

The Kolubara B thermal power plant with a capacity of 350 MW, which was supposed to be built by the Chinese company Power Construction Corp. of China was to be completed by 2024. The Ministry of Mining and Energy ordered the suspension of the construction of the Kolubara B thermal power plant, and after the announcement of this news, a protest was organized by miners and employees at the Nikola Tesla Thermal Power Plant, organized by the Kolubara Mining Basin Trade Union. The miners said at the gathering that coal must be the mainstay of Serbia for another 30 years, and that in the event that coal stops being mined, Serbia will remain in the dark, while citizens will feel all other solutions in their pockets.

At the same time, the Ministry announced that the energy transition does not mean the sudden closure of all thermal power plants, but that it requires long-term planning until 2050, and that workers should not be afraid of losing their jobs overnight. Somewhat later, Minister Zorana Mihajlović also said that “No one is working on closing the power plant, nor will anyone lose their job.”

The news about the suspension of the construction of a new thermal power plant in our country is certainly commendable. Energy transition is finally becoming an issue that gets attention, and after the adoption of the law on climate change and renewable energy sources, it is clear that things in this area are really slowly starting to change. At the same time, different reactions to this news show how complex the energy transition will be when there will be numerous controversies in the public.

Coal is at the exit door

Coal is the energy source that contributes the most to climate change, and in recent years, many countries around the world have adopted a large number of measures and policies aimed at limiting its consumption. In the countries of North America and the European Union, a sharp decline in coal use has been recorded in the last ten years. At the level of the entire EU, only about 13% of electricity was produced with the help of coal in 2020, which is less than with the help of solar and wind energy.

In addition, the European Union is preparing to introduce a carbon tax on imports of certain goods, such as steel, to protect its economy from competition from countries that do not have strong policies to combat climate change and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. It is not yet known whether these taxes will apply to all products in the future, but it is clear that this is a problem for our country, given that Serbia is among the countries with the largest share of coal in electricity production in the world. Currently, about 70% of electricity is obtained with this energy source, which is responsible for the largest emissions of carbon

dioxide, which means that the announced taxes could greatly affect the Serbian economy. Although coal is already at the exit door in Western countries, globally its consumption shows only a slight downward trend after the maximum reached in 2013, mostly due to the growth recorded in Asia. However, after the proclaimed goals of achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by the middle of the century in the largest Asian economies such as China, Japan and South Korea, coal demand is expected to decline much faster in the second half of the next decade.

Abandonment of coal is inevitable and it is necessary to make an “exit strategy”

What has been known for some time is that the future of energy is not in coal, and the reason for that is not only policies to fight climate change and fight air pollution, but also a steep decline in electricity prices obtained from renewable sources that are now competitively competitive with fossil fuels . The global trend of abandoning coal and introducing some kind of tax on CO2 emissions will certainly continue, and if Serbia does not seriously approach the plan to change its energy system, it risks remaining a black hole - first on the map of Europe and then the world. This does not mean that it is expected and possible that all thermal power plants in our country will be closed abruptly and overnight, but it is also clear that this will have to happen before 2050. Turning our heads away from this fact now will only complicate this process in the future. In previous years, the state practically ignored the issue of energy transition, and that time could be used to make preparations that will make the transition easier and of better quality.

Just transition, ie the issue of the economic future of miners and employees in thermal power plants is extremely important and the next period is much better used by creating a strategy that will ensure that their rights and interests are recognized and best protected through support and retraining programs. not fighting something that is inevitable. In the end, we should not lose sight of the fact that the closure of thermal power plants not only prevents climate change, but also improves air quality. Our thermal power plants are among the biggest polluters in the whole of Europe, and according to the data of the World Health Organization, more than 6,500 people die from polluted air in Serbia every year.

Source: klima101.rs