

World River News

Dear river lovers,

Vjosa, Huchen, Kamp & Co – read about new developments in the Blue Heart of Europe and at rivers elsewhere in the world in this newsletter!

The team at Riverwatch wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

“Save the Blue Heart of Europe” campaign



Construction site in Valbona National Park, Albania. © Mirjan Aliaj

New report confirms hydropower tsunami in the Balkans! A new analysis makes the extent of the threat to Europe’s last wild rivers visible: 2,800 hydropower plants are being projected between Slovenia and Greece, 187 are under construction. More than 1,000 (or 37%) are located inside high-level protected areas. Since 2015, about 160 to 180 hydropower plants have been constructed in that region. [MORE](#)

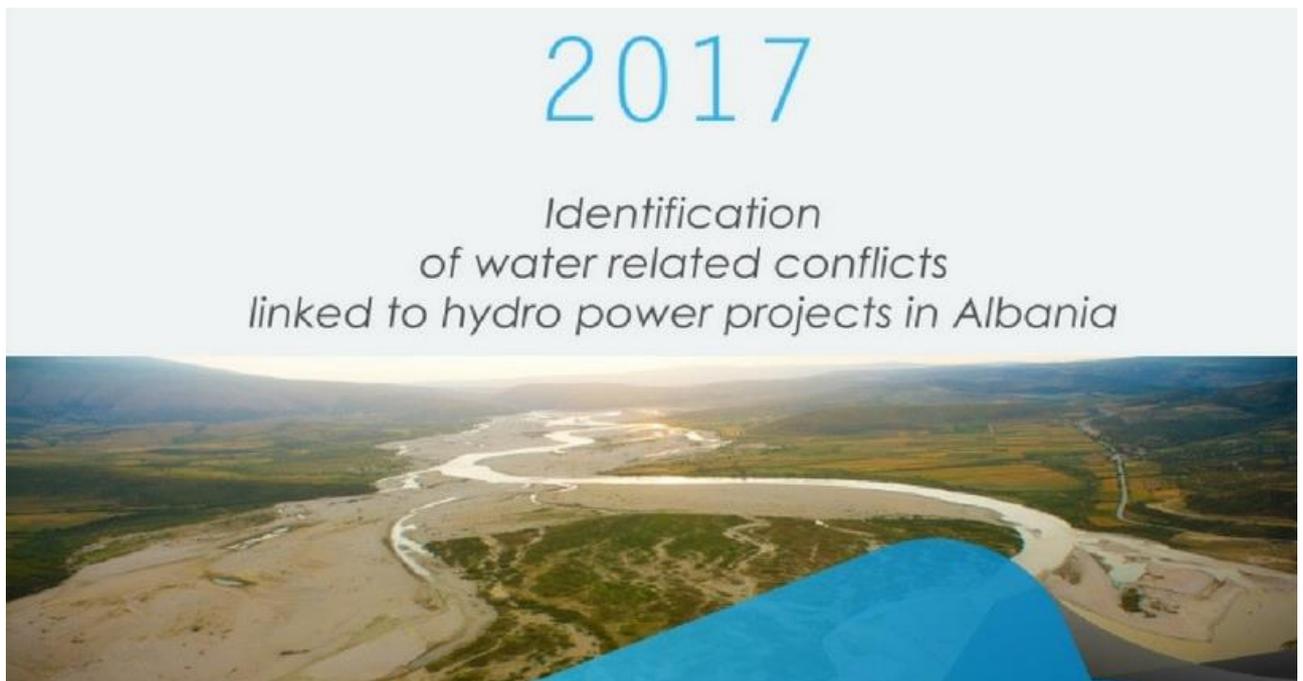
Read the exclusive report in *The Guardian*: [Balkan hydropower projects soar by 300% putting wildlife at risk, research shows](#)

VJOSA, ALBANIA



In Albanian society, the opposition against the projected hydropower plants on the Vjosa is receiving further support © Gernot Kunz

Unusual support: Albanian industrial confederation advocates for free Vjosa! In an open letter, the “Konfindustria” calls upon the Albanian government to stop the dam plans on the Vjosa river and to conduct environmental impact assessments according to EU standards. The Konfindustria represents Albania's 280 major industrial firms. [MORE](#)



Hydropower conflicts in Albania: 6 casualties, 34 people arrested. An EU-funded study proves how dangerous opposition against hydropower can be in Albania. Between 2012 and 2016, 34 people have been arrested; six casualties are recorded, including one murder and one murder attempt. Furthermore, the study confirms that corruption and lack of transparency are deeply connected with hydropower development in Albania. [MORE](#)



