

Coal is an important resource of energy systems of the countries within the region. Because of the significant coal reserves in BiH, entity of Republic of Srpska specially, the construction of new thermal power facilities has been planned for years: TPP "Tuzla", block 8 (450MW), TPP "Banovići" (300MW), "Ugljevik 3" (600MW) and "Kakanj 8" (300MW). The latest developments which are directly related to the erection of the thermal power plant "Ugljevik 3" near Bijeljina in RS refer to the conflict between the non-governmental organisation from Banja Luka called Center for Environment and the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Environment of RS. The Environmental Impact Assessment for the new thermal power facilities that are to be built contains incorrect data, it has been found by the expert analysis conducted by this non-governmental organisation. This is the Environmental Impact Study for the new blocks of the TPP "Ugljevik 3". In this Study, some key information which is necessary for making an adequate Environmental Impact Assessment, in accordance with the industrial emissions directives of the EU, is missing. In the Environmental Protection Center, they say that the data on the exhaust gases NO_x (nitrogen oxides) and SO₂ and (sulphur dioxide), as well as on dust emission, is completely incorrect.

However, in the competent ministry, they say that all procedures prescribed by the Law on Environmental Protection have been complied with for the construction of the TPP "Ugljevik 3", as well as that this Center has so far lost all disputes in other cases brought against this ministry before competent courts.

Although, in the Environmental Impact Study and the environmental permit, it is stated that the thermal power plant will be in accordance with the prescribed norms from the IED (Industrial Emissions Directive), the information on whether the proposed pollution control technology will be sufficient to achieve this compliance has not been provided anywhere. This is worrying, they say at the Center. A continued implementation of projects which violate the IED will have a big and long-term impact on the people's health and the quality of the environment, as well as financial consequences on the budgets of both entities in BiH, the members of the non-governmental organisation say.

As it has been stated in the media, there is also pressure on the existing Mine and Thermal Power Plants (RITE) "Ugljevik" to reduce the quantity of SO₂ in the smoke within the next three years from 25.000 to the acceptable 200 milligrams per cubic meter (mg/m³). BiH committed itself to this eight years ago, when the Treaty of Accession to the Energy Community (EC) was signed.

At the website of the Center for Investigative Reporting there is the data that, by using dirty coal for electricity generation, the existing thermal power plant "Ugljevik" produces even up to 160.000 tons of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) annually, emitting even up to 125 times more of SO₂ per each cubic meter (m³) of smoke than it is permitted by the European environmental regulations.

Therefore, five years ago, the Mine and Thermal Power Plants “Ugljevik” took out a loan of 90MEUR for building a facility for flue gases desulphurisation. The construction should have been finished by the end of 2013, but it has not even started yet.