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**In some parts of the rivers in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, it is increasingly difficult to reflect in the water from garbage, but what we see is a reflection of today's man - lifestyle, environmental awareness, care of the authorities. We are so close and so connected, and with the waters that connect us, "taking care" to leave enough for ourselves, we send each other - waste. In all three countries, nature has not spared to honor man with beauty, nor does man spare ways to pollute that beauty.**

### **Serbia: Ecocide on Lim - death of one river**

Lim used to be considered one of the cleanest rivers in Serbia. It has been far from that for years. Faeces, chemicals and tons of various garbage are now his reality. It is most endangered by illegal landfills, of which there are dozens in Prijepolje and Priboj. The black spot - the unsanitary landfill "Stanjevine", which greatly endangered Lim, was closed more than a year ago.

"Although the problems have started to be solved by rehabilitating this landfill, where waste from Prijepolje has been dumped for more than 40 years, there are still about 40-60 illegal landfills along Lima through Serbia. The competent institutions are currently working on the construction of the transfer station "Banjica" with the recycling island in Nova Varoš, which will finally close the large unsanitary landfill near Potpečko Lake, but for now there is no precise information when the transfer station will be completed. It is planned to transport the selected waste from Prijepolje, Nova Varoš and Priboj from "Banjica" to the Regional Sanitary Landfill "Duboko" in Užice. There is no doubt that this will drastically reduce the pollution of Lima, but if the causes are solved at the same time. At the same time, it is very important for the competent institutions to be aware that solving these decades-old problems directly contributes to the strategies of the European Union, but also to the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, which emphasizes the need to reduce pollution, associate of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Criminal policy and inspection supervision in Serbia are missing, and that additionally slows down the process of solving the problem, states the assistant of the department for ecology at the Faculty of Political Sciences, Marko Vujić. He also says that there is no data on whether anyone has been held liable for pollution of the river so far.

"Research shows that 40,000 tons of garbage reaches Priboj. A large percentage of waste sinks, while the rest remains on the surface. It is a classic ecocide against one treasure, such as Lim. It is also worrying that the authorities have not reacted in the right way for years. do not take concrete steps when it comes to remediation of sanitary landfills and

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other things that threaten Lim. "They eat, where they bathe, it's all questionable. With such treatment, Lima is threatened with ecosystem extinction," says Vujic.

### **Lim: From the cleanest river to the waste canal**

Sewage, sanitary and industrial wastewater, garbage and everything else that people throw away float through the tin for years. Due to the condition of the river, the Danube, Sava and Drina are endangered. The consequences for the past several times were most visible on Potpec Lake. In January last year, the belt around the dam on Potpec Lake near Priboj was buried with thousands of cubic meters of various waste that Lim picked up from several landfills in its upper course. The data then showed that Lim brought about 40,000 cubic meters of floating garbage from landfills from five municipalities in Montenegro to Potpec. Half of that waste, water swallowed forever. Experts warn that the responsibility for endangering the river lies on several fronts.

"The negligence of the citizens, above all, is a big problem in the whole story. It is terrible that people throw everything in Lim. Various garbage, dead cattle, tin kovid boxes, construction waste are thrown. Unfortunately, our people have this mantra - to water everything somewhere. The logic of the average Serb back 5-6 centuries is that when you throw something in the water, you have solved the problem, it is amazing, this is the big problem of Lima. "Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the irresponsibility towards Lim is equally shown on all sides of its coast," Vujic states.

The large amount of municipal waste floating through Lima makes the river look like the worst example of an ecocide that can most often be seen in Asia or Africa, which is devastating, warns Svetlana Stanisic, a professor at the Faculty of Environment in Belgrade. "Change of environmental awareness is necessary and will be achieved if environmental issues are given more space in the media and if the competent institutions are more involved in solving the problem. If pollution continues in Lima, we can expect the river to become a source of pollution for local fields and fertile land. , the loss of vegetation on the banks of the river can be expected, and people in the vicinity of such polluted water can have numerous health problems, which stem from inhaling water droplets and various ways in which toxins enter the chain through plants, animals and drinking water. they eat and reach the body ", states Stanišić.

