

On the river Drina, on the territory of Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the construction of a new hydroelectric power plant “Buk Bijela” with an installed capacity of 93MW is planned. Bosnia and Herzegovina evaded the environmental impact assessment procedure for the project and violated the Convention. For that reason, the non-governmental organizations Green Home, Ozon, Aarhus Center BiH, Center for the Environment from Banja Luka submitted an initiative to the ESPOO Secretariat, against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“The accumulation of the planned power plant will extend upstream, all the way to the border with Montenegro, and now there is evidence that, if this facility is built, there will be a significant negative impact on the Tara River canyon ecosystem within the Durmitor National Park.” The 2015 study, which this plan did not even consider, classifies the Drina, Tara and Lim rivers as key biodiversity areas and rivers with the longest habitat for endangered trout species, inhabited by as many as 30% of the total Balkan population in 553 km of watercourses” says their joint statement.

Natasa Kovacevic of Green Home said that although Montenegro had expressed its intention to participate in the new cross-border procedure as a potentially vulnerable party, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and Ecology continued the process of issuing new environmental permits without conducting a new impact assessment procedure for the environment, violating the ESPOO Convention.

“It is unacceptable for Montenegro to stop here and give up. We must avoid the scenario of late reaction we have with Albania at Cijevna and already built hydroelectric power plants, which is why it is essential for the Government of Montenegro to urgently submit a report on compliance with the ESPOO Secretariat and request a real assessment of potential environmental damage for HPP Buk Bijela. We remind that the project itself is part of the plan to build large hydropower plants on the Drina, which in addition to Buk Bijela includes three other large energy facilities: HPP “Foca” of 44 MW, HPP “Paunci” of 43 MW and HPP “Sutjeska” of 44 MW, she said.

It is inconceivable that Montenegro does not react to the ESPOO Secretariat and other international bodies, to the process of issuing an environmental permit for HPP Buk Bijela, which is based on the Environmental Impact Study made eight years ago.

“This is not only due to the fact that in the meantime there have been significant changes related to the project and the environment, but also due to the fact that the project is based on outdated, incomplete and thus inaccurate information on the impact on river biodiversity and waters of Montenegro,” said Kovacevic.

BiH violates the ESPOO Convention by evading the environmental impact assessment procedure for the construction of HPP Buk Bijela

According to Aleksandar Perović from Ozon, they are very worried about the ignorant attitude of the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also about, the rather passive role of the Government of Montenegro, which should be changed as soon as possible as it is the public issue in both countries.

“We hope that this joint initiative of the reference environmental non-governmental organizations towards the ESPOO Secretariat will achieve its goal, but it is very important that the Government of Montenegro also makes a concrete contribution, in accordance with the rights it has as a signatory to that convention.” The Tara River has already been seriously devastated by the negligence of the Chinese company CRBC, which is building the priority section of the Bar-Boljare highway, but also the Montenegrin government, and it is necessary to stop this trend and avoid all potential risks to river and related ecosystems, “said Perovic.

The signatories of the NGO in the request sent to the representatives of the Water Council and MORT, state that the planned project has a significant transboundary impact on the environment of Montenegro, which is why they require all necessary steps to ensure transboundary environmental impact assessment and comply with the provisions of the Convention on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context.

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