

**What Is  
Holding  
Back RES  
Development  
in Serbia?**

**Alfred Grannas**

Ambassador of Germany  
to Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Germany Remains  
an Important  
Partner in the  
Western Balkans'  
Energy Transition  
Process**



*ProCredit Bank*



**SUSTAINABILITY STARTS FROM WITHIN**

# Smart infrastructure

is sustainable infrastructure



**SIEMENS**

# WORD OF THE EDITOR



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Dear readers,

Summer traditionally brings us more light, energy, and optimism, and it is precisely this spirit that we have sought to convey in the new issue of our magazine. At a time when sustainability, energy security, and environmental protection are among the most important global topics, it is encouraging that concrete progress and successful projects contributing to a greener future are increasingly emerging in our region.

In this issue, we bring you interviews with interlocutors who shed light on the processes of the energy transition from different perspectives. The Ambassador of Germany to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alfred Grannas, speaks about the priorities of German cooperation with BiH, the importance of knowledge and technology transfer, and the opportunities opening up on the path towards sustainable energy development.

With Danijela Isailović, Director of the RES Serbia Association, we discussed how close Serbia is today to achieving its energy and climate goals, the challenges slowing down the development of renewable energy sources, and the role that battery storage systems will play in the future energy system.

The commissioning of the DeLasol North solar power plant in Lapovo, from which the first green kilowatts were delivered this spring, also confirms that Serbia is moving in the right direction toward achieving the goals of the green transition. At the same time, Serbia continues to improve its regulatory framework through new regulations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and managing waste more efficiently.

From Republika Srpska, we bring an overview of the development of the renewable energy sector through a conversation with Zoran Janković, President of the Association of Renewable Energy Electricity Producers. He discusses investment trends, regulatory challenges, and prospects for the sector's further development.

Although energy and innovation are the dominant topics in this issue, the true "stars" of the edition are birds whose importance for ecosystems and the preservation of a healthy environment is immeasurable, but which, after decades of neglect, have almost disappeared from our region.

We hope that vultures, although they may not be regarded as "beauty kings", will once again become the rulers of our skies in the years to come, thanks to the dedicated work of the Foundation for the Protection of Birds of Prey, as well as the support of all of us.

We wish you pleasant reading and enjoyable summer days.

*Nevena Đukić*  
Nevena Đukić  
editor-in-chief

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# GERMANY REMAINS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER IN THE WESTERN BALKANS' ENERGY TRANSITION PROCESS

In the context of the accelerated energy transition and the strengthening of climate policies in Europe, Germany plays a leading role in supporting the countries of the Western Balkans. Through the Regional Climate Partnership, the Green Agenda, and a series of bilateral and regional projects, this cooperation focuses on decarbonization, the development of renewable energy sources, the modernization of energy systems, and strengthening

resilience to climate change. In an interview with the German Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alfred Grannas, we discussed Germany's key priorities, current projects, the transfer of knowledge and technologies, as well as the challenges and opportunities facing Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards a sustainable energy future.

**Q: How would you describe Germany's current role in supporting the**

**energy transition and environmental protection in the countries of the Western Balkans?**

A: Environmental protection is something that is very important to Germany and has a long tradition, dating back at least to the 1970s. In addition, Germany has maintained a long and successful tradition of cooperation with the Western Balkans, particularly in environmental protection and energy. This cooperation has intensified and expanded, and

will continue to do so. Thus, in 2022, former Chancellor Olaf Scholz launched the Regional Climate Partnership (RCP) between Germany and the Western Balkans, which contributes to the implementation of the “Green Agenda for the Western Balkans” through a series of bilateral projects in all six Western Balkan countries, as well as through a number of regional projects — currently six. What makes this especially distinctive is that, so far, this is Germany’s only regional climate partnership, which further underlines the importance of the region, also under the new government!

What makes the RCP attractive is the attempt to connect political engagement at the highest level with technical expertise and economic

investment. In this way, solutions are being developed that are easily applicable in practice and bring visible changes across the entire region, bringing it closer to the European Green Deal — from the modernization of electricity grids and the expansion of renewable energy sources to preparing the region for the negative consequences of climate change through targeted adaptation measures. The partnership highlights Germany’s ambition to assume a leading role in the energy transition and to be a reliable political partner that provides practical solutions and offers new opportunities for green technologies, services, and jobs, from which Germany can also benefit, but above all, the people of the Western Balkans.



Alfred Grannas

Ambassador of Germany to Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Q: What are Germany’s key priorities in this area in the coming period?**

A: Germany is committed to climate and environmental protection. The accelerated implementation of the “Green Agenda for the Western Balkans” forms the foundation of regional contributions to the Regional Climate Partnership. At the same time, bilateral projects are agreed upon jointly with individual partners as part of intergovernmental negotiations. The Green Agenda has a strong focus on decarbonization, with a large share of the more than 100 projects contributing. These include, for example, the expansion of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and grid integration. Support is also being provided for improving the circular economy in the region. In addition, projects are being implemented to combat pollution, support sustainable agriculture, and protect biodiversity in the region, such as protecting habitats like the Vjosa River in Albania. For us, work on sustainable energy transformation, energy security — including the preparation of a risk assessment plan for the regional electricity sector — as well as





cooperation with the private sector, namely maximizing the potential for cooperation with German businesses in the Western Balkans within the framework of the Green Agenda, will remain relevant. In the context of EU integration, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and its appropriate preparation are playing an increasingly important role for the Western Balkans as well.

**Q: Which projects in the Western Balkan countries are you currently financing through grants and loans, and where do you see the greatest potential for further development?**

A: German cooperation projects with the Western Balkans contribute to improving air quality, protecting the environment, and ensuring a just energy transition. In this regard, since last year, the German Federal Government has been supporting a just energy transition across all six Western Balkan countries, with a focus on coal regions, to demonstrate economically and socially acceptable alternatives to coal exploitation and to promote sustainable, renewable

energy sources. In addition, the German Federal Government has launched a regional project to promote the circular economy. This project aims to increase the efficiency of resource use, encourage material circulation, and, in this context, permanently strengthen information exchange among the Western Balkan countries. Within the project, proven recycling methods are being strengthened, institutional capacities are being built, and expert exchange between different stakeholders is being enhanced.

In addition, the German Federal Government established the European Climate Initiative (EUKI). Support is provided to non-governmental organizations, regional and local authorities, non-profit enterprises, and educational and research institutions. In terms of content, the initiative focuses on key future-oriented areas in the sphere of climate and transformation policy. These include, among other things, climate-neutral mobility, climate policy, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, promoting the energy transition, including the development of climate-neutral buildings, as



well as support for socially just structural change and orientation towards a sustainable economy. The Western Balkans is one of the target regions of this German funding instrument.

**Q: How does Germany transfer knowledge and technologies from its own energy transition to institutions and companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region?**

A: Financial assistance, provided through KfW Entwicklungsbank, includes grants, favorable loans, and policy-based financing to support key reforms, stabilize the energy sector, and invest in green energy infrastructure with regional effects. In parallel, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) provides technical support. It encourages, for example, capacity building,

cross-sectoral reforms, regional dialogue, and stakeholder involvement in areas such as decarbonization, integration of renewable energy sources into the grid, sustainable urban development, climate adaptation, agriculture, and training for green jobs.

**Q: How much progress has Bosnia and Herzegovina made in aligning with EU standards in energy and environmental protection?**

A: Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that remains largely dependent on energy generated from coal. The transition to other energy sources is therefore challenging but not impossible — the potential for developing renewable energy sources, particularly wind and solar power plants, is enormous and has not yet been fully

realized. At the same time, it will be important to find joint solutions for employees in the coal sector, in the spirit of a just transition. Some approaches already exist, but domestic policy must also assume greater responsibility in this regard.

**Q: Which reforms do you consider key to accelerating this process?**

A: I am not an expert on the details when it comes to the national or regional energy sector. However, I am certain that serious reform efforts aimed at Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the EU would have a very positive impact on improving standards in the energy sector.

**Q: Which projects can have the greatest direct impact on citizens' quality of life?**

A: The air we breathe in Sarajevo will become cleaner if even more wind farms are built and the use of coal is reduced. The water that most people in Zenica and Tuzla drink now arrives clean and is reliably supplied, thanks to KfW support. That is why I believe that the implementation of German development cooperation projects has a direct and positive impact on the quality of life of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Q: What are the biggest challenges for Bosnia and Herzegovina's transition to clean energy sources, and how can they be overcome?**

A: As already mentioned, I see the structure of the energy mix, with coal accounting for around two-thirds, as well as the large employment sector surrounding it, as the greatest challenges. If Bosnia and Herzegovina refocuses on its enormous potential to expand renewable energy sources and politicians show a sincere willingness to undertake reform efforts, I am certain that the transition to a clean energy supply will succeed — Germany is ready to be a partner in this!

Interview by Jasna Dragojević





**LUXOR**  
solar module manufacturer

## CLEAR STRUCTURE – CLEAR VALUE PREPOSITION

Europe's solar market has undergone major changes in recent years. Financial pressures, falling module prices, competition from Asia, but also growing demand for renewable energy sources have changed the way investors choose equipment. In such an environment, the German manufacturer Luxor Solar has reorganized its portfolio into three clearly defined segments — ECO LINE Classic, ECO LINE Pro, and ECO LINE Prime. We spoke with Nino Sijerić, the company's Business Development Manager, about the reasons for

this change, the state of the market, and the direction in which the solar industry is developing.

**Q: What led to the reorganization of the ECO LINE portfolio, and how do the Classic, Pro, and Prime segments function today?**

A: We noticed that there are three most common profiles of needs. One is investment optimisation, meaning the best possible price and a cost-efficient model. The second is long-term reliability and security, and the third is the highest utilization per square meter. We felt that our

portfolio may not have been segmented clearly enough, which meant that people could not immediately reorganize where they belonged, so we wanted to simplify it.

This is how ECO LINE Classic was positioned for projects where the initial investment and competitive price are key. ECO LINE Pro focuses on

**Luxor Solar Responds  
to Market Needs with  
a Clearer Portfolio**

longevity and mechanical durability, while ECO LINE Prime was developed for maximum efficiency and uses back-contact technology.

Classic and Pro use TOPCon technology, while Prime is based on back-contact technology. That is the main difference.

The new segmentation also brought a change in the approach to warranties. We realized that competitors in this segment generally offer a 15-year product warranty, and that is why Classic has been positioned in a similar way. But our Pro remains the product for which we are reorganized – with a 30-year product warranty and a 30-year performance warranty. With this, we wanted to show why people pay more for Luxor.

There are also differences in module performance. Classic currently reaches a power output of around 620 W, Pro 630 W, while Prime, with back-contact technology, goes up to 655 W, with further efficiency growth expected.

As far as our segmentation is concerned, there is no winner. All products have their position on the market, depending on the client's needs. Over the past four months, the ratio between the Classic and Pro segments has been practically 50–50 per cent.

**Q: The European solar market is undergoing major changes. How do you see market development in the region today, and are investors still primarily guided by price?**

A: In the Balkans, we have gone through a typical phase of market maturation. People often look at a solar panel only from the outside – as a glass surface in a rectangular frame – and assume that all products are more or less the same, so they make decisions solely on the basis of price. However, the market is slowly but surely learning from its mistakes, and the focus will increasingly shift from price alone to longevity and stable kilowatt-hour production.

The solar market has already gone through two major cycles, especially over the past two years, when the sharp decline in module prices pushed many manufacturers into financial difficulties. This was challenging both for manufacturers and for end users, because the market was changing rapidly.

When I started preparing my first offers in 2009, the price was around three euros per watt-peak, while today we are talking about 10 to 15 cents. Nevertheless, projects were already profitable back then. That is why I believe the next phase of the market will not be only about the lowest price, but about trust, long-term reliability, and secure revenues from electricity generation. Today, financial institutions primarily follow projects that can provide stable and long-term revenues, which is why the durability of equipment is becoming increasingly important.

**Q: How much demand is there today for specialized solar solutions, and which products from that part of the portfolio would you particularly highlight?**

A: In addition to standard products, Luxor Solar also develops specialized solutions for specific applications. We have the Eco Line Pro Non-Reflect module with glass that does not reflect light, but “traps” it, which is of great importance for certain projects. We are also developing façade modules with thicker glass and greater weight for integration into buildings.

Façades and façade modules are a topic that is still discussed too little. In winter, façades can generate more energy than rooftop power plants. What is needed is simply more communication with clients and the market, because quality will certainly prevail in the end.

