

- We get most of our electricity from thermal power plants, so the Government will continue to take care that electricity continues to be treated as a social category and it is unlikely that it will decide to introduce a carbon tax without a firm agreement with the EU because that would impose additional costs on industry and increased electricity prices for consumers. Therefore, there is nothing of that unless an agreement is reached which would include investments and favorable loans in other sources of electricity - our interlocutor states and adds that the price of electricity will continue to be adjusted as before and minimally in the years when elections are not held.

Although Janez Kopac, director of the Energy Community Secretariat, in a recent conversation with President Aleksandar Vucic expressed the expectation that our country would accept the initiative of that institution under the auspices of the European Union to introduce a carbon tax, it is hard to believe that the Serbian government will agree, a source close to the Serbian government, who wished to remain anonymous, told Danas.

The Energy Community has prepared a study on the introduction of a tax on CO2 emissions, which points out that the gradual introduction of this tax is mandatory for all economic entities that consume electricity obtained from coal, the most cost-effective option to protect human health and the environment.

Accordingly, the Energy Community has asked Serbia and the surrounding countries to gradually introduce carbon taxes, and so far only Elektroprivreda Crne Gore has responded. plants that contribute to climate change and the price of CO2 emissions by the end of the year should start calculating the power plants of Northern Macedonia.

Judging by the information of Danas, the authorities in Serbia are not happy to follow that example.

While the government, according to the data we have obtained, does not intend to listen to the recommendation of the Energy Community, the expert public is divided on the question of whether what is required of us should be fulfilled.

Energy expert Goran Radosavljevic told Danas that the introduction of a carbon tax is a trend in the European Union in the last few years.

- Its goal is to protect the environment and human health by general taxation of all those who produce or use electricity from thermal power plants. Therefore, it is comprehensive for all economic entities, while previously the collection of taxes was partial and referred only to some. This is not a mandatory condition that Serbia must meet in order to become a member of the European Union, but a recommendation. Regardless of that, the initiative of the Energy Community should be agreed in the way that is most favorable for the citizens of Serbia. Namely, what would not be good is for the carbon tax to be another additional duty

in order to protect the environment. There are already a lot of environmental taxes that are paid in Serbia. In case another one is added, it would certainly have a negative impact on the price of electricity, ie it would definitely increase. To avoid this, it is necessary for the carbon tax to replace the existing environmental taxes, instead of being added to them. In that way, there should be no increase in prices and additional costs for consumers – our interlocutor explains.

According to him, the budget of Serbia collects significant funds from taxes for environmental protection, so that hundreds of millions of euros have been collected from Elektroprivreda Srbije alone in the last ten years.

- The problem is that only a small part of that amount goes to environmental protection projects. The reason that most of the funds were not used was the lack of specific projects. What should be done in the future is to spend those funds systematically so that it would not be unused, and so far that has not been the case – says Radosavljević.

On the other hand, Vojislav Vuletić, Secretary General of the Gas Association of Serbia, says for Danas that there is not a single reason for the authorities in our country to accept the initiative of the Energy Community.

- Germany, as a member of the European Union, produces electricity from coal. Poland does the same. If those countries do that, why are we expected not to act in the same way. Serbia gets the most electricity from thermal power plants and there is no reason not to use coal as a resource as long as it has it. There is no need to introduce a tax on carbon as requested by the Energy Community, because in that way electricity in Serbia would become more expensive and consumers would pay higher bills than is the case now. Therefore, the production of electricity from coal should be continued and the equipment for environmental protection should be introduced in parallel. I would like to remind you that since October last year, the flue gas desulphurization plant has been working very efficiently at the Kostolac Thermal Power Plant. So, Serbia is investing in modern equipment for environmental protection in thermal power plants, so it is completely meaningless to ask for the introduction of a carbon tax at the same time, which would increase the price of electricity for households and the economy – our interlocutor concludes.

Source: danas.rs