

## OPEN LETTER REGARDING DAM PROJECTS ON BÂSCA MARE RIVER IN BUZĂU COUNTY, ROMANIA

Ljubljana, Slovenia, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019 - Bâsca Mare River (upstream Nehoiu, Buzău County/Covasna County, Romania) represents a top asset of Romania's natural heritage. It is one of the very few relatively big rivers in Romanian Carpathians not sacrificed yet for hydropower developments. Featuring a spectacular valley, a result of a unique rock structure specific to the geologically twisted zone in the Curve of the Carpathians, with thick forests adding value to the landscape, the whole area has a huge tourism potential that could provide thriving sustainable economy for the locals. However, **this area is under threat** as there is currently an **illegal Hidroelectrica dam project under way on the upper Bâsca Mare River**. This dam, once finished, would divert the whole river into a diversion tunnel and then into Siriu accumulation lake some 20 km away. This would leave the Bâsca Mare River completely **dry**. The diversion would mean very little to the National Energy System, but it would be a huge loss not only for people of Nehoiu, a town by the river that would be greatly affected by this project, but also for the Romanian **natural heritage**.

The project is problematic because it **breaches many EU directives and conventions**: locals that depend on the river for their livelihood were not consulted about this project, which means a lack of implementation of **Aarhus Convention**, unsustainable hydropower plant that would dry out the river breaches **Water Framework Directive**, severe negative impact on biodiversity breaches **Habitats Directive**, and the illegal building ground breaches the **Carpathian Convention**, which states that "the Parties shall pursue policies aiming at conserving natural watercourses". This gives Romanian people an impression that their leaders do not respect EU guidelines and ratified conventions despite being a member of EU for more than 10 years. Romania's leaders continue to exploit and sell out this country, full of unharvested natural resources, with locals being left behind. Politicians, elected and paid by everyday Romanians to represent their interests fail to do so in dramatic ways and are instead failing to fulfil even the most basic expectations. This leaves locals with no other option but to ask for sanctions from EU.

Exploitation of pristine waters and forests, that protect the delicate climate which is continental and dry seem to be present in all parts of this country. The building site sits in **Penteleu**, a part of **Natura 2000** protected areas network. Bâsca Mare River is the main riverine habitat of the area, where **10 fish species found in the river will perish** if the dam is completed, and **4 of them are a Natura 2000 protected species**. The significant ecological impact will also hit protected species such as **otter and *Carabus variolosus***, for which the site was designated. The diversion of Bâsca Mare River would lead to loss of aquatic ecosystem, deterioration of linked ecosystems on banks and slope and aridization. The diversion of the flow of Bâsca Mare River, devastating for the integrity of "Penteleu" Natura 2000 site,

reminds us of illegal hydropower project on Jiu River, stopped by the final court decision of the Bucharest Court of Appeals.

Despite **the obvious sustainable ecotourism potential**, that would bring reliable income to the locals who prefer to live in harmony with nature, Romanian leaders continue to fail in providing people with these kinds of opportunities. Selling off nature in this **eco genocide** will only provide a selected few with huge amounts of money, while leaving people living off these natural wonders in threat of survival. This kind of behavior is unacceptable in the European Union, which promotes itself with its belief in protection of nature, people and human rights.

**Hidroelectrica, the state-owned company** that controls most of Romania's hydropower business, seems to be above the law, and because of that, Romania keeps being in trouble in the European Union – all at the expense of the locals who will have to foot the bill. The **infringement case 2015/4036**, about the breaching of EU law by hydropower plants in Romania, has led to no results due to the lack of action from the European Commission, which did not take it to the European Court of Justice yet. This lack of will to impose the EU law actually encouraged the Romanian authorities to continue illegal projects like the one sealing the fate of Bâsca Mare River.

Last but not least, since the case 2015/4036 is not taken to Court yet, we urge the European Commission to **include the illegal diversion of Basca Mare River in this case**. Romania has to respect conventions and resolutions that protect natural resources, so Penteleu cannot be taken advantage off anymore. It is the responsibility of the Romanian government to protect Romania's incredible natural heritage and wealth for future generations. All this is happening while Romania holds presidency of European Union, promoting environmental protection around the world while destroying European natural heritage at home.

In Ljubljana, April 24<sup>th</sup> 2019

Signed by:

**Asociatia Declic**, Romania

**Leeway Collective / Balkan River Defence**, Slovenia

**Riverwatch**, Austria

**Calin Dejeu**, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas member

**Rok Rozman**, Leeway Collective CEO, Slovenia

Katarina Mulec, Slovenia

Tomaž Čubej, Slovenia

Primož Knap, Slovenia

Carmen E. Kuntz, Canada

Elisabeth Diringer, Austria

Vera Knook, Netherlands,  
Denise Liane Rebnegger, Austria  
Adéla Moravová, Czech Republic  
Jana Joeressen, Germany  
Jessica Droujko, Canada  
Martin Dalvai Ragnoli, Italy  
Christoph Staber, Austria  
Uli Andelfinger, Germany  
Kasper Sluiter, Netherlands  
Seon Crockford-Laserer, Australia  
Thomas Wimmwe, Austria  
Chiara Hirsch, Austria

The letter was sent to:

- European Commission, DG Environment
- Mr. Karmenu Vella, Commissioner, [cab-karmenu-vella-contact@ec.europa.eu](mailto:cab-karmenu-vella-contact@ec.europa.eu)
- Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General, [daniel.calleja-crespo@ec.europa.eu](mailto:daniel.calleja-crespo@ec.europa.eu)
- Secretariat of the Bern Convention, Ms. Iva OBRETENOVA, secretary, [Iva.OBRETENOVA@coe.int](mailto:Iva.OBRETENOVA@coe.int)
- IUCN European Regional Office, Mr. Luc Bas, Director, [Luc.BAS@iucn.org](mailto:Luc.BAS@iucn.org)
- the President of Romania, Mr. Klaus Iohannis, [procetatean@presidency.ro](mailto:procetatean@presidency.ro)
- the Government of Romania, Mrs. Viorica Dăncilă, [drp@gov.ro](mailto:drp@gov.ro)
- the Secretariat of the ICPDR, Mr. Ivan ZAVADSKY, Executive Secretary, [ivan.zavadsky@icpdr.org](mailto:ivan.zavadsky@icpdr.org)
- the Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, Ms. Cristiana Pașca Palmer, [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int)
- the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Ms. Martha ROJAS URREGO, Secretary General, [ramsar@ramsar.org](mailto:ramsar@ramsar.org)