

Croatian power utility HEP is trying again to revive the project of hydropower plant on the river Ombla near Dubrovnik, which has also this time caused bitter criticism of the public. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development gave up two years ago of financing this project due to environmental controversies. Hydropower plant should have a specific profile – accumulation would be carried out within the hill that is over the source, creating a concrete curtain that would hold the water. Opponents of the project have several objections to this solution, but in spite of this, HEP publicly presented at the end of April in Dubrovnik a New study of key acceptability estimates of the project for the ecological network.

It is a document requested by the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection, although even before the presentation were recorded complaints that the study cannot be credible and objective because its commissioner and financier is investor by himself – HEP. On the other hand, it is clear that the Government is committed to the Ombla, although different promises could be heard before the election. Opposition to the project and some similar ideas cost the former relevant Minister Mirela of function. Then EBRD retired, taking into account the expertise which determines that there is an area of outstanding biodiversity in the water source underground.

After the withdrawal from the project, EBRD commissioned additional studies of biodiversity of Ombla source, for which the research was conducted in 2012<sup>th</sup>. Based on this study the Ombla is included in the ecological network of protected areas in the EU “Natura 2000”. The campaign against hydropower plant launched a local environmental non-governmental organizations, as well as broader movements such as Green Action. They argue that a new study is based on a survey of other speleological facilities near Dubrovnik, not only Vilina Spilja over the Ombla. They argue that HEP intends to implement the project based on the study of the environmental impact from 1999<sup>th</sup>, alleging that there is no animal protected species in the Ombla.

In addition, opponents of the project argue that studies commissioned during the mandate of the Minister Holy indicate that accumulation cannot achieve the required level of water sustainability to be profitable.

Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection also opposes the Ombla because it considers that construction would cause negative impacts on the preservation of the ecological network. In the opinion issued by the Institute to the relevant Ministry it points out that the negative effects are possible on all prominent elements of protection.