

At the conference on “Issues related to the Kolubara B thermal power plant project” organized by the Coalition for Sustainable Mining in Serbia, it was concluded that Serbia has committed itself to international transition, ie the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and shutting down thermal power plants by 2050, which is why it is important for the state to make a plan of what will happen to the workers and find them alternative jobs.

The president of the Coalition, Zvezdan Kalmar, says that the organization supports the letter that the Minister of Mining and Energy, Zorana Mihajlovic, sent to EPS to believe that it is necessary to stop the construction of the thermal power plant “Kolubara B”. Kalmar claims that the project is unprofitable for Serbia, because the state will borrow a lot to build that thermal power plant, which, if built in 2030, will be able to work for a maximum of 20 years, and that will not be enough to pay off the loan. In addition, he emphasizes that the construction of thermal power plants is not in accordance with the environmental agreements to which Serbia has committed itself, because the construction of a new power plant implies an increase in excavation and combustion of coal and greater pollution. He also points out that the permit for impact assessment for the “Kolubara B” project was revoked in court in 2015 by the Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development. He reminds that the project was planned in the 50’s and 60’s and that it was supposed to be the most modern project at that time, but, he points out, times have changed and the climate crisis has been declared.

Kalmar adds that EU member states have committed themselves to a zero rate of harmful gas emissions by 2050, and Serbia, which strives for European standards, will have to follow that path. He points out that the shutdown of thermal power plants will not and cannot happen “overnight”, and emphasizes that it is therefore important for the state to build enough plants that use renewable energy sources and thus provide jobs for workers from thermal power plants.

“Because of energy security, we have to have facilities built before 2050,” says Kalmar. He states that it is time for Serbia to turn to renewable energy sources, and that the future of Serbia’s energy security is large hydropower plants.

“Serbia has the potential to build Djerdap 3, that project can be even over one gigawatt of installed power, and even up to two. Which means that it is the most precious energy facility that can be built,” Kalmar said.

Project coordinator of the Belgrade Open School (BOS) Mirjana Jovanovic says that the energy transition in Serbia is happening, adding that it is nothing new for our country and that it has been known since 2005 when it signed the Energy Community Treaty with the EU

and other Western Balkan countries. She adds that messages about the gradual closure of blocks in thermal power plants are not transmitted to citizens and workers, and that they are kept in suspense.

Therefore, she emphasizes, it is very important that the state prepares workers and citizens for the energy transition and makes a plan for their future jobs, when thermal power plants and mines are closed.

Jovanovic says that a social and economic catastrophe must be prevented in cities such as Lazarevac or Kostolac, which live from mines and thermal power plants. That is why she called on all decision-makers to include unions and workers in those talks when planning energy and climate policies in our country, and to start planning what they will do with all those jobs from 2050.

“We have to plan gradually, so that we don’t end up in a situation like we saw in Romania or Bulgaria, where the mines closed within five years and thousands of people lost their jobs because there were no plans to provide alternative jobs”, concluded Jovanovic.

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