

# They forgot they signed for protection of Cijevna

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The Governments of Montenegro and Albania signed this summer a Framework Agreement on Water Management, but that document did not contribute to better communication of the two countries when it comes to construction of small hydro power plants (SHPPs) in the Albanian part of the river Cijevna.

Montenegrin Government representatives said earlier to the daily newspaper „Vijesti“ that they didn't discuss construction of SHPPs in the Albanian part of Cijevna river with the Albanian colleagues during the joint summer session, neither officially nor unofficially.

According to agreement on water management signed this summer, Skadar Lake, Drim, Bojana, Grnčar and Cijevna are of common interest for Montenegro and Albania.

The Albanian Ministry for Infrastructure and Energy said to media that construction of SHPP on Cijevna in that state does not have an impact on its watercourse in Montenegro, and therefore they didn't consider it necessary to inform the competent Montenegrin authorities about the works. They emphasized that they received several requests relating to Cijevna, and they said they didn't issue any permit.

According to the documents „Vijesti“ had an insight into, the Deputy Prime Ministers **Milutin Simović** and **Senida Mesi** signed an agreement in the field of water resources management in Skadar on July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

„These are activities related to water quality preservation, protection from floods, regulation and maintenance of watercourses, more intensive exchange of information and finding funds for financing these activities... Implementation will require joint action of the two states, joint infrastructure works on protection from floods and undisturbed flow of cross-border watercourses...“, reads the report following the joint session.

According to the agreement, waters of common interest are Skadar Lake, Drim, Bojana, Grnčar and Cijevna.

Milutin Simović's department confirmed that the agreement was signed.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, in accordance with the procedures of ESPOO Convention, sent a formal request to the Government of Albania for submission of the necessary information about the activities being implemented on the cross-border watercourse of Cijevna. We expect from the colleagues from Albania a formal response, following which we will give our opinion about this case. As regards cross-border watercourses, the best model of management should be reached by dialogue, in accordance with the international regulations and previous experience and best practices of the states, which went through the process of

harmonization of standards relating to cross-border watercourses management, said representatives of Simović's department.

Although media allegations are considered speculations in Montenegro, and Albanian Government fails to disclose them, works on the Albanian part of Cijevna river are underway and „Vijesti“ journalists team convinced themselves of it on the spot.

In the Framework Agreement on Water Management the states signatories are obliged to base all the existing and future interventions and activities on the principles of prevention, precaution, avoiding causing damage, realization of „lung contaminant“ principle, sustainable economic development, sustainable water management and reasonable and fair use of waters and in terms of environmental protection – use of waters in a sustainable manner. The document obliges the signatories also to ensure that making decisions on issues which are subject matter of the agreement is completely available to public, to exchange information on a regular and timely basis... The agreement obliges the states signatories to act in agreement relating to handling and operation of water facilities, which include also hydro power plants...

The Water Management Commission, which is composed of 20 members, 10 from each state, is in charge of implementation of the agreement. Albanian-Montenegrin commission for waters exists since 2001 and its present composition was announced at the Government session on July 6, three days after signing the agreement in Albania.

On Saturday a protest “Ne Cijevnu u cijev” (Don't put Cijevna in the pipe)

On the occasion of the announced construction of SHPP on Cijevna the NGO Center for Protection and Research of Birds in cooperation with the association Biciklo.me organizes a bike ride under the motto “Ne Cijevnu u cijev” on Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>.

The interested parties will gather in the Independence Square, in Podgorica, wherefrom the ride will begin at 11.00 AM up to the Cijevna bridge, turning to Dinoša, where the biologist Vuk Ivović will explain which impact SHPPs have on living world in the rivers, and Ines Mrdović from MANS will speak on the topic whether the SHPPs are “business for the privileged”.

According to the Albanian Government, studies conducted by investors suggest that SHPP in Albania will not affect the level of the Cijevna River in Montenegro. Anyway, according to the conventions of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, Albania had to inform Montenegro about everything before making any decision, said biologist and CEO of the NGO Eco Albania, Olsi Nika, assessing the official Albania's response “as pretty diplomatic”.