

In eight years, 89 billion dinars were collected from eco-taxes in Serbia, of which only 34 billion went for environmental protection

In the period 2010-2018. from these fees, budgets at all levels received a total of about 89 billion dinars, while about 34 billion dinars were spent on activities that really contribute to environmental protection.

### **Valjevo spent a quarter of the money from the eco tax for other purposes**

In Valjevo, which is among the most polluted cities in Serbia, from 2011 to 2019, 359 million dinars were collected from various charges for the preservation of the environment, and 264 million were spent on it, according to data from the "Stanište" association. So, more than a quarter of the money that citizens and the economy gave to live in a healthier environment, went to other purposes. Protests over air pollution are sporadic and do not gather as many people as would be expected, given that clean air is not a matter of economic status, political persuasion or any other difference, because all residents of a city breathe the same air.

"While we are more afraid of where we will drown the child, than whether we will be poisoned, we will keep silent about this problem, because we believe that there may be jobs for that polluter," Dejan Maksimović from the Stanište association told Startit Dnevnik .

### **In four years, investment in the environment has been reduced by two billion**

Stanište has been investigating the problem of unintended spending of money from eco-taxes since 2010, considering that the establishment of budget funds for environmental protection at the local level began a year earlier. These are funds to which municipalities reallocate budget money planned for investment in water, land and air protection.

"If we look at the trend of investing in the environment, less money is allocated every year and we can expect the continuation of such a practice. "If we look at the total amount of municipalities that they planned to allocate for their local funds for environmental protection, we see that in 2015 it was 6.4 billion, next year it was a billion less, and in 2019 it is planned to be 4.5 billion." states Maksimović.

When we go down from planning to the level of realization, the numbers are even more devastating. At the same time as the expenditures are falling, the revenues from these fees have been constantly growing, because their amounts have increased and the criteria have changed, so today those who do not create pollution also pay taxes. From 4.6 billion dinars in 2015, the revenues of all municipalities together jumped to 6.3 billion in 2019.

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## **20 billion of ecology spent for other purposes**

It is devastating that 24 municipalities abolished their fund, even though they had it in 2015, because, as they say, budget funds are no longer earmarked. This is in line with the changes from December 2015, according to which the purposeful spending of budget funds was abolished, ie it was legalized so that the money from eco-taxes would not be used for ecology.

“The Republic Fund for Environmental Protection was abolished in 2012, and was re-established as the Green Fund in 2017. For four years without the fund, the revenues of the republic budget from fees were a total of more than 20 billion dinars, which was fully used for other purposes.”

In that period, the fee for environmental pollution, which was paid during the extension of the registration of motor vehicles, is also abolished. For the citizens, it seemed for a moment as a relief for the household budget, but the municipalities already in 2013 introduced new and increased the existing fees, in order to compensate for that loss. According to the research of Stanište, today those who earn the most from eco-taxes spend the most on non-purpose purposes.

## **In 8 years, 89 billion dinars were collected, 34 billion were spent**

“So, about half a billion euros were spent for purposes that have nothing to do with the environment. This practice happens every year, in the republic budget and in about 80 percent of local self-governments, so we can talk about intentional and systematic environmental degradation. ”

## **What could we do with those half a billion?**

Reducing air pollution from all sources requires huge investments, and the state is at least indirectly responsible for investments of around 2.3 billion euros, according to the Fiscal Council in its report from 2018, in which it estimates that a strong increase in investments in environmental protection is budgetary. priority in the coming years.

“It is necessary to reduce air pollution from city heating plants (especially those that use coal and fuel oil as fuel), which will require investments of around 550 million euros in the reconstruction of the plant (transition to natural gas, biomass or municipal waste) and expansion of the hot water network to 2030 ”, the report states, among other things. Not only did the authorities have that money at their disposal, but they also spent it for no purpose. Heating plants and individual fireplaces are the biggest source of air pollution, which was also discussed by the former line minister. Coalition 27, a platform for the participation of civil society in the process of adopting EU standards and values in the field



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of environmental protection, states that the biggest polluters are heating plants, and not traffic, as some representatives of competent institutions said.

Source: [bif.rs](http://bif.rs)