**Q: How are changes in the European market, such as the CBAM mechanism and competition from Chinese manufacturers, affecting demand for**



Nino Sijerić

Business Development Manager at the Luxor Company

**solar solutions in the region and the position of European companies such as Luxor Solar?**

A: The changes are already visible. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are currently seeing strong demand precisely because of CBAM. Companies exporting to the European Union have to prove that they use renewable energy sources, so both small and large manufacturers are turning to solar as the fastest and simplest solution.

On the other hand, when it comes to competition from Chinese manufacturers, what matters today is no longer where a product is manufactured, but how it is manufactured. Our business model is similar to that of Apple. We develop solutions and control quality, while production takes place in China. However, what matters is which components are used and what level of security the client receives.

Our warranty is in Stuttgart, our headquarters are in Stuttgart, and therefore a client in Europe knows where they can exercise their rights in any situation. This is becoming increasingly important to people today.

Interview by Milica Vučković



# ABB SERBIA TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FORUM 2026: A DAY DEDICATED TO KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY, AND PARTNERSHIP

**From smart circuit breakers and SF<sub>6</sub>-free switchgear to the electric motor drives of the future: technologies that are shaping energy and industry today**

**H**ow can we simultaneously ensure more energy, greater system reliability, and a lower environmental impact? This is one of the key questions currently facing the energy sector, industry, and infrastructure projects worldwide.

ABB sees the answer to this challenge in connecting electrification, digitalization, and sustainability – areas that are increasingly intertwined in modern power systems. In a world where the need for electricity is growing, and requirements for decarbonization

and more efficient use of resources are also becoming stronger, technology is no longer merely a business support. It is becoming a key driver of transformation.

This is precisely why ABB brought together partners, customers, and experts from the fields of energy and

industry on 19 May at the ABB Serbia Technology and Innovation Forum, held at the Radisson Collection Old Mill Belgrade hotel. The aim of the event was not only to present new products but also to open a dialogue on how modern technologies can help companies improve system reliability, increase energy efficiency, and meet the requirements of sustainable development.

The strong interest in the event and a hall filled to capacity confirmed the importance of these topics for the domestic market today. The Forum was opened by the directors of ABB Serbia's business units, Nenad Dlačić and Milan Jevremović, who emphasized the importance of partnership, knowledge exchange, and working together to find answers to the challenges that await



the energy sector and industry in the years ahead.

The program was guided by Ivan Vasiljević and Isidora Cvetković, who connected presentations by local and international ABB experts into a unified story about the future of power infrastructure.



### When a Circuit Breaker Becomes a Source of Data

The initial presentation was delivered by Matteo Lazzar, ABB Global Product Manager for the ABB SACE Emax platform, who presented the new generation of SACE Emax 3 air circuit breakers. Lazzar pointed to

the trends shaping the development of power infrastructure, highlighting that the global low-voltage circuit breaker market is recording average annual growth of around eight per cent, while the development of data centers, infrastructure, and energy systems is further increasing the requirements for reliability and availability of electricity. In this context, SACE Emax 3 was presented as a solution that goes beyond the traditional role of a protective circuit breaker and becomes an active part of a digitalized power system.

Thanks to the Ekip Aware platform, the device continuously monitors system conditions and enables real-time, data-driven decision-making. Its particular advantage is the possibility of a digital upgrade without replacing the device, while retaining the same dimensions as the previous Emax 2 generation, enabling simple modernization of existing facilities and offering more than 30 available digital functionalities. Among the solutions that attracted the greatest attention were continuous thermal monitoring of connections and



advanced Arc Flash protection, which enable earlier fault detection, increase personnel safety, and support the transition to predictive maintenance. Further confirmation of its advanced digital capabilities is that the SACE Emax 3 is the world's first air circuit breaker to hold IEC 62443-4-2 SL2 cybersecurity certification.

### Sustainability Without Compromise

One of the central topics of the Forum was the sustainability of power infrastructure, discussed by Pietro Poggiato, ABB Global Product Manager for UniSec Air. His presentation focused on changes introduced by European regulation in the field of fluorinated gases and the gradual phase-out of SF<sub>6</sub> technology in medium-voltage switchgear. In response to these requirements, ABB has developed UniSec Air. This medium-voltage switchgear solution uses dry air as the insulating medium, with a global warming potential equal to zero. Particular interest was generated by the fact that the system retains the same dimensions as existing UniSec switchgear, enabling users to modernize without additional construction work. Poggiato also presented the new GSec Air technology, which combines vacuum current interruption



with dry-air insulation, without the use of harmful gases. In this way, the high standards of safety, reliability, and sustainability that today's users expect from medium-voltage switchgear are brought together. An additional step towards digitalization is represented by the UniSec Air Digital concept, which enables the integration of a wide range of sensors, monitoring of substation access, and remote monitoring of equipment operation.

### Data as the Foundation of Smart Grids

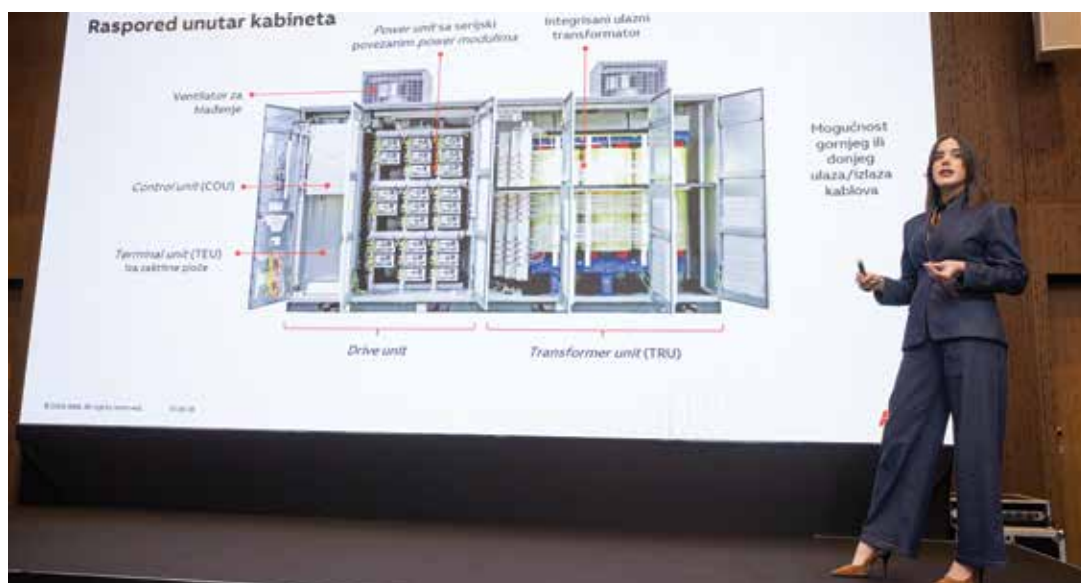
The role of data in modern power systems was discussed by Adam Kvítek, ABB Sales Manager, who presented ABB's portfolio of sensors and

instrument transformers. Through practical examples, it was shown how modern substations are becoming a source of valuable data that enables more precise system management, better maintenance planning, and greater grid reliability. The latest generation of sensors and instrument transformers forms the basis of digital substations and smart grids, in which data becomes a resource as important as electricity itself.

### Electric Motor Drives as Drivers of the Energy Transition

The presentation by Isidora Cvetković and Stefan Pavlović, dedicated to new-generation electric motor

In addition to the expert program, participants had the opportunity to learn directly about ABB technologies through the exhibition area, where electrical cabinets, relay protection devices, sensors, PLC systems, frequency converters, and electric vehicle chargers were presented



drives and their role in the energy transition, attracted particular attention from the participants. In an overview of the latest ABB solutions, they showed how the combination of highly efficient electric motors, frequency converters, and digital services enables the industry to simultaneously reduce energy consumption, increase productivity, and extend equipment service life.

As highlighted during the presentation, electric motor systems today consume approximately half of the total electricity used in industry, making them one of the greatest opportunities to improve energy efficiency.

### Technologies That Can Be Seen and Touched

In addition to the expert program, participants had the opportunity to learn directly about ABB technologies through the exhibition area, where electrical cabinets, relay protection devices, sensors, PLC systems, frequency converters, and electric vehicle chargers were presented. The ABB eFormula simulator attracted particular interest, with many guests trying their hand at a virtual race, while the best result was rewarded with an ABB electric vehicle charger.

This activity symbolically connected the world of electromobility with the technologies that ABB is

developing for a more sustainable future of transport.

After the formal part of the program, discussions continued on Radisson's piazza, where participants exchanged views on the challenges they face in their daily work, future projects, and opportunities for cooperation.

These encounters showed precisely that technological innovations achieve their greatest value when they become part of a dialogue between those who develop them and those who apply them every day.

The ABB Serbia Technology and Innovation Forum confirmed that the domestic market has a strong need for professional gatherings that bring together people of different profiles around common challenges and solutions. At a time when the energy transition is becoming an everyday reality, the exchange of knowledge, experience, and concrete technological solutions remains one of the most important prerequisites for successfully shaping the energy and industrial future.



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INVESTORS ARE READY,  
PROJECTS ARE WAITING:  
WHAT IS HOLDING BACK RES  
DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA?





Danijela Isailović  
Manager of the RES Serbia Association

In recent years, Serbia has made significant progress in developing renewable energy sources, thanks to new wind farms, solar projects, and a growing number of prosumers. However, despite increased investment and successful auctions, the sector now faces serious challenges – from delays in issuing permits and grid connection problems to regulatory changes that could postpone the implementation of new projects for several years.

We spoke with Danijela Isailović, Manager of the RES Serbia Association, about how close Serbia is today to achieving its energy and climate goals, why the development of renewable energy sources has slowed down, what role battery energy storage systems will play, and what the key topics of the upcoming “RES Serbia 2026” conference will be.

**Q: How would you assess the current development of renewable energy sources in Serbia? Is Serbia today closer to its energy and climate goals than it was a few years ago?**

A: We are certainly closer to our goals, bearing in mind that new RES

capacities have been built in recent years, primarily by auction winners, as well as through some projects that dared to test themselves fully on the market. Prosumers have also taken root, making citizens and businesses important actors in the energy transition.

However, when it comes to the question of whether the national targets will be met — targets that envisage 3.5 GW of solar and wind power plants connected to the grid by 2030, so that the share of RES reaches 45 percent — I am less optimistic today than I was in previous years. We currently have 824 MW of wind farms on the grid, including Čibuk 2 and the Kostolac wind farm, which are in trial operation. Around another 200 MW of wind farms are under intensive construction. As for solar, together with prosumers, we have less than 400 MW on the grid. This indicates that in Serbia, over the past 12 years, a total of around 1.2 GW of wind farms and solar power plants has been built, while in the next four years, by 2030, three times that amount would need to be built and connected.

We would like that to happen, but a realistic understanding of the market suggests that only a few more projects, mostly those of auction winners, are likely to be built during that period. Some unusual developments are currently taking place in Serbia, and decisions are being made whose consequences may be felt by the energy transition for many years. The development of RES projects has slowed down, with a real possibility of coming to a complete halt. As is known, amendments to the regulation adopted on 21 May introduced a decision to postpone the preparation of connection studies until the last quarter of 2029. Since this is the first step in the development of wind farms and solar power plants, it practically means that the process of obtaining permits will only begin in 2030, and construction itself only in 2035.

In addition, a certain number of investors are facing problems in obtaining permits and discrimination. This concerns 1.2 GW of projects belonging to our members, as well as a certain number of other investors who have deposited bank guarantees

worth tens of millions of euros with the transmission system operator, thereby undertaking to build the power plants. On the other hand, in the permitting process, they have been slowed down or stopped by circumstances over which they had no influence whatsoever. For this reason, we have submitted an initiative to amend the disputed articles of the decree to prevent the activation of bank guarantees and to give these projects a new lease of life.

**Q: In recent years, there has been significant growth in investments in solar and wind power plants. What key factors have contributed to this development, and do you expect this trend to continue in the coming period?**

A: First of all, we had two successful auction rounds, which were highly competitive processes that proved beneficial for everyone. EPS obtained cheap green energy, while investors secured guaranteed purchase for 15 years. Our members who participated and won auction premiums built their projects quickly and efficiently. We regret that others have not been as agile, but we certainly expect them

to build their capacity to avoid a situation in which their bank guarantees are invoked.

We also expect the third auction round to be held in accordance with the three-year plan, but for now, there are no signals that it will be announced soon.

