

Despite the lockdowns in the region caused by the coronavirus, the construction of five SHPPs started in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Non-governmental organizations have filed or drafted lawsuits against the competent ministries in the Federation of BiH and the Republic of Srpska, the entities comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), for non-compliance with law in the procedure of approving the construction of five small hydropower plants (SHPPs).

Now the Center for Environment, the Aarhus Center Sarajevo, and Konjic-based environmental protection association Zeleni Neretva are suing against the decision of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism to renew environmental permits for the construction of SHPP Srijanski most and SHPP Gorovnik ušće on the Neretvica river. The investor is power utility Elektroprivreda BiH (EPBiH).

### **The locals prevented the start of construction on the Neretvica river**

According to the Center for Environment, locals have also opposed the projects, and a few days ago they prevented the installation of an information board about the construction works on the Neretvica river. The similar situation occurred recently near the town of Foča.

### **Public participation in decision-making is disabled**

The Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism issued renewed environmental permits to the investor, and in both cases prevented public participation, which is against the law on environmental protection of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH).

The institute of 'renewed environmental permit' is unknown in the law, which is why the three organizations believe the ministry violated it, said Nina Kreševljaković, legal advisor to the Aarhus centers in BiH.

Amir Varišić, president of the Green Neretva association from Konjic, confirmed both lawsuits would be filed very quickly.

The association is an interested party in the procedure because in 2010 it submitted remarks to the ministry on the environmental impact study of an SHPPs in the Neretvica river basin, he said.

However, the ministry did not inform it nor the local population about the new procedure.

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