

There are now 300 percent more small hydropower plants in Western Balkans than two years ago

“Often when we think about SHPPs, we say yes, they are small and have a small impact, but it is not like that. Their contribution to energy production is negligible, and the damage they do is enormous. We could all see pictures of rivers that have been turned into pipes for kilometers, so there is no more water in their bed without which the living world cannot survive,” says Danijel Lončar from WWF for Radio Free Europe (RFE). Over 5,000 kilometers of rivers in the Balkans will be turned into pipes if all the planned small hydropower plants (SHPs) are built, warns the WWF through a river protection campaign, in which they have launched a regional petition.

In a petition calling on the citizens of the Balkan countries to raise their voices to save the rivers, WWF states that the construction of SHPPs in the Western Balkans has increased by 300 percent in the last two years.

“Looking at the regional map, most of the planned small hydropower plants are in Serbia, over 800, followed by BiH, and it is difficult to get data for Albania. But we know that in Albania, the construction of small and large hydropower plants is a national policy, because almost the entire country depends on the electricity produced in them. Montenegro is at the bottom of that scale, but that does not mean that the situation is better there “, notes Lončar.

### **Protests in Montenegro**

This is evidenced by numerous protests of citizens and non-governmental organizations in recent years, which were actualized in the north of Montenegro. Vasilije Ivanović lives in Rečine, seven kilometers from Kolašin, and is one of the locals who oppose the construction of the Skrbuša SHPP.

“I oppose it because it causes irreparable damage to the local canyon, river and its trout hatchery,” Ivanovic told RFE / RL, adding that it was unacceptable that the builders of mini hydropower plants did not have to study the environmental impact if they were less than one gigawatt.

Ivanovic believes that the village and its inhabitants do not benefit from this exploitation of the river.

“From that SHPP, the electricity would not go to the village, but would be connected to the electricity transmission system.” “On the fact that the producer puts it into the electricity transmission system, he has a profit and earnings, and the locals have nothing, except that the investor says that he will pave several kilometers of the rural road”, says Ivanović.

After several days of protests by locals and NGO activists on Rečinska Rijeka, who blocked the access to machines for the construction of SHPP Skrbuša on Sunday, October 11, an

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agreement was reached with the concessionaire “Hydro logistics” that the works will be suspended for a month.

“This is not just a crime against nature and the environment, but above all against the people who live there and who need this water. It does not matter who sold the property and how, because the right to sell water is not in anyone’s name, “said one of the participants, Milovan Labović, during the protest.

In September 2019, the government passed a decision on granting concessions for two new small hydropower plants Skrbuša to the company “Hydro Logistics” Slaven Burzanović, who is also an authorized representative in the company “BB hydro” Blaž Đukanović, son of President Milo Đukanović, who is building two other small hydropower plants.

The NGO Green Home states that SHPPs should primarily be a source of electricity for remote and rural areas.

“So, if the SHPP is being built in a village, it should supply it to that village. However, in our country, they are connected to a distribution network that does not serve to supply the local community, which should be the essence of this project. Also, in the EU, subsidies for hydropower facilities are allowed only for facilities that are in accordance with the Law on Environmental Protection, which is not the case in Montenegro “, says Irma Muhić from that non-governmental organization for RFE.

Source: [slobodnaevropa.org](http://slobodnaevropa.org)