

Although Serbia's Electric Power Industry has invested a lot of money and effort in the previous period to protect the environment from the negative effects of thermal power plants, air pollution levels are still above the parameters considered acceptable in developed countries.

The experts point out that reaching these standards requires additional investment and more intensive development of renewable energy sources.

According to the Fiscal Council, EPS must invest at least € 800 million in environmental protection because it is "the largest polluter in Serbia and among the largest in Europe". That investment would have to be completed by the end of 2025 in order to meet national and European environmental regulations. It is necessary to build a desulphurisation plant, waste management system and wastewater treatment plant.

Data from 2016 show that in Europe, sulfur dioxide was emitted most by the Kostolac B thermal power plant (Serbia), followed by Ugljenik (BiH), followed by Nikola Tesla A thermal power plant in Obrenovac (Serbia), followed by Kakanj (BiH), and then Kostolac A (Serbia), and in sixth place is Nikola Tesla B thermal power plant in Obrenovac (Serbia). Also according to the data from that year, when it comes to the emission of powdered materials, the Kosovo B (Serbia) power plant is biggest polluter, Kolubara A is the third, followed by the Nikola Tesla A thermal power plant.

However, Aleksandar Antic, the minister of mining and energy, points out that this is outdated data from several years ago and that in the meantime the situation has changed for the better.

He pointed out that a great deal of work had been done on flue gas desulphurisation in Kostolac and that a project had been started at thermal power plants in Obrenovac.

According to him, EPS is the company with the largest investment in the field of environmental protection, more than € 400 million.

- In the next five to seven years, another billion euros will be invested, bringing EPS plants to the level of parameters allowed in European Union countries. We have installed electrostatic precipitators in all the blocks that will continue to operate even after 2023, denitrification goes according to plan and projects are underway to build a flue gas desulphurisation plant. This is supported by the air quality monitoring report, which shows that Kostolac is in the category of air quality - excellent - said Antic. As one of the evidences that much has been done to increase environmental protection in EPS, they point out that examples of powdered matter emissions have been reduced from about 66,000 tonnes in 2003 to 8,500 tonnes in 2018.

The experts do not dispute the efforts that EPS is making to protect the environment, but believe that this cannot be enough, that at the same time it needs to intensively develop renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on coal and pollution emitted from thermal power plants. Secretary General of the Serbian Gas Association Vojislav Vuletic points out that much could be achieved by building gas power plants.

- Small hydropower plants do not produce much electricity and windmills depend on whether or not there is wind. Therefore, renewables of this kind cannot be seen as a viable substitute for coal. The construction of gas power plants can be an alternative. I would like to remind you that the construction of a number of gas power plants in Serbia was planned at the time when the construction of the South Stream gas pipeline, which was stopped in the meantime, was ongoing. It is extremely useful that EPS invests in environmental protection, but it is not enough. In order to protect nature adequately, it is necessary to develop other plants for the production of electricity such as gas power plants, which would reduce the production from thermal power plants and thus further reduce air pollution - explains our interlocutor.

Ljubodrag Savic, professor at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade, points out that RES needs to be developed not only to reduce coal consumption and thus to protect the ecology, but also because domestic coal is of poor quality.

- The highest quality coal is in Kosovo, but EPS cannot count on it. Coal that is being mined in Kolubara is of poor quality and is becoming increasingly difficult to reach. Therefore, alternatives must be considered, and these are certainly renewable energy sources. The effect is therefore twofold, there is an alternative for production from thermal power plants, and thus the environment is further protected - our interlocutor concludes.

Source: danas.rs