

On 20 April, the Energy Community Secretariat sent an Opening Letter to Montenegro to address its breach of the Large Combustion Plants Directive. In particular, the country's sole thermal power plant Pljevlja, continues to operate despite the expiry of the limited lifetime derogation period of the plant. Montenegro has to respond until 20 June. Following a written declaration not to operate a plant for more than 20,000 hours after 1 January 2018, the limited lifetime derogation (also known as opt-out) was granted to selected installations by the Energy Community Ministerial Council. It is an implementation alternative to complying with the maximum emission limits set by the Large Combustion Plants Directive. Following the expiry of the 20,000 hours, the plants can only remain in operation if they meet the (stricter) standards of the Industrial Emissions Directive. This is not the case for TPP Pljevlja.

The Montenegrin Government has tasked state-owned power utility EPCG, as an operator of coal-fired thermal power plant Pljevlja, to take all legal actions and provide all conditions in order to protect the interest of the state in the procedure before the Energy Community. The Government also instructed the Ministry of Capital Investment to monitor and provide active support to EPCG in the procedure and to jointly prepare a draft response statement to the Opening Letter sent by the Energy Community Secretariat.

Prime Minister Zdravko Krivokapic said recently that premature closure of Montenegro's sole coal-fired thermal power plant Pljevlja would mean 20 to 25 % higher price of electricity, due to increased electricity imports that would also affect the country's GDP. He stressed that the main goal of Montenegro's new Energy Strategy is to find a way to replace 225 MW of Pljevlja's installed capacity without compromising the stability of the energy system.