### **Cooperation between Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Lima's problem is international. It flows through Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Are all countries working to address river pollution?

"Regardless of the fact that the process of solving the decade-long pollution of Lima has started in Serbia, this problem is international and should be solved equally in Montenegro,

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Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The pollution covers at least 600 kilometers of river flow, because it is not only Lim, the Drina, the Sava and the Danube are already in question. "It seems that every country is working for itself. It seems that Serbia has made the biggest step in solving the problem in the last two years," said Natasa Milivojevic.

Cross-border cooperation has not shown concrete results so far, and everything that has been done so far comes down to the intervention of the European Union, says Marko Vujić. "It is a river that has several irresponsible guardians, partly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if that country does not send what Serbia is doing, if it does not send in the same intensity, then we will not have the same problem-solving effect. Cooperation is necessary and change habits "That is the essence - we all need to become environmentally aware together. It is obvious that the authorities do not have the ear to deal enough with solving the causes of problems in Serbia, Montenegro and BiH. Lim and other environmental problems are not primary for them," Vujic said.

In order for the Lim River to "breathe" and continue to flow without garbage, it is necessary to do a lot more, the interlocutors added. And what are the future plans of the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Serbia and what has been done so far when it comes to the preservation of Lima, we have not received an answer to those questions.

### **BiH: Drina in Visegrad**

It is still an association to the great work of Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, but today its shores are connected not only by a bridge, but also by a huge amount of waste.

The problem of river pollution has existed for two decades, almost since the construction of the Hydroelectric Power Plant on the Drina. High water levels always bring new amounts of garbage. Those quantities were approximately 2 to 3 thousand cubic meters per year, but in recent years the number has increased significantly. In January, 15,000 cubic meters of floating debris arrived on the Drina sprocket, mostly plastic, but there are also a lot of tree trees, which are the biggest problem for sprockets and hydroelectric power plants. Last year, there were 7 refrigerators floating on the surface, "says Dejan Furtula, president of UG" Eco Center "Visegrad.

The association states that they are not satisfied with the engagement of the competent bodies and institutions. They believe that there is no problem that cannot be solved if it is approached with enough seriousness. And this problem, they tell us, showing the garbage islands on the Drina, is a reason for great concern, but also shame.

"Floating waste on the Drina and Visegrad rivers, as the last point where it stops and is removed, is a big problem for the environment, health of all of us, but also reputation,

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because imagine when tourists come to our city and come across endless amounts of waste in water. "The Drina in Visegrad is very polluted, we are now in the process of analyzing the water from the Drina River where we will find out the ecological status of the river. Things are not going well, due to floating waste and toxic substances ending in the Drina, they say. Geography professor Vedran Zubić says that in addition to physical or mechanical garbage, the worst pollutants are those that come biochemically, because everything we put in the geographical envelope becomes part of our area.

"It is interesting that, when we are no longer worried about some types of flora and fauna, how are we not worried about us and the health of our offspring. We always forget that we did not inherit this space, or planet Earth, from our ancestors but borrowed it from our descendants. As a geographer, I could estimate this amount of waste with just one word: Hydrocide ", says Zubić.

### **Who is to blame for the garbage in the Drina?**

It would be easiest to shift all the responsibility to the neighbors, but also wrong. The Drina originates from Piva and Tara, and due to this fact, Zubić believes that most of the garbage found in it is from the territory of another state. However, he notes that some rivers come to the Drina and from the territory of BiH as tributaries.

The Drina contains not only what is directly thrown into it, but everything that comes from the basin of a given river. All its tributaries 'forward' a larger or smaller amount of waste into it. But this is certainly not done by states as political entities, but irresponsible people on both sides of the border. Somehow we forget that the geographical envelope and all the pollutants in it do not know about political borders. it quickly pollutes the air around you, the flora, the land you farm and the grasslands you graze on cattle, so by the law of integrity we can't limit anything in nature, not even pollution. The reason is snow retention or melting of snow! Then level erosion 'cleanses' nature and transfers all garbage from the field to the river system. shi, one way or another, in rivers, "he says.

