



... a campaign to save the Balkan rivers.

**Dear Friends of the Balkan Rivers,**

after we introduced you to the Eco-Masterplan in our last newsletter, we'll now tell you how we are presenting it to decision-makers. Moreover, we will inform you about resistance movements and their successes - for example in Kruščica, about a bank summit for the protection of the Balkan rivers, as well as about a Blue Heart award. Enjoy the read!

**The Blue Heart team wishes you a beautiful spring!**

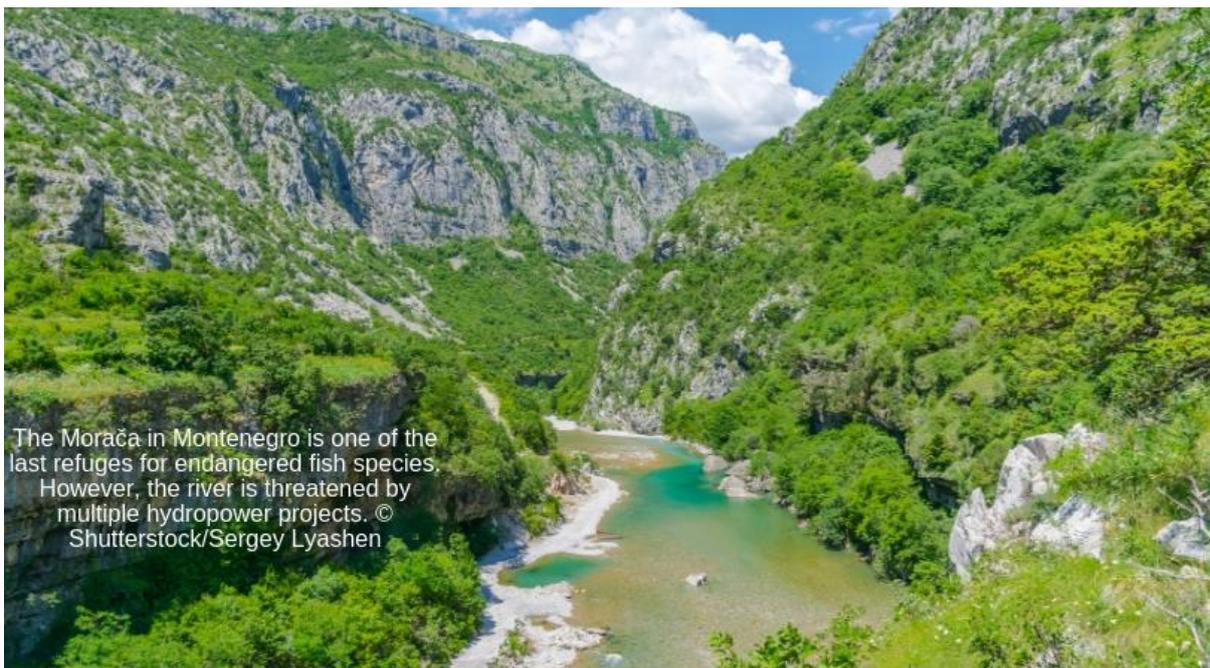


**Video about Eco-Masterplan!** Freshwater systems are endangered like no other ecosystem globally. In Europe, the last intact rivers are located in the Balkan region. We have come up with a scientifically founded plan to protect these river jewels, which defines no-go zones for future hydropower development. On World Water Day, we published this video, explaining the Eco-Masterplan in 2 minutes! [Watch for yourself!](#)



The Eco-Masterplan for Balkan Rivers presented in the European Parliament © Vasileios Katsardis

**Eco-Masterplan presented in Brussels and Skopje.** Our goal is to convince decision-makers on all levels to implement the no-go zones defined by the Eco-Masterplan. Thus, we don't miss any opportunity to present this special plan, like on March 7<sup>th</sup> [in the European Parliament](#), or on March 25<sup>th</sup> [at a conference with important decision makers](#) in Macedonia.



