

In the last 17 years, Zvornik has received non-refundable funds from Serbia in the amount of around one million euros for projects such as the reconstruction of the bridge and the health center. Although the mayor of Zvornik, Zoran Stevanovic, thinks that the money is "a kind of satisfaction", for him, regular income in the budget would be more important than the expected compensation.

If Serbia started paying compensation for the use of the hydro potential of the Drina River, it would help create new jobs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is what Zoran Stevanovic says for Radio Free Europe (RFE). Zvornik, along with other Podrinje municipalities, Bratunac, Srebrenica and Visegrad, should be compensated on the basis of flooded land during the construction of the Zvornik and Bajina Basta hydroelectric power plants.

"Our budget is 23 million marks (about 11.5 million euros). At least a million to be, which could be used to repair infrastructure, which could be used to buy land, which could be offered to an investor tomorrow to create new jobs and so on", states Stevanovic, explaining that Zvornik never received compensation from Serbia on the basis of submerged land during the construction of hydroelectric power plants Zvornik and Bajina Basta

"Our regular income should be, so let it start to be paid from tomorrow, it doesn't matter, let it start to be paid from 2021, but let's know that we are counting on it," added the mayor of Zvornik. Hydropower plants (HPPs) Zvornik and Bajina Basta, on the Drina River, on the eastern border of BiH, have a combined installed capacity of 400 megawatts (MW).

Electricity produced in these hydropower plants, ie 550 gigawatt hours (GWh) per year from HPP Zvornik and more than 1,500 GWh from HPP Bajina Basta, is fully used only by Serbia. Energy expert and former director of Elektroprivreda BiH, Amer Jerlagic, states that after a certain period of use, these potentials should have been shared with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"Our estimates are that it is about 4.5 billion euros, money that was stolen from these two hydroelectric power plants according to market values without any agreement between the two sovereign independent states." Serbia is alienating that energy from Bosnia and Herzegovina. "People go to prison for a bag of flour, and here, it takes some energy from two hydroelectric power plants for twenty years," he added.

The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, even after several inquiries from Radio Free Europe, did not answer how much debt Serbia has been accumulating since 1992, as well as what is currently being done to resolve the dispute. There are no answers from the competent institutions in Serbia either.

For decades, without any compensation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia has been profiting from the potential of the Drina River, its natural border with Bosnia and

Herzegovina. The problem dates back to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, when power plants built in the then-common state found themselves on the borders of new countries. It is actualized by the fact that Serbia and BiH have never signed the Agreement on the state border, states in a written statement for Radio Free Europe (RFE) the member of the Presidency of BiH, Sefik Dzaferovic.

"The reason is the insistence of the Republic of Serbia to exchange territory on four points before signing the Agreement – near the two hydroelectric power plants Zvornik and Bajina Basta, and in the municipality of Rudo and the part of the Belgrade-Bar railway that passes through Bosnia and Herzegovina," Dzaferovic told RFE / RL. The Republic of Serbia, Dzaferovic points out, avoids resolving these open issues with Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with international standards.

"He also avoids determining the amount of fees from the use of the hydro potential of the Drina River, which belong to Bosnia and Herzegovina, through interstate expert commissions. Our call to resolve these issues is still open ", says Dzaferovic, adding that the position of Bosnia and Herzegovina is such that it does not agree to any exchange of territory.

"We believe that it is necessary to first sign the Agreement on the state border, and then, in accordance with international norms, ensure the use of energy and traffic facilities in accordance with the principles of cross-border cooperation in the EU," Dzaferovic believes. Inquiries about the use of the hydro potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Radio Free Europe did not receive an answer from the Ministry of Energy and Mining of the Republika Srpska, one of the two BiH. entity. On the other hand, the Ministry of Energy and Mining of the Federation of BiH states that back in 2017, they asked the Council of Ministers of BiH to, as the competent institution in this case, solve the problem with Serbia.

"We sent a letter that this should be resolved at the level of the Council of Ministers, with the participation, of course, of both entity ministries, not only because of the river and the use of the hydro potential of the Drina River, but also because of other rivers bordering the Federation.") and the Republika Srpska, and they have the potential for the construction of some hydroelectric power plants ", states the Minister of Energy and Mining of the Federation of BiH, Nermin Dzindic.

Serbia's request dates back to mid-May 2003, when it was in a state union with Montenegro. The 2008 negotiations agreed in principle on the border between the two countries, as it was at the time of the interstate recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The border agreement was never finally concluded, and five years later, Serbia requested a correction. In December 2017, in Belgrade, at the presidential level, the line of demarcation

between BiH and Serbia was negotiated.

Source: slobodnaevropa.org