



Strasbourg, 6 March 2025

**T-PVS/Files(2025)2022-1\_comp**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Standing Committee**  
45th meeting  
Strasbourg, 8-12 December 2025

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**Bureau of the Standing Committee**  
8-10 April 2025  
Strasbourg

**Complaint on stand by: 2022/01**

**Alleged habitat destruction in the area of Novi Sad due to  
proposed infrastructure constructions  
(Serbia)**

**- COMPLAINANT REPORT -**

*Document prepared by NGO World and Danube*

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Nevladina organizacija **Svet i**

Nongovernmental organization **World and Danube**  
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**Council of Europe**

**Secretary of the Bern Convention**

Cc: Permanent Representation of Serbia to the Council of Europe Ms.  
Daniela Stojković Jovanović (complainant)  
Submission of an III updated report for the attention of the Bureau 31th of  
the January 2025  
Subject: Complaint No. 2022/1  
Complaint on stand-by

**Alleged habitat destruction in the area of Novi Sad due to proposed infrastructure constructions**

In accordance with the instructions received

Dear Members of the Bern Commission,

I am writing to provide additional information and emphasize the urgency of Complaint No. 2022/1, which is being processed against the State of Serbia for alleged habitat destruction in the area of Novi Sad due to proposed infrastructure projects.

- 1. Progress of the construction of the fourth bridge:** The construction of the fourth bridge in Novi Sad is progressing, and unfortunately, we have already lost two lives during this process (We sent you details about the first case of a kayaker's death in a previous update, and the case of a Chinese worker's death took place on July 17, 2024). Currently, auxiliary bridge has been built and CRBC have started to work on the pillars of the bridge as shown on the Photo 1. For more details, please refer to this [video about the bridge](#)



Photo 1 Construction of the main bridge followed by auxiliary bridge

2. **Area devastation:** The site where auxiliary and the main bridge are in construction process has been cleared and devastated in terms of forest clearing as shown in Photo 2. A number of old Black Poplars and Willows have been removed, bank damaged and deep trenches dug up as shown on Photo 3. Additionally, because of these unregulated works illegal dumps of communal and construction wastes (Photo 4) have appeared on several places on Kamenička ada island what is direct degradation of natural values of the area proposed for protection. This small area of 3,6 hectares area has been greatly devastated which will have long-term negative effects on the Dunavac oxbow and its wildlife. But even besides that works still did not affected negatively overall biodiversity of the Kamenička ada island and Dunavac oxbow. During the whole 2024 year additional biodiversity surveys within the area brought additional discoveries of new international important, protected species of birds which increased to 160 since 2021 (139). New important discoveries (Photo 5) during 2024 were observations of Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Ferruginous Ducks (*Aythya nyroca*), Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*), Pygmy Cormorants (*Microcarbo pygmeus*), etc. Additionally, over 250 new georeferenced data on birds and invertebrates were collected (Photo 6). More people have been involved in field surveys, trainings, communal waste clearings and excursions (Photo 6) organized by various organizations - what in total additionally confirmed importance of the area for local community and biodiversity respectively.



Photo 2 Clearing of alluvial forest of old Black and White Poplars





Photo 3 Clearing of alluvial forest of old Black and White Poplars

- 3. Connection with a related company:** I would like to emphasize that the related company (the Chinese consortium CRIC&CCCC, which consists of the companies China Railway International Co. Ltd and China Communications Construction Company Ltd) was also responsible for the reconstruction of railway stations in Novi Sad. During this project, we witnessed a major tragedy when the canopy of the Novi Sad railway station collapsed, resulting in the death of 15 citizens. Since the collapse, Serbia has seen mass protests against the government for failing to disclose all details of the contracts with the Chinese company involved. Additionally, a massive general strike took place yesterday, with schools, theaters, bookstores, and many other institutions closed. The whole process of railway and bridge projects are very similar due to secretive agreements, permits and general official documents, illegal construction works and possible corruption, the same as were followed by the problematic fourth bridge scandal. For more details, please refer to these videos about the general strike and this [video](#).

