

After the environmental permit for hydropower plant Buk Bijela was revoked last summer, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology of the Republic of Srpska (RS) issued a new permit, valid for the next five years.

In 2018, Aarhus Center BiH challenged before the District Court of Banja Luka the decision on the renewed environmental permit for HPP Buk Bijela, after which it was annulled in June last year. In the meantime, the company "HE Buk Bijela" ceased to exist, which was integrated into the newly established company "Hidroenergetski Sistemi (HES) Gornja Drina", to which the Ministry has now issued a new environmental permit. However, the new permit was issued without conducting new environmental impact assessment study for the project.

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. In June 2016, the contract on the concession grant 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 "Hidroelekrane 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. The concession includes the preparatory period of 12 months from the day of contract signing. The preparatory period includes the development of the project documentation and obtaining all necessary permits, followed by the investment of some 21.5 million euros. So-called Upper Drina project consists of HPP Buk Bijela, HPP Foca, HPP Paunci and HPP Sutjeska. According to original plans, overall power output of all four HPPs should be 238 MW, while annual electricity generation should reach 800 GWh (HPP Buk Bijela - 115 MW, HPP Foca - 52 MW, HPP Paunci - 36 MW and HPP Sutjeska - 35 MW).