

The Center for Energy and Clean Air Research (CREA) and Greenpeace published a report in which Serbia was ranked eighteenth on the list of countries that emitted the most sulfur dioxide last year, and the “Nikola Tesla” coal-fired thermal power plant (TENT) on ninth place on the planet. The residents of this Belgrade municipality do not need proof that it is difficult to breathe in Obrenovac because they know how it is for them.

Mirko Popovic, program director of the Regulatory Institute for Renewable Energy and Environment (RERI), a non-governmental organization established to achieve goals in the field of protection, preservation and improvement of the environment and sustainable use of natural resources, says that such results when it comes to TENT are not surprising.

- EPS reports contain similar data. This document estimates that the annual emission of sulfur dioxide is 197,000 tons, and the EPS report mentions the figure of 193,000 tons. This is not a big difference and there is no significant deviation. They do not match only in the methodology of data collection, in whether it is done from below or from the air. It is not disputed that “Nikola Tesla” emits four to six times more sulfur dioxide than allowed, nor that it is an old plant, without a device for desulphurization of flue gases, and it is clear that because of all this it is one of the biggest polluters - says Popovic.

He is convinced that the pollution is a consequence of non-compliance with regulations and reminds that the European Union has respected the Directive on large furnaces since 2001, which stipulates the obligation to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and powdery substances upgraded with even stricter and stricter rules.

The danger of sulfur dioxide is often reduced and the fact that this substance is not in the top twenty biggest pollutants is emphasized. Criticizing such thoughts, Mirko Popovic states that there are more dangerous substances, as well as that exhaust gases from cars and individual furnaces are also a serious problem, but also warns that by ignoring the Directive on large furnaces, Serbia is already far behind developed countries.

- It is true that electricity in Serbia is cheaper than in other countries, but that is not a product of market opportunities, but of politics. We will face serious difficulties in the near future. First, TENT-like plants in European countries have to pay the state some kind of penalty in the amount of 25 euros per one ton of emitted carbon dioxide, so it is easy to calculate the financial ballast of “Elektroprivreda Srbije”. And secondly, EU countries are introducing the so-called cross-border tax in order to protect domestic producers who respect the regulations, which leads to the fact that electricity imported from other countries, including Serbia, gets a higher price - RERI’s program director points out. However, not all environmentalists agree. Ognjan Pantic, coordinator of the project “Energy, Climate and Environment” within the Belgrade Open School (BOS), a non-profit

educational organization of civil society founded in 1993, believes that the news of the infamous placement of TENT in the top of world pollutants should be taken with caution because the methodology by which this result was obtained may be questionable. He agrees, however, that the main question is whether the emissions coming from the entire thermal energy sector, including TENT, are in line with domestic regulations and international obligations.

- It is clear that these obligations have not been met. As of January 1, 2018, the provisions of the Directive on Large Furnaces began to apply to the states signatories to the Agreement on the Establishment of the Energy Community, including Serbia. In order to comply with the provisions of this directive, Serbia has chosen to develop a National Emission Reduction Plan, instead of harmonizing each thermal power plant individually. From 2005 and accession to the Energy Community until 2018, not enough has been done to prepare Serbia for the implementation of this directive. In other words, we are violating our obligations starting from January 1, 2018 – says Pantic.

He explains that the sulfur dioxide emitted from TENT is a gas that poses a threat to the health of the population. It leads to acid rain that pollutes both soil and water. High emissions of sulfur dioxide also contribute to the increased concentration of suspended particles in the air.

- The problem is the fact that coal used in Serbia for the production of electricity is actually low-quality lignite, the combustion of which leads to the release of a large amount of sulfur. It is planned that the desulphurization plant will be installed in the thermal power plant, but the project is very late, for which “Elektroprivreda Srbije” had to pay fines, due to the unused loan – says Pantic.

He also mentions the problem with carbon dioxide emissions, which contributes to climate change. He reminds that the regulations of the European Union are aimed at drastically reducing carbon dioxide emissions, in order to meet the goals in the field of combating climate change.

- In addition to the existing ones, new economic instruments are planned which should additionally burden the production of electricity from coal – adds Pantic and concludes that soon the production of electricity by burning coal will become a thing of the past – both from the environmental and economic point of view.

Environmentalists

Thermal power plants “Nikola Tesla” are the largest producer of electricity in Southeast Europe. The company consists of 14 units with a total installed capacity of 3,411 megawatts,

Serbian TPP “Nikola Tesla” is the ninth largest sulfur dioxide pollutant in the world

which is one third of the installed capacity of “Elektroprivreda Srbije” (EPS), and annually produces more than 50 percent of Serbian electricity.

It is also interesting that their web page says that TENT is a leader in the field of investing in environmental protection and raising the quality of life of the local community. It is also stated that “the care for the local community of TENT, in addition to environmental protection, is also manifested through the maintenance of the district heating system, which was solved in Obrenovac in the best possible way.”

Source: politika.rs