Concession for HPP Kalivaç newly awarded. In late October, the Albanian Minister for Energy announced that the Kalivaç dam on the Vjosa is to be constructed by the Turkish company Ayen Enerji. It is the same company which already failed the Poçem HPP. We will exhaust every legal possibility to stop this project. [MORE](#)



4,000 at Vjosa concert: Under the slogan “**Mos ma prek Vjosën!**” (Hands off Vjosa!), a special kind of concert took place at the main square in Tirana in mid-October. In front of over 4,000 people, prominent Albanian musicians sang for the protection of the Vjosa river and against the planned dam projects. Read our [press release](#) and check out the [photos](#) and [videos](#) of the event!



New discovery: this fish species previously entirely unknown to science was discovered in the area of the projected hydropower plant Poçem. © Wolfram Graf

Two new animal species discovered in the area of projected dam! In only one week of research, an international research team found 300 animal species at the Vjosa, including a fish and stonefly species previously unknown to science. 40 species have been recorded for the first time in Albania. [MORE](#)

MAVROVO NATIONAL PARK, MACEDONIA



Streams like this would be destroyed by dam projects inside Mavrovo NP © Theresa Schiller

Bern Convention states: Hands off Mavrovo! At its recent annual meeting, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention once again called upon the Macedonian government to suspend the construction of all hydropower projects inside Mavrovo National Park. [MORE](#)

RIVERS IN BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



The projected HPP on Vrbas would put the critically endangered Huchen further at risk.
© Center for Environment

NO to hydropower plants on Vrbas! The Vrbas is one of the last remaining rivers providing habitat to the critically endangered ‘tiger of rivers’ – the Huchen. The construction of further HPPs on the river would put this species even more at risk as well as endangering the water supply for the residents of Banjaluka. Our partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Center for Environment – are fighting these projects. [MORE](#)



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

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



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. Nevertheless, nine dams are projected, including the mega project „Buk Bijela“. [MORE](#)

BALKAN RIVERS IN MEDIA



The “**Scientists for the Vjosa**” week in Albania ([VIDEO](#)) was accompanied by several media, such as the German magazine [Spiegel ONLINE](#) (now also available in English!). The impressions of the scientific head of the research week – Dr. Fritz Schiemer – were published on Patagonia’s blog “[The Cleanest Line](#)”. More articles: UNDARK “[The Allure and Perils of Hydropower](#)“, IntelliNews „[Wild capitalism threatens the untamed rivers of Southeast Europe](#)“, The Calvert Journal „[Natural wonder – Celebrating Albania’s magnificent but endangered wilderness](#)”



The Rapuni dam causes 4.5 km of downstream riverbed to dry up. © Pippa Gallop

EBRD confirms negative impacts of Albanian hydropower plants on people and the environment. This Bankwatch post addresses the connection of climate change induced droughts and a drop in hydropower production. The EBRD is only realizing this now – a little too late. The bank is better advised to invest in solar power. [MORE](#)



