

# Free Flow Camp

## Vera Knook River Intellectuals

In July 2019 the Balkan River Defence will organise a Free Rivers School to gather students from various disciplines and regions to think about the challenges in the energy sector of the Balkans. In a full week of workshops, field visits, river exploration and discussions, the students develop a vision which they present to local Decision Makers. This can trigger them to think further than short-term gain. In this session, I would like to discuss the objectives of the school and which elements are needed to reach those.

### Free Rivers School, Idea Outline:

The Balkans are known as the Blue Heart of Europe because of the pristine character of most of its rivers. This character is threatened by more than 2.700 proposed hydropower plants which should solve the rising demand for renewable energy in the region and around. At the same time, thermal power plants urgently need to be closed down to reach a carbon-free economy. These two energy sources are often considered as the only substantial energy sources. What if we look further? Other (more sustainable) techniques are out there and there are big opportunities in energy efficiency. What is the real future demand and for whom are we producing the electricity? This overall understanding of energy supply and demand will be the main theme of the Free Rivers School. A mix of 30 students of the Balkans and the rest of Europe get together to work on real sustainable solutions. They will have a chance to explore a wild river and see the destructive effects of hydropower. Together with experts on energy resources and local decision-makers, they think of the future of Balkan rivers and an energy secure region, without unnecessary exploitation.

The students have different backgrounds as they study various disciplines reaching from biology to engineering and from tourism to economics. This will ensure a broad overview of the challenges that the Balkans are facing at the moment and stimulate inventive ways of tackling these challenges. We will invite decision makers to join the discussions so that the ideas are taken to the next level. Thereby we hope to enlighten some minds that can change the future of our rivers.

The program will be a full week of workshops, field visits, river exploration and discussions. In the end, the students will present their ideas in a pitch towards the Decision Makers and a conclusive report will be written and handed over to the local and/or national government.