

The disgusting stench comes from the brown water full of feces that is released into the river, which is light years away from the blue that inspired the composition "On the beautiful blue Danube" by Johann Strauss, writes Agence France-Presse. In 2019, Austrian scientists pointed to "critical" levels of fecal bacteria *Escherichia coli* in the Serbian part of the Danube, which, according to local experts, is a sign of great organic pollution.

About a third of the 1.6 million inhabitants of the Serbian capital are not connected to the sewage system and rely on septic tanks, the contents of which are discharged directly into rivers, the agency states, Beta reports.

Not far from the historic heart of Belgrade, fences are opening to let a tanker truck go to the magnificent Danube River where it empties its cargo of wastewater, the agency writes in an article entitled "The Danube is not so blue in Serbia." The agency points out that this is not a secret operation, but rather something that no one wants to talk about, pointing out that Belgrade is the only European capital that releases its unfiltered wastewater into the second longest river on the continent.

Fishermen who live off the Danube and the Sava, which form a spectacular estuary near the old Belgrade fortress, call these daily discharges "catastrophic".

"I feel like crying, and the whole world doesn't care," Dragoljub Ristić, a 59-year-old fisherman, told AFP.

But even the dirty water of those who are connected to the sewage system ends up in the same place through the sewage emptying, adds France Press. The agency states that the Serbian Minister of Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlović, estimates that 190 million cubic meters of wastewater, ie 60,000 Olympic swimming pools, are discharged into Belgrade's watercourses every year. France Press reminds that the source of the Danube is in Germany, that it flows to the east 2,850 kilometers through nine other countries and ends in the Black Sea.

With its strength and size, the Danube manages to "self-purify" relatively well from organic waste. For most of the year, bacteriological particles do not reach a critical level of 500 micrograms per milliliter, said Bozo Dalmacija, a chemistry professor who conducts research on water quality in Serbia. However, as France Press points out, those who spend their lives on the Danube say that they have noticed a deterioration, an accumulation of substances that reduces the depth of the water.

According to fishermen, the species of fish has changed with the decline of species considered noble and the increase of those that consume decaying waste products such as catfish.

"We killed all our rivers, we will kill this one as well. The Danube is a very strong river and a

very strong one that manages (pollution), but it cannot do that indefinitely “, said Mladen Jović, a 59-year-old fisherman.

France Press points out that Serbia is a candidate for joining the EU and that it hopes to join 2025, and that its performance in the environmental sphere is an obstacle, that the country needs five billion euros of investments to build infrastructure that would better respect nature.

Source: politika.rs