

Help save the beautiful nature in the Slatina river valley in Slovakia and stop the wasting of public resources in the preparation of a dam that nobody officially needs.

Slovakia is a small country at the heart of Europe. Due to the diverse climatic, geological and morphological conditions there is a large variety of valuable natural wildlife. Many of them are unique in Europe - for example deep forests, grasslands with protected plants, wetlands, rivers and fens. Extremely valuable in this respect is also Slatina river valley in the centre of Slovakia near the city of Zvolen.

The meandering Slatina river created a breakthrough in volcanic rocks with xeric oak communities, orchids, butterflies and other insects. Below them in a narrow valley can be found preserved forests, wetlands and wet meadows with critically endangered species of plants and animals. Very precious is the Slatina river with its rocky beds, islands, oxbow lakes, rocky river beaches and its river banks with rich vegetation, which include 100 to 200 year old willows and alders.

Slovak scientists, citizens and NGOs have been trying for almost 20 years to enforce statutory protection of the river Slatina valley. Scientists have found that in the valley that there are 562 species of higher and lower plants, 123 species of birds, 27 species of mammals, 8 species of reptiles, 9 species of amphibians, 33 species of fish, 207 species of beetles, 158 species of butterflies and 10 species of dragonflies.

In the past, experts have proposed the addition of the Slatina valley to the list of sites with European Importance (NATURA 2000). Unfortunately their superiors overturned this decision. There are many other precious sites, not just the Slatina valley that have been struck off the proposed list. When the European Commission warned Slovakia about their insufficient protection of such habitats, like the Slatina river valley, scientists have again recommended its inclusion on the list. The authorities have however again refused to protect the 17 types of habitat with both European and national importance.

The reason behind this rejection is absurd, an outdated plan to build a dam. The dam would flood not only precious natural sites but also the village of Slatinka with its 625 year history. The proposed dam is to be named after this village. Government officials began planning this dam in 1956, and to this date building has

not yet commenced. The purpose of the dam is continuously changing. Even today it is not exactly known how much it will cost, who will finance its construction or who will use the water.

The construction of the dam is being enforced by the Slovak Government, although they do not have the finances to pay its construction or even its planning. To finance the dam they plan to gain money from the European Union. They want to use arguments about climate change and the need for effective water control. Based on these arguments the plan is to store water in the reservoir and in dry months, water would be released into the river Hron. The water would be used by Industrial companies, but primarily the Mochovce nuclear power station located 100 kilometres downstream. The government argue that there is a lack of water for nuclear power and they therefore want to "sacrifice" the Slatina valley and flood it.

Citizens have informed of more sustainable, cheaper and effective means to detain water in the river. They are asking that companies who will use the water, help with the financing of the project – as is written in the European Union Directives on water.

Slovak citizens have for many years unsuccessfully warned that the government in terms of national legislation and water directives, may only permit water abstraction from rivers which do not damage aquatic ecosystems. Citizens have a suspicion that the Slovakia secretly subsidises commercial companies by permitting them to over abstract water from the river Hron. They want cost of solving these problems to come from the public funds of European Union instead of it being paid by the companies who cause them.

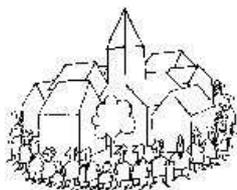
We, the residents of the European Union are saying NO to such practices.

We are asking the European Commission to ensure protection of the river valley Slatina. We are asking the European Commission to investigate the practices of Slovakia the way they use the water directives and to question why the abstraction of water from the river Hron is being done at the expense of the aquatic communities and why the commercial companies who cause the problems by abstracting water, do not make a contribution to help solving them.

Finally we authorize the following persons to act in this matter in the sake of nature conservation and good water management of Hron river:

- Martina Barancová Paulíková, member of Slatinka Association, Sokolská 11, 960 01 Zvolen
- Alexander Vágner, member of Slatinka Association, Kremnická 1, 960 01 Zvolen
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