

## Factsheet 2:

### The fight for the Blue Heart of Albanian Alps: Valbona Valley

<b>Description</b>	<p>In January 2016, a local NGO Toka in Valbona valley learns of a hydro-power project that will be developed in the National Park of Valbona. After research and queries the local population and NGO-s learned of plans to begin construction of 2 cascade plants (Ceremi and Dragobi, which together are referred to as Dragobia HPP) which will have a total capacity of 22.7 MW. In February 2016, it became known that this project was part of a bigger 4 HPP/51 MW scheme concession. In March 2016, after being told by National Environmental Agency (NEA) that there were no further projects, the locals learned of the "Valbona Project Company" which holds a license for an additional 9 HPP on Valbona River, 3 of which are wholly within the protected area. In addition, another third company T-Planishpk is developing another HPP named T-Plani HPP, using a former existing HPP. In total, the GoA had issued 3 concessions for the development of 14 HPPs. T-Plan HPP started construction in 2013. Whereas, Dragobia Energy shpk., which owns Dragobia HPP and Ceremi HPP started the construction works on 21 September 2016 amid protests and complaints by CSOs, activists, scientists, media and international professors and nature-lovers and international community.</p> <p>The CSOs and citizens have done a thoroughly review of all project documents, licenses, permits and environmental studies and found the EIA as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor project design and planning;</li> <li>• Biodiversity not properly assessed;</li> <li>• Development did not meet legal deadlines;</li> <li>• Public consultation inadequate and ineffective;</li> <li>• No consultation with neighbouring countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Basic data</b>	<p>Dragobia Energy Shpk                  Installed capacity 22.7 MW and expected production is 26.900 KWh. Project water flow to be exploited is 7.15m<sup>3</sup>/s and will be used 150 days/year. The project is a run-of-river scheme, which means that there is no water storage, no dams, and the production of energy depends on the seasonal water flows. The project is comprised of two small hydropower plants. One is on the Ceremi stream, which is a tributary of the Valbona River, and the other is on the Valbona River itself, near the village of Dragobia. The penstock which will take the water from the tunnels to the powerhouses will also be underground, making most of the project virtually invisible. The water will be diverted for 3090m in Ceremi HPP and 271m in Dragobia HPP. The water will then be returned to the river which will continue its normal flow.</p>
<b>Source of conflict</b>	<p>Environmental impact and national park -1<sup>st</sup> level of conflict;                  Landscape and tourism impact - 2<sup>nd</sup> level conflict;                  Water diversion - 3<sup>rd</sup> level of conflict.</p>
<b>Project details and actors</b> <b>Project area</b> <b>Level of investment</b> <b>The main actors engaged in the conflict:</b>	<p>The Concessionary Company Dragobia Energy shpk which manages the HPP Dragobia is fully owned by GENER-2 shpk.</p> <p>17.5 Mill EUR of private investment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NGO TOKA;</li> <li>- "Protect the Rivers" NGO consortium, composed of (INCA, Mileukontakt Albania, EcoAlbania, REC Albania, EDEN, Ekolëvizja, Association for Organic Agriculture, Institute for Environmental Policy, Network for the Protection of Nature, Illyria)<sup>15</sup></li> <li>- International NGOs (WWF, River watch, EuroNatur, Leeway Collective, Patagonia);</li> <li>- Scientists and professors community;</li> <li>- Local citizens.</li> </ul>

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<b>The conflict and mobilization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On 11 April, citizen's protest in front of town hall asking for cancellation of hydro-plants and focus on tourism and protection of Valbona Valley.</li> <li>- April 2016, position paper by WWF Adria on "Hydropower development in Valbona National park, Albania;</li> <li>- On 8 May, kayakers paddling Valbona to protest against dams tsunami threatening Balkan rivers and Valbona led by the Slovenian Olympic athlete Rok Rozman.</li> <li>- On 20 May in Tirana protest in front of Prime Minister Office to cancel all HPPs licenses in Vjosa and in Valbona;</li> <li>- Online petition collection of more than 1, 870 signatures;</li> <li>- On 25 June 2016, the local people protested in front of the Prime Minister Office. The local community from Vjosa River supported the protest too.</li> <li>- 18 requests sent by the group "Protect the River";</li> <li>- One local expert review of EIA report for Dragobia HPP;</li> <li>- On 21 September 2016, the starts of construction works for Dragobia HPP;</li> <li>- On 29 October, a Protest Concert in Valbona for the protection of Valbona valley with famous singers Elina Duni, Elda Zari and many activists.</li> <li>- On 19 December, a protest in Tirana in front of the Ministry of Energy was organized by "Protect the Rivers" consortium, asking for information which HPP-s will be cancelled under the motto "Have you decided to destroy Valbona".</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict impact</b>	<p>Potential Environmental impact: landscape loss, biodiversity loss, water diversion. Potential Social -economic impact: tourism decrease.</p>
<b>Conflict outcome</b>	<p>9 HPPs of Valbona Energy Company allegedly<sup>17</sup> have been cancelled, whereas three HPPs will go forward, a public statement of the PM Rama says so, but no official information was given from the Ministry of Energy. The battle is still ongoing for the cancellation of the remaining 3 HPPs through strong diplomatic efforts with Government of Albania and possible litigation measures.</p>
<b>Sources and materials/References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elba shpk, "Feasibility study of HPPs in Valbona River: Environmental Impact Assessment report";</li> <li>- WWF, Position paper: "Hydropower development in Valbona National Park, Albania"; Jiří Dusík and Martin Smutný (2016), "Review of environmental impact assessment report for hydropower plants on the Dragobia cascade in Tropoja district", WWF Adria.</li> <li>- <a href="http://gener2.al/business-lines/qarrishta-and-dragobia-hydropower-plant-2/">http://gener2.al/business-lines/qarrishta-and-dragobia-hydropower-plant-2/</a></li> <li>- NGO Toka documents;</li> <li>- EIA <a href="http://www.journeytovalbona.com/good/river-initiatives/">http://www.journeytovalbona.com/good/river-initiatives/</a></li> <li>- <a href="http://www.reporter.al/lufta-per-zemren-blu-te-alpeve-shqiptare">http://www.reporter.al/lufta-per-zemren-blu-te-alpeve-shqiptare</a></li> <li>- <a href="http://www.balkanweb.com/site/masakra-ne-valbone-11-hec-e-ne-25-km/">http://www.balkanweb.com/site/masakra-ne-valbone-11-hec-e-ne-25-km/</a></li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> [http://help-cso.net/?page\\_id=448](http://help-cso.net/?page_id=448)

<sup>17</sup> PM Rama stated publicly from the Assembly Plenary that out of 12 HPPs issued in Valbona only 2 of them would go forward: Dragobia & Ceremi and Valbona (Tplani) HPPs.