

Last year, more than a hundred civil society organizations, representatives of small businesses and various professional agencies issued a public appeal for a green recovery. “The government has not only disobeyed and adopted our proposals, but has completely ignored the public and is still hiding the entire document, which should be sent to Brussels in two weeks. What we want to see in the plan is to invest in collective immunity and resilience to future crises, and not to finance unsustainable practices and old models and projects “, said Luka Tomac from the Green Action.

On the occasion of informing the Parliament about the summary of the Recovery Plan, the Green Action Association, the Society for Sustainable Development (DOOR) and the Center for Peace Studies (CMS) held an action once again pointing out the complete lack of public participation in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. At the same time, they warned of the substantive shortcomings of this document, which will determine the development of the Republic of Croatia not only in the next five years, but will also significantly affect the lives of future generations. “The National Recovery Plan, a document that gives the Republic of Croatia the opportunity to access a budget of 6.3 billion euros in grants, is perhaps the only opportunity for a real turnaround in a fairer low-carbon society. However, it is evident from the published summary that such a Plan will not take us through this crisis nor will it make us more resilient to future crises “, said Luka Tomac from the Green Action.

Miljenka Kuhar from the DOOR association pointed out that the summary of the Plan does not show even the slightest ambition regarding measures in the field of energy, and it does not show the strength to really implement reforms and measures. The best example is that the expected result in the area of decarbonisation of buildings is expected to be the adopted program to combat energy poverty, which the Government has committed to adopt by the end of 2019 and then by 2020. “For 6.6 percent of Croatian citizens, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (2019) living in households that cannot afford adequate heating in the coldest months, the adoption of programs, which do not follow clear measures of assistance, monitoring and data collection, will not bring anything new. But the Government has not only forgotten the poorest citizens who cannot afford to pay their heating bills, but also the citizens who would like to contribute to the development of a low-carbon society by producing their own energy from renewable sources, “explained Kuhar. The national legislative framework still does not allow citizens, for example, within an apartment building, to organize into sustainable energy communities and thus contribute to reducing their own costs, but also greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the summary of the Plan, it seems that the Government does not take the citizens and the production of energy from solar power plants seriously, because by 2026 it

envisages the connection of only 800 MW of electricity produced from renewable sources. “For a country that has committed to producing at least 36.6 percent of its energy from renewable energy sources by 2030, this plan is not only not ambitious, but its low level of involvement of citizens and local communities in the system of renewable energy production is a serious concern. Croatia needs more, not less, solar power plants owned by citizens,” Kuhar added.

Not only economic but also social recovery is needed, and resilience needs to be woven into the long-term vision of this society’s progress. However, recovery and resilience are seriously threatened by the lack of a coherent vision of the development of society and its individual segments, but also by harmful ideas that could slow down recovery and jeopardize resilience.

“The summary of the Plan announces the sale of state property, ie that by 2023 the sale of at least 150 companies that the Government considers not of special interest will be announced. Sale and privatization are not management. Good governance in the 21st century implies citizen participation and civic control over the spending of public money, and we want to see that in this Plan. How can a state that sells its property and mismanages it and does not invest in it really be resilient to crises?” Commented Sara Lalić from the Center for Peace Studies. He adds that although the Government has recognized the need for education reform and stated in the Plan the need to invest in infrastructure, which would meet one of the preconditions for the introduction of one-shift and full-time classes and equalization of conditions and access to education in Croatia, but unfortunately it is not enough. Instead of the tradition of individual partial interventions in education, for really quality and accessible education in Croatia, Croatia needs long-term, concrete, mutually harmonized and coherent interventions in the education system and beyond, and with this Plan we miss another opportunity to achieve that “, added Lalic.

The summary also reads vague plans for changes in labor legislation aimed at encouraging indefinite employment, but also lists vague terms such as innovative forms of work and labor market flexibility, which has so far been synonymous with reducing the scope of workers’ rights. It is also unbelievable that the pension reform includes changes in legislation to allow work after the age of 65, despite the fact that citizens have already rejected such an initiative in 2019.

Given this scandalous procedure in which key stakeholders and the general public did not see the full document, let alone have the opportunity to participate in the public debate, the associations published a draft of the entire National Recovery and Resilience Plan from December last year. “Perhaps the version we have at the moment is outdated, but we call on

the Government to deny us a newer one," Tomac concluded.

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