

Montenegrin state authorities are complaining to international institutions about the Buk Bijela hydro-power plant on the Drina River, claiming that the reservoir may have a negative impact on the Tara River canyon.

HPP Buk Bijela is a joint project of Serbia and Republika Srpska and its construction is planned on the river Drina, about 11 km upstream from Foca in RS. Slobodan Ruzic, an energy expert and former Deputy Minister of Energy of Serbia, says for Kurir that this hydroelectric power plant is of great energy importance not only for these two countries, but also for Montenegro.

- The accumulation hydroelectric power plant, which has a seasonal accumulation, collects water from spring, in the period when there is a lot of it and stores it for the period from October to April, when we have a great demand for electricity and when it is the most expensive on the market. The construction of the HPP would bring energy benefits not only to Serbia and RS, but also to Montenegro. The need for import would be eliminated, as well as the danger of restrictions, and consumers would be supplied with the cheapest possible energy - concludes Ružić.

However, several NGOs, along with Montenegro's Green Home and Ozone, have lodged a complaint with the ESPOO Convention Secretariat against BiH for violating and evading the transboundary environmental impact assessment procedure. Environmentalists from Montenegro complained that "the competent authorities of Montenegro were not consulted" when obtaining environmental permits, which was supported by the Montenegrin Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism.

Natasa Kovacevic, executive director of the Montenegrin NGO Green Home, one of the organizations that filed the complaint, told Kurir that the request was submitted with the intention of "reviewing the whole situation, given that there was no public debate at the cross-border level."

- Our Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism has on several occasions asked BiH to send them a project and information regarding this case and they received the answer that BiH considers that the consultations, held in 2013, are legitimate and will not repeat the procedure seven years later. For us, this is a violation of the ESPOO convention, because it is necessary, given the passage of time, to redo the entire document of the strategic environmental assessment - says Kovacevic. The UNESCO mission, which visited the highway construction site in 2018, stated that the construction of bridges and exploitation, disposal of gravel and sand "seriously devastated the Tara riverbed within the protected area". Even the European Parliament and the European Commission at the time asked the Montenegrin authorities to urgently implement measures to remedy the



Whose hydro-power plant is more damaging to the Tara canyon in Montenegro?

devastation.

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