

If forest-rich Bosnia made full use of the potential from biomass energy, it could meet around 7 per cent of its electricity needs, but the resource is not being exploited, experts say.

Bosnia could exploit clean biomass energy to cover a significant share of its total electric needs, experts say, arguing that the potential is not being completely unexploited.

“Bosnian authorities are planning to build the first biomass power plant in the western town of Livno but the project is still only on paper,” Fahrudin Kulic, an expert on biomass working with USAID, told BIRN.

According to Kulic, Bosnia could cover around 7 per cent of its total electricity demand by fully exploiting biomass. However, this potential is still not exploited, Kulic said, noting several reasons.

“Investors effectively in possession of biomass resources, mostly Bosnian companies dealing in the wood sector, are not familiar with these technologies ... and they find it hard to obtain permits to start operating in this sector,” he explained.

Another reason, Kulic pointed out, is that it is currently expensive for local businessmen to build the plants.

Biomass refers to biological material which can be used to produce energy, most commonly wood or biological waste.

If properly treated, it can produce very low polluting emissions, Livio Visentin, CEO of the Italian company Ecos Energy, which is one of the leaders in the sector in Europe, told BIRN.

“Today, we have succeeded in creating implants which are totally neutral from the point of view of their environmental impact,” Visentin explained.

Visentin recently visited Bosnia with a delegation of Italian entrepreneurs working in this sector, who were presenting their technology to Bosnian entrepreneurs and representative from 60 municipalities which might be interested in accessing this kind of technology.

Biomass, especially from wood derivatives, could constitute a significant resource for Bosnia, as forest and forest land cover more than 50 per cent of its territory, the UN noted in a report from 2014.

Despite this, this resource is not being properly exploited, and when biomass is used under current conditions, mostly wood for private consumption, it is highly polluting, Irma Filipovic Karadza, project manager at the South East Europe Sustainable Energy Project in Sarajevo, told BIRN.

“Most people who use biomass for private consumption do it with a very low efficiency,” she noted, adding that the use of wood for heating has lately become more popular in urban

areas because of the rise in price of heating - and that this has a very bad impact on pollution.

She also maintained that while the effects on the environment of exploiting biomass are still debated, in Bosnia the issue is even more complex because of the lack of proper studies.

“In Bosnia, not many reports have explored this topic ... so we still lack consistent data on this issue,” she said.

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