

The former Zenica ironworks is now the company ArcelorMittal, the largest steel producer in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ArcelorMittal employs about 2,200 workers.

Air quality in Zenica is the “third category” in the last five years, according to a report by the Kemal Kapetanovic Institute in Zenica, which is working to determine its quality.

“Limit values have been exceeded many times, especially in periods when there is an inversion in Zenica, when a layer is formed above Zenica that does not allow the release of pollutants and pollution increases day by day,” Halim Prcanovic, head of the Environmental Center at RSE, told Zenica Institute “Kemal Kapetanovic”.

Prcanovic adds that there is no precise data on how much ArcelorMittal or some other factory in Zenica-Doboj Canton, one of the ten cantons in the Federation of BiH, pollutes the air and has a bad effect on the environment, because a study was not done due to lack of money.

But this year, that could change, as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has set up an air quality management assistance program for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The study will be made for Zenica, ie the impact of home fireplaces and industry on the pollution of the city.

110,000 tons of coal were imported

ArcelorMittal Zenica is the largest producer of long steel products in the region, and annually produces almost a million tons. The basic product range includes corrugated concrete steel, wire, mesh and lattice girders. Steel is an alloy of iron and carbon with other elements, and iron is most commonly found in the earth’s crust, in the form of ores. The Zenica company draws ore from a nearby mine, but a few days ago coal for this company arrived from Australia. It was delivered by the largest ship that has sailed into the Port of Ploče in Croatia so far, on February 18. As RSE was told from ArcelorMittal, the coal was brought for the needs of the coking process in their Coke plant.

“This is a completely different type of coal from the energy we use on our boilers in the energy plant for the production process and heating of the city. Coking coal cannot be used anywhere else except in the coking process, after which it is later used in a blast furnace for steel production. In addition, this type of coal is not available in the former Yugoslavia “, stated the Public Relations Office of this company.

The company adds that they have implemented a number of projects for environmental protection, and that they have formed the first private-public company, Toplana Zenica, where the City of Zenica is a partner.

“This project is equally important for district heating, energy efficiency as well as for

environmental protection in Zenica. The CO₂ emissions from the factory will be reduced by 80 percent “, explained ArcelorMittal.

Where is BiH on the path to decarbonisation?

Arcelor Mittal is not the only company that uses coal for production and heating. There are 14 coal mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and almost 70 percent of electricity production is based on the combustion of this ore.

In November 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and the Declaration on the Common Regional Market of the Western Balkans. The declaration, among other things, implies the encouragement of the tax on carbon dioxide emissions, the development of market models to encourage the use of renewable energy sources, the gradual abolition of subsidies for coal, but also the shutdown of all coal mines and thermal power plants by 2050. Decarbonization is also one of the conditions for BiH's membership in the European Union (EU). BiH should thus get rid of the use of brown coal, lignite, fuel oil, and start using renewable energy sources, such as wind, water or sun. However, further insistence on the construction of thermal power plants in BiH, instead of using renewable energy sources, is a special problem pointed out by the EU. This was also the reason for the Energy Community to impose sanctions on BiH on January 18, due to, as stated in the decision, serious and permanent omissions in respecting the rules and directives of that organization. Bosnia and Herzegovina was then suspended from certain rights under the Energy Community Treaty due to non-compliance with the Second Energy Package in the gas sector, the Sulfur and Fuels Directive, as well as the Third Energy Package for electricity and gas. One of the key problems for the EC is that BiH is continuing its activities on the construction of Unit 7 of the Tuzla Thermal Power Plant, at a time when European Union countries are trying to give up coal-fired energy.

Source: slobodnaevropa.org