

The Bulgarian government is aiming to limit the extent of a new industrial emissions directive being introduced by the European Union.

The EU already has an Industrial Emissions Directive but plans to bring in stricter limits and the Balkan nation has issued a statement to Power Engineering International outlining why it plans to oppose the new measures.

“Bulgaria will insist on changes in the emission levels set in the draft of the new EC reference document on best available techniques for large combustion plants,” the statement reads. “This opinion was shared by the participants in a meeting arranged by the Ministry of Energy on this topic. The discussion involved representatives of the Presidency, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Environment and Water, District Heating Companies, Thermal Power Plants and the Mines from the Maritsa Basin and Members of the European Parliament.”

By the end of April 2017 the reference document on best available techniques for large combustion plants will be subject to approval by a special commission set up by the EU member states under the provisions of art. 75 of the Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC Directive).

The Bulgarian government says there is a number of reasons why the country cannot accept the more stringent requirements.

“The new emission levels of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury included in the draft-document are unachievable for Bulgarian coal-fired power plants. This is especially true for the thermal power plants in the Maritsa Basin, since they use local lignite characterized by a high content of sulfur.”

“According to the initial estimates of the coal-fired power plants, they will need over 1 billion BGN of investments in order to meet the new environmental norms.”

Bulgaria says that the European Commission’s environmental requirements are continuously increasing in quite short periods of time, which means difficulties for operators’ investment programmes and the possibility of scaring away investment. Sofia is keen for new regulations not to impact too negatively on its most vital power infrastructure such as the Maritsa Iztok Complex. This is the largest energy complex in South Eastern Europe. It consists of three lignite-fired thermal power stations. The complex is located in a large lignite coal basin, which includes several mines, enrichment plants, a briquette plant and its own railway system.

“The Maritza East Complex provides about 40 per cent of the electricity in the country. Therefore, any possible restrictions may directly affect about 10 000 employees working in that Complex, and indirectly may further affect another 110 thousand people employed in

related industries. Besides the risks related to security of energy supplies, energy independence and national security, the new emission values may also pose risks of losing economy competitiveness, as well as risks of deindustrialization and depopulation of entire regions in the country.”

Bulgaria is now set to request a meeting with the EU Commissioners for Environment, Climate and Energy Karmenu Vella and Miguel Arias Cañete in order to ascertain what, if any changes can be made to the document in terms of new emission levels for sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury.

“Given the short time remaining till the upcoming approval of the new norms, we hope this meeting will take place in the coming weeks. The European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has also been notified. The Bulgarian standpoint is also supported at an international level by the European Association for Coal and Lignite EURACOAL.”

“The goal is that the international community at the highest level becomes aware of Bulgarian arguments against the approval of such restrictions. During the discussion, our country will insist on the adoption of separate rates for Bulgaria, by allowing other countries to join our view by their arguments.”

Meanwhile the European Commission has told Power Engineering International that while there may be scope for Bulgaria to be given more time to meet newly proposed emission standards, the country must remain compliant with the existing emissions directive.

Iris Petsa, EU Commission press officer for the Environment, said, “There is in place the Industrial Emissions Directive which sets certain emission limits. For the new stricter emission limits there is a room for a derogation to give certain plants time to adapt. The derogation is granted by national competent authorities (not by the Commission) and it should be given on certain strict conditions. If Bulgaria grants derogation to specific plants it has to report them to the Commission.”

“What Bulgaria cannot deviate from is its obligations set in the existing Industrial Emissions Directive ie the IED desulphurisation rates set out in Article 31(1) will continue to apply as minimum requirements - even if a plant is granted a derogation as this is a minimum requirement of the Directive.”

Meanwhile a Bulgarian ministry of energy spokesperson says the country is overachieving on its current renewable energy target.

“Bulgaria is overfulfilling the targets for renewable energy sources (RES) as a share of the total energy consumption, i.e. 16 per cent by 2020. As early as in 2015 the RES covered 18.4 per cent of the total energy consumption in the country, and a year later the share of “green” energy in gross domestic consumption was already 20.8 per cent.

These results have been achieved thanks to the significant preferences that have been introduced over the years for energy generated from renewable sources, namely long-term contracts with guaranteed purchase of generated electricity at subsidized prices at significantly higher levels than the market prices. Attracted by these preferences, investments in the sector multiplied, providing generation of more and more “green” electricity, thanks to which its share in end-user consumption has also increased.”

Source: powerengineeringint