**Q: How successful is the existing incentive system for renewable energy sources in Serbia in attracting new investments? Are additional changes to the regulatory framework needed for the market to continue growing?**

A: Ten years ago, when it came to incentive measures in Serbia, we had a feed-in tariff system. As in all European countries, this type of support was necessary for solar power plant, wind farm, small hydropower plant, and biogas plant projects, and thanks to it, we made the first steps in the RES sector. After that came auction premiums, a significantly less profitable form of incentive but a system that provided investors with security in electricity purchases and balancing. Equally important is that the auction system drove down electricity purchase prices, enabling

EPS to secure a significant amount of green energy at a favorable price.

The auction-based incentive system remains in force, given that the three-year plan envisages three auction rounds. Unfortunately, there is still no information on whether and when they will be implemented. In addition to all this, we believe that further regulatory changes and the adoption of a new three-year auction plan are necessary.

**Q: The development of renewable energy sources is increasingly raising the issue of power system flexibility.**



**How important are battery energy storage systems, as well as other forms of storage, for the next phase of Serbia's energy transition?**

A: Battery storage is one of the main topics at all professional events and one of the segments of the RES business currently receiving the most attention. At present, we have more than 4 GW of requests for battery facilities, and the amended regulation has not prohibited applications for new connection studies, which indicates that this business can still develop in Serbia. The regulation has obliged investors to provide battery

permits. Another problem is that certain projects have no chance at all of reaching the stage of connection studies, either for the transmission or the distribution electricity system, because a moratorium on new projects is in force. As in the rest of Europe, additional investments in power infrastructure are also necessary in our country. However, the reality is that six times as much RES capacity is currently connected to the transmission system as the system can realistically accept, so there is no justification for slowing investors down. In addition, a detailed

**Serbia? What needs to be done today for Serbia to realize its full potential in clean energy?**

A: If the regulations are not changed in line with our initiative, by 2030 the main focus will be on investments in battery storage, as well as on opportunities to obtain the status of an active customer and the status of a prosumer for households. On the other hand, there are far more challenges and difficulties. At a time when we need energy security and independence more than ever, and when CBAM charges are becoming a major financial threat and burden for the business sector, we are not using the full potential of clean energy in Serbia. Instead, we are slowing down proven investors who have already invested billions of euros and engaged the domestic construction and electrical industries. The priorities should be, above all, respect for adopted plans and strategies, consistent, non-selective monitoring of construction plans, and fully transparent work in the RES sector.



storage for new projects, so we expect the construction of such capacities to begin soon. Examples include the Noćaj 1 and 2 solar power plants, for which our member Fortis Energy has already obtained construction permits with battery storage.

**Q: Investors often point to challenges related to connecting new power plants to the grid. How ready is the power infrastructure today for further growth in renewable energy capacity, and what should be the priorities in the coming years?**

A: As I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, some investors are facing the impossibility of connecting to the grid because certain holders of public authority are slowing them down in the process of obtaining

analysis conducted by our members, following all transmission system work plans in which investors indicated planned commissioning years, showed that only one out of 20 projects was implemented in line with the announcements. As an association, we pointed out several years ago that false investors were overburdening system operators with their requests, and we advocated introducing bank guarantees and stricter criteria. However, we did not anticipate the problems and challenges that genuine investors are now facing in the very process of obtaining permits.

**Q: Looking at the period up to 2030, what do you see as the greatest opportunities and the greatest challenges for the renewable energy sector in**

**Q: The “RES Serbia 2026” conference will be held in September, and over the years it has become one of the most important events dedicated to the energy transition and renewable energy sources in the region. Which topics do you expect to be in the spotlight this year?**

A: Interest in the “RES SERBIA 2026” conference is enormous, regardless of the current challenges in the sector. The professional community still firmly believes that Serbia is a good place for the development of RES projects. That is precisely why, in Vrdnik, we will openly discuss CBAM, the problems investors face when obtaining construction permits, the moratorium on grid connection, battery storage, the financing of RES projects, as well as electromobility and sustainable fuels.

Interview by Milena Maglovski



# PROCREDIT BANK – SUSTAINABILITY STARTS FROM WITHIN

**T**his year, ProCredit Bank in Serbia is marking 25 years of successful operations, during which it has built a reputation as a reliable and responsible financial partner, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises and individuals. From the first green loans for individuals in 2007 to the latest programs supporting the digital and energy transition, the bank has consistently implemented a sustainable banking strategy. We spoke with Nemanja Tomić, Member of the Executive Board of ProCredit Bank, about the results achieved so far, plans for a green future, and the importance of internal culture in recognizing clients' environmental potential.

**Q: On the occasion of ProCredit Bank's 25 years of successful operations in Serbia, what are the key values you have nurtured throughout this period, and what will you continue to work on in the future, especially when it comes to sustainable banking?**

A: From the very beginning, our operations have been based on clear values: responsibility, transparency, and a long-term approach to clients. Over the past 25 years, we have not pursued rapid growth at any cost, but rather stability and the quality of our placements, with strong support for small and medium-sized enterprises and individuals. Sustainable banking holds a special place in our business model, and we do not treat it as a

trend but as a strategic commitment. In the coming period, we will continue to develop green and digital products while also investing in client education to help them better understand the importance of sustainable investments and make long-term, responsible financial decisions.

**Q: Back in 2007, you launched the first green loans for individuals. After almost two decades of developing green finance, what are your further plans when it comes to expanding your green loan offer, particularly for individuals, given rising energy prices and citizens' growing interest in energy efficiency?**

A: We were among the first to recognize the potential of investments

in household energy efficiency. Today, citizens' interest is significantly higher, particularly due to rising energy prices. Our focus is on further improving our offer – expanding financing for solar systems and energy renovation of buildings, as well as simplifying the application process through digitalization. Our goal is to make these investments accessible to as many citizens as possible, with a clear calculation of savings and long-term benefits.

**Q: ProCredit Bank recently received the O.U.R. HR award for the best HR team. What does this recognition mean to you, and how does the culture of sustainability within the bank – which you have built through HR practices – help employees better recognize green potential among clients and become more proactive in offering green financial products?**

A: This award is a confirmation of our long-standing investment in employee development and an organizational culture based on responsibility. At ProCredit Bank, we believe that sustainability starts from within – through employees' knowledge and awareness. Through continuous training and development programs, our employees gain an understanding of topics such as climate change and green finance, enabling them to act as competent advisers to clients. As a result, they not only recognize opportunities for green investments but also actively encourage clients to think in that direction.

**Q: ProCredit Bank and the EBRD have signed a EUR 10 million loan agreement for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. What exactly are the criteria for companies to qualify for these funds, and what does the procedure look like for an average SME owner in Serbia?**

A: The Go Digital in the Western Balkans program provides a combination of specialized financing for

automation, digitalization, competitiveness, and green technologies for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. The key criteria relate to business sustainability, financial transparency, and a concrete investment idea that contributes to greater energy efficiency or a reduction in negative environmental impact. The procedure itself is simplified – the client defines the project with a banking adviser, after which an assessment is conducted, and a quick financing decision is made. An additional advantage is a grant of up to 10 percent of the total loan amount, plus free technical support from the program consultant, both financed by the EU.

**Q: Given that at least 60 percent of placements are directed towards green and digital investments, how much will this program accelerate the green transition in Serbia?**

A: We believe the impact will be significant, as the SME sector forms the backbone of the domestic economy. It is precisely through programs like this that faster business modernization, reduced energy costs, and more competitive operations are made possible. Our focus on green placements is already producing results, while additional technical assistance and investment incentives from the European Union, through partnerships such as this one with the EBRD, further accelerate the transition.

**Q: ProCredit Bank already uses the Net Zero calculator to measure carbon footprint – what has been the initial feedback from clients who have used it? Were they surprised by the results, and how often does this tool prove decisive in their decision to apply for a green loan?**

A: Client reactions have been very positive. For many, this is the first time they have been able to assess their own carbon footprint concretely and understand where the



**Nemanja Tomić**  
Member of the Executive Board of  
ProCredit Bank

largest emissions occur. They are often surprised by the results, but this is precisely what motivates them to consider changes. In practice, this tool often serves as the first step towards deciding whether to invest in energy efficiency or renewable energy sources. We are increasingly seeing clients, after the analysis, seeking concrete recommendations and financial solutions to reduce emissions.

**Q: You financed your first solar project back in 2013, followed by the largest solar power plant in 2023. What is the next major step in supporting renewable energy sources?**

A: After financing pioneering projects in the field of solar energy, our next focus is the further decentralization of energy generation. This includes support for small solar systems for businesses and households, as well as investments in innovations such as energy storage. Our ambition is to remain a reliable partner in Serbia's energy transition and actively contribute to its sustainable future.

Interview by Milena Maglovski



# KOPAONIK TO HOST THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CIRED CONFERENCE

**F**rom 21 to 25 September 2026, Kopaonik will once again become a meeting place for leading experts, companies, and institutions in the fields of electricity distribution and energy. Organized by the Serbian National Committee CIRED Serbia, with the support of the international CIRED conference, the 15th Conference on Electricity Distribution Networks with Regional Participation will be held.

This year's Conference is of particular importance, as it represents an introduction to a major jubilee – three decades of CIRED Serbia's work, which will be marked in 2027. Over the past 30 years, CIRED Serbia has grown into one of the most important professional platforms for the exchange of knowledge,

**Particular attention is being drawn to the pre-seminar, in the form of a panel, with the working title "Action Plan for Grids in the Western Balkans"**

experience, and innovative solutions in the field of electricity distribution systems, not only in Serbia but throughout the entire region.

The general patron of this year's Conference is Elektrodistribucija Srbije d.o.o. Beograd, while the patron of the event is DOO Crnogorski elektrodistributivni sistem (CEDIS) from Podgorica.

The continued growth in the Conference's importance is evidenced by strong interest among the professional community. More than 90 expert papers from eight countries in the region have been submitted for this year's event, confirming the CIRED Conference's status as one of the most important regional events dedicated to electricity distribution networks.

In addition to the expert program, a commercial exhibition will be held this year, featuring more than 50 companies showcasing their products, technologies, and services. Among them is MT-KOMEX, one of the most significant and long-standing gold sponsors of the Conference, which has for years actively contributed to the development and promotion of modern energy solutions.

### Focus on the Challenges of the Energy Transition

Particular attention is being drawn to the pre-seminar, in the form of a panel, with the working title "Action Plan for Grids in the Western Balkans", organized under the patronage of the German development agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit).

The aim of the panel is to bring together representatives of the power sector, regulatory bodies, and international organizations to discuss the future of power grids in the region, investment needs, and examples of good practice. Participation has been announced by representatives of Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republika Srpska, Serbia, and the



Energy Community, further confirming the regional importance of this event.

The relevance of the topics to be addressed during the panel indicates strong interest from the professional public, especially given the accelerated energy transition, the growing share of renewable energy sources, and the need to modernize distribution networks.

### Digitalization, Distributed Resources, and Transformers in Focus

The Conference program will also include a series of expert panels dedicated to the most important challenges of modern electricity distribution systems. Among the topics that will be in focus are:

- What smart meters mean for the automation and digitalization of the electricity distribution system;
- Connection and management of distributed energy resources (DER) in electricity distribution systems – objectives, experiences, and challenges;
- Power transformers in electricity distribution systems – challenges, technologies, and perspectives.

These topics reflect the key processes currently shaping the power sector – digitalization,

decarbonization, and the decentralization of electricity generation – as well as the need for significant investments to develop and strengthen grid infrastructure.

### A Meeting Place for Knowledge and Partnership

Over the years, the CIRED Conference has become much more than a professional conference. It represents a meeting place for engineers, the scientific community, companies, regulators, and decision-makers, providing an opportunity to exchange experiences, present innovations, and establish new partnerships.

For this reason, the jubilee 15th Conference on Kopaonik will be an opportunity to consider the challenges and opportunities for the development of electricity distribution networks in the coming years, as well as to jointly define the directions for the further development of the energy sector in Serbia and the region.

The organizers invite experts, companies, and all interested participants to contribute to the success of the jubilee event by attending and actively participating, and to continue the tradition that has connected the regional power community for three decades.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



# NEW DECREES IN SERBIA: MEASURES TO REDUCE EMISSIONS AND IMPROVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

**A**t the end of May and the beginning of June, two decrees were adopted in Serbia regulating the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the improvement of waste reuse and recovery.

