

There are plans for two small hydropower plants- SHPP Elektrobosna and SHPP Pijavice - only a few hundred meters from the world-famous Pliva Waterfall in Jajce.

In a hurry to hold a public hearing before the formation of the newly elected Municipal Council in Jajce, investors in small hydropower plants on the Pliva River in Bosnia and Herzegovina are trying to take advantage of legal loopholes and the current poor epidemiological situation in the country to prevent adequate participation of the public that is strongly against these projects. This violates the principles of justice, distorts the idea of public participation, and reduces the transparency of the process.

If allowed, their construction would further degrade the hydrology of the river, which is already under severe pressure due to the Jajce I Hydropower Plant. Furthermore, this would have a serious negative impact on the flora and fauna that depend on the river, but also the cultural, tourism, and recreational offer of the City of Jajce. At the same time, it would cause direct financial damage to the local community and all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it could also be used to destroy another river.

“The demands of citizens of Jajce are clear, it is necessary to postpone the planned public hearing for these two small hydropower plants until a new Municipal Council is established. Only then can they decide on initiating the procedure for awarding concessions to planned projects. Also, the spatial plan of the municipality does not provide for the construction of these small hydropower plants, making issuing a permit for their construction impossible”, said Samir Beharić, a representative of 30 local organizations that oppose these projects. If this process continues without the possibility of adequate public involvement, which is currently not possible due to the pandemic, it will violate the recommendations of the Energy Community Secretariat. The recommendations clearly state that any small hydropower project should be stopped if there is no public support, i.e. the local community is against it. Bosnia and Herzegovina, as one of the signatories of the Energy Community Treaty, should take these recommendations and conclusions seriously, in particular, those related to the abolition of incentives for small hydropower plants and their economic unsustainability.

“It is interesting that this is happening at a time when the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has announced the abolition of subsidies for small hydro and is proposing plans for a permanent ban on their construction. It is impossible to shake off the impression that this is an attempt at a lightning-fast action to obtain the necessary permits for bad projects before the Government's decision takes effect. Therefore, it is crucial to hear and accede to the citizens' request asking for a postponement of all concession-granting procedures until the formation of a new Municipal Council”, suggested Zoran

Mateljak, Freshwater Program Manager at WWF Adria.

The legitimacy of the entire process is questioned because of hasty decision-making and the disregard for the requests of the local community. The Pliva River is a natural treasure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, valued not only by people living on its banks but also by everyone who visits the area, and the City of Jajce has great potential for the development of sustainable, river-based tourism. Together, the city and the river form a complex landscape where people's lives are intertwined with the natural, cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage that would be irretrievably lost if these hydropower plants were built.

Source: wwfadria.org