

The Organization for Nature Protection (WWF) said that the energy contribution of small hydropower plants is negligible and the negative impact on nature is huge, and that the construction of new hydropower plants is in complete contradiction with the goals of biodiversity conservation set in the European Green Deal.

WWF, with signatories such as the NGO Naša akcija, Eko-tim, Green Home, KOD, Center for the Protection and Study of Birds, Support Breastfeeding - for a healthier planet, MSJA, Olive Society - Boka seek redirection of public funds to increase energy efficiency and reduce production impact from other renewable energy sources such as solar or wind.

“The initiative of non-governmental organizations across Europe comes several months after a new analysis showed that 93 percent of freshwater migratory fish in Europe have disappeared since 1970. This is due, among other things, to the construction and operation of hydropower plants. Although 91 percent of existing and planned hydropower plants in “Europe belongs to the category of” small “hydropower plants (capacity up to 10 MW), their contribution to energy production is negligible, and the impact on nature is huge. If these plans are realized, we will destroy Europe’s last free-flowing rivers and further degrade already vulnerable freshwater ecosystems.” it is stated in the announcement.

Support for the preservation of free-flowing rivers was also provided by more than 20,000 people who signed WWF’s regional petition to stop small hydropower plants in the Balkans. “The European Commission and European financial institutions have been crediting harmful hydropower projects for years. If they continue with bad investments, they will directly undermine the ambitions set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the goal of restoring 25,000 kilometers of rivers by 2030. Existing financial needs to be urgently removed, models and incentives for new hydropower projects, both small and large, focus on meeting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and support the European Green Plan. It is also time for the hydropower sector to start investing in the environmental renewal of existing capacities and river revitalization that have been under great pressure for decades due to energy production, “said Zoran Mateljak, head of freshwater programs at WWF Adria.

The manifesto, supported by 150 NGOs across Europe, calls for:

- stopping all forms of encouraging the construction of new hydropower plants, regardless of their size;
- stopping the financing of all new hydropower plants in Europe by
- European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development;
- exclusion of all new hydropower plants from the list of renewable energy sources that classify them for receiving state aid;

## NGOs are calling for an end to the construction of small hydropower plants in the Balkans

- redirecting public funds for new hydropower plants to ecological renewal, projects to remove existing dams, especially those that are out of order, and encouraging energy production from other renewable sources such as wind or sun, while respecting transparency, public involvement and reducing negative impacts on nature and people.

Source: vijesti.me