The Decree on the Types of Measures and the Method of Reporting on Implemented Activities for the Reduction of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>eq) Emissions specifies the conditions for exercising the right to a tax credit and the types of investments recognised as contributing to decarbonisation. According to this decree, the right to a tax credit may be exercised for activities that lead to permanent, measurable, and technically verifiable emission reductions. These are projects aimed at increasing energy production from renewable sources, improving energy efficiency, as well as developing energy storage capacities and greater flexibility of the power system.

Among the measures specifically highlighted are the reconstruction, revitalisation, and modernisation of existing energy facilities, including capital overhauls

**Incentive funds are intended for operations involving the recovery of waste tyres, waste electrical and electronic equipment, waste oils, spent batteries and accumulators, as well as end-of-life vehicles**

and investment maintenance, as well as the construction, expansion, or replacement of capacities for the production of electricity and heat from renewable sources. The development of energy storage systems is also emphasised, through the construction of new and the improvement of existing battery, thermal, electrochemical, and hydrogen systems, as well as pumped-storage hydropower plants and other technical solutions that contribute to greater stability and flexibility of the energy system.

The decree also highlights the importance of investments in electricity infrastructure, namely the construction of the missing transmission and distribution network necessary for the connection and integration of new renewable energy capacities and energy storage systems.

fuels, as well as activities that increase the use of energy sources with CO<sub>2</sub>eq emissions.

A legal entity that exercises the right to a tax credit is obliged to submit a report on the implemented emission reduction measures electronically to the ministry responsible for environmental protection. The report should contain data on the tax period for which it is submitted, identification data of the taxpayer, the name and description of the implemented measure, the period of its implementation, as well as data on the achieved reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>eq emissions, or the expected reduction after the full implementation of the measure.

In addition to the decree concerning the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the Government of Serbia

economy are encouraged, in which waste is viewed as a resource rather than as an end product intended for disposal.

Incentive funds are intended for operations involving the recovery of waste tyres, waste electrical and electronic equipment, waste oils, spent batteries and accumulators, as well as end-of-life vehicles. At the same time, the decree specifies that the funds cannot be used for waste recovery operations for energy purposes.

The decree also establishes quotas for the accounting period, as well as maximum amounts of incentive funds per kilogram of waste for certain types of waste. For waste electrical and electronic equipment, a quota of 25,000 tonnes is envisaged, with an incentive of up to RSD 24.80 per kilogram. For waste tyres, the quota amounts to 35,000 tonnes, with a maximum incentive of RSD 15 per kilogram, while for spent batteries and accumulators, a quota of 13,000 tonnes has been set, with an incentive of up to RSD 40 per kilogram.

For waste oils, a quota of 10,000 tonnes is envisaged, with a maximum incentive amount of RSD 26 per kilogram, while for end-of-life vehicles the quota amounts to 25,000 tonnes, with an incentive that can reach RSD 30 per kilogram.

The right to incentives will be exercised through an auction procedure, which the ministry will initiate through public calls. Auctions may be organised jointly for several types of waste or separately for individual waste streams, while the procedure itself consists of three phases – qualification, bidding, and selection of the most favourable offers. After the incentive funds have been awarded, the competent environmental protection inspection, in cooperation with the Commission for Monitoring the Dedicated Use of Incentive Funds, will carry out control and supervision over their dedicated use.

Prepared by Katarina Vuinac



Measures to improve the flexibility of power system operation are also specifically singled out, with the aim of better integrating renewable energy sources and increasing grid stability, as well as decarbonisation measures involving the gradual withdrawal, conservation, or permanent closure of thermal energy capacities.

At the same time, the decree also specifies which activities are not considered emission reduction measures. This primarily applies to investments in facilities that use fossil

has also adopted the Decree on the Type, Criteria, Amount, Elements, Conditions, and Method of Awarding Incentive Funds to Operators Carrying Out the Reuse and Recovery of Waste in the Period from 2026 to 2028.

The aim of this decree is to improve the waste management system by supporting operators that contribute to returning waste into production flows. In this way, the principles of sustainable development, respect for the waste management hierarchy, and the development of the circular

# THE RES SECTOR IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY UNCERTAINTY





Zoran Janković  
President of the Association of  
Renewable Energy Electricity Producers  
(UPEOI)

**A**t a time when the energy transition is becoming one of the key development issues in the region, the renewable energy sector in Republika Srpska finds itself between an accelerated investment cycle and increasingly pronounced systemic constraints. Although significant growth in solar power plant projects and other renewable energy capacities has been recorded in recent years, questions are also being raised regarding market stability, regulatory predictability, and an adequate institutional framework to accompany such development.

In this context, electricity producers from renewable sources have come together through a newly established association whose aim is to provide the sector with a common, institutional voice to decision-makers. The emphasis is on the need to connect the interests of investors, the professional public, and regulatory bodies, with the view that renewable energy sources represent not only an energy issue, but also a broader development issue. We

spoke with Zoran Janković, President of the Association of Renewable Energy Electricity Producers (UPEOI), about all the reasons for establishing the association, the state of the sector, and the key challenges.

**Q: What was the main reason for establishing UPEOI, and what is the Association's mission?**

A: UPEOI was established out of the need for renewable energy producers to have an institutional voice and an interlocutor that would bring together the interests of investors, the professional public, and decision-makers. In recent years, the renewable energy sector has experienced significant development, but numerous challenges have emerged in parallel, requiring joint action.

Our mission is not only to protect the interests of our members, but to create a sustainable energy system that will bring Republika Srpska energy security, new jobs, technological development, and significant investments. We believe that renewable energy sources are not only

an energy issue, but also a development issue.

**Q: How would you assess the current state of the renewable energy sector in Republika Srpska?**

A: The renewable energy sector is currently facing serious challenges that are not solely the result of market developments. Part of the responsibility also lies with institutions, which had ample time for years to prepare the energy sector for entirely predictable changes.

Producers of electricity from solar power plants invested based on European energy policies, expected

**Republika Srpska still has the opportunity to be a leader in the region's energy transition, but declarative support alone is no longer sufficient**



growth in green energy consumption, and announcements of the introduction of the CBAM mechanism. However, today we face a situation in which CBAM has not been used as a development opportunity for the domestic economy, no domestic electricity exchange has been established, and the economy has no means to buy green energy through domestic market mechanisms and gain a competitive advantage on the European market.

At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina imports electricity worth several hundred million convertible marks annually, while domestic producers, at times, face prices that do not even cover basic operating costs. This shows that the problem is not a lack of production, but a lack of strategic management of the energy market.

**Q: What are currently the biggest obstacles to the development of new renewable energy projects?**

A: The biggest obstacle today is not the sun, the wind, or technology. The biggest obstacle is the absence of a market framework that keeps pace with the development of generation capacity.

For years, we have warned that the widespread construction of solar power plants would lead to energy surpluses during certain hours. At the same time, the energy storage market has not been developed; a domestic electricity exchange has not been established; mechanisms for long-term contracts between producers and the economy have not been developed; nor have conditions been created for domestic industry to use green energy in response to CBAM.

Investors have done their part. Now it is time for institutions to do theirs.

**Q: Do investors have a stable and sufficiently predictable regulatory framework?**

A: Honestly, not to a sufficient extent. Energy investments are planned over a period of 20 to 30 years, and every serious investment decision is based on the predictability of the regulatory and market environment.

In recent years, we have witnessed a situation in which investors are being burdened with new costs and obligations that could not have been foreseen when the investment decision was made. The best example of



this is the distribution network charge for electricity producers from renewable energy sources. UPEOI has repeatedly warned that such measures represent a serious blow to the economics of projects already implemented. We believe this levy lacks developmental character and further

**The energy transition cannot be built on a constant increase in costs for those investing their own capital. Solar power plants are not threatened by the sun but by unpredictable costs that arise after the investment has already been realized**

introduced, the message is that the rules are unstable. Such practice increases perceived risk and directly affects the willingness to make new investments. UPEOI believes it is necessary to urgently review the model for calculating the distribution network charge for producers and establish a regulatory framework that will not retroactively undermine the economic sustainability of existing investments.

The energy transition cannot be built on a constant increase in costs for those investing their own capital. Solar power plants are not threatened by the sun but by unpredictable costs that arise after the investment has already been realized.

in electricity prices during the hours of highest generation. Today, we are witnessing precisely that scenario.

We welcome the legal recognition of energy storage, but a legal provision alone is not enough. Urgent by-laws, clear connection rules, and a market model that will enable investments in battery systems are needed. Every month of delay further increases the damage suffered by electricity producers.

**Q: How much investment potential do you see in the renewable energy sector?**

A: The potential is enormous, but for the first time we must openly say that it is not unlimited. Capital goes where there is predictability. If the issues of the electricity market, energy storage, CBAM, and the electricity exchange are not resolved, there is a real danger that part of the investments will be redirected to countries in the region that have completed these processes earlier.

Republika Srpska still has the opportunity to be a leader in the region's energy transition, but declarative support alone is no longer sufficient. Concrete steps are needed.

**Q: Are the existing support mechanisms sufficient?**

A: No, and by this I am not referring to classic subsidies. Today, what the sector needs most is not incentives, but market mechanisms. A functional electricity exchange is needed, along with the possibility of concluding long-term contracts with the economy, the development of a market for guarantees of origin, accelerated implementation of the CBAM policy, and stronger support for energy storage projects. If this is not done, the risk of the energy transition will be shifted exclusively onto investors, and no serious investment cycle can withstand that in the long term.

Interview by Jasna Dragojević



burdens a sector already suffering the consequences of record-low market electricity prices.

When an investor puts tens of millions of convertible marks into a project based on one set of economic assumptions and then, during operations, new parafiscal costs are

**Q: How do you view the issue of energy storage and its importance for the future development of the sector?**

A: Energy storage is today the key to the survival of part of the renewable energy sector. The growth of solar capacities without the development of battery systems will lead to a decline



# NEW MODERN SOLAR ENERGY CAPACITIES IN LAPOVO – DELASOL NORTH



**E**very new megawatt of energy produced from renewable sources represents an important step towards the energy transition and the development of a more modern and resilient energy system. Guided by this idea, at the end of March this year, MT-KOMEX commissioned the DeLasol North solar power plant in Lapovo, once again confirming its expertise and experience in developing and constructing modern solar power plants.

The facility, with an installed capacity of 9.9 MW, covers an area of 15.85 hectares and consists of 16,830

solar panels manufactured by Aiko Solar, each with a capacity of 650 Wp. The panels are mounted on a supporting substructure at a 20-degree angle to the horizontal and oriented towards the south, enabling optimal use of solar radiation and higher electricity generation during the summer months. All generated electricity is delivered to the distribution system, contributing to an increased share of renewable energy sources and the further development of Serbia's sustainable electricity system.

Energy conversion is handled by 100 inverters, each with a capacity of 100 kW, manufactured by Huawei

**The DeLasol solar power plant, with a capacity of 9.9 MW, is also located at this site and was commissioned in April 2024. Together with the DeLasol North power plant, this area forms the company's largest solar energy complex in Serbia**



GmbH, while transmission is carried out via 10 power transformers with a capacity of 1,000 kVA. The power plant is also equipped with a lightning protection system, further improving the safety and reliability of the facility's operation.

The average annual specific electricity generation is estimated at 1,328.9 kWh per installed kilowatt, confirming the high production potential of the location and the carefully designed technical solution.

Interestingly, approximately 10 percent of the installed capacity is oriented towards the southwest. Although such a configuration results in slightly lower total annual electricity generation than an optimal south-facing orientation, it enables higher production in the afternoon and evening hours, when market electricity prices are usually higher. This optimizes the market value of the generated energy and increases the power plant's overall revenues.

### **World Sun Day and DeLasol North Power Plant Day**

To mark the commissioning of the DeLasol North power plant, a ceremony was organized and attended by colleagues, the professional public, partners, and friends of MT-KOMEX.

### **The Renewable Energy Sources of Serbia Association presented Director Miloš Kostić with an award marking five years of MT-KOMEX's membership in the association, as recognition of the company's long-standing contribution to the development of renewable energy sources**

The event combined socializing with the celebration of a successfully completed project, while also giving those present the opportunity to learn more about the operation of the solar power plant. Symbolically, the ceremony was held on World Sun Day, further emphasizing the importance of using solar energy and developing renewable energy sources in Serbia.

As part of the event, the Renewable Energy Sources of Serbia Association presented Director Miloš Kostić



with an award marking five years of MT-KOMEX's membership in the association, as recognition of the company's long-standing contribution to the development of renewable energy sources and the advancement of the green transition in Serbia.

Company Director Miloš Kostić took the guests on a tour of the facility, during which he presented the key technical solutions of the system and the way the power plant operates. On that occasion, those present had the opportunity to learn about



the project’s technical characteristics and its contribution to the domestic energy sector.