Professor Zubić explains the principle of cross-border garbage exchange, reminding that most rivers or 70 percent of BiH's surface belong to the Black Sea basin, which means that most water from BiH ends up in the Sava, Sava in the Danube and Danube in the Black Sea. "The Neretva, like some sinkholes, carries its water to the Adriatic Sea, either directly or through underground canals and springs at the bottom of the sea. However, non-degradable garbage moves. It partially forms both floodplains and rivers. It also floods the rubbish around the rubbish. It is clear that it contaminates the local area, but due to its movement the river spreads pollutants over a wider geographical area. We forget that these 'Quaternary depressions' or lower parts are the most fertile areas, such as Semberija or

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Lijevče polje in BiH, and the neighboring areas have their own agricultural areas, and it is impossible to stop waste at political borders. That is why everyone has to get involved in this problem, so if a person throws something in the Tara canyon, his friend may consume it in an 'invisible' form at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube near Belgrade ada ", states Zubić.

### **Involvement of line ministries in BiH**

The Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republika Srpska points out that they are involved in the problem, that since 2014 they have been conducting intensive talks with Serbia and Montenegro to solve the problem of floating waste in the Drina basin:

"Republika Srpska, ie BiH in this case is exclusively collateral damage, and our public must know that. Almost all floating waste in the accumulation of HPP Visegrad comes from the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro, ie the rivers Lim and Tara. Floating solid waste that the river Lim arrives in the Drina watercourse seriously endangers the operation of HPP Visegrad and HPP Bajina Basta, as well as all producers of electricity on the Drina River downstream of Visegrad. Landscaping, Construction and Ecology of the Republic of Srpska has launched an initiative for a regional project to mitigate and rehabilitate the problem of floating solid waste on the rivers Lim and Drina, given that this is a common problem of the Republic of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina Serbian."

From 2004 to 2021, safety nets were set up on the Lim and Drina rivers, meetings were held, and working groups were formed. Still, garbage is, year after year, more and more. The biggest problem in the Tara River Basin is wood waste, ie all that caused by wild deforestation and storms, which ended in the Tara River and later in the Drina, according to the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and Ecology of Republika Srpska. In November last year in Belgrade, a meeting of officials from Serbia and BiH was held. It was pointed out that floating waste is not only an environmental problem, but also threatens the stability of the energy sector in Republika Srpska. It was stated that the activities undertaken by the Republika Srpska and Serbia on the remediation of floating waste in the past period had results, but the need to actively involve the competent institutions in Montenegro in solving this problem was emphasized.

The FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism states that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the most significant negative impact on water quality in the Drina River Basin has urban and industrial untreated wastewater, solid municipal waste, illegal landfills, industrial waste landfills near river banks and agricultural activities.

"The problem of floating waste on the river occurs every year and, unfortunately, it could

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turn into a major environmental disaster, which may already be the case if you judge by the thousands of cubic meters of waste that keeps the sprocket on the Drina River near Visegrad every year. HPP Visegrad extracted more than 8,500 cubic meters of floating waste in that year. the way it ends in the rivers. "

The solution to this problem should be sought in talks with officials from Serbia and Montenegro, because large amounts of waste that reach the Drina River come from these countries: the Tara River and the Lim River from the cities of Bijelo Polje, Prijepolje, Priboj, according to the federal ministry and they point out that more active participation and more concrete actions of competent institutions in neighboring countries have been required for years.

"It should certainly be pointed out that a permanent solution to this problem requires large financial resources. In recent years, there have been some efforts to alleviate these problems. is that the amount of floating waste is growing from year to year and that the chains themselves are not enough to solve this problem. Also, municipalities in the Federation of BiH that gravitate along the Drina River through the implementation of the Cressida project have been distributed bins and containers for waste collection. "

Geography professor Vedran Zubić points out that water should be declared a basic human right, and those who pollute it should be severely punished.

