

Balkan Rivers News



Dear Friends of the Balkan Rivers,

Much has happened since our last newsletter. The court decision against the planned hydropower plant Poçem on the Vjosa was definitely a highlight. Read about this ruling, and about what else is new at the Vjosa and other rivers between Slovenia and Albania in this newsletter!

VJOSA, ALBANIA



Hope for the residents of Kutë due to a court decision. They would lose their lands in the Poçem reservoir. © Gregor Subic

Albanian court stops hydropower project on the Vjosa! Our lawsuit against the HPP project Poçem was the first ever environmental lawsuit in Albania. In early May, the Administrative Court ruled in our favour. However, the Albanian government has already appealed the decision. If necessary, we will take this all the way to the Supreme Court! [MORE](#)



Kalivac construction site: unfinished for 10 years © Roland Dorozhani

HPP Kalivaç revisited: For almost 10 years, the construction of the dam project Kalivaç has been halted, but now it shall be continued. The Albanian Ministry of Energy and Industry has cancelled the contract with the Italian Company Kalivaçi Green Energy only to open the procedures for re-issuing the concession shortly after. We are considering legal actions. [MORE](#)



Unusual press conference for an extraordinary river. © Jehs Steingässer

Scientists for the Vjosa! In April, 25 scientists from 4 countries researched the Vjosa in the area of the projected Poçem dam for one week ([watch the 3-min video](#)). In an unusual press conference on a gravel island in midst of the Vjosa, they took position against the hydropower plans. First results, confirming the extraordinary biodiversity and complexity of this natural riverscape, will be presented at a press conference in Tirana on September 19. [MORE](#)

RIVERS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA



Our new Blue Heart partner in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Center for Environment.

© Aleksandar Škorić

New key country in the campaign: Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) still has many near-natural rivers, some of which hosting the endangered Huchen. Over 300 HPPs are projected throughout the country and the [Center for Environment](#) (CZZS) – our new campaign partner – together with the Coalition for the Protection of Rivers in BiH are working to prevent this exploitation.



CZZS and Riverwatch represent the Blue Heart at the Drina Regatta. © Aleksandar Škorić

Huchen protesting at Drina Regatta: Together with local fishing associations, we protested for the first time at this year's Drina Regatta in July – Europe's biggest river-related event – against the planned construction of HPPs on the Drina. The Drina is the most important river for the threatened Huchen ([check out the gallery](#)). Nevertheless, nine dams are projected, including the mega project „Buk Bijela“. With a floating protest slogan and a Huchen-dummy, we raised awareness for the highly threatened fish species. [MORE](#)



Glued on 14-m-woman smashes the already broken and obsolete dam on the Baščica River in BiH © Dinno Kasalo

Freedom to our rivers! The Center for Environment (CZZS) recently attracted international attention with a very special action: a [14-meter-woman is smashing](#) an already broken and obsolete dam on the Baščica River in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a hammer. Furthermore, CZZS supports local initiatives in the [fight for their river](#).