Kostić also pointed out the differences between conventional oil-filled and dry-type transformers. Unlike traditional solutions, dry-type transformers do not use oil, eliminating the need for regular oil quality checks, oil replacement, and the disposal of oil as potentially hazardous waste. In addition to environmental advantages, such solutions provide enhanced fire protection, making

them a suitable choice for modern energy facilities.

The DeLasol North project demonstrates how modern technological solutions, expertise, and dedication can be integrated into a system that generates clean energy and contributes to a more sustainable future.

The DeLasol solar power plant, with a capacity of 9.9 MW, is also located at this site and was commissioned in April 2024. Together with the DeLasol North power plant, this area

forms the company’s largest solar energy complex in Serbia, developed in several phases at the same location. The true scale of the complex was best experienced by guests on a quad bike tour, designed to offer a simple and dynamic way to visit the entire power plant.

MT-KOMEX views sustainability as a principle applied at every level — from design and construction to the operation and maintenance of the facilities themselves. It is precisely in this spirit that the agrosolar concept was developed at the Lapovo site, where more than 130 sheep help maintain vegetation in the power plant area.

Instead of conventional mowing and mechanized maintenance, the land is maintained naturally, reducing the need for machinery, optimizing costs, and further strengthening the system’s overall sustainability.

In this way, the same area gains a dual function — the production of clean electricity and the agricultural use of land. This approach increasingly demonstrates that solar power plants can simultaneously integrate energy production and agricultural land use in a mutually compatible way.

Prepared by Katarina Vuinac



# RES DAYS 2026 IN OPATIJA: THE ENERGY TRANSITION ENTERS A NEW PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

**T**his year's RES Days 2026, Croatia's largest conference dedicated to renewable energy sources with a strong international character, brought together in Opatija representatives of the energy sector, industry, investors, regulatory bodies, financial institutions, academia, and local self-governments from Croatia and Europe. During the three-day conference, the dominant topics were

energy security, power grid development, battery systems, data centers, project financing, energy communities, and the role of citizens in the energy transition.

The message that ran through almost all discussions was clear – energy is no longer only a matter of electricity generation, but a key factor in economic development, competitiveness, national security, and the digital future.

## **From Renewable Sources to the Question of National Security**

The conference was opened by Maja Pokrovac, Director of Renewable Energy Sources of Croatia (OIEH), who recalled the development of the Croatian renewable energy sector over the past decade.

– Energy today is a matter of Croatia's overall social and economic development. When we started, we



# DANI OIE

Opatija, Amadria Park  
20. - 22. 5. 2026.



spoke about the first wind farms and the first solar rooftops. At that time, only a few individuals believed that Croatia could have a modern power system based on domestic renewable energy, said Pokrovac.

As she pointed out, over the past ten years, OIEH has grown into one of the key actors in Croatia's energy transition and a partner of leading European energy organizations. At the same time, she warned that administrative procedures and the regulatory framework still do not keep pace quickly enough with the investment cycle and market development.

- We must see how to accelerate procedures and how to rely more strongly on the production of our own, domestic energy, the OIEH Director emphasized.

Strong support for the Croatian energy sector was also expressed by SolarPower Europe CEO Walburga Hemetsberger, who stressed that geopolitical crises have further shown how costly and risky dependence on fossil fuels is. According to her, the

combination of solar power plants and battery systems is becoming one of the foundations of Europe's energy resilience.

Representatives of Croatian institutions emphasized that the country has entered a period of accelerated development of renewable energy. Particular emphasis was placed on the impressive growth in solar capacity, which has increased from approximately 330 MW to more than 1,300 MW in just a few years. In addition, new laws on the electricity market and renewable energy sources were announced, along with additional funds from the Modernization Fund to support the energy transition.

## Energy Independence as a New Defense Strategy

One of the central topics of the first day was the connection between energy and security. The panel "Energy Independence as a Defense Strategy" brought together experts from the fields of energy, defense, and industry, who highlighted

changes in the global security environment.

Prof. Gordan Akrap, PhD, warned that energy has been used for decades as a tool of political influence and geopolitical pressure. At the same time, WindEurope representative Tju Lippert recalled that the war in Ukraine showed how vulnerable energy infrastructure can become during crises.

Particular attention was drawn to the message that renewable energy sources, battery systems, and micro-grids are no longer merely a climate or economic issue, but an important element in the functioning of critical infrastructure and defense systems.

## The Grid Is Becoming the Biggest Challenge of the Energy Transition

If the first phase of the energy transition was focused on building new capacities, the messages from the conference show that the second phase depends on the development of the power grid.



On the second day of the conference, the issue of grid infrastructure dominated most of the panels. Participants agreed that the development of renewable energy sources is no longer limited by a lack of investors or technology, but by the possibilities of connecting to the grid.

Mladen Čavić from the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Croatia vividly described the dynamics of change in the sector: “Today, we can no longer make a ten-year plan because it changes within a week.”

Representatives of investors, system operators, and financial institutions discussed flexible grid connection agreements as a possible solution to grid congestion. Such agreements already exist in many European countries, but investors warned that their success depends on clear rules and the predictability of electricity delivery limitations.

According to data presented at the conference, there are currently around 4,000 MW of projects in Croatia waiting for grid connection. At the same time, the Croatian Transmission System Operator (HOPS) has secured around EUR 330 million over the past five years for the development of the transmission network.

### **Pantheon and Data Centers: A New Industrial Revolution Powered by Energy**

One of the most prominent topics at this year’s conference was the surge in electricity demand driven by the development of artificial intelligence and data centers.

The panel “Who Will Power the Digital World” opened a question that is increasingly occupying the energy industry worldwide: who will provide the energy for the digital economy of the future?

Particular attention was drawn to the Pantheon project, presented as potentially the largest infrastructure and energy project in Croatia. Mario Gudelj, Director of Energy Projects at Pantheon, emphasized that the development of large data centers today comes down to two basic questions: site availability and access to energy.

– The key issue is energy. Can it be delivered to the point where the data center is located, and where will you bring it from? – Gudelj said.

According to him, the project would require approximately 2 GW of combined wind and solar power capacities, making it one of the largest energy undertakings in the region.

Gudelj assessed Pantheon as a kind of test of the Croatian system’s ability to support new-generation projects: “The most expensive grid is the one that is not built.”

The discussions showed that the development of data centers is no longer solely an IT topic but also a matter of energy policy, investment, and national competitiveness. Participants concluded that countries capable of supplying large quantities of reliable, competitively priced energy have an opportunity to attract significant investments in artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure.

### **Tourism, Agriculture, and Energy – Increasingly Interconnected Sectors**

The conference also showed the extent to which the energy transition today is intertwined with other branches of the economy.

At the panel dedicated to tourism, representatives of leading companies spoke about the growing importance of sustainability for tourists and investors. In the tourism sector, energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy sources, and the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions are becoming increasingly important.



## One of the most prominent topics at this year's conference was the surge in electricity demand driven by the development of artificial intelligence and data centers

At the same time, in the agricultural sector, agrisolar projects and the combination of agricultural production with electricity generation are attracting growing attention. Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture announced the possibility of adapting the legislative framework to enable the development of such projects while preserving the land's basic agricultural function.

### Project Financing and Bankability

On the third day of the conference, the focus shifted to the financial and regulatory aspects of renewable energy development.

In a discussion with Marko Primorac, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank, it was emphasized that high-quality grid infrastructure and energy storage systems will be key prerequisites for the further development of the sector.

– Stable and predictable revenues, secured grid connection, resolved property and legal relations, and environmental permits are key to the bankability of projects – Primorac said.

It was emphasized that battery systems will become an increasingly

important element in almost every new energy project, both for system stabilization and to increase investment profitability.

### Citizens and Energy Communities as the Next Step of the Transition

The final segment of the conference was dedicated to citizens, energy communities, and active energy customers. Participants assessed that the next phase of the energy transition will involve much stronger inclusion of local communities in energy production and management.

Discussions focused on PPA agreements, energy sharing, energy communities, and new models of demand-side management. Experts pointed out that the success of these models requires simplifying procedures and providing citizens with easy access to information.

At the conference's closing, Maja Pokrovac emphasized the importance of educating local communities and more actively involving citizens in the energy transition.

– We need to educate local communities more so that different participants at the local level can

achieve greater energy independence and meet their own energy needs. Croatia has the potential to develop a modern power system based on domestic renewable energy sources. It deserves the opportunity to build a modern power system based on its potential – Pokrovac concluded.

### The Main Message from Opatija

RES Days 2026 showed that the energy transition in Croatia is entering a new phase of development. While in previous years the focus was on the construction of wind farms and solar power plants, today the key issues relate to grid development, energy storage, system flexibility, digital infrastructure, and citizen participation.

The messages from Opatija indicate that the future competitiveness of the Croatian economy will largely depend on the state's ability to accelerate the development of power infrastructure, provide a predictable regulatory framework, and enable the implementation of major investments in renewable energy sources, battery systems, and data centers.

Precisely for this reason, this year's RES Days were not only an energy conference but also a gathering where participants discussed Croatia's future economic development model, its energy security, and the position it wants to take in Europe's green and digital transition.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



# WHERE DOES SERBIA STAND ON CHEMICAL MANAGEMENT?

**C**hemicals are an indispensable part of modern life, but their safe use poses one of the greatest challenges in protecting human health and the environment. Although Serbia has largely harmonized its legislation with European regulations, numerous problems continue to burden the system – from insufficient institutional coordination to inadequate control of products containing hazardous substances. We spoke with Jasminka Randelović, master of biochemistry and Program Manager at the organization Alternative for Safer Chemicals – ALHem, about how well protected we really are from harmful chemicals, what the ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury means for Serbia, and what the key recommendations are for improving the system.

**The delay in alignment with the EU REACH Regulation means that Serbia still does not fully follow the pace of the European chemicals management system**



**Q: When we talk about chemical management, where does Serbia stand today in relation to European standards, and what would you single out as the main bottlenecks in the system?**

A: Serbia, as a candidate country for membership in the European Union, has achieved a satisfactory level of legislative alignment with relevant EU regulations in the field of chemicals management. By-laws are continuously being harmonized with amendments to the European regulations to which domestic legislation is aligned, although the pace of this process should be further accelerated, a task made more difficult by the limited administrative and professional capacities of the competent institutions.

However, chemical management does not mean only adopting regulations. It requires an integrated approach that connects institutional coordination, effective inspection oversight, data availability, and risk-based decision-making. It is precisely in this area that Serbia continues to face significant challenges.

The main bottlenecks in the system remain structural in nature. Insufficient coordination among institutions, unclear delineation of responsibilities, and limited inspection capacity continue to undermine the effectiveness of market control and the consistent implementation of regulations.

At the same time, the public does not have sufficient access to data on chemicals placed on the market, inspection results, implemented projects, and the fulfillment of obligations arising from international conventions in this field. This makes it more difficult to monitor the actual effects of chemical management policies and reduces citizens' trust in the system.

In the coming period, the priority should be the further development of an integrated chemicals management system, with a focus on improving inter-institutional cooperation,

increasing the availability of information on chemical risks, reducing the use of the most hazardous substances, and strengthening preventive control mechanisms to protect human health and the environment.

**Q: At the end of 2024, Serbia ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury, ten years after signing it. How important is this step, and what will it mean in practice for the state, the economy, and citizens?**

A: At the end of 2024, Serbia ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury, ten years after signing it. The adoption of this convention represents an important institutional step, as Serbia thereby formally confirms its obligation to gradually reduce and eliminate the use of mercury, one of the most toxic substances for human health and the environment. The ratification of the Minamata Convention is not only a matter of international obligations but also a matter of protecting citizens from exposure to mercury through products, waste, and environmental pollution.

However, the key challenge is not the ratification itself, but its consistent implementation. In practice, this means improving the management of mercury-containing waste, identifying potentially contaminated sites, and gradually reducing mercury levels in industrial processes and products. For the economy, this means technical adaptation and the application of safer alternatives, while for citizens, in the long term, it means reduced exposure to one of the most dangerous heavy metals.

The particular importance of the convention is reflected in the protection of the population from products containing mercury. It envisages the gradual restriction and elimination of mercury in various consumer products, wherever safer alternatives exist, such as thermometers, certain blood pressure measuring devices, fluorescent lamps, batteries, and



Jasminka Randelović

Master of Biochemistry and Program Manager at the organization Alternative for Safer Chemicals – ALHem

dental amalgam. This encourages the transition to safer solutions and reduces emissions of this extremely toxic substance into the environment. At the same time, it reduces the risk of citizens' exposure to mercury through everyday product use and through inadequate disposal of waste containing it.

