

The Serbian government has quadrupled the fees for renewable energy sources used to finance the destruction of rivers

Fulfilment of international obligations is used as the main reason for the savage construction of small hydropower plants. And while private investors see them as an opportunity to make money, environmental organizations and initiatives across the region warn of their harmfulness and futility.

At the last session, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Decree which, from January 2021, increases the amount of the fee for the production of electricity from renewable sources fivefold. Despite years of appeals from civil society organizations and protests from local communities, the state refuses to side with citizens who oppose further investment in small hydropower plants through the renewable energy fee. In addition, Serbia will take over the presidency of the Energy Community next year, and should be guided by the positive example of countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina or Montenegro, which have announced concrete measures to stop incentives and build small hydropower plants.

“Almost a year ago, several civil society organizations sent an open letter to the Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, in which they called on her to change the existing regulations and exclude small hydroelectric power plants from the incentive system. Then, it was proposed to form a working group that would include representatives of civil society, and which would participate in the preparation of amendments to the Law on Energy and bylaws. There was no answer, and in the meantime, the Decree on incentive measures for the production of electricity from renewable sources has expired. To date, not only has the process of amending the Energy Law not begun, but incentives have increased fivefold. In this way, the Government of Serbia shows that it is not interested in the opinion of civil society organizations on issues that concern all citizens “, reminded Natasa Milivojevic from WWF Adria.

Serbia primarily depends on energy obtained from coal, and it is necessary to reduce emissions from thermal power plants as soon as possible and turn to renewable sources, but that must not be to the detriment of our rivers. The envisaged funds allocated for small hydropower projects, which in no way contribute to the economic or energy stability of the country, should be directed towards increasing energy production from other renewable energy sources that have a less harmful impact on nature and energy efficiency measures. In these cases, too, one should keep in mind the impact on nature, the environment and local communities, as well as ensuring the transparency of the whole process and the timely involvement of the public in decision-making.

“Considering that a part of the envisaged fees for production from renewable sources is set aside for small hydro power plants, it is necessary to revise the regulations of privileged

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producers as soon as possible, as well as abolish incentive measures for all small hydro power plants that are not built or do not work in accordance with law. It is necessary to start amending the Energy Law as soon as possible, which is an opportunity for Serbia to permanently abolish the feed-in tariff system, and move to the auction system as soon as possible, thus stopping further construction of small hydropower plants, as well as finally turning to other, more sustainable renewable energy sources “, concluded Milivojevic. At a time of deep social and economic crisis caused, among other things, by the Covid-19 virus pandemic, the state must find a way to start building long-term economic, social and environmental stability of the entire society. The countries of the region have already begun to take concrete measures to stop the construction of small hydropower plants. The Federation of BiH announced the suspension of all incentive measures for SHPPs at the beginning of 2021, and the new Montenegrin Government announced a ban on their construction as soon as possible. The time has come for Serbia to keep pace with the region, but also with the rest of Europe, and to put the well-being of its citizens first.

Source: wwfadria.org