

General Electric (GE) projects that Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS) should, in the years to come, modernize over 2.5 GW of its installed capacities in order to meet the environmental protection standards of the European Union (EU).

Gaetano Massara, GE CEO for the Balkans, says in his interview for eKapija that all European countries should harmonize their activities with the Industrial Emissions Directive of the EU, which imposes limitations to flue gas emissions from the stacks of large combustion plants.

- GE is a world leader in producing a "clean coal" technology, which efficiently meets the emission limits defined in the IED. When it comes to modernization of mining equipment, we believe that modernization of mechanization and resources rationalization is needed at most of the Western Balkans coal/lignite mines, so that the mines would become more efficient and cost effective, thus providing cheaper energy sources for more competitive power production - Massara points out.

Diversification of sources as a condition of energy stability

During the visit by a group of journalists from former Yugoslavia to the RDK8 power plant in Karlsruhe, representatives of General Electric, EnBW and energy experts discussed the importance and prospects of fossil fuels, more precisely coal, as generators of energy in the period to come.

The conclusion was that an energy mix was needed to meet the growing demand in the world. Fossil fuels will continue to participate with 60 % and will be necessary to the stability of grids, whereas renewable energy is the fastest growing segment. Global energy market projections show that, by 2025, the additional coal- and nuclear energy-based capacities will have grown considerably, and with reserves of nearly 900 billion tons, coal remains a vital part of the energy mix, a self-sufficient and accessible generator of energy.

- Most of the Western Balkans countries are heavily reliant on coal and have domestic coal/lignite reserves available for a number of years. We believe that diversification of energy sources is needed in order to guarantee energy stability of one country. However, in order to produce a competitive power, countries need to rely on internally available, thus cheaper energy sources - Massara explains.

Ante Ramljak, manager of the Zagreb-based Texo Management and former adviser to the Croatian minister of energy, holds the view that each state needs to produce electrical energy from various sources.

- This is not a matter of either-or, whether to use one source or the other. On the contrary, I believe that there should be a third option as well, wherever possible. If you tick to only one energy source, you will run into trouble in case of market disturbances, as you won't have an alternative for the supply. This is why it's good to have a satisfactory energy mix, and due to the prices as well - if you look at the ratio of coal and gas prices in the past ten years, you'll see that they correlate to a large extent and that whenever the price of one

jumped, the price of the other dropped - Ramljak concludes and notes that coal is nowhere near the pollutant it used to be if modern technologies are applied and that it is definitely one of the best options among energy-generating products.

GE planning to participate in the tender for the overhaul of TENT

Both eKapija's interviewees agree that harmonization with the EU Directive means that old power plants in the Balkans in which modernization or extension is not justified by the matching benefits regarding efficiency and environmental protection should be decommissioned.

- Other thermal power plants, for which it makes economic and environmental sense to bring them in line with the relevant EU emission standards, would instead need to invest in applicable environmental control solutions technologies to reduce the flue gas emissions in the atmosphere - Massara thinks.

Massara says that EPS is one of General Electric's most important customers in Serbia and the region and that GE plans to participate in the tender for the general overhaul of TENT in Obrenovac.

- We are closely following all EPS' activities and are participating at all relevant projects. General overhauls, retrofits, repairs, upgrades and modernizations are certainly projects which are on the radar screen of GE when it comes to our intentions to participate at projects by EPS - Massara concludes.

Source; eKapija