

The Supreme Administrative Court allowed the coal-fired thermal power plant Maritsa 3 to resume operations, arguing that the facility is incurring substantial losses by being shut down and that the rights of more than 200 workers, who are forced into unscheduled leave without pay and risk unemployment, need to be safeguarded.

Thus, the Supreme Administrative Court halted an April 29 order by which the Director of the Haskovo Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water which suspended the plant's operation due to increased air pollution.

Another argument for the SAC's judgment is over 18 million euros claimed by Hydro Power Utilities Ltd as a penalty for Maritsa 3's default on its contractual obligation to deliver an amount of electricity because of the forced and unplanned suspension of the power plant's operation.

In late April, the Bulgarian Environment Ministry announced that TPP Maritsa 3 located in Dimitrovgrad in southern Bulgaria was forced to stop operation due to increased air pollution. The local environmental inspectorate issued an order for coercive administrative measures instructing the power plant to immediately cease operation. The order follows a number of violations of the Environmental Protection Act and breaches of the power plant's integrated permit in the past months. Maritsa 3 has already been fined for those.

The newly issued order states that TPP Maritsa 3 must stop operation immediately and its coal and biomass slots (where the fuel is fed to the boiler) must be sealed. The operator violated requirements in its integrated permit regarding the handling of flue gases and the power plant's sulfur dioxide emissions exceeded the air quality standards in the town of Dimitrovgrad.

TPP Maritsa 3 reported a net loss in the amount of 2.6 million euros in the first quarter of 2022, compared to a loss of some 8 million euros recorded in the same period last year. The company's total revenues dropped to 6.8 million euros in the first three months of 2022, compared to 10.8 million euros in the same period in 2021. Total expenditures dropped as well, reaching 9.4 million euros, compared to last year's 20 million euros.