

Coal plant emissions in the region continued to achieve negative records on a European-wide scale.

A comparison with the National Emissions Reduction Plans reveals coal plant sulphur dioxide emissions were increased and that they were six times higher than the ceiling -there was no improvement last year on air pollution from lignite-fired industrial facilities reported to the European Environment Agency by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia, Bankwatch said.

In 2020 edition of its Comply or Close report, CEE Bankwatch Network said dust emissions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia were 56.8% higher than allowed, at 17,557 tons. Montenegro is included in the report, but it has only one large combustion unit and is therefore without a National Emissions Reduction Plan or NERP, in which limits are determined.

Separately, none of the countries complied with pollution ceilings. However, North Macedonia and Serbia had nitrogen oxide (NOx) levels below the limit and Serbia's emissions of dust or suspended particle matter - PM were also regular in nominal terms. For the whole group, NOx came in lower than the maximum allowed.

Emissions of SO₂ in TPP Kostolac B surpass Serbia's entire quota

On the other hand, sulfur dioxide (SO₂) emissions increased 2.2% year on year to 617,281 tons in total, a level almost six times (495.4%) higher than the limit. The Kostolac B thermal power plant breached Serbia's overall national limit by 1.45 times and its individual level by almost ten times, at 79,113 tons.

The volume there dropped less than a third on an annual basis despite massive investment in desulfurization equipment, installed by China Machinery Engineering Corp. It indicates the system may not be working properly, the report's authors warned.

Serbia's NERP plants are still emitting almost three times as much SO₂ as is allowed for the four countries together. The region's worst individual offender in relative terms in the same category is coal-fired power plant block Bitola 3 in North Macedonia. Its emissions of the toxic gas in 2019 were 13 times as high as its ceiling.

The country's SO₂ volume more than doubled last year and the cause is unclear.

Desulfurization investments yield few benefits

In total, thermal power plant Ugljevik in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the biggest emitter - 88,302 tons or 9.7 times as much as its ceiling. A desulfurization unit started test operations in December, but the dust filters, overhauled three years ago by Czech company

Termochem, aren't working properly. It means the entire system is still not operational.

Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina lowered their SO₂ emissions slightly last year.

"There are now two coal plants in the region with new desulfurization equipment that doesn't work. The electricity companies responsible in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina need to address this immediately as an urgent public health issue," said Ioana Ciuta, Energy Coordinator at CEE Bankwatch Network.

The fact that the two largest desulfurization investments have not yet resulted in significant emissions cuts shows the need to consider closing more coal plants, sooner than planned, according to the document.

Accountability for negligence

The countries have known since the Energy Community Treaty was signed in 2005 that they needed to comply with the Large Combustion Plants Directive by 2018, Southeast Europe Energy Advisor Pippa Gallop noted. "Fifteen years has passed since then, with very little done. Those responsible for this negligence need to be held accountable," she asserted. Montenegro is the only country in the Western Balkans - apart from Albania, which has no functional large combustion plants - that may comply with the Large Combustion Plants Directive in the next few years, the update showed. Its Pljevlja thermal power plant still has very high SO₂ and NO_x emissions.

Source: balkangreenenergynews.com