

The municipal flag of Stanari, a small town in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), bears an unusual symbol – a chimney, representing the Stanari Thermal Power Plant (TPP) built by China.

It was the first China-built power plant in Europe, and its opening led to the creation of many jobs and an influx of investment into the country's infrastructure. The Stanari TPP is a source of pride in the local community, thanks to its use of green energy instead of polluting coal.

The power plant, constructed by China Dongfang Electric Corporation (DEC), began operations in August 2016. It has since generated more than 7 billion kilowatt-hours of on-grid power, which has mainly been sold to European markets including Croatia and Germany.

"It's one of the things that students learn in school," said Zorica Glisic-Samac, a teacher at the central school of Stanari. "When you say Stanari, first you think of the power plant. It's a big deal."

The town, 150 kilometers north of the country's capital Sarajevo, is rich in lignite, a low-quality type of coal. Lignite emits pollutants if burned in a conventional way, while its low value makes long-distance transport economically unviable.

Frustrated by strict European environmental regulations, the widely available coal reserves and mining industry in the Balkan region were trapped in technological and financial difficulty, while local development was stemmed by power deficits.

DEC, a company based in China's Sichuan Province specializing in power-generation equipment, offered a solution which brought hope to BiH.

In 2016, Stanari adopted an energy-saving and emissions-reducing technology that DEC had independently developed.

The production is efficient, said Aleksandar Milic, technical director of the plant, adding that in controlling emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and dust, it even exceeds EU standards.

The power plant has put Stanari on the map. It has attracted peer companies from more than 30 countries, according to Hu Yang, DEC's operation and maintenance manager for the Stanari project.

### **Prosperous path**

Stanari used to have a population of just 2,000. Young people would leave for better jobs in nearby cities or in other countries.

A great many changes have taken place since the power plant broke ground in 2013. Stanari

now has a population of about 5,000, with some 850 people working for the power plant and the adjacent coal mine.

Boro Krsic, an electrician, said he takes pride in his job at the plant because it offers a better salary and working conditions than his previous one. His 23-year-old son also works at the company.

Over the past four years, 20 million convertible marks (\$11.3 million) have been spent on the municipality's infrastructure alone - and all of the investment came from the power plant - according to Dusan Panic, mayor of the Stanari municipality.

"It has benefited everyone. Without the power plant, Stanari would still be a village," Panic said, adding that the average monthly salary in Stanari city - around \$719 - is now far higher than the national average of \$528.

Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of the tripartite presidency of BiH, said in an interview with the Xinhua News Agency in September that he believed cooperation with China is in the interest of Balkan countries. Chinese enterprises have provided good opportunities for the development of infrastructure, energy and communications in Balkan countries, Dodik said.

Source: [dodsondigest.com](http://dodsondigest.com)