

In Serbia, coal is the dominant resource in charge of producing 70% of the country's electricity. Although coal-fired power plants are the biggest polluters, Serbia will be condemned to them for at least 25 years. During that time, developed countries plan to shut down their thermal power plants by 2038. However, if there were no production of electricity from coal, that from hydro potential as well as development plans related to renewable energy sources would not be able to meet domestic electricity needs and Serbia would import even more electricity than is the case now.

The problem is that coal-fired power plants in Serbia are big polluters. Even the biggest, according to the claims of the Fiscal Council of Serbia. At one time, the council disclosed data that EPS must invest at least 800 million euros in environmental protection because it is "the biggest polluter in Serbia and among the biggest in Europe."

That investment would have to be completed by the end of 2025, in order to meet national and European regulations in the field of environmental protection. It is necessary to build a desulphurization plant, a waste management system and a wastewater treatment plant. Data from 2016 show that in Europe, sulfur dioxide was mostly emitted by the Kostolac B thermal power plant (Serbia), followed by Ugljenik (BiH), followed by Nikola Tesla A thermal power plant in Obrenovac (Serbia), then Kakanj (BiH), and Kostolac A (Serbia), and the sixth place is the thermal power plant Nikola Tesla B in Obrenovac (Serbia). Also, according to the data from that year, when it comes to the emission of powder materials, the Kosovo B power plant (Serbia) pollutes the most, Kolubara A is in third place, followed by the "Nikola Tesla" A thermal power plant.

Commenting on the claims made by the Fiscal Council, Aleksandar Antic, the Minister of Mining and Energy said that these were outdated data from several years ago and that in the meantime the situation had changed for the better.

He pointed out that a lot of work has been done related to the desulphurization of flue gases in Kostolac, as well as that the project in the thermal power plants in Obrenovac is in progress. According to him, EPS is the company that has convincingly invested the most in the field of environmental protection, more than 400 million euros.

- In the next five to seven years, another billion euros will be invested, which will bring the EPS plants to the level of parameters that are allowed in the countries of the European Union. We have installed electrostatic precipitators in all units that will continue to operate after 2023, denitrification is going according to plan and projects for the construction of a flue gas desulphurization plant are progressing. The review of air quality monitoring speaks in favor of that, which shows that Kostolac is in the category of air quality - excellent - Antic pointed out. As one of the proofs that a lot has been done to increase the protection of the

environment in EPS, they point out that the examples due to the emission of powdery substances have been reduced from about 66,000 tons in 2003 to 8,500 tons in 2018.

Slobodan Ruzic, director of the consulting company Energy Saving Group, says that Serbia does not have the luxury as Germany to give up coal as a resource for electricity production.

- The one who would insist on that would work against the interests of the electric power system of Serbia. Coal is the dominant resource when it comes to electricity production in Serbia. It received as much as two thirds of the electricity. There are no potentials that could adequately replace it. That is why we are forced to spend it as a resource while its stocks exist. That means in the next 25 years - our interlocutor explains. However, that does not mean that renewable energy sources and energy efficiency should not be developed at the same time, he added.

- Every kilowatt hour obtained from renewable energy sources is very important for the electric power system of Serbia and it is very important to work on that. Also, obsolete production units in Serbian thermal power plants should be replaced with new ones, which will improve their efficiency by some 10 percent. When coal runs out, we will have to think about a new resource for electricity production, which can replace it to the fullest.

Renewables are not. If no other source for obtaining electricity is found by then, the only solution is nuclear energy - our interlocutor says.

Vojislav Vuletić, Secretary General of the Gas Association of Serbia, points out that the "blue fuel" that would be produced in gas thermal power plants was the basic substitute source for coal consumption, ie the operation of thermal power plants.

- The Electric Power Industry of Serbia once made a plan to build seven gas thermal power plants - heating plants along the route of the "South Stream" gas pipeline, a project that has been canceled in the meantime. These are power plants that would be built in Novi Sad, Subotica, Zrenjanin, Sremska Mitrovica, Belgrade, Kragujevac and Nis. The "Turkish Stream" gas pipeline should pass through the "South Stream" route, which means that the construction of those power plants in which thermal energy for heating and electricity would be produced is still a reality. So the alternative to coal as a resource from which electricity is obtained is certainly gas. Renewable energy sources do not have that potential, that is, not enough electricity can be produced from them in Serbia. Accordingly, they can only be a limited replacement capacity and by no means a basic resource for obtaining electricity in our country - concludes Vuletić.

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For the next 25 years Serbia will be condemned to use coal