

Issue paper

For more information

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CEE Bankwatch Network's mission is to prevent environmentally and socially harmful impacts of international development finance, and to promote alternative solutions and public participation.

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Boskov Most Hydro Power Plant Macedonia

The project Boskov Most HPP involves the construction of an accumulation (33 m high dam) and a hydro power plant with a total capacity of 68MW. Annual generation is forecast to be around 118 GWh. It will use the water potential of one main river and its 6 tributaries in the northwest part of the country. Around 70 percent of the project activities and objects will be located in the territory of the Mavrovo National Park, one of the oldest and most valuable protected areas in the country (established in 1949).

Problems

The Energy Strategy of Macedonia until 2020 assesses that achieving the 20/20/20 target is feasible by investing in more hydropower plants. In the Mavrovo National Park, another HPP in addition to Boskov is planned, in the most strictly protected area, and several more small HPPs are also under development.

Currently, the national park is in a process of re-assessment of its values, in order for its re-establishment to take place (by the Parliament). In this sensitive period, the investor, ELEM (the Macedonian power generation company) is offering its 'assistance' to the national park authorities in the preparation of documents and management plans for the assessment. The CSOs working in the field of environmental protection fear that this will lead to changes of the borders of the park, and/or changes of status of certain zones (from strictly protected to zone of active management or zone of sustainable utilisation).

Possible effects on the environment

The Mavrovo National Park is one of the richest in biodiversity areas in the country. It is home to 50 mammal species, including the wolf, brown bear, fox, wild cat and lynx, 129 bird species, 11 species of amphibians (out of a total of 15 species found in the entire country), 24 species of reptiles (out of 32 in the country) and 924 species of invertebrates.

Out of these, 11 mammal species, 45 bird species, 2 amphibian and 13 reptile species found in the National Park are listed in Appendix II of the Bern Convention, thus signifying the importance of the site for biodiversity protection. Moreover, the National Park is an Emerald site and a future Natura 2000 site.

CSO position

Environmental civil society organisations were involved in the scoping process of the project, by the investor, only after signifying to the EBRD local office that they had been forgotten. As scoping meetings were already held without notifying or inviting eCSOs, a separate meeting was held with eCSOs).

Since this is only one of many hydropower projects planned in the country, CSOs are calling for an assessment of the cumulative effect of all HPPs planned in the Mavrovo National Park before any further steps.

If there is no proper assessment of the cumulative effect of all the planned projects, the national park would lose the status of a national park, and would not be classified as a future Natura 2000 site. There would be significant fragmentation of the biodiversity-rich areas in the region, which is not conducive to establishing a Natura network). Any decrease in the favorable conservation status of the area risks decreasing the valuable species' population, which can lead to extinction.



With biodiversity loss a pressing global issue, Macedonia must take this problem seriously. Failure to do so also has political consequences: If Macedonia is aspiring to join the EU, biodiversity protection is one of the issues it should not fail to achieve, as the future Natura 2000 sites are a high European priority.