

Open letter of Municipalities of the Vjosa River valley

To: Ministerial Council of the Republic of Albania
Mr. Edi Rama, Prime minister

cc: Parliament of the Republic of Albania
Mr. Ilir Meta, Chairman of the Parliament

Dear Prime minister,

Vjosa River is one of the last rivers in the natural state in Europe. It is characterized by beautiful canyons in the upper part and by a magnificent wide riverbed in its middle and lower part. Together with its tributaries, Vjosa creates a dynamic ecosystem, a true legacy of the Albanian and European nature.

This river is closely related to the daily life of the inhabitants of the area, offering opportunities for the development of agriculture, fisheries and tourism and it presents their main source of future economic development. Vjosa valley represents a treasure of cultural, social and historical heritage of the country.

Considering the actual situation where the whole valley of Vjosa is being threatened of turning into a huge hydropower park without based on comprehensive serious studies but by political directives and;

Considering the concerns of residents whom we represent as well as the position of other local and international actors about the threat that the values of our valley is facing due to the development of hydropower projects;

We, the elected representatives of the local community of the Vjosa valley urge the Albanian Government:

- To re-consider hydropower projects along the Vjosa River and its tributaries
- To undertake initiatives for cancelation of concessionary contracts related to the construction of hydropower plants along the Vjosa River and its tributaries.
- To ensure the implementation of mechanisms for community participation in decision-making process as foreseen in the Albanian legislation.
- Cooperate with the Vjosa valley's LGU-s and other stakeholders, to explore strategies for sustainable economic development for the area considering development projects that do not affect the integrity of the river and guarantee the protection of our natural heritage.
- To require full transparency by the Greek Government for the interstate agreements regarding the Vjosa River.

Vjosa River must be protected on its entire length for a harmonious coexistence between society and nature.

Signed by:

Agron Kapllanaj, Mayor of Mallakastër

Niko Shupuli, Mayor of Permet

Tërmet Peci, Mayor of Tepelenë

Përparim Shametaj, Mayor of Selenicë

Durim Rroshi, Mayor of Memaliaj