

Bulgaria: Environment Ministry Stops Implementation of Pirin National Park's Management Plan

Following the strong public reaction to the anticipatory enforcement of a decision not to make an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of a draft update of the 2014-2023 management plan of the Pirin National Park, Environment and Water Minister Irina Kostova said her decision would be cancelled on Monday.

A controversy flared up over a ministerial order issued on the last working day before the March 3 long weekend, which gave the go-ahead to a new Pirin Park management plan without an EIA. Environmentalists threatened with street protests on Monday evening and are determined to challenge the ministerial order in court. According to a media report, the Ministry was already late in allowing the implementation of the new management plan and has been repeatedly criticized for this by the European Commission. It also says that this type of management plan has not been subject to environmental impact assessment before. The timing of the Ministry's decision was not calculated to limit the opportunity for an appeal against it.

President Rumen Radev wrote on Facebook the decision to skip the EIA of the 2014-2023 management plan was hasty. He stressed that this is a matter important to the public, and talked with the Environment Minister and Prime Minister Ognian Gerdjikov about finding a transparent, responsible solution to safeguard the public interest.

However, environmentalists will still stage protests. They claim the new plan allows construction on 4,000 hectares in the protected area and industrial logging.

Source: Sofia