

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Complaint against HPP Buk Bijela on the river Drina**

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Aarhus Center challenged the environmental permit for that project last year, but the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republic of Srpska (RS) reissued the permit. The Center for the Environment and the Aarhus Center from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), together with the organizations Green Home and Ozon from Montenegro, filed a complaint with the Secretariat of the Espoo Convention against BiH for violating and avoiding the procedure on transboundary environmental impact assessment for the project of construction of hydropower plant Buk Bijela on the river Drina.

The accumulation of the planned power plant will extend upstream, all the way to the border with Montenegro, and now there is evidence that, if the facility is built, there will be a significant negative impact on the Tara River canyon ecosystem within Durmitor National Park. Legal advisor of the Aarhus Center Nina Kresevljakovic pointed out that the agreement on the establishment of the Energy Community, to which BiH is a signatory, stipulates the obligation to implement the EU Directive, which, among other things, refers to the decision whether to assess the impact to the environment. That directive does not regulate the possibility of using an old environmental impact assessment study for a new environmental permitting procedure. The initial environmental permit was issued in 2013 and it has expired in the meantime. In order to reissue the permit, the entire procedure must be carried out from the beginning, which was not done in this case.

In June 2016, the concession contract for the construction and operation of 93.52 MW HPP Buk Bijela between the RS Government and the consortium which consists of power utility ERS and its subsidiary "Hidroelektrane na Drini" has been signed. The concession is granted for a period of 50 years and the estimated value of the investment is around 195 million euros. Last March, Serbia and the Republic of Srpska (RS) decided to cooperate on the project for the construction of HPP Buk Bijela, besides already agreed joint development of the projects for the construction of hydropower plants Foca and Paunci on the Drina river. At the meeting of the Energy Committee of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, it was concluded that the construction of these facilities, whose combined installed capacity exceeds 180 MW, would equally contribute to the stability of energy systems of both countries.