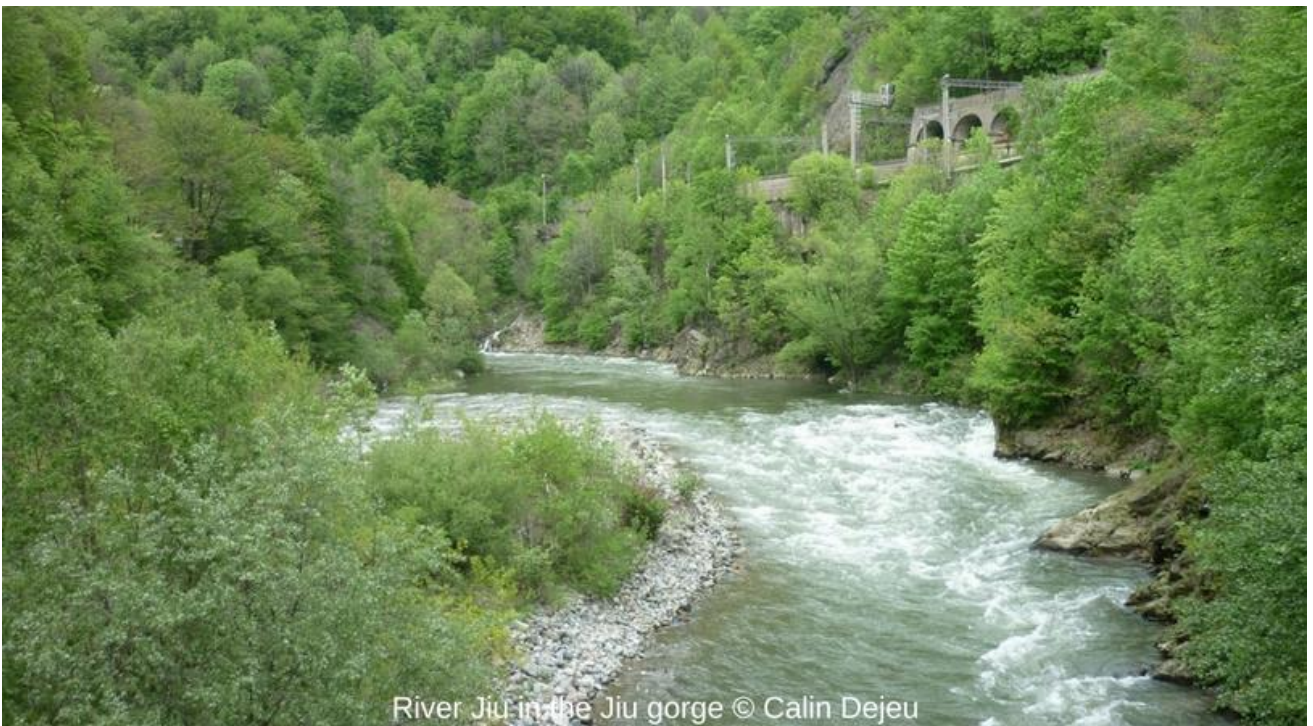
Kelag: environmental crime against Huchen River Sana! The Austrian-German Kelag company is constructing a hydropower plant on the Sana in BiH – in midst of a Huchen habitat, a highly endangered fish species particularly vulnerable to dams. Rivers with Huchen occurrences must be no-go areas for dam construction. Watch the [protest video](#)

GENERAL



The river ends at the Rapuni dam © Pippa Gallop

Bankwatch Blogs: Our partners from Bankwatch are reporting about the grievances in relation to the development of hydropower in the Balkans. Read about local communities [putting up a fight against a dam](#) which is threatening important fish habitats in BiH. Learn more about the [Rapuni dam](#) in central Albania, which led to dire consequences for residents; or about the fact that [HPPs are popping up in Albania like bunkers in Hoxha's time](#) – with little regard for people and nature.



River Jiu in the Jiu gorge © Calin Dejeu

Save Defileul Jiului National Park (Romania): The Romanian River Defender Calin Dejeu has recently submitted a [petition for the protection of the Defileul Jiului National Park](#) and its overlapping Natura 2000 area to the European Parliament. Signatures are still being collected. [Please sign the petition!](#)



ZDF documentary about dam craze in the Balkans receives film award © ZDF/Mark Hugo

International film award for ZDF documentary “Hydropower Madness”: The ZDF planet e documentary “[Hydropower Madness - The destruction of rivers in the Balkans](#)” received the [documentary award](#) of the International Wlodzimierz Puchalski Nature Film Festival Lodz. Congratulations to Birgit Hermes from the ZDF!

BALKAN RIVERS IN MEDIA

SPIEGEL ONLINE Das letzte blaue Wunder Europas



The “**Scientists for the Vjosa**” week in Albania was covered by several media. Here a selection: [Spiegel ONLINE](#), [FM4](#), [Huck Magazine](#), [Universum Magazin](#). The impressions of the scientific head of the research week – Dr. Fritz Schiemer – were published on Patagonia’s blog “[The Cleanest Line](#)”.



National and international media report about the Vjosa court decision in Albania © Gernot Kunz

The **Vjosa Court Decision** also attracted national and international media attention: [Der Standard](#), [TAZ](#), [Top Channel](#), [Gazeta Shqiptare](#), [Balkan Web](#)

bne  **INTELLINEWS**

Eastern Europe

Central Europe

Southeast Europe

Eurasia



Magazine

Wild capitalism threatens the untamed rivers of Southeast Europe



Intellinews.com published an elaborate article about the explosion of hydropower investment in the Balkans, about high corruption in that context as well as about the impacts of climate change on hydropower efficiency. [Great read!](#)

All the best,
Your Blue Heart Team