

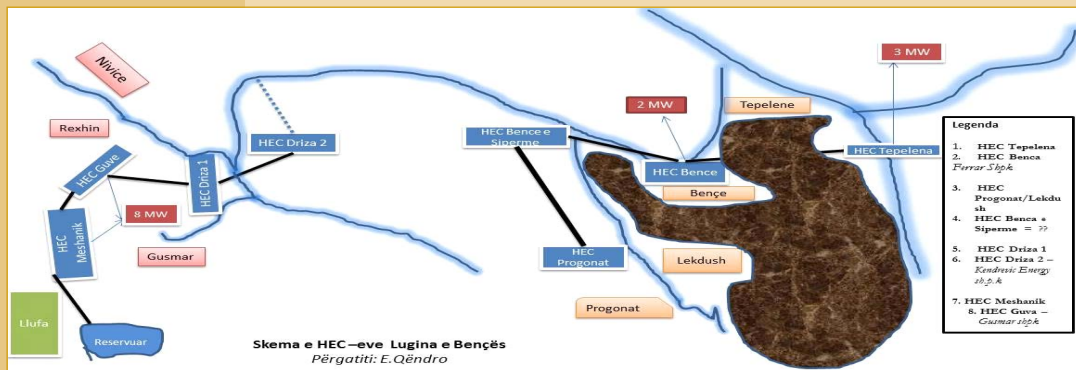
## Factsheet 15:

### HPP Bença & Tepelena: Cultural and environmental heritage threatened

#### Description

On 6 June 2009, the Ministry of Energy signed a concessionary contract with *Ferar shpk* company for the construction of Hydro Power Plant (HPP) Bença and Hydro Power Plant Tepelena. Both HPPs make 7 MW (3+4) and will be built using a derivation tunnel as run-off river projects. Indeed, the Government has licensed the construction of 8 hydropower plants given to 4 different concessionary companies: *HPP Meshanik*, *HPP Guva*, *HPP Driza 1 & 2*, *HPP Lekdush/Progonat*, *HPP Upper Bença*, *HPP Bença*, *HPP Tepelena*. All the HPPs are located in Bença Valley, Progonat and Nivica Canyons, which are part of the Vjosa Valley. The Bença valley, with a length of 26 km is stretched between Trushnica and Buza e Bredhit. It is a magnificent river valley which is formed from the Progonat Brook and Nivice Stream. The local habitants are very proud and self-esteemed from the nature they have and heritage they got. The Bença valley as such is actually not a protected site but eventually it does provide a natural riverine ecosystem combined with an amazing landscape that can potentially be a core area of a future Vjosa National Park. On the other hand there are some protected sites along the valley and especially closed to the intake of the HPP in Bença. The Nivica canyon which is Nature Monument status, *Progonat Waterfalls*, *Erosive Tarace of Bença*, cultural monument the *Aqueduct of Ali Pasha*.

Specifically, the construction of HPP Bença & Tepelena owned by Ferrar Energy shpk has started the works in April 2013 without an environmental permit which they received only in September 2013. The consultation process was done in August 2013, (after the construction works have started) in an unclear situation presenting a different project with a dam and reservoirs which would create employment, a small lake, fishing industry and sports recreation and other attractions. However, the project was then changed from 2 HPPs to only one, without any information and consultation. The new project would take the water through channels, pipes and a derivation tunnel back to powerhouse by drying and changing completely more than 5 km of river line. The local habitants have stand against the construction of this HPP and several times they have protested close to the construction site. On the other hand they have raised their voice even to the high level of the Albanian decision makers since they have been laid in regard to this project. Their main concern is related to the change of their cultural identity connected with the river and the valley, nature and the landscape. The take of water through pipes and tunnels will change completely their tourism potential.



#### Basic data

#### Ferar Energy Shpk

Installed capacity 5,405 KW and expected production about 41.669 million kWh. Project water flow to be exploited is 7.71 m<sup>3</sup>/s and will be used all year around by respecting the ecological water flow during dry periods. The project consists of (side intake channel using the former irrigation channel, a forebay (concrete basin to collect the water coming from the channel), a derivation tunnel, penstock, a power house, and transmission line to Tepelena substation. The power house is located in the downskirts of Tepelena city.

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<b>Source of conflict</b>	Environmental impact -1 <sup>st</sup> level of conflict Water diversion - 2 <sup>nd</sup> level conflict Water management - 3 <sup>rd</sup> level of conflict
<b>Project details and actors</b> <b>Project area</b> <b>Level of investment</b>	Ferar Energy shpk. is owned by Ferid Sukaj 100%. The total project costs is 675.221.200 All (around 5 Million EUR)
<b>The conflict and mobilization</b>	Eco Albania and 13 other national NGOs (REC, EDEN, Milieukontakt, Ajmi, INCA, Ecolvizja, SHBO, EPER, ACERC, etcetera); Local habitants, scientists, River Watch, Euronatur.  Street protest, complain letters, declarations, media appearances. EIA review. Conflict chronology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During 2014 several complaint letters were sent by the local people of Bença to the government;</li> <li>- On 29 April 2015, a protest at the construction site of HPP Bënça. Was organized from residents from Përmet, Selenicë and local people from Bënça against the construction of HPP-s in Bënça and Vjosa rivers.</li> <li>- In March 2015 a petition was signed by the residents of the Vjosa Valley from Përmet to Selenicë and local people from Bënçë addressed to PM Rama.</li> <li>- In July 2015 a declaration was signed by 13 NGO-s asking cancellation of HPP construction in Bença and Vjosa and delivered to PM office.</li> <li>- On 6 June 2015 a concert protest was organized in Tirana against the HPP-s in the Vjosa valley. Bënça Iso-polyphonic group participated.</li> <li>- On 17 May 2016 kayakers as part of the Balkan Rivers Tour paddled the Bença River.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict impact</b>	<b>Potential</b> Environmental impact: landscape loss, natural values threatened, biodiversity loss, water diversion,  <b>Potential</b> Social –economic impact: Threat to tourism and cultural identity and pride.
<b>Conflict outcome</b>	Construction stopped temporarily. No institutional changes Not sure, as the project has been pending for more than a year.
<b>Sources and materials/References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <a href="http://balkanrivers.net/en/key-areas/vjosa-river">http://balkanrivers.net/en/key-areas/vjosa-river</a></li> <li>o National Business Centre, <i>historical extract of Ferrar shpk</i>, accessed on 22 December 2016;</li> <li>o Ferar Shpk, - <i>Environmental Impact Assessment</i> report, prepared by Invictus shpk, 2013.</li> <li>o Environmental description of natural environment of “Bença valley”, and the impact of construction works ad functioning of HPP in the river bed.</li> <li>o MoE, <i>Environmental Permit</i>, Type B, issued on 6.09.2013 No.1449</li> </ul>