

A new coal-fired power plant in Bosnia-Herzegovina will have to adhere to stricter air quality standards, according to a new ruling by the Energy Community Secretariat.

The decision comes in response to a complaint filed by the environmental NGO Ekotim regarding the environmental permit enabling the construction of the 350 MW Banovići power plant in north-eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The complaint, filed in July 2016, claimed that the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism had failed to require pollution limits as obliged under the Energy Community Treaty.

Under the Treaty, any power plant entering operation after 1 January 2019 must be in line with the EU's Industrial Emissions Directive Chapter III. However, the environmental permit for Banovići power plant failed to specify this requirement.

The Energy Community Secretariat, in a letter to Ekotim dated 8 February, stated it would inform the Ministry that the permit needs to be changed to stipulate compliance with the Directive.

The Banovići coal-fired power plant is one of several new power plants currently planned in Bosnia-Herzegovina threatening to lock the country into dirty fossil fuels energy for decades to come. Local civil society groups and Bankwatch have been repeatedly warning about the ramifications of this trend and working to halt it.

Ekotim's complaint is the first of a series of lawsuits and formal complaints on coal plants in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to be concluded.

A lawsuit seeking the cancellation of the environmental permit for the Banovići power plant was filed to the Sarajevo Cantonal Court by Ekotim on April 15, 2016. Also in April 2016, a lawsuit seeking the cancellation of the environmental permit for the Ramići cooling water reservoir for the Banovići plant was filed to the Sarajevo Cantonal Court. In January this year, a further case was filed against the decision to grant an environmental permit for the Čubrić ash landfill for the power plant. All three cases are still ongoing.

A lawsuit seeking the cancellation of the environmental permit for the planned Tuzla 7 power plant was also filed to the Sarajevo Cantonal Court by Ekotim on September 29, 2016, along with a separate formal complaint to the Energy Community on Tuzla 7 shortly afterwards.

"Ekotim has repeatedly informed the Ministry of Environment and Tourism of the deficiencies of the planned power plants at Banovići and Tuzla during the public hearings for these projects, but our most important comments have been ignored. We are glad to see that the Energy Community has stepped in to resolve this issue", said Rijad Tikveša, President of Ekotim.

New blow to Bosnia-Herzegovina coal plans as Energy Community requires changes to permit

“Let us hope that the Energy Community’s findings will finally force the Federal government to examine Banovići and Tuzla 7 in more detail before, rather than after, our public companies indebt themselves to the tune of almost EUR 1 billion”, he added.

source: bankwatch.org