

Although, according to Government's opinion, the project represents a strategic one for Montenegro, the public hearing program determined for only one round table to be organized, which means one public presentation of the project in Pljevlja, on May 25, just after four non-working days due to national holiday celebrations.

Non-governmental organizations Green Home (GH) and MANS accused the government of deliberately feigning a public hearing on the construction of the second block of the thermal power plant, and that proposed solutions provide false information and go in favor of the investors and to the detriment of the citizens.

The government has adopted a draft Detailed Spatial Plan (DSP) for the power plant and the Report on the strategic assessment of environmental impact (SAI) and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism recently announced a public hearing about these documents.

"Although this is a very complex and Controversial project that bears significant ecological and economic risks for Montenegro, the Ministry did not bother to adequately inform the public about the start of the public hearing, nor to encourage as many stakeholders as well as the local community to participate in this process. Moreover, the chosen timing speaks to the fact that the intention of the Government is to let the discussion pass with as little "boat rocking" and "comments", is said in the statement of GH and MANS.

They corroborate this with the fact that the period from 29 April to 29 May designated for public hearing includes two state holidays, which drastically reduces the number of working days and causes the discontinuity of the discussion.

"The program of public hearing determines for only one round table to be organized, i.e. a public presentation of the project only taking place in Pljevlja, on May 25, just after four non-working days due to national holiday celebrations. We believe that this cannot be a coincidence and that this way they are trying to reduce the public's attention and its presence at this event, "the statement said.

They state that there is an impression of lacking of understanding of policies related to the environment and climate change, as well as an unwillingness to face the new liabilities they entail.

"This can be noticed in the estimates of costs related to the exploitation of a new block of thermal power plant which are not adequately perceived in the draft documents, while the costs of emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) are very underestimated and projected at the current price of five euros per ton of CO₂, although all estimates and announcements from EU say that due to the increasingly stringent requirements of climate policy by 2025 we can expect even up to 30 euros per ton of CO₂."

They state that, if the state wants to realistically and objectively perceive the profitability and risks of such an investment, it should at least assess the costs of exploitation and operation of the facility, which will additionally go at the expense of citizens.

NGOs argue that there is still an ongoing practice of having sympathies towards investors in comparison to the public and realistic consideration of interests and needs of Montenegro.

“Even in this case, as in many so far, we have an example that you first meet the investors’ needs and you agree the frameworks and parameters of the project, and only after that you conduct a public hearing, which in this case is only just a mere formality and not an essential and realistic assessment of the pros and cons of such an investment whose first estimates say that if we only take into account the loan that the Government and EPCG are planning to take in order to implement this project, it could cost up to nearly half a billion euros. In addition, we already have the announcement that the credit debt will pass over to the expense of citizens by increasing the price of electricity in the following period, while the total costs of the project (such as the opening of new mines, the protection of the environment or health) could exceed one billion euros “, according to GH and MANS.