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Nottingham
UK
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10 February 2016

Glenis Wilmott MEP
13G305
Bafiment Altiero Spinelli
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels
Belgium

Dear Glenis

As promised, following a brief telephone conversation with XXXX in your Nottinghamshire Office I have written down a bit more detail about my concerns with some projects in Albania.

Since retirement, YYY and I have spent time travelling around the former Eastern European Countries and have grown particularly fond of Albania. I see this as a country which is making great strides since a lawless period towards the end of the last century. I appreciate that they are keen to join the EU and it is clear that such a union could be of considerable mutual benefit. I note that almost 650m Euros has been budgeted from the EU to assist Albania in the period up to 2020 and this is already evident on the ground. Interestingly 34% of this is to properly establish Democracy and Governance, 10% is for Environment and Climate Action. The projects which concern me, although (I think) not directly funded by the EU, in my view come under these headings.

The Valbona valley is a quite remote part of Albania, close to the Kosovo border. The main river is a tributary of the Drin and according to the attached pdf document (Gener 2) has a potential for 51 Mw of hydro electric production. This is obviously a considerable amount which could have positive benefits on the economy and well being of both the nation and the locality, however, there are deep concerns about the way this is being procured. In fact the World Wildlife Fund are very scathing about the way in which the Albanian Government have applied EU directives on Environmental reports in relation to proposed Hydro Electric plants, this can be found in the executive summary of the attached WWF report. There is increasing tourism in the valley which is being conducted in an environmentally friendly way, this is starting to have a positive impact on the residents well being¹.

Although my experience of hydro electric plant is very limited and over 40 years out of date, reading through the Gener 2 report, which is really a business plan, I can see a few glaring errors, such as an assumed price of \$6 per Kwh of electricity generated! It is with concern that I note the Environmental Statement at the end consists of just 3 lines and claims an environmental licence exists, without references to any further reading. Our major infrastructure projects would need several volumes of environmental studies.

Speaking to residents of the valley I understand there has been little or no consultation and some work is already under way. There are concerns that the entire river will be diverted through a series of 3m diameter tunnels; detailed plans do not seem to exist. No one seems to have so far produced any worthwhile environmental impact study, which would be pre-requisites for any democratically arrived planning decision throughout the EU. I am reliably informed of a very rich bioculture in the area which has enjoyed protected status as a National Park since 1996. I understand this status was confirmed following a suggestion made by the Head of the EC Monitor Mission to Albania in 1993; Guy Sheridan². Further strengthening of National Park status under the EU sponsored "ECRAN" project (Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network)³ is soon to be approved by the Council of Ministers, I sincerely hope any future Hydro electricity installations will fully comply.

In short there could be benefits from increased hydro electric power as a green source of energy but it is also clear that there could also be severe disbenefits. There appears to be no evidence of an Environmental Impact Study open to scrutiny and no suggestions of any mitigation. It would be nice to be assured that such work has been done; are you able to gain that assurance from senior members of the Albanian Government?

Yours Sincerely

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- 1) Journey to Valbona <http://www.journeytovalbona.com/>
- 2) Article to Alpine Journal of the Alpine Society <http://tinyurl.com/zfq6b8y>
- 3) <http://www.ecranetwork.org/Beneficiary/Albania>



The river Valbone in May, there are fears that this could be entirely diverted. It is rich in fish upon which many endangered species directly and indirectly depend.