The Morača in Montenegro is one of the last refuges for endangered fish species. However, the river is threatened by multiple hydropower projects. © Shutterstock/Sergey Lyashen

**Bank Summit in Belgrade for the protection of Balkan Rivers!** Representatives of the Blue Heart campaign initiated a summit meeting between banks and environmental activists. At the round table in Belgrade, the role of banks in the destruction of Balkan rivers by hydropower was centre stage. We particularly demanded more transparency in the financing of dam projects. We also presented the Eco-Masterplan to the banks. [MORE](#)



Trophée de femmes: Claude Fromageot (director of the „Fondation Yves Rocher“ Paris), Cornelia Wieser (Riverwatch), Stella Deetjen (Back to Life), Elke Mannigel (OroVerde). © Fondation Yves Rocher Vincent Guihur Photographie

**Award for the Blue Heart!** In February, the project "Save the Blue Heart of Europe" was honored with an award: Riverwatch employee Cornelia Wieser received the second environmental prize "Trophée de femmes 2019" by the Foundation Yves Rocher in La Gacilly/France for her work in the protection of Balkan rivers. The second prize is endowed with EUR 5,000, which will benefit the project. [MORE](#)



## STUDENTS FOR RIVERS CAMP

PUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

**Students for Rivers Camp!** Are you a research-hungry student interested in saving rivers? Then join this Students for Rivers Camp at the Soča River in Slovenia, from July 13-17 - a week-long gathering of students from across the Balkans and other European countries, organised by the Balkan Rivers Defence. [Applications are now open!](#)

## VJOSA, ALBANIA



Olsi Nika of EcoAlbania (far left) presents the "Vjosa case" to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. (c) Theresa Schiller/EuroNatur

**Bern Convention opens case-file against Albania!** In early December, the Standing Committee to the Convention responded to our complaint and opened proceedings against Albania. The government in Tirana is now called upon to suspend all hydropower projects on the Vjosa river, since these pose an imminent danger to the unique ecosystem. [MORE](#)



The Vjosa in Albania – Europe's last untouched river beauty – is at risk. © Gregor Subic

**Albania violates European Energy Community rules!** The European Energy Community in Vienna will also deal with the Vjosa case in the future. In late February, the Secretariat received a complaint against the Albanian Government. In this complaint, EcoAlbania, Riverwatch and EuroNatur and have raised concerns about the procedures for the Kalivaç and Poçem hydropower projects (HPP) not being in line with Energy Community rules. [MORE](#)

## RIVERS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA



The brave women of Kruščica celebrating as they vacate the bridge after over 500 days and nights. © Sediva fotografije/ Arnika

**Victory for the "Brave women of Kruščica"!** Shortly before Christmas we received good news for Balkan rivers: On December 14<sup>th</sup>, the women of Kruščica in Bosnia and Herzegovina won a crucial court case. The permits for the construction of two hydropower plans have been cancelled; the dams must not be built. The women of Kruščica were able to vacate the bridge after over 500 days and nights of peaceful protests. [MORE](#)

## RIVERS IN SERBIA



On Sunday, about 5000 people protested in Belgrade against the planned construction of hundreds of hydropower plants in Serbia © Radomir Duvnjak

**Protest in Serbia: We don't give you our rivers!** In January, around 5,000 people took to the streets in Belgrade to protest against the sell-off of the rivers in Serbia, particularly against the planned construction of hundreds of hydropower projects. More than 850 hydropower plants are officially planned in Serbia, about 200 of which within nature reserves such as national parks, nature parks, etc. [MORE](#)

