

Government requests from Albania everything about the Cijevna

KOD: If the Cijevna in its upper course run through Montenegro,
it would face the same as in Albania

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism (MORT) has requested from their Albanian counterparts the information on the construction of small hydro power plants (SHPPs) on the Cijevna, on the territory of that state, but also the complete documentation about the environmental impact.

This was told to the Vijesti yesterday from the line ministry of **Pavle Radulović**.

They have sent the request to Albania through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“MORT has requested the complete documentation on the check of environmental impact, so that the Montenegrin public and experts could assess any possible impact on the ecosystem and biodiversity of the river”, said the Ministry.

The Cijevna in one part runs through Albania, and in the other – longer – part it runs through Montenegro, and the governments of these states, according to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ESPOO), are obliged to engage one another in the process of granting permits.

On that river, according to the 2011 Cijevna Protection Study, three hydro power plants have been built – HPP *Selca* of 50 KW/H, HPP *Tamara* of 150 KW/h and HPP *Vukli* of 80KW/h. According to the same document, five more HPPs have been designed, but not approved, and they would generate 50,000KW/H of electric power. What it had not approved back then, the Albanian Government showed green light to years after, also approving several additional projects; so, now, according to the information of the Vijesti, 14 SHPPs are planned for construction on the Cijevna in that country.

That the works on the Cijevna have already started can be witnessed from the photos sent to our news desk, taken mid-last week. They show an already built structure on the river, pipes laid into the river bed and numerous machines on the site...

“If, by any chance, the Cijevna in its upper course run through Montenegro, it would face the same as in Albania”, assesses Petar Gošović of KOD organization.

He says that the only activities allowable in protected areas, such as the Cijevna, are those that do not disturb their natural processes, but he reminds also of the appearance of that river in Montenegro:

“Its river bed in several sections gapes due to exploitation of sand, in several places it has been turned into a dump, fish is decreasing, and unknowledgeable urban planning makes this area further devastated”.

Environmentalists have been warning for years that the construction of SHPPs is accompanied by money laundry and corruption, and that loans are often approved despite unfavourable environmental impact assessments, while also saying that SHPPs cause damage to the environment and local communities.

As some of adverse impacts of SHPPs, Gošović from KOD underlines their poor design and the investors' custom not to respect biological minimum to the benefit of profit - the minimum necessary for the respect of nature's requirements. For that reason, he says, river beds between the water intake

and turbines are often empty. He adds that the SHPP construction leaves the water quantity in a river unchanged, but not its quality. When a river passes through a pipe, that alters its biological and chemical elements as well as its temperature. By passing through sand, gravel, earth – a river undergoes self-treatment and gets enriched, which is not the case when it is “imprisoned” in pipes.

The SHPP construction also causes the “river splitting” and some water animals, says Gošović, move upstream and downstream: “And surely they will not survive if we build barriers on the Cijevna at, let’s say, 14 places. These animals do not know anything about borders.” **D.K.**