Ratification is also important because it entails developing a system to monitor mercury emissions and releases, improving public information, and implementing protective measures for particularly vulnerable population groups, such as children and pregnant women. For the benefits of ratification to be visible in practice, it is necessary to ensure transparent reporting on the implementation of the obligations undertaken, as well as adequate administrative and financial capacities to realize them.

**Q: The report states that Serbia has not yet fully aligned its regulations with the EU REACH Regulation, including the ban on microplastics and certain hazardous substances. How much do such delays affect human health and**

**the environment, as well as Serbia's European integration process?**

A: The delay in alignment with the EU REACH Regulation means that Serbia still does not fully follow the pace of the European chemicals management system, which is continuously updated on the basis of new scientific knowledge and risk assessments.

Progress has been made in certain areas, such as the introduction of restrictions on microplastics in certain products, primarily in some cosmetics and detergents. However, unlike the EU REACH Regulation 2023/2055, which introduces a broad, systemic approach to banning intentionally added microplastics across a wide range of products – from cosmetics and fertilizers to sports fields and industrial materials – Serbia's approach remains partial and limited to certain product categories.

From the perspective of health and the environment, this delay creates a time gap between the moment when a particular substance is recognized as risky at the EU level and the moment when the same measure is applied in Serbia. This gap may result in a longer period of exposure of the population and the environment to substances that have already been banned or restricted in the EU.

In the context of European integration, alignment with the REACH Regulation is one of the key benchmarks under Chapter 27, as it demonstrates not only the legal but also the institutional capacity of the system to follow European standards for the protection of health and the environment in real time. For this reason, REACH is viewed not merely as a technical issue but as an indicator of how aligned and operational the chemicals management system is in practice.

**Q: You particularly warn about the multi-year delay in transposing the RoHS III Directive, which is why products containing toxic phthalates**

**are still legally present on the domestic market. How exposed are citizens in Serbia to these substances on a daily basis, and is there sufficient awareness of their potential consequences?**

A: By adopting the new Law on Waste Management (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 109/2025), Serbia formally transposed the ban on four toxic phthalates — DEHP, DBP, BBP, and DIBP — in electrical and electronic equipment, thereby achieving alignment with the EU RoHS Directive at the level of the law in this respect.

However, it is not enough for the ban to exist on paper. Until the relevant rulebook is updated, the ban on



the four toxic phthalates cannot be fully implemented in practice. This means that there is still a possibility that electrical and electronic products containing toxic phthalates in prohibited concentrations, which have been banned in the EU since 2019, may remain on the Serbian market.

Phthalates are chemicals used as plasticizers in PVC and are scientifically recognized as substances that may act as endocrine disruptors, with possible effects on reproductive health and development, especially in cases of long-term and cumulative exposure. This is precisely why they have been strictly restricted in the EU for many years, even though safer alternatives are widely available.

A particular problem is that exposure is not limited to electrical and electronic equipment but also extends to a wide range of everyday products made of soft plastic — such as school backpacks, notebook covers, toiletry bags, raincoats, artificial leather, and household products.

In this part of the system, there is a serious institutional problem: an unclear delineation of responsibilities among inspection authorities, whereby in practice no inspection body has assumed clear and consistent responsibility for the systematic control of phthalates in this group of products. This creates a regulatory vacuum in an area that directly affects citizens' everyday exposure, including children.



The key problem is no longer the lack of rules, but the lack of their consistent implementation, control, and institutional responsibility.

**Q: One of the problems you highlight is the difference between the domestic and European lists of substances of concern. What does this mean in practice for consumers in Serbia, and to what extent are they currently deprived of information about the chemicals contained in the products they buy?**

A: At this moment, the domestic List of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC list) is fully aligned with the corresponding EU list.

At the same time, the Candidate List of Substances of Very High

Concern shows a slight lag behind the EU list, with a difference of two entries. This list is a key instrument of transparency and consumers' right to information about the presence of the most hazardous substances in products.

However, despite the formal alignment of regulations, the serious question of their consistent implementation in practice remains, particularly regarding data availability and the effectiveness of market surveillance. Based on available public reports, it cannot be established that regular inspection supervision has so far been carried out to verify the implementation of Article 27 of the Law on Chemicals, which prescribes the obligation of suppliers to provide, at the consumer's request, information on the presence of SVHC substances in products in concentrations above 0.1 percent.

**Q: The report also mentions the problem of jurisdiction between different inspections, due to which the control of certain products is practically absent. Is this institutional misalignment one of the reasons why the chapter on chemicals management appears in the report "Systemic Error"?**

A: Yes, the unresolved delineation of responsibilities between inspections for certain product groups, such as general-use products that come into contact with the skin or mucous membranes, is one of the clearest examples of a systemic problem in chemicals management. When it is unclear who is responsible for controlling a specific group of products, supervision is effectively absent. In such situations, inspection bodies declare themselves incompetent, while products that pose a risk to citizens' health remain available on the market. Instead of a coordinated consumer protection system, we get an institutional gap in which responsibility remains unclear. That is why

this problem can rightly be described as a "systemic error".

**Q: What are the key recommendations made by Coalition 27 in the report "Systemic Error", and what must the state urgently do to make the chemicals management system more efficient, more transparent, and aligned with European Union standards?**

A: The key recommendations are directed towards strengthening the three basic pillars of the system: legislative, institutional, and human resources.

First of all, it is necessary to accelerate harmonization with European Union regulations, particularly when it comes to the timely transposition of bans and restrictions on hazardous chemicals in products, the regular updating of the Candidate List of Substances of Very High Concern, as well as regulations on the classification, labeling, and packaging of chemicals.

Second, it is necessary to strengthen the professional and administrative capacities of the competent institutions and resolve problems in inspection supervision through a clearer definition of responsibilities and better coordination between authorities. Citizens should not be in a situation where products remain outside control because it is unclear which institution is responsible for them.

Third, the system must become more transparent. This implies publicly available, regularly updated data on hazardous chemicals in the market, as well as information on unsafe products, particularly through the NEPRO rapid alert system. Without transparency, there is neither public trust nor effective risk control.

Finally, stable financing and continuous strengthening of human resources must be ensured. Without a sufficient number of qualified professionals and adequate resources, even the best regulations remain only on paper.

Interview by Milena Maglovski



# ELECTROMOBILITY IN SERBIA: FAST CHARGING IS BECOMING THE STANDARD

**T**he development of electromobility in Serbia and the region has gained momentum in recent years. Progress is no longer reflected only in the growing number of electric vehicles on the roads, but also in the accelerated expansion of charging infrastructure, both public and private. According to Charge&GO, one of the pioneers in developing the electric vehicle charging network in

Serbia, the market today shows clear signs of maturity and long-term growth.

An increasing number of companies are opting to electrify their vehicle fleets, accompanied by the construction of private charging networks for internal use. Companies from the logistics, delivery, trade, and service sectors are particularly active, especially those with a large number of vehicles or branches

across the country. Within these systems, in addition to standard AC chargers, high-power DC chargers are increasingly being installed, enabling fast battery top-ups and maximum efficiency.

The changes we see today would have been difficult to imagine just a few years ago. While three or four years ago, interest in fast DC chargers was very limited, today they have become a key element of every serious

strategy for developing electric vehicle infrastructure. A similar transformation has also taken place in public charging networks, where fast chargers are gradually taking precedence.

The reason for this also lies in the development of the automotive industry. The new generation of electric vehicles is equipped with higher-capacity batteries and systems capable of accepting significantly higher charging power. Users expect fast and simple battery top-ups during journeys, without long stops. This is why chargers with capacities of 150 kW, 180 kW, or even 240 kW are becoming the new standard at busy locations and along major transport corridors.

Drivers of electric vehicles today carefully plan their routes and choose locations that enable the most efficient charging. When there is a

choice, preference is given to stations that allow shorter stops and continuation of the journey without unnecessary waiting. This approach contributes to a better user experience and further encourages the transition to electric mobility.

that combine solar power plants, the electricity grid, and battery storage. Such solutions enable companies to achieve greater energy independence, better cost control, and increased stability of electricity supply.

For owners of electric vehicles and infrastructure operators, battery systems must enable the installation of higher-power chargers, even at locations where the available grid connection capacity is insufficient to supply such devices directly. This opens new opportunities for the development of the charging network without the need for costly, time-consuming expansion of connection capacity.

Positive trends are also present in the region. In North Macedonia, at least four fast chargers with a capacity of 150 kW will soon be put into operation on the motorway towards

Greece, which drivers will be able to access through the domestic Charge&GO application. In the center of Skopje, the first fast charger of the same capacity is already operational. It is also available to users from Serbia, thanks to the regional interconnection of networks.

At the same time, the domestic market continues to grow. This year will bring a record expansion of the electric vehicle charging network in Serbia. Along the main transport corridors, more than 40 new fast DC chargers are being installed at petrol stations, while charging infrastructure is simultaneously being developed in cities, in line with the capacities of the electricity grid at each location.

Investments in infrastructure, the growing number of electric vehicles, and the increasing interest of companies in sustainable transport solutions indicate that electric drive will play an increasingly important role in transport in Serbia and the region in the years to come.

### Responsible Use of Charging Infrastructure

Charge&GO appeals to all drivers to use spaces intended for charging electric vehicles in accordance with their purpose. Parking internal combustion engine vehicles in spaces reserved for electric car charging is becoming an increasingly common problem, particularly in shopping center car parks.

Just as we respect parking spaces intended for persons with disabilities, we also need to respect spaces clearly marked for electric vehicles. They are not intended for long-term parking but to provide access to charging infrastructure for users who need it to continue their journey. By developing a culture of responsible use of shared infrastructure, we contribute to the more efficient functioning of the system and the faster development of electromobility in Serbia.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski





# GREEN FINANCIAL SOLUTIONS: SUPPORTING MORE SUSTAINABLE CHOICES FOR LIFE, HOME, AND ENERGY

**W**e are increasingly choosing to do things differently – to consume less energy, plan our purchases more carefully, and think about how our everyday choices affect the world around us. What once seemed like a distant story about the future is now becoming part of everyday life.

Interestingly, these choices are reflected not only in the

environment, but also very quickly become visible in our own lives – through lower costs, greater comfort, and the feeling that we have made a smarter decision.

This is precisely where space opens up for financial institutions to play an important role – by making such decisions more accessible and easier to implement through financial support and advisory services.

Recognizing the importance of initiatives that encourage a more responsible attitude towards the environment, Erste Bank has developed products to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy consumption, and lower harmful gas emissions.

Green loans are increasingly being recognized as an important instrument for encouraging environmentally conscious financial decisions.

## Green Consumer Loan

Erste Bank's green consumer loans aim to reduce negative environmental impact by improving energy efficiency, thereby lowering energy consumption and emissions of harmful gases. In addition to environmental benefits, such investments also bring tangible advantages in everyday life – through lower monthly costs and a higher level of living comfort.

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**Loan amount:** from RSD 100,000 to RSD 4,500,000

**Repayment period:** from 13 to 95 months

**Fixed effective interest rate:** 7,79%

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**Do you want to improve your home or business sustainably but need financing?  
See which green products Erste Bank offers to its clients.**

## Green Housing Loan

Erste Bank's commitment to environmental sustainability and reducing negative environmental impact is also reflected in its broad range of green loans. For this reason, a special offer has been prepared for the purchase of properties whose energy performance meets criteria aligned with the EU Taxonomy for sustainable activities.

Customers can choose a housing loan with a fixed interest rate and a repayment period of up to 240 months, or a loan with a variable or combined interest rate and a repayment period of up to 360 months.

For the purchase of properties in energy class A or A+, it is possible to apply for a loan with a variable or combined interest rate, with a maximum repayment period of up to 35 years.

For buyers purchasing their first residential property in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, and Kragujevac, financing is available with a 10% down payment.

## EBRD SME Go Green Program Supporting Sustainable Investments

The loan under the SME Go Green program is intended for sustainable investments by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), with a special focus on investments in agriculture and agribusiness, the greening of value chains in these sectors, and support for women-led businesses. The credit line is made available with technical assistance and incentives financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Union (EU).

## Green Car Loan

Erste Bank's green car loan supports the transition to more sustainable mobility through the purchase of energy-efficient vehicles that emit less than 50 g of carbon dioxide per kilometer traveled. By choosing an electric or hybrid car that meets the required criteria, customers can secure a more favorable, fixed interest rate.

