

The Ugljevik coal-fired thermal power plant is the biggest air pollutant in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On April 1, it will undergo a regular annual overhaul, for which it is not known how long it will last, only after its completion and re-commissioning of the thermal power plant unit, will the gas desulphurization plant start operating (ODG).

A total of 95 million euros has been invested in the project of desulphurization in this coal-fired power plant in the north-eastern part of BiH, and the project started 12 years ago. The new plant should reduce emissions of SO₂ and particulate matter in line with European standards at the thermal power plant, which, according to a report by CEE Bankwatch Network, emitted 88,302 tons of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) in 2019, which is 9.7 times more than allowed.

Japanese credit

An agreement on a loan worth 85 million euros for the Project for the construction of a gas desulphurization plant at TPP Ugljevik was signed on October 20, 2009 between the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and BiH. It became effective only on April 16, 2010, with the publication of the Decision of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the ratification of the Loan Agreement.

When asked by RSE why it took 12 years for the plant to start operating, TPP Ugljevik said that the reasons were “strict requirements of creditors and slow procedures for obtaining all permits and approvals in BiH.”

Czech company sued for faulty filters

Work on the installation of equipment for desulphurization of flue gases began only in 2017. In the same year, a three-month overhaul was performed, during which the electrostatic precipitator plant was reconstructed, which was a precondition for the construction of an EDC plant. The Czech company “ZK-Termochem” was chosen for this job, which charged 10 million euros for this job. In February 2020, the EDC plant was put into trial operation, when it was noticed that it was not functioning properly and that it was releasing a higher concentration of harmful particles than allowed. The culprits were faulty electrostatic precipitators installed by a Czech company three years earlier, which were paid 10 million euros, in addition to the Japanese loan. Because of that, the Thermal Power Plant sued the Czech company, and in the meantime, it had to spend an additional 100,000 euros on a study that would determine how to solve the problem. Finally, the EDC plant was handed over to the management of TPP Ugljevik in October 2020, and it operated for only 50 days during trial operation and warranty tests. The last time the plant was operational was on February 11 and 12 in the test phase.

Doubts about the measured values of pollution emissions

In the response from TPP Ugljevik to the request of RSE how the test phase passed and what the tests of the plant showed, it is stated that significantly lower levels of emission of sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and solid particles were shown.

“The plant for EDC TPP Ugljevik was last in operation on 11 and 12 February, it was started and worked independently, with its trained staff, for more than 50 hours with SO₂ emissions of 130 mg / Nm³ (allowed 200) and particulate emissions 5 mg / Nm³ (allowed 20).

Previously, during 2020, it worked for 50 days (trial operation and warranty tests) with an average of SO₂ below 150 mg / Nm³ and solid particles below 5 mg / Nm³”, the response of TPP Ugljevik points out.

Majda Ibrakovic, coordinator of the Energy and Climate Change Program at the Center for the Environment (CZZS), doubts the credibility of these data.

“The same results were sent to us in a very concise table from which it is not clear who did the monitoring. So, it is not clear whether it was done by some authorized institution or they measured it themselves. They must, in accordance with the environmental permit, perform continuous monitoring of emissions of harmful gases and particles. I am not claiming that what was in the test period is incorrect, and it is very possible that these measured parameters were in line with the limit values, however we do not have a complete picture. We asked for complete data on the operation of the plant to be provided to us instead of half the data, but we are still waiting for an answer, ” explains Ibrakovic.

Source: radioslobodnaevropa