As many as 1/3 of the people or 2.6 billion do not have access to drinking water. This is one of the biggest problems today. We need to 'force' politics to declare water a 'basic human right'. water is salty, and land is not used at all. Of the 3 percent of inland waters 2.2 percent is ice on Earth! Of the 0.8 percent that remains there is groundwater, polluted water, industrial water, pond and swamp water, etc. There is a small amount that we can use, and it is the basis of life. As much as 70 percent of our body is water! Scientists around the planet are trying to discover an 'ice grain' on some other celestial bodies, and at the same time There are two ways to protect water and not just water: The first is long-term and it involves education that includes real knowledge about the need to protect and preserve hydrography, and the second, short-term, are quick and painful punishments for perpetrators! , and killing an ecosystem is killing ourselves ", concludes Zubić.

### **Montenegro: The sheet metal is not polluted throughout**

"For anyone who once drank water from that river, Lim represents emotion. Lim is poetry. Sung, literary described, artistically painted countless times", are the words with which journalist Tufik Softić describes the river Lim, which flows through his city - Berane.

During his youth, like many of his fellow citizens, he bathed in it in the summer days, and it

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is possible to do that even today, but not if you live downstream from Berane.

“From the place in the settlement of Brezje near Plav, where it springs from Lake Plav, to Berane, Lim has, one might say, preserved its purity and beauty to this day. On that stretch, in the upper course, you have countless beautiful beaches in summer which is occupied not only by the local population, but more and more often by tourists, with the development of ethno tourism.

“By shutting down the industry in Berane and building a collector in this city, which was financed by the European Union with 13 million euros, Lim became cleaner below Berane than it was,” he added.

However, the situation is getting worse in the further course of Lima, so Softić singles out Bijelo Polje as a black spot when it comes to the pollution of this river.

“The situation on the territory of Bijelo Polje is completely different and it could be said that the whole course through three countries is a black ecological point when it comes to Lim. Bijelo Polje has no collector, and on the other hand has industrial pollutants, agricultural and meat plants, from which all wastewater goes to Lim”, he explains.

“In Bijelo Polje, you have a huge number of wastewater pipes that go into the river without any filters. All this makes the fish stock on the territory of that municipality destroyed,” Softić continues.

“As one of my friends says, it may be the only city that is not on Lima, but next to Lima. It is unbelievable that such a city does not have a single street that overlooks the river and does not have a promenade near Lima,” said the journalist, who wrote during his career countless texts on the issue of pollution of the Lim River.

“Working on a story about it recently, I asked my colleague from Bijelo Polje how many texts he wrote on the topic of Lima pollution, he told me at least fifty. I asked him if there was any result, he replied that the effect of that writing was mostly big zero,” he concludes.

As he says, there are countless wild dumps on the banks of the river from which small or larger canals and rivers, draining, dirty and polluted water flow into Lim.

### **Who is to blame - the state or individuals?**

It is not only the landfills that citizens themselves often form on the banks of rivers, that are the main culprits for the current situation. This is also shown by the case of Beransel, where the locals opposed the authorities, and the protests that lasted for several years prevented the formation of a landfill that included medical waste. The landfill, which functioned for a while, was in the immediate vicinity of the river Sušica, which flows into Lim. Their struggle was then noticed by the director and activist, Mladen Ivanović, who was shooting the documentary “In Between” (Between the River and the People). When asked whether

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citizens are the biggest culprits for river pollution, as is often thought, Ivanovic explains his theory:

It would be strange if only citizens could be blamed for any phenomenon in society. The state is responsible for the system and the way it functions. And each of our colonies of states is captured by the political 'elite' or those whose orders they obey. I asked my mother, and they told me that there was always garbage in the rivers. Only much less. Logically, there were fewer people in the cities, "says the director and activist.

"I tend to always look for the culprit in the state because if she was lucky she would be subordinate to us and should work for us. As this is not the case, she is my fault by default. But let's not lie, we are very primitive, brother." , states Ivanović, and then proposes a point list for determining guilt.

