

Romania: Ecological organizations have stopped the construction of two hydropower plants, a loss of EUR 155 million

Two eco-organizations, Bank Watch and Neuer Weg, managed to stop the work on two hydro power plants on the Jiu River in Romania. Started in the previous decade, works were near completion when the court decision was taken. Romania has invested 155 million euros in construction work. The two hydro power plants could have supplied 100,000 households. Bank Watch and Neuer Weg took a victory in the trial, demanding the abolition of construction permits for hydroelectric power plants on the Jiu River, which was initiated by “Hidroelektrika”, the largest electricity producer in Romania.

Environmental associations say the river will be destroyed and that this is the most pollution project in the Romanian environment in the post-revolution period.

Environmental organizations lost a dispute before the Court in Bucharest, and then appealed to the Appellate Court, which annulled the decision of the first instance court and decided to withdraw the building permits. This decision of the Appellate Court, pronounced on December 14th, is final.

The decision states that the appeal is approved and the construction permits issued by the District Council of Hunedoara and the Gorj County Council are canceled.

The decision will most likely force Hidroelektrika to conserve the works, since the hydropower plants are almost finished.

Works on two large hydropower plants, HPP Bumbesti and HE Dumitra, and a small hydro power plant Livezeni, started in 2004. Installed power of these hydroelectric power plants is 65 MW.

The annual production of hydroelectric power plants would be 259 GWh, and they could supply 100,000 households with an average monthly consumption of 200 KWh, in conditions where more and more experts warn that Romania has problems covering the demand, especially during the peak period.

At the moment when the Appellate Court made a decision to stop the de facto construction, the works on HPP Dumitra were 98% completed, and in the case of HE Bumbesti 90% of construction works and 70% of equipment were completed, according to the Hidroelektirka’s data.

For these projects, “Hidroelektrika” has allocated 220 million Euros, and so far about 155.5 million Euros have been spent, the company said.

When making a decision, the court probably took into account (explanation not available) that this area was meanwhile declared protected. However, the Jiu River Canyon was declared National Park in 2005, after the state decided to start hydrographic planning, and the location became Natura 2000 in 2007.