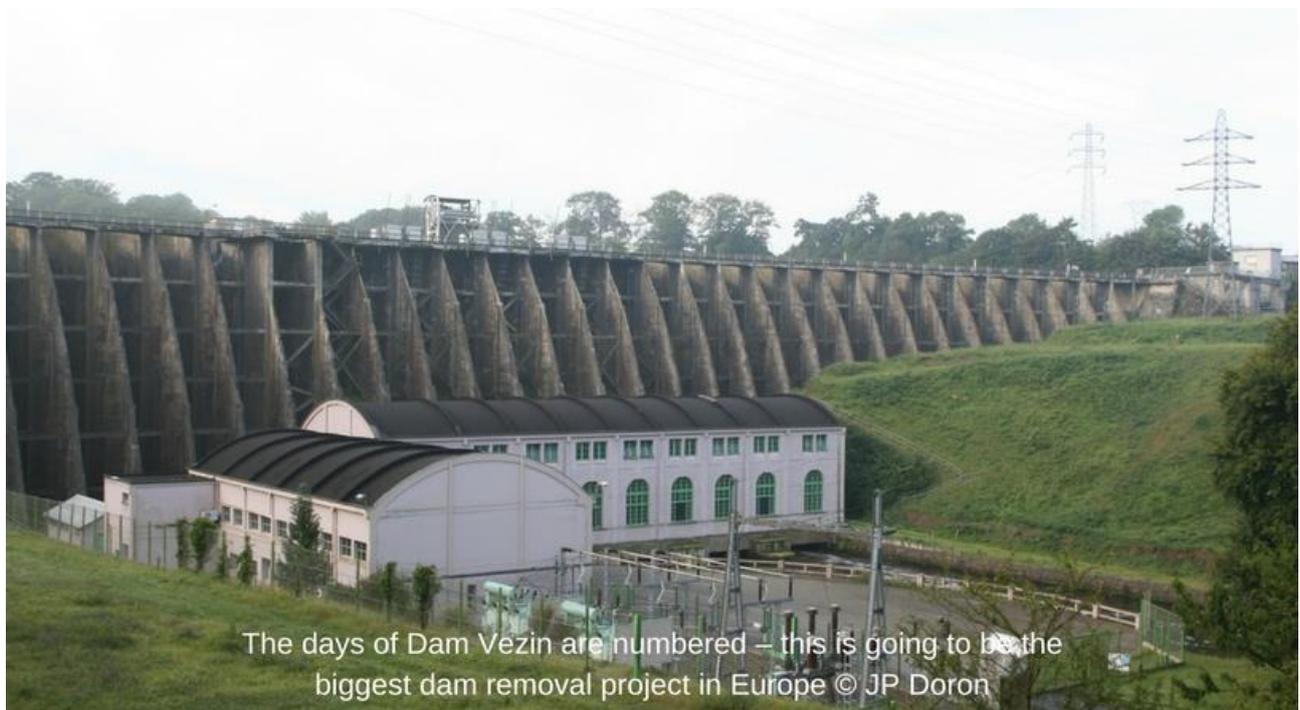
Video: 48 HOURS IN BOSNIA! In September, Patagonia took a group of so-called “Change Makers” to the Balkan to explore the stunning rivers, learn about the threats they are facing and what we do to save them. [This video](#), produced by Grégory Mignard of the “Captain Yvon Association”, is the first outcome of this trip.

“Remove the Dams!” campaign



Protest action at the dam Rosenberg on the Kamp river in Lower Austria. The floating letters say “Free our rivers. HPP Rosenberg – Get rid of it” © Riverwatch

Free the Kamp! – Dam removal at Rosenberg demanded. With an unusual action, Riverwatch and kayakers from the Kamp valley in Lower Austria demand the removal of the dam in Rosenberg. The licence of the dam, which was constructed in 1908, is expiring in 2022. If the dam was to be removed, the Kamp could flow freely in its original river bed for the first time in over 100 years. [MORE](#)



The days of Dam Vézin are numbered – this is going to be the biggest dam removal project in Europe © JP Doron

Biggest dam removal project in Europe approved! In November, France’s Minister of the Environment Nicolas Hulot approved the removal of two large hydropower plants. The river Sélune in Normandy will be freed of a 35m and a 15m high dam. Demolition works will start in spring 2018. This will reconnect 90 kilometer of watercourse, facilitating free passage for salmon, eels and many other species. [MORE](#)

River News from around the world



Ilisu: Detonation of historic rocks: After the relocation of the historic Zeynel Bey Tomb monument (please sign [this petition](#)), the destruction of 12,000 year old city of Hasankeyf has reached a new level: the [demolition through explosives of human formed rocks](#) has recently started. The [Initiative to Keep Hasankeyf Alive](#) presents a new documentary about the destructive project and what it means for culture, ten thousands of people and nature. [Watch this trailer!](#)



European Court of Justice decides: operators of hydropower plants are liable for environmental damage! This is also the case for plants constructed before 2007. Thus, operators can no longer argue that environmental damages were covered by earlier national operating licences. [Here the court ruling](#)



Berta Cáceres's Assassination linked to Executives at Honduran Dam Company. Recently, a report by a team of international lawyers revealed that the plot to kill anti-dam activist Berta Cáceres went up to the top of the Honduran energy company behind the dam, Desarrollos Energéticos. [Watch the video by Democracy Now](#)



The residents of Graz/Austria fight on for their Mur river © Sigrid Schönfelder

MUR: Planless Award 2017. The mayor of Graz Siegfried Nagl and his municipal government received the "[Planless Award 2017](#)" for the projected, highly contested and uneconomic hydropower plant at the Mur river! While the excavators are on the roll, opposition against the project continues tirelessly. [MORE](#)



Save the Date: Connecting Fish, Rivers and People! The [World Fish Migration Day](#) (WFMD) is an annual global-local event to create awareness for the importance of open rivers and migratory fish. The next World Fish Migration Day is on April 21, 2018. Will you participate? [Register your event!](#) Also find the [video](#) and [brochure](#).