

The protesters from the village of Dinoša send the message that mini-hydroelectric plants mean death to watercourses

## **A call for the Salvation of the Cijevna River**

**DINOŠA - Subsidized production of electric energy through the concept of building small hydroelectric power plants is a model which has no grounds in economy and directly puts the environment into the danger threatening the existence of the population along the banks of river streams, especially those marked for being piped, say those who organised a protest on the banks of the Cijevna River**

In the upstream Albanian part of the Cijevna River, whose major part goes through the Montenegrin area of Malesija, is currently a building site for two out of the allegedly planned 14 mini-hydroelectric power plants. This warning was shared by the ecologists and activists from the non-governmental sector who organised a protest under the slogan "Do not turn rivers into pipelines". The protest was organised by the Centre for the Study and Research of Birds together with the NGO Biciklo.me. It was populated by the banners sending messages such as "This river is our fortune – Cemi eshte pasuri jona". The protests were joined by the kayakers, common citizens and the Cijevna River lovers - the river whose fascinating canyon was declared protected natural area.

The group departed from the centre of Podgorica, and the meeting point was the bridge on the Cijevna River. Vuk Iković, a biologist, briefly listed all the key issues and the potential consequences of building mini-hydroelectric power plants, which can reflect even far from the zone of the building sites where the construction works take place.

According to him, turning river streams into pipelines is usually preceded by a huge volume of preparatory construction works, which in effect lead to the destruction of local roads, eliminating vegetation and devastating a broad area surrounding this immediate environment.

- Without vegetation, there will be torrents which will be resulting in floods in the lower valley part of the river stream, says Iković. He claims that the very introduction of water in the pipes leads to the elimination of the natural process of erosion, which means that the deposits of pebbles and sand will be reduced. This will, in turn, affecting the situation and the outlook of the river beaches.

- Putting water streams into pipes means that the process of sinking into the ground will be stopped which will reflect on the abundance of water in springs and water wells, says Iković. He adds that water will lose its power of self-purification putting into the danger the zone necessary for the life and reproduction of fish and other water organisms, which will in effect influence the life of the population along the stream.

Overall, he says, there are far-reaching consequences while the benefits will be reaped only by the investors whose electricity will be purchased using subsidised prices and which will be paid by the citizens themselves through the item number 26, which can be found on their electricity bills. Ines Mrdović from the non-governmental organisation MANS says that Montenegro saw the development of 20 mini-hydroelectric power plants so far and that 40 more are planned, mainly on the rivers in the north of Montenegro.

She says that subsidies have been guaranteed for the next 12 years along with the guaranteed purchase of the electricity regardless of the fact whether the Electrical Company of Montenegro has or does not have a sufficient amount of electricity.

- Half of the total profit made by the owners of mini hydroelectric plants comes from the subsidised portion of the purchase price, says Mrdović.

She also claims that four companies currently running these electrical energy facilities in Montenegro have 18 employees in total meaning that almost half of them are directors themselves, which means that there is no economic justification for advocating the concept of building small hydroelectric power plants.

I. P.