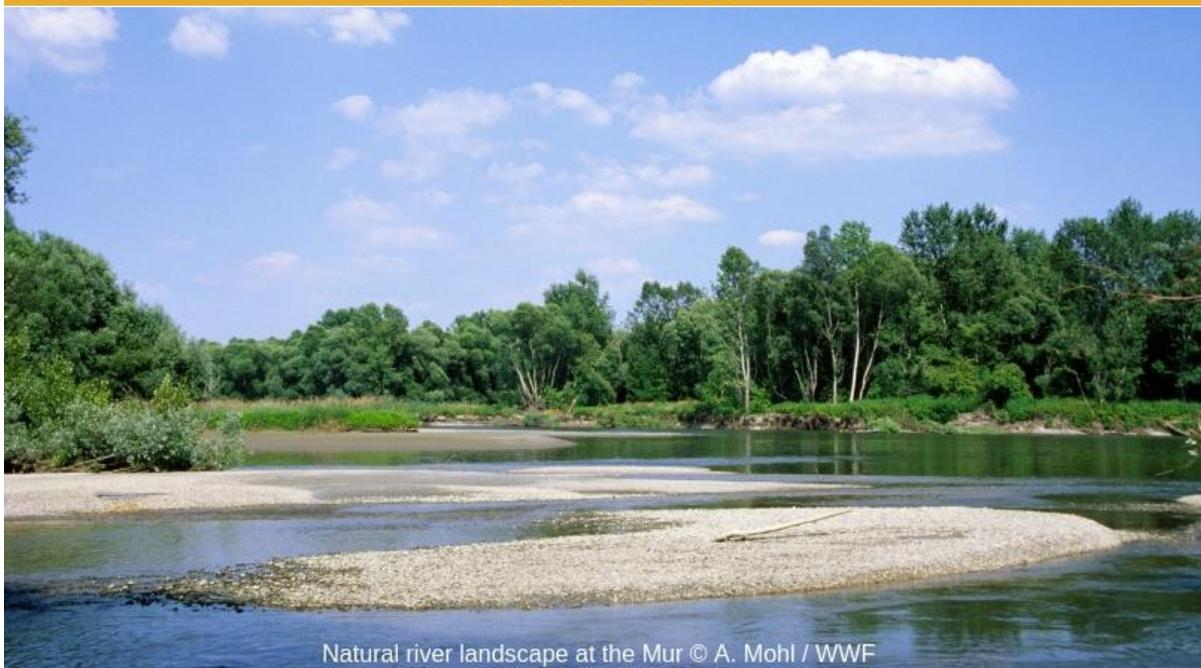
## RIVERS IN NORTH-MACEDONIA



Streams and creeks in Mavrovo NP  
under attack by low-performing  
hydropower projects. © Theresa Schiller

**Fight for Mavrovo National Park continues!** The big fight for Mavrovo National Park in North-Macedonia continues: the Zirovnicka river, one of the most important tributaries of Radika river, is at stake. Local communities in Zirovnica are dependent on this river as it constitutes their water supply and strongly opposes the two planned hydropower projects. [MORE](#)

## RIVERS IN SLOVENIA



Natural river landscape at the Mur © A. Mohl / WWF

**Success for Mur!** In February, the Slovenian Minister of the Environment Jure Leben presented a draft regulation to stop the eight planned hydropower projects along the Slovenian stretch of the Mur river, a decision [supported by 100 scientists](#). This brings the Minister considerably closer to his promise to protect the free-flowing Mur for future generations. Bravo! [MORE](#)

## PETITIONS



**Doljanka River!** The Doljanka River in Bosnia and Herzegovina needs your help! Please sign this petition to protect it from a destructive hydropower project, which is financed by former NBA Player Mirza Teletović. [PETITION](#)

## VIDEOS



**River.People.Future.** What does a sustainable water management look like and which role do fishing associations play in this? Learn about this and much more in the 17-minute film Fluss.Mensch.Zukunft – English subs are available! [VIDEO](#)

- Energy -

## Dark side of dams: social and environmental costs of hydropower may outweigh the energy benefits

By Siobhán Dunphy - 06.11.2018



**The dark side of dams!** More and more media outlets report about the devastating effects of hydropower: [Dark side of dams: social and environmental costs of hydropower may outweigh the energy benefits](#) (European Scientist); [Disillusionment With Hydropower in the Balkans](#) (Exit); [Vanishing Sands: Montenegrin Island Threatened by State Inaction](#) (Balkan Insight); [Die Schattenseiten der Wasserkraft](#) (Deutschlandfunk)

All the best,  
Your Blue Heart Team

[check out our website](#) | [visit us on Facebook](#) | [forward to a friend](#)

[www.balkanrivers.net](http://www.balkanrivers.net)

[www.euronatur.org](http://www.euronatur.org)

[www.riverwatch.eu](http://www.riverwatch.eu)

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