

"The energy security of Southeast Europe – the role of coal"

Panel Discussion – D-r Vlatko Cingoski, CEO, JSC ELEM

ABSTRACT

What is coming first on your mind when you hear the word: coal? 19th Century, Industrial revolution, black-faced and tired miners, black and dirty pieces of stone, maybe some art picture? Or maybe CO₂, ozone layer, pollutions, carbon credits, etc.? Whatever you might have in your mind, it is true. Coal is still one of the most favorable steady, sustainable and commercially desirable primary sources of energy in the world. Many countries in the world, either developed (USA, Australia, Germany, Russia, China), transitional countries (India, Turkey, Poland, Czech Republic), or even our regional countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina), all of them still strongly depend on utilization of the coal (anthracite, black or brown coal, or lignite) as the primary energy resource.

Although in the past ten, twenty or even more years, coal has been considered (and openly condemned) as the most environmentally unfriendly (un-clean) energy resource, still even today coal plays a significant positive role in the energy sector in the world. According to the amount of money that are spent, and research efforts that worldwide are going on to provide the so-called BAT (best available technologies), clean coal movement, CCS (carbon-capture storage) facilities, etc., it is obvious that the era of coal is far from ending. Even very far from declining!

The coal (in case of Republic of Macedonia – lignite) is the crucial and most valuable energy resource in the country. More than 80% of all produced electricity in the Republic of Macedonia comes from burning lignite. Out two major lignite mines, Suvodol in Bitola and Oslomej yearly provide approximately 7,5 million tones of low caloric lignite that is used in the TPP Bitola and Oslomej for producing electricity important for Macedonian economy.

JSC ELEM investigation, investment in opening and excavation of new coal (lignite) deposits in the present and new lignite mines, considers of a paramount importance for stable and sustainable energy generation and supply of all customers under most favorable economical parameters on a short and middle term. Lignite is the only fossil fuel which is available in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, therefore, future exploration and exploitation of the lignite for electricity production has not only economical value, but in general strategically importance and could provide sustainable development of the entire energy sector and accordingly the economic development of the country.

According to the present status of geological surveys that has been carried out, Republic of Macedonia with present rate of utilization of existing lignite mines, and opening of some new and already surveyed lignite deposits could count for stable supply of lignite to the existing TPP and potentially with construction of additional TPP with capacity up to 300 MW, for the next 25-30 years. However, since this strategy requires significant investments, there should be a consistent policy towards modernization of the existing lignite mines and TPP and opening of new (open-pit and/or underground) lignite mines and respectively new TPPs if we need "bright" electricity future.