"Lim is protected by the Danube Convention from 2008, but realistically, when it hurts to care. With this item, I give a point that citizens and the state are equally guilty," he said. There is no system for purifying water from sewers, so I give three points that the state is more to blame. The place where the local self-government built an illegal dump is called Vasova VODE! Fourteen sources of drinking water is a place for garbage! Imagine how unconscious , you have to be arrogant and arrogant in order for such a place to serve as a dump for you " , he emphasizes and that is why he awards 100 points to the state.

By easily reviewing the table, we will establish that the state has 104 points and the citizen one point of guilt and responsibility for the destruction of the Lim River. We can only wonder how and who will be responsible for that destruction, for the millions of projects spent "unused project documentation, for audits, for lunches and dinners. When we realize that we paid them to destroy us, without seeking responsibility, I am afraid it will be too late," Ivanovic concluded.

"I will not even talk about honorable and brave people who laid down their lives to protect the environment. I will always stand up when I mention their name. Glory to Goran Šćekić, grandfather Đoša and many. Glory to the Beranese!", He said.

**Out of 38 locations, only in two places the water quality had a status - very good**

The NGO Green Home says that they are familiar with the state of the Lim River, which brings about 40,000 cubic meters of floating waste from Montenegro to Lake Potpec in Serbia.

"Waste management in Montenegro is one of the burning issues. Images of rivers where waste floats are unfortunately common. Testing the quality of water in our rivers provides very accurate information that should concern us. Of the 38 sites where the survey was conducted in 2020 "Water quality had a very good status in only two measuring points. In



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almost 60 percent of localities, moderate water quality status was recorded, which means that the values of biological elements deviate from the values usual for this type of water in undisturbed state, and related to human activities", explained from this NGO.

"The Lim River in the part below Bijelo Polje is also categorized as water of moderate quality, which means that the action of the human factor, by throwing waste into the river and discharging untreated wastewater, has left a mark. Water still carries pollutants and waste. throw it away and deposit it along the shore or carry it further to the water recipient. In this case, it is the Potpeć reservoir ", adds the executive director of the NGO Green Home, Azra Vuković.

"Recently, in cooperation with the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology, we launched the procedure of installing automatic measuring equipment for water quality parameters within the Dobrakovo hydrological station on this river. This will be the only automatic water quality station whose data will be available to the public online. with the goal of quick reaction in case of accidental situations ", Vuković emphasized.

This NGO believes that the main cause of the current situation is the lack of adequate infrastructure near rivers, insufficient information of citizens, lack of punitive measures, inadequate functioning of utilities and inspections.

"The fact is that the way of life has changed a lot in the last 20 years, so significantly larger quantities of plastic packaging for food and beverages are in circulation, while at the same time not providing adequate disposal of this waste," said the NGO Green Home .

### **Citizens need to be educated**

When asked how the situation in Montenegrin rivers, and especially Lima, can be improved, Ivanovic recounts an anecdote from the screening of his film:

When we won the award for best debut documentary in Stockholm for a film about Beransel, a man from the audience asked me if I had made a feature film or a documentary. He didn't have enough synapses to understand that someone could destroy this miracle of beauty in such a way which does not deserve us so poor. "

"There is no character option in the brain for our destructive creativity. It took me a while to convince him that it was all reality. I don't think he even understood me to the end. The solution is always and only in emancipation," he concludes.

Softic has a similar opinion, emphasizing that despite the great guilt of the government, citizens should be educated, which cannot be done without an adequate penal policy.

"This cannot be achieved by only one environmental and one construction inspector, whose competence is to prevent the illegal exploitation of river material, in the entire north of Montenegro," he explains.

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“Both have their headquarters in Berane. And imagine when they receive a report about something from Bijelo Polje, or anywhere else, how long it takes them to get to the place where the ecocide was reported,” Softic said.

“There is still a lot to be done so that what happened last year does not happen to us, so that the participants of the traditional Lim regatta, simply at the entrance to Bijelo Polje, pack their boats and skip that city regarding the protection of the natural environment, be strict, because we will obviously not hear the appeals of ecologists and naturalists who call on us every day to protect this international river,” he added.

Despite the promise, the Montenegrin Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism did not answer the questions even after a month, N1 writes.