

Grand plans in Republika Srpska to build more than 100 hydro-power plants over the past decade have not got far, officials concede. Authorities of Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated entity of Bosnia, have completed only 16 of more than 100 small hydro-power plants that were planned for construction over the past 10 years, the Energy Regulatory Commission of RS told BIRN.

Starting from 2006, the Republika Srpska government signed contracts with private companies for the construction of more than 100 plants, media reports note.

Ten years on, however, this effort has born little fruit.

"A total of 19 small hydro power plants are today operating in RS ... of these, only 16 have been built in the past 10 years," Jelena Prtilo, spokeswoman of the Energy Regulatory Commission of RS, told BIRN.

According to Damir Miljevic, an economic expert from Banja Luka, the poor success rate of the government's plan is down to several factors.

"The companies that won the tenders to build the hydro-powers were often not prepared to do this kind of job and many were not working well," Miljevic told BIRN.

"Another reason is that in many cases, work was slowed by the inefficiency of the RS administration, so that these companies had enormous problems even in obtaining building permits," Miljevic added.

BIRN tried to contact the Ministry of Energy and Industry of RS for a response but did not get a reply from the institution by the time of publication.

Other observers maintain that many hydro-powers were planned without meeting the necessary conditions, including respect for the environment.

"Several plans for building hydro-power plants represented a serious danger to the environment," Natasa Crnkovic, of the Centre for Environment, CZZS, an environmentalist NGO based in Banja Luka, told BIRN.

Last year, the CZZS coordinated a campaign that succeeded in stopping construction of five plants that the RS authorities were planning to build inside the Sutjeska national park, in the east of Republika Srpska.

Other actions were planned during the last months by environmentalist organisations aiming to preserve the river Sana, in the northwest of the country, where a German-Austrian company plans to build a small hydro-power plant.

"The local community has for more than seven years opposed the project to build a hydro-power plant on their territory ... this is a good example of how society is resisting," Crnkovic said.

"The idea of building so many plants in so little time was just not realistic," she concluded.

Bosnian Serb Power Plant Plan Remains Grounded

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