

# Kresna Gorge case update

41<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee,  
December 2021, Strasbourg

**On behalf of “Save Kresna  
Gorge” coalition:**

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# Report on new development on the case

- ✓ March-April 2021 – report of the EC funded external experts;
- ✓ August 2021 – on-spot appraisal mission (on-line) of Bern Convention;
- ✓ Round of consultations between State institutions, environmental and nature conservation NGO's, local community and biodiversity scientists;
- ✓ Initial set up of three working groups targeting results and consensus solutions on the conflicting issues.

# Results and recommendations:

- The support of the Convention mechanisms **once more** led to constructive consultations and pave the way to a better decision-making process;
- Both expert missions confirmed that the biodiversity assessment and the mitigation measures proposed at the 2017 EIA Decision are **not compliant with the Habitat Directive** requirements;
- Need of **revision** of the conservation measures, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the alternatives;
- Better understanding of the **local needs and social issues**.

# Our risk assessment:

- ❑ The start of the consultation process *per se* is **not a guarantee** to a fruitful decision for adequate biodiversity protection of Kresna gorge.
- ❑ Further administrative attempts only for the improvement of the project **through the Gorge**, approved in 2017, will preclude a positive development.
- ❑ Administrative rejection of new AA and EIA procedures will block the opportunity to work and approve a better alternative **out of the Gorge**.

# We ask the Standing Committee to reopen the case file:

- ❖ In practice, already for three years, the case is monitored as an open file
- ❖ The recommendations of the Convention mission refer to continuous monitoring until final results of the Recommendation 98/2002 are achieved
- ❖ Despite our long-standing communication with EC and their promises for closer monitoring of the Struma motorway, the case is not explicitly included in the current referral to Court Infringement procedure on Natura 2000 against Bulgaria(INFR(2018)2352)

Therefore, an open file of the Bern Convention remains the only effective monitoring tool on the project.

# Save Kresna gorge! Thank you!

