

The preparation of binding bids for participation in the project for the construction of nuclear power plant Belene will be delayed due to the state of emergency in Bulgaria introduced in response to the coronavirus pandemic, Bulgarian Ministry of Energy said. The statement from the Ministry said that the five shortlisted potential candidates will be able to start preparing their binding bids from the day they will be granted physical access to the data room for the project. Therefore, the new deadline for submitting the prepared offers will be set accordingly.

Bulgaria has already sent online the information memorandum for NPP Belene project to all of the five shortlisted potential candidates after they signed a confidentiality agreement earlier this month. The memorandum contains basic information about the project, its national legal framework as well as an analysis of the market environment in the region. In December, Energy Minister Temenuzhka Petkova announced the five shortlisted companies to enter the second, binding round of NPP Belene tender. She specified that the Russian, South Korean and Chinese companies are bidding for the position of strategic investor in the project, Framatome expressed interest in supplying safety systems and financing this share of its participation, while General Electric wants to manufacture turbines and other equipment and will also self-finance this part of the project. The five were selected on the basis of their experience in building nuclear power plants, their financial stability and high credit rating. The following companies submitted bids for strategic investments at the tender concluded in August 2019: Russian Rosatom through its subsidiary Atomenergoprom, Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co., China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC), Bulgarian company IPK & UP and two Bulgarian-registered consortia: Elektrocentrala Belene 2019 and AEC Belene. French Framatome applied to participate in the project's financial structuring and the supply of safety systems. US General Electric also seeks involvement in the financial structuring, but also as a potential designer and supplier of equipment. Bulgarian Grand Energy Distribution and Atomenergoremont is interested in acquiring minority stake in the project, while European Trade of Energy has expressed an interest in the purchase of electricity produced by the plant. North Macedonia also wants to participate in the project's implementation through a minority stake acquired by state-owned power utility ESM and a long-term electricity purchase contract.