

Nearly 640 lives are lost every year in Macedonia due to enormous air pollution caused by a myriad of reasons, primarily by the energy sector, which needs to abandon coal-fired production, according to a document. The SEE Carbon Calculator, prepared by 17 civil organizations from Southeast Europe, offers alternatives to the energy future of SEE countries.

According to recommendations stemming from four-year researches, in which the Macedonian organization Analytica Think Tank was also involved, presented Thursday in a conference on the Future of Energy - Where Macedonia and the EU meet, national governments should cancel all the new coal/lignite-fired power plants. They need to focus their efforts and investments on energy efficiency and sustainably-planned renewable energy. Actions must be taken now, it is stressed, in order to prevent against pollution from existing thermal power plants that are extremely harmful to general health and the environment.

"Greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by 76 percent until 2050. The more a solution to pollution and clean energy is prolonged, the worse for the general population and victims of pollution per year," stated Sonja Ristovska, research and management coordinator at Analytica Think Tank.

She called on Macedonia and all SEE countries to 'get back to business' in their capacities as signatories of the Paris Agreement on the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

"An alternative to coal is possible in Macedonia. In addition to what the country is doing to build a gas pipeline, I think at the moment not much is done to develop renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. In terms of finances, if we invest in coal and if we invest in renewable energy sources, such as the sun, wind, energy efficiency, cycling, electric vehicles, etc., the cost is almost the same - close to four billion euros from 2010 to 2050," Ristovska said adding that Macedonia had potential for solar energy because it had many sunny days throughout the year.

She noted that in Macedonia, considering its potentials, 60 percent of electricity produced in the country by 2050 could in fact come from the sun, 10 percent from wind and 26 percent from hydro production. At the moment, 60 percent of the power generated comes from coal and the rest from hydro capacities and the sun.

To provide power in the long run, Macedonia should implement reforms considering the challenges it is facing in terms of limited lignite reserves and outdated infrastructure to produce and distribute electricity, according to Dragan Malinovski, official of the EU Delegation in Skopje.

In the coming period, he said, important decisions should be made considering liberalization

of the energy market, implementation of the third energy package and investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources and inclusion of the country into regional initiatives.

source: independent.mk