

## Montenegro: Fighting over Ljestanica river – investors do not give up on building shpp, river defenders are embittered

Although Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, when meeting with the non-governmental sector in Bijelo Polje, said that he could not believe that such a beauty as the Ljestanica River should be put in a pipe, or build a small hydroelectric power plant on it, only the gullible could believe that those who make good money on the small power plants, give up construction on a river that captivates with wild beauty.

Soon after, the Podgorica consortium “Hydro Ljestanica” submitted an application for a building permit for the construction of a small hydroelectric power plant, which, according to Danijel Mrdak, a member of the Ljestanica River Conservation Board, is based on a very controversial site study.

-It is clear that it is impossible to obtain a building permit based on it, so it may be an attempt to manipulate the investor in order to seek as much compensation as possible from the state in case of termination of the contract, Mrdak believes, and warns that the Ljestanica River Protection Committee is still in February submitted an initiative to the Constitutional Court to initiate proceedings to review the constitutionality and legality of the act.

To his claims that the contractor sought permission to build on land other than his own because expropriation had not been carried out for all properties, the director of Hidro Lještanica Milutin Micanovic replied that they were not correct in claiming permission on the land they were not allowed to build.

- It can be clearly established that for all the plots covered by the planning document and on which the construction of the small hydro power plant is planned, the decision on determination of public interest was made and the expropriation procedure was initiated. The said procedure is entirely within the competence of the state or the competent ministry as the owner of the said land, so the concessionaire neither intended nor tried to build on other land, but acquired the right to use the site for the construction of small hydropower plants in a lawful and transparent procedure – said Mićanović .

By the way, in June this year, the Ministry of Sustainable Development issued to Hidro Lještanica the urban-technical conditions for the preparation of technical documentation for the construction of small hydropower plants. The Hydro Ljestanica Company has submitted an application for approval to the Environmental Impact Assessment Study for the construction of small hydropower plants, and the Municipality of Bijelo Polje has informed on its website that a public hearing on the document will be held in Bijelo Polje on December 17.

After a statement by Markovic, who was well aware of the decision of the council majority in

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the Bijelo Polje Municipality almost a year ago, where the keynote was given by the DPS councilors, the party in which he is vice president, to make a decision on a local study of the Ljestanica mini-hydro power plant, even and those “well informed” found themselves in a dilemma – whether the contradictory views of the Prime Minister on the one hand and the DPS, or the White Field leader, on the other, were part of a “disagreement” at the top of the DPS, or faking other things.

Especially if we have in mind the ownership structure of the company “Sinergy”, which received a concession for the construction of a power plant, ie consortia “Hydro Ljestanica” owned by “Sinergy”, behind which is businessman Vuk Rajkovic, godfather of Milo Djukanovic.

### **The municipality ignores them?**

Apparently, Ljestanica’s defenders will have to wait for the decision of the Constitutional Court, which has saved the Komaraca River in Plav from the attack of the electricity lobby. – It is dramatic that the construction of water intake is planned at the very source of the river. Skakala River and Waterfall are a symbol of the entire Vranška Valley and Bijelo Polje. The united Whites and the inhabitants of Vranes will together succeed in defending our sanctuary. It is our principled position that we do not negotiate with the investor and do not meet with them at coffee shops. The only interlocutor of the river protector is the Government because the municipality of Bijelo Polje has been ignoring us for years, Mrdak says, while proposals are coming from various sides to hold a protest rally on December 17 against the destruction of the beauty river.

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