

At the beginning of the construction of the new block of Kostolac thermal power plant, the Serbian government has once again pursued its energy policy, which relies heavily on the use of fossil fuels, and above all brown coal and lignite with low energy value. While at the international level a major fight against investment in fossil fuels is taking place, and renewable energy sources become more and more accessible every day, the question is where does the new power plants lead us?

Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, Energy Minister Aleksandar Antic and the Chinese partner laid the foundation stone on November 20th for the new block of Kostolac B3 power plant, 350MW. Minister Antic claims that this is the largest investment in the energy sector after three decades, and the total value of the works will be 715.6 million dollars. This investment is another proof of the Serbian government's commitment to the energy that we receive from fossil fuels, which is a multitude of problems, and which increasingly abandons the countries.

Thermal power plants contribute significantly to air pollution, and indirectly to human health. The emission of soot from the thermoelectric and individual boiler plants, the combustion of a coal-fired coal in poor thermal energy, is the main cause of air pollution in Serbia. The main sources of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions are thermal power plants. It was noticed that in Obrenovac, Kostolac, Lazarevac, near thermal power plants, there were a lot more patients with respiratory diseases, and children were particularly vulnerable. Excavation of coal on open pit mines leaves desolation behind and requires big funds for their rehabilitation. When ore mines disappear, most of them remain abandoned, with a similar look to the surface of the moon. Incineration of brown oil and lignite leaves large quantities of ash and slag which, if incorrectly deposited, lead to contamination of underground and surface waters.

Serbia, as a signatory to the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015, pledged to limit its carbon dioxide emissions. The construction of a thermal power plant is a sign that there is nothing from the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Even before the climate congress in Paris, it was clear that the authorities did not want to seriously address the issue of climate change, despite the fact that, under the influence of these changes, we are increasingly exposed to floods, fires and droughts. The statistical data showed promise of a 9.8% emission reduction, actually an increase of 15.3%, because the reference data were taken from 1990, as well as emissions from power plants from Kosovo that are not already included in the national emission. Over the past 25 years, we have witnessed strong de-industrialization, which in addition to all negative effects has contributed to reducing emissions of harmful gases. Instead of using this brief breath and moving towards a green

transition, a new thermal power plant opens, which will further increase the greenhouse gas emissions.

The new thermal power plant project already faced its problems at first, as lawyer Sreten Djordjevic filed a lawsuit to annul the environmental impact study for the investment last week. "The investor does not have a valid solution, and it must have the latest at the latest before getting the start of the works, so the start of the construction of the plant is illegal," Djordjevic said. Despite the potential irregularities in the process of obtaining the license, the foundation stone was set up and started to work.

The once-big supporter of renewable energy sources, Prime Minister Ana Brnabic, has come to the ashes to lay the foundation stone for the construction of a thermal power plant, which uses the most dirty energy source. After this, can we expect tomorrow to support the construction of a nuclear power plant? Only two years ago she was one of the authors of the publication "Roadmap for the Development of Renewable Energy Sources in Serbia and the Region", while today it seems that signs beside the road leading to the direction of using fossil fuels.

If they do not want to listen to common sense, domestic politicians might listen to at least the recommendations of the European Union, which they are allegedly traveling to. On this path, the European integration of the countries of the region should reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, which includes the shutting down of a number of thermal power plants in the coming years. The proposal of the experts is to invest in energy efficiency of residential buildings, more efficient use of wind and solar energy, while reducing the use of coal. Despite its somewhat progressive policies on energy transition, neither the European Union has made much progress, although it has become the "leader" of the world in the fight against climate change after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. In Germany, environmental activists are struggling to close thermal power plants, and frequent actions of physical blocking of thermal power plants, despite private security and police. So far Poland has managed to curtail or slow down climate negotiations and remain "faithful" to fossil fuels, primarily coal. The next climate congress will be held in Poland and presents another opportunity to change the flow of negotiations more sharply, because climate change is no longer just a dystopian future, it is a great deal of the present.

China has become the world leader in the transition to renewable energy in recent years. Such a decision became inevitable, because the excessive use of coal in thermal power plants and the expansion of individual traffic made cities smash in the smog. While China's massive greenhouse gas power is being shifted to green energy today, the government of Serbia, instead of purchasing solar panels and wind turbines, imports dirty technology for

burning fossil fuels from China.

Serbia has the potential to switch to renewable energy sources. The transition to green, sustainable sources of energy, as well as socio-ecological transformation is primarily a political issue. Without a strong pressure from citizens, the civil sector and progressive political parties and movements, it will be difficult to change the course towards sustainable energy sources. Thermal power plants, as centralized systems, are much easier to put under the control of the ruling elites, while the negative effects on human health and the environment are socialized, the coal-extracted energy is further subsidized. The transition to sustainable energy production could contribute to decentralization, but also to cooperative ownership and the pursuit of smaller systems, which by connecting to the smart grid will provide greater energy independence through the acquisition of energy from more independent and interconnected sources.