

Serbia plans to build 856 small hydropower plants following a cadastre made 32 years ago that never became an official state document. However, the locations, opinions, approvals issued by the competent authorities are referred to in this file. If all these anticipated SHPPs were built, we would lose about 2,200 kilometers of watercourses, and we would only get 3.5 percent of the required electricity. But if Serbia's Electricity Company were to cope with the losses of electricity generated on its way from producers to customers, and they are estimated at around 15 percent by the World Bank, no SHPP would likely have to be built. This is just one of the questions that were raised during the lecture of the Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, prof. Dr. Ratko Ristic at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) as part of a series dedicated to energy efficiency.

Prof. dr. Dr. Ristic recalled that about 135 SHPPs have been built so far, and the real invasion is in the basin of the Josanica River, where 17 of them operate, without all the necessary documents. However, this fact was not enough to prohibit their work and to release about 27 kilometers of Josanica water stream from the pipes.

He recalled the words of Martin Doyle, director of the Water Management Program at Duke University, that many small dams in one watercourse resemble "the death of a thousand cuts", alluding to the execution of the death penalty in China when the convict was caught 1,000 times to death.

During the lecture, which is the result of cooperation with colleagues from the Forestry department as well as with experts from the Faculty of Biology, he also mentioned the most commonly heard theses among those who advocate the construction of these hydro power plants.

"Apologists like to say that there are 24,000 HPPs built in Europe, but they forget to note that these countries are much richer in water. Let me remind you, Serbia is the poorest Balkan country when it comes to the water surface, and one of the poorest in Europe. The accusers of SHPP are accused of supporting wind turbines, and I will remind that 200 megawatts released from wind this year is equal to the production of electricity from 400 mial hydroelectric power plants" - emphasized prof. Dr. Ristic.

Visiting 46 locations with colleagues, Ristic realised that SHPPs do not respect the biological minimum, that is, how much water can enter the pipe and how much will remain in the watercourses. He also warned that biologists must do it, not engineers. He also realised that no fish trail, if any, was made so that the fish could move around.

"We also came along closed paths because the owner of the SHPP knows that the more water there is, the kinetic energy is bigger, the turbines rotate faster and more electricity is produced" - added one of the most vocal opponents of the construction of SHPP in Serbia.

The lecture also contained numerous testimonies that SHPs are not desirable in other countries. Authorities in China's Sichuan province have limited their construction until 2020, citing negative environmental impacts as a reason. Canada's most populous province - Ontario- has abolished 758 renewable energy contracts, and 1,100 small dams and watercourses have been removed in the United States, mainly for environmental reasons. And the Germans consider SHP to be an outdated technology.

Denying allegations that political interests were behind the construction of the SHPP, Ristic added that he believed that "every smart government should remove the reasons that led to dissatisfaction."

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