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Renewable Energy – a new energy scenario for Macedonia?

Renewable energy sources include non-fossil sources of energy that are sustainable over time and have no harmful environmental side effects. The new global energy and environmental trend is directed towards increase of the share of the RES in the energy production. Global, Europe-wide, and country-specific scenarios show 10% to 50% shares of primary energy from RES by 2050. Following this agenda the European Union has enthusiastically set the target of RES in the total energy production at 20% until the year 2020. While EU countries are leading forces in the use of RES in the world Macedonia is lagging behind. The share of RES in Macedonia is minimal; major energy sources still remaining the fossil fuels with environmentally damaging effects.

Is there an opportunity for more serious use of the RES in the energy sector in Macedonia? Can Macedonia become environmental friendly country, in the same time providing efficient and sustainable energy market?

Need for renewable energy sources in Macedonia

Today the share of renewable energy sources (hydro, solar, wind) in the total energy consumption in Macedonia is at a very low level. The energy sector remains very much dependent on the thermo-energy based on coal and lignite, as well as on the imports of oil and electricity. Nuclear power as a source of energy is not considered as an option on medium-term. With the astronomical rise of the oil prices, the global scarcity of the fossil fuels, the country's insufficient distribution of natural gas and the underdeveloped electricity grid, Macedonia is facing serious problems with the energy production in the years to come. These serious indicators show the urgent need for bigger use of the sources of renewable energy in Macedonia. It will serve as exit from the energy crisis, reducing country's dependence on imported energy sources, economic competitiveness on medium and long turn, and approach to the EU target level of 12% of share in RES until 2010, set in the EC White paper for a Community Strategy and Action Plan. The energy from RES will also allow for reduction of GHG in the atmosphere, which is also on the top of EU's environmental agenda.

RES - Positive practices and blurred future pace

Following the EU directives on energy efficiency and RES as well as the provision in the Law on Energy from 2006, recent years show increase in the tendencies for energy from renewable sources. Thus, last year saw the launching of the tender for construction of small hydro-plants for electricity production. However other planned projects like the establishment of small geothermal district heating systems based on biomass and the building on windmills remain unrealized, on the level of policy recommendations. This is a result of the lack of concrete operational framework in the field of renewable energy on a state level, which hauls down the exploitation of the RES in Macedonia, leaving the initiatives mainly in the private sector.

Even though the EU 2007 Progress Report for Macedonia has positively evaluated the country in the field of renewable energies, the lack of administrative capacity for implementation and monitoring of the renewable energy projects remains as major obstacle for the energy sector. The absence of priority treatment in the state development policy has left the organized large-scale electricity production from RES out of the country's energy agenda. Macedonia hasn't developed efficient energy scenario for the upcoming years of energy crisis and economic instability. The question on how the renewable energy can fill in the gaps of the energy production in Macedonia remains an open issue that sets the Macedonian energy map until 2020. The solution to this issue will be better law enforcement, increase of technological innovations and political will for implementation of the state policies in the field of renewable energy.

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Energy Profile of R.M. for 2007:

(in 10^{3TJ})

Total energy consumption: 121, 07
Energy production: 63, 59 (52, 52%)
Energy import: 57, 48 (47, 48%)
Electricity from thermo-plants: 18, 37
Electricity from hydro-plants: 3, 46
RES share in total energy consumption (wood and geothermal energy): 7, 58 (6, 26%)
CO2 emission: 8.05 million metric tons

Source: Ministry for Economy