

Global Ispat Koksna industrija d.o.o Lukavac (GIKIL) has not had an environmental permit since 2017, thus working contrary to the Law on Environmental Protection of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Environmental Impact Assessment study was requested by the Federal Administration for Inspection Affairs in February 2020, and the deadline for submitting the study to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) is the end of September 2020.

It is not the first time for the company's employees to be in a stressful situation. GIKIL's work permit was revoked in 2018, after which a temporary solution was found. At the same time, in 2019, on suspicion of organized crime, the owners and some members of the GIKIL Supervisory Board were arrested.

Constant state of stress - this is how engineer Jasmin Imširović from Lukavac, an industrial town near Tuzla in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, describes the situation in which workers find themselves. At the time of the pandemic, our interlocutor believes, it is especially difficult for a group of workers.

"This is a group that is very close to the end of its working career. Will you go to the employment office with two or three years of work experience that you lack until retirement, when no one will take you to a company to work, to become a social case before retirement", Imširović wonders.

For him, GIKIL is the first and so far the only job. Despite the difficulties of this company, this engineer believes that it is worth fighting for the survival and improvement of the coke plant.

Nurdin Đuzić, the president of the Trade Union of Workers of this company, is also emotionally and professionally connected to GIKIL. He says for RFE that "the decisions of the competent institutions from the past are to blame for the situation in which GIKIL is now."

Abdel Đuzić, a professor at the University of Tuzla, also lives in Lukavac, Doctor of Technical Sciences in the field of environmental protection and environmental engineering was previously a member of the Supervisory Board of GIKIL. He says for Radio Free Europe that he is very attached to the company. "You can't just turn it off and say - you're polluting, here's an inspection, we'll lock you up. What will you do with 900 people, those people will not leave the factory from which they live so easily", adds Đuzić.

The GIKIL Administration for RSE says that preserving jobs is a priority, especially during a pandemic.

Suad Imamović, Deputy General Manager of GIKIL, states that they tried to save every job, although working conditions have changed significantly.

### **The third largest exporter of pollution?**

Today's GIKIL originated from a coke-chemical plant (KHK) during socialist Yugoslavia.

The coke oven battery was built from 1945 to 1959, with facilities for the production of by-products of the coke oven and electricity, followed by chemical products (fertilizers, maleic anhydride). In January 2003, it grew into KIL (Coke Industry Lukavac), and in November 2003 it became GIKIL, with the participation of Global Steel Holdings Limited (formerly Global Infrastructure Holdings Limited), whose former chairman Promod Mittal, an Indian entrepreneur, is suspected of organizing crime related to GIKIL.

Due to non-fulfillment of GSHL's obligations, the management of GIKIL has initiated a procedure for the exclusion of this company from the management structure and these processes are underway, confirmed GIKIL for RSE. Thus, the Government of Tuzla Canton became the majority owner in terms of management.

GIKIL says that the issues of the management and ownership structure of GIKIL have yet to be resolved, because the company KHK is also part of GIKIL, which is owned by TK, under bankruptcy. It is also unclear to whom the share of GIKIL that was taken away from the GSHL investor was left.

"It was planned to pay 77 million to GSHL, of which 35 million was paid, and 42 million were not. The management was obliged to do so," Deputy General Director of GIKIL Suad Imamović told RSE.

Today, GIKIL is one of the largest pollution exporters in BiH, in second place, according to the Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH. The association for environmental protection Eko forum from Zenica states that GIKIL is one of the biggest polluters in this region.

During 2018, tar leaked from GIKIL and flowed into the Bosna River and then the Sava. At the same time, according to the association, coke is one of the biggest air pollutants, which, along with other plants in this area, places Tuzla and Lukavac on the list of the most polluted cities in the world, especially in winter, when weather and households contribute to industrial pollution as they heat on coal.

The consequences for human health are numerous, and the report of the University Clinical Center Tuzla from February 2020 states that due to air pollution at the Clinic for Lung Diseases of the University Clinical Center in Tuzla, the number of hospitalized patients with respiratory diseases has drastically increased. Most of them were from the area of Tuzla, Lukavac and Živinice.

Until 2017, GIKIL operated according to the environmental permit from 2012, which has a five-year deadline. After 2017, the company did not obtain a new permit, because it did not meet the minimum requirements, it was announced in June 2020 from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of the Federation of BiH. Then, they addressed the Ministry from GIKIL to request a temporary work permit and the import of raw materials.

After the first application for an environmental permit was rejected, the Federal Administration for Inspection Affairs issued a decision to close the plant in November 2018, followed by a series of meetings, agreements and promises to invest in environmental

protection.

At that time, GIKIL workers also protested in front of the FBiH Government in Sarajevo, demanding that work not be suspended.

The second request for a permit was also rejected by a decision of December 30, 2019, and GIKIL initiated an administrative dispute against him in the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo, which is still ongoing.

In February 2020, the Federal Administration for Inspection Affairs issued a decision ordering GIKIL to obtain an environmental permit for the shutdown of the plant and plant, ie the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Study for closure. This deadline expires at the end of September.

The consequences of industrial plants in the vicinity of Lukavac should not be a problem only for Lukavac, believes engineer Imširović.

After the GIKIL Management submits the Environmental Impact Study for closure to the Ministry, this institution has 90 days to form a commission that will decide further.

Deputy Director Imamović says that the Study is ready and that he will submit it to the Ministry in the coming days.

“The decision of the Inspection is the result of the past, and it is our obligation to do according to this order. We can’t talk about the outcome now. We are committed to working in compliance with all legal frameworks. In addition, we have drafted the requests for a new environmental permit, submitted them in early September and we believe that the Ministry will accept the request, “the Deputy General Director of GIKIL told RSE.

The Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism told Radio Free Europe that when the Study is received, it will act in accordance with its competencies.

“To date, the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism has not received any request for the closure of GIKIL, and therefore no study on environmental impact assessment, which is an integral part of that request.

In the process of closing such a complex, which also deals with hazardous substances, a study on environmental impact assessment and public discussion is necessary. When such a case is received in the Ministry, it will be forwarded to the reference sector for competent action “, it is stated in the written answer for RFE.

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