

Wind farm Vratarusa 2 was planned to be built near the town of Senj. The High Administrative Court annulled the decision of the Croatian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy which said that it is not necessary to conduct an environmental impact assessment study for the 24 MW wind farm Vratarusa 2.

This decision marks the end of three years long lawsuit filed by the environmental organization BIOM against the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy. The suit was first filed at the Administrative Court in Rijeka, which rejected it. BIOM then appealed to the High Administrative Court pointing out that the vicinity of the proposed construction site is a known nesting area for endangered species of vultures and eagles.

The High Administrative Court upheld BIOM's argument that the cumulative impacts of the Vratarusa 2 wind farm with the neighboring Senj wind farm, located two kilometers away, had not been assessed. According to the conclusion of the High Administrative Court, the first instance court failed to correct the stated shortcoming, which BIOM pointed out in the lawsuit. Also, the High Administrative Court found that the Ministry's allegations that the cumulative impacts had been assessed were not true.

"Our goal is not to stop investments in renewable energy sources, but to ensure proper and legal impact assessment procedures that do not benefit investors to the detriment of nature." If the purpose of these procedures is again neglected and projects are allowed to be 'released' on the basis of data of questionable quality, these procedures are reduced to just another bureaucratic step that investors must satisfy ", said the director of the Biom Association Željka Rajković.

At both court instances, Biom pointed out significant shortcomings in the impact assessment procedures for Gatekeeper II, especially the fact that the possible impacts of the wind farm on griffon vultures and golden eagles, which nest or feed at the planned wind farm location, have not been accurately determined.

"These are strictly protected birds and rare predators whose population is stagnant in Croatia," warned Biom, which is one of the leading civil society organizations for nature protection in Croatia and a representative of the world's largest bird protection network BirdLife in Croatia.

In parallel with this lawsuit, Biom had to conduct a procedure against MZOE for Vrataruša II and before the Information Commissioner because, as they say, the Ministry refused to submit expert opinions of its bodies, and then sued the commissioner before the High Administrative Court and lost.

"We are satisfied with this verdict, but we are sorry that these same arguments, as a rule, do not pass in our courts, which is why we had to turn to the European Commission, which

Court suspends Vrataruša II wind farm project in Croatia due to possible environmental impact

then had to sanction Croatia's omissions in assessing the impact of wind farms," Rajkovic concluded.

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