

The air pollution in the industrial town of Tuzla, has been above legally allowed limits on 12 out of 20 consecutive days, according to joint measurements performed by CEE Bankwatch Network and the Tuzla-based environmental group Center for Ecology and Energy.

The town in the north-eastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina houses a lignite power plant. Tuzla is the first in a series of locations two organisations aim to cover in their air quality measurement tour. It is a part of an effort to provide an independent set of data on air quality in various locations across the Balkans, according to the Bankwatch report.

Meanwhile, Elektroprivreda BiH, the state-owned power utility company, has plans to build a new 450 MW unit at the lignite-powered Tuzla Thermal Power Plant (Termoelektrana Tuzla). The “Tuzla 7” facility is meant to replace two of the four such units, but will also increase the plant’s overall capacity.

The new unit would almost certainly contribute to the heavy air pollution in the area, since the power plant is awkwardly situated at the western part of the city, with regular western wind carrying smog across the valley. Tuzla is regarded as a place with poor air quality, with every winter period bringing higher levels of particulate matter (i.e. fine dust), which are not shown in the official reports on air pollution monitoring in the Tuzla Canton.

The numbers are worrying, according to data reported by Bankwatch: the values of the PM10 were regularly above the Federation of BiH legislation of 65 µg/m³ limits, with peaks at over 300 µg/m³. The numbers tend to rocket after 7:00 PM local time, as a possible indicator that dust filters are turned off overnight. With 12 days crossing the legal limits of pollution out of 20 days monitored, Tuzla almost certainly sees well over 35 days a year on which the average concentration exceeds the legal limit for PM10.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted air quality legislation on par with the European Union standards. The Center for Ecology and Energy, however, said that the enforcement of the laws is weak, and called authorities to force polluters to respect their duties and protect health and lives of the population.

source: balkangreenenergynews.com