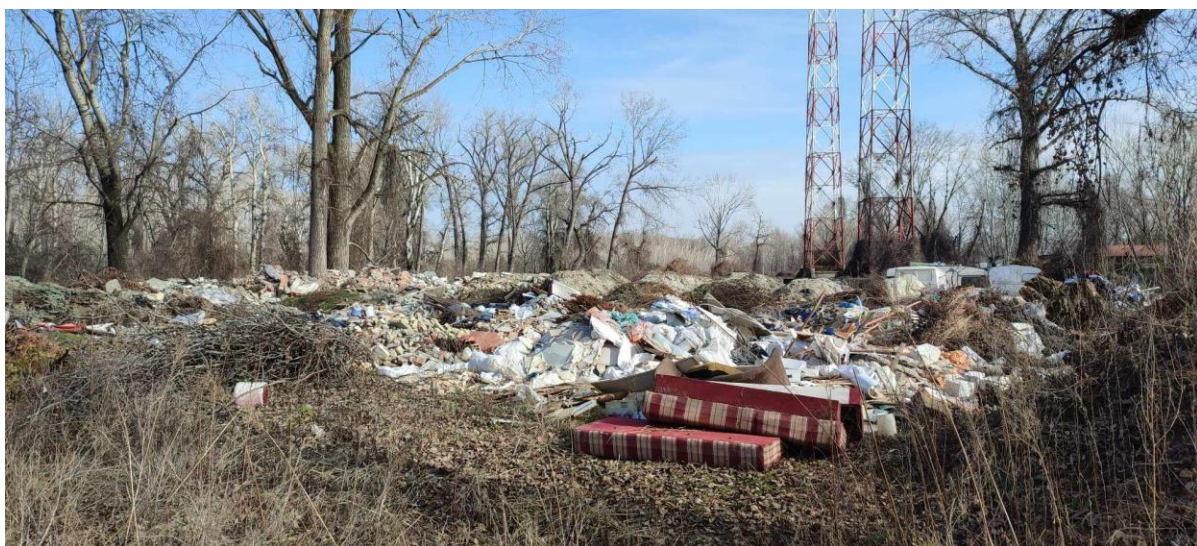


Photo 4 Communal and construction waste, Kamenička ada 2024





Photo 5 Flock of Glossy Ibises on Dunavac oxbow, August 2024

- 4. Environmental Impact Study:** The Environmental Impact Study (considering the construction of the bridge) was submitted a full year after the commencement of the works. This study is utterly null and void, given the real situation on the ground. It is filled with contradictions, dry legal data from various laws, and references to cited paragraphs from international conventions and current national laws. Additionally, authors of EIA did not use any of the 2000 georeferenced data for biodiversity we have freely provided Provincial Institute for Nature Protection during this process, what could radically change the final analyses of the EIA. That was unacceptable! Also, we are concerned and think that necessary EIA study is also missing in the case of the construction of the fifth bridge (Photo 7). We have not confirmed that, but maybe Bern Convention Secretariat can ask for that document. According to national legislation projects like this (corridors of over 10km long) one should be analyzed by Strategic environmental impact assessment. The 5<sup>th</sup> bridge which is also in construction from the same agreement with CRBC is located on the border of the already designated Special protected area “Koviljsko-petrovaradinski rit”. Furthermore, the proposed urbanization and degradation of the remaining water protection area 170 ha on Kamenička Ada and Šodroš is extremely concerning (Photos 4). If these continue together with movement of the embankment it will lead to complete destruction of this natural retention zone and habitat for over 200 strictly protected species.
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Photo 6 Field excursion during Eurobirdwatch, October 2024



Photo 7 Corridor of the 5<sup>th</sup> bridge over the Danube downstream Novi Sad

5. **Ramsar Convention:** Additionally, on 24 January 2025, we learned over the media that Novi Sad has been granted the status of “Ramsar wetland city”, which a serious scandal is considering this current process over the Bern Convention and other problems with wetlands around the Novi Sad city. This bizarre news was a shock for us! Therefore, we ask the Bern Convention Secretariat (if it is possible) to check with the Ramsar Secretariat how this was possible considering all the numerous illegalities which were created by the local administration from Novi Sad during the past several years only considering the Šodroš and Dunavac area, not mentioning the others.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to take all necessary measures to halt work on the disputed projects until the case is resolved. Thank you for your attention and willingness to address this issue.

Sincerely,

Daniela Stojkovic Jovanovic President

NGO World and Danube

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