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**Loan amount:** up to RSD 4,500,000 / EUR 40,000

**Repayment period:** up to 83 months

For a loan indexed to EUR, a 30% down payment is required, whereas loans in RSD do not require a mandatory down payment.

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## Energy Efficiency Loan from the EBRD Credit Line

The energy efficiency loan, supported by the EBRD and the GEEF program, enables investment in energy-efficient technologies that contribute to lower electricity and heating bills, while preserving comfort and reducing negative environmental impact. Beneficiaries of this loan also receive a financial reimbursement of part of the invested funds – 20% of the loan amount for the introduction of solutions based on renewable energy sources, or up to 15% for other energy efficiency improvement measures covered by the program.

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**Loan amount:** from RSD 100,000 to RSD 4,500,000

**Repayment period:** from 13 to 95 months

Interest rates are more favorable with a salary transfer to Erste Bank.

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## Financing Renewable Energy Projects

Erste Bank supports the implementation of projects using renewable energy sources through long-term financing of up to 15 years, an individual approach for each project, and the provision of funds to accelerate investment implementation. To date, more than 80 renewable energy projects have been financed, with a total installed capacity of more than 800 MW and investments exceeding EUR 400 million.

Prepared by Katarina Vuinac



# TEB FORUM 2026: SIGNPOSTS FOR THE FUTURE OF ENERGY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

**A**t a time when the energy transition is becoming a key issue for Europe's future economic development and energy security, the need to connect experts, investors, decision-makers, and innovators has never been greater. It was precisely with this mission that The Energy Bridge (TEB) was created — a community intelligence start-up and spin-off of the Vienna University of

Technology, which seeks to accelerate the transformation of the energy sector in Central and Eastern Europe by networking key stakeholders.

Confirmation of the importance of this initiative also came at the third Energy Bridge Forum, held in Vienna, which brought together more than 500 participants from over 18 countries. Over two days, 90 speakers on two stages and across six thematic areas discussed the most important

challenges and opportunities of the energy transition, from the development of renewable energy sources and energy storage to financing, digitalization, and regional cooperation.

## **The Most Important Outcomes of the Forum**

BESS as a New Investment Infrastructure Class – Battery energy storage systems (BESS) are increasingly moving from a speculative

investment phase into the category of structured infrastructure assets. As Thomas Rosenzopf of Enervis pointed out, this development is being driven by a “rare convergence” of factors – increased market volatility, falling capital expenditure (CAPEX), and improved regulatory frameworks.

Lukas Stühlinger of Fingreen pointed to the increasingly pronounced shift towards project bankability, noting that contracted revenues and a certain level of cash-flow certainty are necessary to secure bank financing in the CEE region. According to him, such certainty is provided through capacity markets, contracts

Hungary’s combined schemes of CfD contracts and grants.

In his assessment, attracting long-term institutional capital depends on the speed of grid connection, certainty in the permitting process, and a clear legal status for energy storage. At the same time, the countries of Central and Eastern

Adina Stoica (4P Renewables, Romania), Jiří Bím (Solar Association Czech Republic), Kitti Krapko (MAVIR, Hungary), Karoline Narodoslowsky (Austria), Marie-Therese Richter-Kuhnert (Energy Community), and moderator Christian Mikosch (Wolf Theiss) discussed the future of regulatory frameworks for renewable energy sources, permitting process reforms, and regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe at the TEB Forum Vienna 2026.



His analysis of the profitability of Central and Eastern European (CEE) markets showed that individual markets differ significantly in terms of the depth of volatility, while the most attractive investment opportunities are those markets that combine frequent price fluctuations with high price spreads. The mere presence of negative price signals, Rosenzopf emphasized, is not sufficient to create a sustainable business model.

for difference (CfDs), tolling agreements, or long-term power purchase agreements.

Stühlinger also emphasized that subsidies in the CEE region today are not only useful but, in most markets, a necessary precondition for project implementation. As key examples, he highlighted Polish capacity market contracts lasting 15 to 17 years, Bulgaria’s RESTORE grants, which cover up to 44 percent of CAPEX, and

Europe face the task of developing sustainable electricity market models after the expiry of existing subsidy programs.

#### Western Balkan Market Integration –

One of the central topics of the Forum was also the Energy Community’s role in aligning the energy markets of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans with the European Union’s internal market. Participants

assessed that the process of transposing European legislation has begun, but its implementation is still in its early stages. Although this is a long-term process, optimism was expressed that the countries of the region, with appropriate support, will successfully progress towards full integration with the EU energy market.

**Decarbonization of District Heating Systems** – On the second day of the Forum, concrete examples were presented confirming that the decarbonization of district heating systems is no longer a theoretical concept, but a process already being implemented in practice.

Particular attention was drawn to the City of Vienna’s Heating Plan to 2040, with an estimated value of EUR 45 billion. Also presented were Wien Energie’s 55 MW heat pump at the Ebswien facility, considered the most powerful in Europe, and the deep geothermal energy development program aimed at securing 200 MW of thermal energy. These projects showed that technological solutions for heating decarbonization are already available and that their implementation is rapidly expanding across Europe.

### **Identified Challenges and Coordination Gaps**

**Market Fragmentation** – In Central and Eastern Europe and the EU, there are more than 20 national balancing frameworks, and that significantly complicates the establishment of a single market. The Forum emphasized that without market coupling, there can be no efficient electricity market. Although Hungary’s integration into the PICASSO platform, planned for the first quarter of 2026, represents a step forward, the harmonization process is still far from complete.

**Misalignment Between Grid Development and Renewable Energy Sources** – Only three per cent of Romania’s renewable energy portfolio can be



considered bankable, not because of technological limitations, but due to insufficient coordination between grid connection, permitting, and financing. At the same time, permitting procedures in Austria remain among the longest in Europe, lasting between eight and twelve years.

**Coordination Between TSO and DSO Operators** – Distribution system operators (DSOs) are gradually shifting from passive grid managers to active platform operators, but the regulatory framework has not kept pace with this transformation, creating additional obstacles to the efficient integration of new energy resources.

**Cross-Border Planning and Market Coupling** – The Forum assessed that the Western Balkans already represents a kind of “large battery” for the European Union market, thanks to its energy potential. However, the formal integration and coupling of regional electricity markets remain in their early stages of development.

**Lack of Heating and Cooling Planning** – Although advanced spatial tools for energy planning exist, such as solutions developed by AEE INTEC and SIR Salzburg, most countries still lack a legal obligation to plan local heating

and cooling systems, which slows their decarbonization.

### **The Winning Combination: Spread and Subsidies**

The most important conclusion from the event is that successful business models for BESS require markets that combine frequent price events with wide daily price spreads; negative price signals alone are insufficient.

Romania has highly attractive price spreads and significant revenue potential from the day-ahead market. Although historical grid charges were a concern, recent legislative changes have greatly reduced exposure to grid charges for storage assets, making it a highly attractive investment market, with strong volatility expected until 2030.

Bulgaria generates exceptionally high revenues in the day-ahead market, sufficient to ensure a sustainable, independent business model while maintaining structurally low grid charges. Moreover, Bulgaria offers substantial funding support through RESTORE grants, which cover up to 44 percent of a project’s CAPEX.

While markets such as Hungary have high spreads, they lack storage-specific exemptions from grid charges, which seriously weakens



standalone profitability. Ultimately, access to EU funding mechanisms and supportive regulatory frameworks positions Romania and Bulgaria, and likely other Western Balkan countries with transposed regulations, at the forefront of battery storage expansion in CEE.

## The Evolution of TEB in the Coming Years

Current Ecosystem:

- **Annual Forum** – now in its third edition, it has grown from a one-day dialogue into a two-day forum with two stages and six topics.
- **TEB Podcast** – in-depth interviews with experts, building a year-round knowledge base.
- **TEB-i** – an AI assistant for the energy transition, providing personalized information to the community.
- **TEB Club** – a digital community platform for year-round networking and knowledge exchange



through a centralized data repository for legal and technical information.

- **TEB Insights Newsletter** – weekly information for decision-makers, covering molecules, electrons, thermal sources, and energy security.

Planned Initiatives Publicly Announced:

- **Critical Infrastructure Hackathon** – October 2026.
- **TEB Forum Real Estate and Energy** – 30 September 2026.
- **Expansion of the Digital Platform** – the aim is to become the largest energy networking community in CEE, with ambitions to reach users across Europe by 2030.

The conclusions of TEB Forum 2026 clearly show that the energy transition in Central and Eastern Europe is no longer a question of technology availability or a lack of investment interest. The key challenge today is coordination – between markets, regulatory frameworks, grid infrastructure, financial institutions, and different stakeholders in the energy sector. It is precisely the ability to connect these elements that will determine the speed and success of the region's energy transformation.

The Forum also confirmed that energy storage systems and other flexible resources are becoming a foundation of the future power system. However, their further development will depend on the creation of stable, predictable regulatory frameworks that provide investors with long-term certainty and enhance project bankability. Countries that successfully combine market reforms, incentive mechanisms, and accelerated grid infrastructure development will have the opportunity to become leaders in the new energy economy.

The importance of deeper integration of the Western Balkans with the European Union energy market was particularly emphasized. The region has significant energy potential, but to fully valorize it, it is necessary to accelerate regulatory harmonization, cross-border cooperation, and the creation of a more favorable investment environment. In this process, initiatives such as the TEB Forum play an important role by creating a platform for knowledge exchange and the launch of partnerships.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



CIREC Serbia is marking **three decades** of work this year.

[PAGE 22]

## The ABB Serbia Technology and Innovation Forum

was held on 19 May at the Radisson Collection Old Mill Belgrade hotel.

[PAGE 12]



Erste Bank has so far financed **more than 80 RES projects**

with a total installed capacity of over 800 MW.

[PAGE 44]

## Two decrees

aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving waste reuse have been adopted in Serbia.

[PAGE 24]



## ECO LINE Classic, ECO LINE Pro, and ECO LINE Prime

are the three new, clearly defined segments of the German manufacturer Luxor Solar.

[PAGE 10]



ProCredit Bank in Serbia marked  
**25 years**  
 of successful operations  
 this year.

[PAGE 20]



The number of breeding  
 pairs of griffon vultures  
 in Serbia has increased

**25-fold**  
 over the past 30 years.

[PAGE 68]



A total of

**1,2 GW**  
 of wind farms  
 and solar  
 power plants

has been built in Serbia  
 over the past 12 years.

[PAGE 16]



**The 9.9 MW**  
**DeLasol North**

solar power plant  
 in Lapovo has been  
 commissioned by  
 MT-KOMEX.

[PAGE 30]



**The Beli Breg Popovci**  
**energy cooperative**

was founded by the  
 residents of the hamlet  
 of Popovci near Vranje.

[PAGE 72]



## EUROPE WILL NEED MORE THAN 600,000 WORKERS IN THE WIND ENERGY SECTOR BY 2030

The European wind industry continues to grow rapidly, but the shortage of skilled labor could jeopardize the achievement of the continent's ambitious energy targets.

According to data from WindEurope, the European wind industry currently employs around 478,000 people, of whom 225,000 are directly employed in the sector, while an additional 253,000 jobs are in ancillary activities across the supply chain. The manufacturing sector alone provides about 110,000 jobs, confirming the importance of wind energy for the European economy.

The number of employees in the sector is expected to exceed 600,000 by 2030. However, as the association points out, the challenge is not only to increase the number of employees, but also to ensure an adequate workforce with the necessary knowledge and skills. If key positions remain unfilled, the development of new wind farms could be slowed down.

To help companies and decision-makers respond to this challenge in a timely manner, WindEurope has introduced a new tool to plan and develop the workforce in the wind energy sector.

The Workforce Development Tool provides a detailed overview of employment needs by country, project development phases, and job categories. It also identifies critical skills shortages and shows how demand for certain profiles will evolve in the coming years. The tool builds on the previous Wind Energy Workforce Report, which identified as many as 235 occupational profiles across the wind industry value chain.

WindEurope warns that companies cannot simultaneously invest in training for all employee profiles, which is why it is necessary to set priorities precisely. Without reliable labor market data, workforce planning becomes uncertain, leading to inefficient training investments and project delays.

Among the most sought-after profiles are field engineers, assembly technicians, pre-assembly technicians, and welders. Demand for these professionals will continue to grow in the coming years.

Energy Portal

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS NEW RULES FOR VEHICLE CIRCULARITY

The European Parliament has given final approval to a new regulation introducing circular economy principles into the European Union's automotive sector, with the aim of reducing resource consumption, increasing the use of recycled materials, and improving end-of-life vehicle management.

