

Sarajevo-based environmental watchdog Ekotim has submitted on Friday an official complaint to the Energy Community dispute settlement mechanism due to lax pollution limits for a new Chinese-backed 450 MW unit at the Tuzla coal power plant in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The complaint claims that the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism has failed to require the plant to comply with the Industrial Emissions Directive pollution limits for new plants. Instead the Ministry required only older, less stringent standards for SO₂ and dust. As a consequence additional investments may be needed once the plant is built.

This complaint is the latest in a series of legal moves by NGOs against planned new coal power plants in the country due to their adverse health and climate impacts.

The environmental permits for new Tuzla 7 and Banovići power plants in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity have been targeted by three lawsuits at the Sarajevo Cantonal Court requesting the cancellation of the permits that were issued by the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism. In addition, an official complaint against Bosnia and Herzegovina was submitted to the Energy Community Secretariat regarding unclear pollution control limits for the Banovići plant, this July.

In the Republika Srpska entity, a lawsuit against the environmental permit for the recently inaugurated Stanari power plant has been submitted by the Center for Environment for Banja Luka, along with an appeal seeking the cancellation of the environmental permit for the Ugljevik III power plant. The group also filed a complaint to the Energy Community dispute settlement mechanism regarding pollution limits for the Ugljevik III power plant in December 2014.

The latest complaint comes at the time when Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted the Energy Community Ministerial Council meeting in Sarajevo as the culmination of its year-long presidency of the regional energy body. During the meeting, new stricter environmental impact assessment standards were adopted, bringing the Treaty up to date with changes in the EU.

“More than ten years since the entry into force of the Energy Community Treaty, the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have proven themselves incapable or unwilling of correctly implementing one of the most basic obligations of the Treaty - the environmental impact assessment process. Now the Ministerial Council has adopted stricter legislation and our authorities haven’t even managed to properly implement the current obligations”, commented Rijad Tikveša, President of Ekotim.

“We’ve been warning the authorities for several years that under the Energy Community Treaty, any new power plants coming online after 1 January 2018 have to be in line with the

Lawsuits and complaints pile up against planned Bosnia and Herzegovina coal power plants

EU Industrial Emissions Directive, but the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities have failed to include this requirement in new environmental permits”, he added.

“It’s anyway incomprehensible that the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities are approving new climate- and health-damaging coal power plants at all, when EU climate policies and low electricity prices will almost certainly render them uneconomic. Solar and wind prices are falling rapidly but Bosnia and Herzegovina is failing to take advantage of these plentiful resources”, added Igor Kalaba, Energy and Climate Change Program Coordinator of Center for Environment.

source: bankwatch.org