

Serbia, Hungary: NPP Paks 2 environment impact on neighbouring countries without proper public discussion in Serbia

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Austria has threatened with legal action after Brussels gave a green light for the nuclear project "Paks II", which is initiated by neighbouring Hungary.

While Viktor Orban is celebrating because the EU has permitted him to build nuclear power plant in his country worth EUR 12.5 billion, the Austrian Government and the energy companies from Austria and Germany will not surrender without a fight, and are trying to oppose the decision.

Margrethe Vestager, European Competition Commissioner, is now under special scrutiny as her decision regarding the appeal will provoke strong reactions in any case and stir up the debate within the EU, but also outside of it. Vestager must assess whether the appeal against Hungary is justified or not, and after reviewing the evidence, must decide whether to approve it or reject it.

The announcement that the EU will soon cancel state funding has been called into question after the European Commission last week suddenly abandoned the procedure regarding breaching EU rules, which was launched against Hungary for awarding the construction project of "Paks II" without tender, reports "Politiko".

In addition to rising fear that the European Commission falls under the influence of the Russian lobby, Margrethe Vestager is well aware that she will face fierce criticism and condemnation if she renders judgement in favor of Hungary and its deal with Russia, which would once again demonstrate that the Kremlin does not shy away from the fact that it uses "energy diplomacy" to ensure strategic influence in the heart of Europe, Austrians think.

That is why the fiercest opponent of the project is the Government of Austria, which set alarm due to its clear anti-nuclear policy and when the EU decided to approve the UK (before Bregzit) to subsidize the construction of a nuclear power plant, "Hinkley Point C", worth tens of billions of euros. Austria is concerned if the construction of "Paks II" nuclear power plant is approved to Hungary, many countries could follow the same way.

- If the European Commission approves "Paks II", Austria will turn to all legal instruments, including the initiation of proceedings before the European Court of Justice - said Austrian Vice Chancellor and Minister of Energy Reinhold Mitterlehner, adding that the expansion of nuclear energy in Europe is, above all, dangerous.

The main question that arises before the Vestager is whether the figures presented in the "Paks II" project comply. Subsidizing is not allowed to EU countries as it may jeopardize the

operation of private companies. Hungary denies claims that part of the nuclear power plant is funded by state money, pointing out that the major part of the funds is secured owing to 10 billion euros loan, which comes from Russia, while the remaining 2.5 billion come from private companies.

Janos Lazar, Head of the Office of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that "the Commission no longer opposes the agreement between Hungary and Russia regarding the construction of nuclear power plant." The European Commission refused to comment on its decision.

The official Budapest denied on Tuesday that there is state aid in the project "Paks II", but also added:

- Nevertheless, Hungary is ready to compromise, even that the EU sends its observers to monitor whether the project "Paks II" is being implemented according to the rules of the Union.

Adverse Effect?

While professional public in Europe is buzzing about the harmful effect of the nuclear power plants "Paks II", discussion regarding this project in Serbia ended in silence last year.

Although it will be constructed only 63 kilometers from our borders, according to "Blic", about thirty people, mostly lobbyists, and some professional public gave the green light for a nuclear power project in the neighborhood. Experts warn that possible accidents at this facility of "the devil's energy" would have much greater impact on human health or the environment in Serbia than in some parts of Hungary.

The construction of nuclear power plant should have been banned especially as nuclear power plants present potential targets of fundamentalists' terrorist actions, and well-informed claim that, one of their goals is causing damages to some of 195 nuclear power plants in Europe.

- Nuclear plants are a great danger if terrorists would set to them and therefore State should take into account what is happening in the neighborhood - says Zoran Dragisic, a professor of security studies.

For doctor Dragana Janjic, radiologists, nuclear power plants in the neighborhood represent a time bomb for human health and therefore it is unclear to her why the competent Minister Snezana Bogosavljevic did not alert Serbian professional public.

- Whole Europe is on its feet, and we keep silent although it is most dangerous for us. If there was a disaster, within an hour the radioactivity would increase and would leave immeasurable consequences on the health of population. Therefore, Serbia should have had stronger reaction - said Janjic who did not even know about the "public debate".