The new rules cover the entire life cycle of vehicles – from design and production to recycling and treatment after decommissioning. One of the key innovations is the requirement that all new vehicles be designed to enable the easy removal of as many parts and components as possible, thereby facilitating their reuse and recycling.

The regulation also sets mandatory targets for the use of recycled plastics in new vehicles. Manufacturers will be required to ensure that the plastic in each new vehicle type contains at least 15 percent recycled content within six years of the rules entering into force, and 25 percent within ten years. At least one-fifth of that recycled material must come from vehicles that have reached the end of their life or from reused automotive parts.

Based on future feasibility analyses, the European Commission will have the option to introduce similar targets for other materials, including steel, aluminum, magnesium, and critical raw materials.

The new rules also bring changes to the second-hand vehicle market. When selling used cars, businesses must prove that the vehicle is not a waste or that it has a valid technical inspection certificate. Simplified rules are foreseen for transactions between private individuals to avoid additional administrative burdens on citizens.

Special attention has been given to end-of-life vehicle management. Three years after the regulation takes effect, manufacturers will assume extended responsibility for financing the collection and treatment of scrapped vehicles across the European Union.

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## HOW SOME ISLANDS HAVE COMPLETELY SWITCHED TO RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES

While large countries are still grappling with how to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, some small islands are already showing what the energy future could look like. From wind turbines and solar farms to battery storage and green hydrogen, certain islands around the world have managed to almost completely switch to renewable energy sources — setting an example for the rest of the planet.

For many island communities, the energy transition was not just an environmental issue, but a matter of survival. Remoteness from the mainland, high fuel transport costs, and vulnerability to climate change forced them to consider energy independence much earlier.

### The Danish island that became a symbol of the green transition

One of the most famous examples is Samsø, a small Danish island that has become a global symbol of sustainable energy. Just over two decades ago, the residents decided to change how they generate energy completely.

Today, this island covers most of its energy needs with wind and biomass, and even exports surplus electricity to the mainland. What is particularly interesting is that many of the projects were financed by citizens themselves, who bought shares in the wind farms.

The result is not only a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions but also a strengthening of the local economy and the creation of new jobs.

### El Hierro: The island harnessing wind and water

On the Spanish island of El Hierro, one of the world's most fascinating energy systems has been developed. By combining wind farms with pumped hydro storage, the island produces almost all of its electricity from renewable sources.

When the wind generates excess energy, it is used to pump water to a higher reservoir. When there isn't enough wind, the water is released back through turbines to generate electricity. This system ensures a stable supply even when weather conditions are not ideal.

### Pacific islands fighting climate change

For many small Pacific islands, transitioning to renewable energy is also a fight for survival.

Rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions directly threaten their communities.

That's why countries like Tokelau are investing in solar systems and battery storage to reduce their dependence on imported diesel. Tokelau has become one of the first territories in the world to derive nearly all its electricity from solar energy.

Beyond emission reductions, the islands have also significantly lowered energy costs, which is crucial for small communities with limited resources.

### The future is smart energy systems

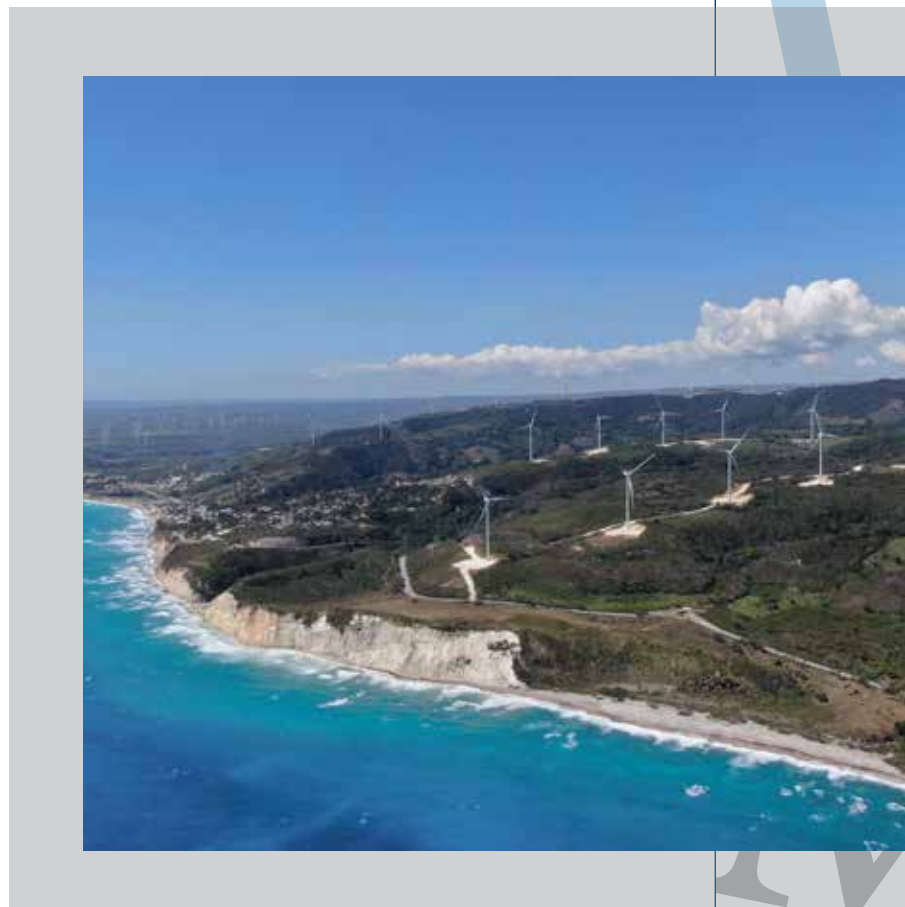
What connects most of these islands is the fact that renewable sources alone are not enough. The key to success lies in combining different technologies — solar panels, wind turbines, battery storage, smart grids, and demand management systems.

This is precisely why many islands today serve as "laboratories of the future," where technologies that will soon become standard even in large cities are being tested.

Although it often seems that such projects are only possible on small islands, experience shows that the same principles can be applied in other settings — from remote villages to large urban centers.

Small islands may have been among the first to take this path, but the way they produce and use energy today could very soon become the global standard.

Milena Maglovski





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### **CITIZENS OF SERBIA CAN ELECTRONICALLY APPLY FOR ENERGY VULNERABLE CUSTOMER STATUS**

Citizens of Serbia can, as of today, electronically submit a request to obtain the status of an energy-vulnerable customer through the “eUprava” platform, the Ministry of Mining and Energy announced.

According to Minister Dubravka Đedović Handanović, this method simplifies and accelerates the procedure for obtaining the right to reduced bills for electricity, natural gas, or thermal energy.

The status of an energy-vulnerable customer allows households that meet the prescribed conditions to receive reductions in monthly electricity, natural gas, or thermal energy bills ranging from 20 to 60 percent.

As stated in the announcement, the service is intended for citizens of Serbia who are registered users of the “eUprava” portal and who live either alone or in multi-member households, and who receive financial social assistance, increased financial social assistance, child allowance, increased allowance for assistance and care of another person, as well as citizens who meet the conditions regarding total income and earnings prescribed by the Regulation on Energy Vulnerable Customers.

The application process has been fully digitalized. Users log in to the “eUprava” portal using electronic identification with a high level of reliability, then access the “Request for Obtaining the Status of an Energy Vulnerable Customer” service, fill out the electronic form, and attach the necessary documentation.

After successfully submitting the request, users receive an email notification, and they can monitor the status of their application at any time in the “Overview of Submitted Requests” section.

During the procedure, the competent authorities of local self-government units obtain the necessary data ex officio from relevant state records and registries, thereby further reducing the need to submit documentation in paper form.

The electronic service is available year-round on the “eUprava” portal, and detailed instructions for registration and use are available directly on the platform.

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### **NEW STUDY: EVERY EURO INVESTED IN WIND ENERGY RETURNS SEVEN EUROS TO THE EUROPEAN ECONOMY**

By 2040, every euro invested in wind energy from public funds could generate seven euros in annual economic returns, according to a new study by Trinomics, conducted in collaboration with DTU Wind. In addition, such investments could significantly contribute to job creation, export growth, and strengthening the European Union’s energy security, WindEurope reports.

The study proposes establishing a dedicated Fund for Wind Energy Research and Competitiveness to further strengthen the competitiveness of Europe’s wind industry. The fund would provide up to 11.6 billion euros in support across the entire European wind value chain, with 9 billion euros allocated to scaling up manufacturing capacity.

Through these measures, targeted funding could generate an additional 33 billion euros in annual gross value added to the EU economy by 2040, while supporting 180,000 new jobs. At the same time, EU wind equipment exports could increase by 12.6 billion euros annually, with up to 89 percent of the total value remaining in Europe, compared to 47 percent without targeted support. The study also highlights that such investments would significantly improve energy security by reducing natural gas imports by 70 billion cubic meters per year, equivalent to approximately 700 LNG shipments.

The study warns that wind energy currently receives less than 2 percent of the EU program budgets it is eligible for, while funding is spread across multiple programs and instruments, further slowing industry development.

In addition, China has in recent years provided its turbine manufacturers with significantly greater public support, further strengthening their global competitiveness. As a result, investment in wind energy is increasingly seen not only as an energy policy issue, but also as an industrial and strategic priority for the European Union.

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## MEMO BRINGS NORTH MACEDONIA CLOSER TO THE EUROPEAN GUARANTEES OF ORIGIN SYSTEM

The national electricity market operator of North Macedonia (MEMO LLC) officially became a member of the Association of Issuing Bodies (AIB) at the Association's General Assembly.

This move brings North Macedonia one step closer to joining the European system for the issuance, transfer, and recognition of Guarantees of Origin, which serve as unique, internationally recognized proof of the origin of electricity generated from renewable energy sources.

According to MEMO's CEO, Zoran Gjorgjievski, MEMO's membership in AIB enables the Macedonian Guarantees of Origin system to implement the necessary procedures for further accession to the European Energy Certificate System (EECS), thereby allowing secure, transparent, and internationally recognized issuance and trading of green energy certificates.

As he explained, integrating the domestic electricity market with the European energy market is of great importance, as it creates new opportunities for renewable electricity producers, suppliers, and companies to demonstrate the use of green energy in line with European ESG standards and decarbonization goals.

In April 2025, MEMO, in cooperation with Grexel, implemented an electronic Guarantees of Origin registry in accordance with European standards. Since then, 500,000 Guarantees of Origin have been issued, with each certificate representing one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated from renewable energy sources.

AIB, headquartered in Brussels, is the leading European association for energy certification and the standardization of Guarantees of Origin for electricity.

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## EGYPT TO INTEGRATE 22 GW OF RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY BY 2030 WITH SUPPORT FROM THE EU AND EIB

The European Union and the European Investment Bank (EIB) will support the upgrade and expansion of Egypt's electricity network through a financing package worth 690 million euros. Of the total amount, 90 million euros will be provided as grants by the European Commission, while the remaining 600 million euros will be provided as an EIB loan.

The project aims to integrate a total of 22 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity into the national grid by 2030. It will be implemented by the state-owned Egyptian Electricity Transmission Company (EETC), and once completed, these capacities will be sufficient to supply electricity to around 10 million households.

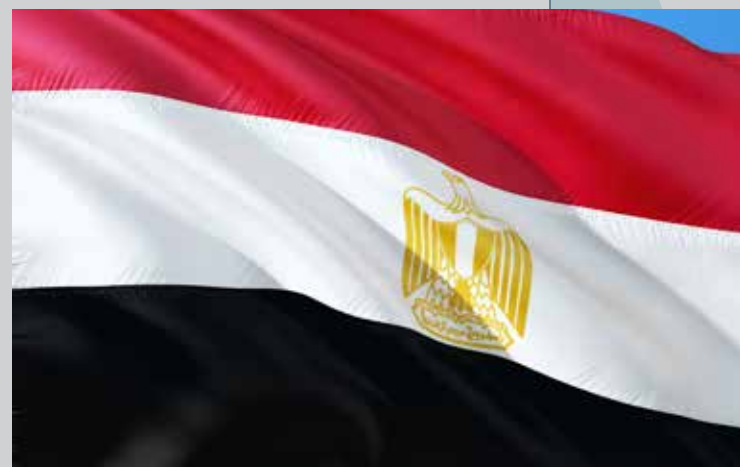
According to the announcement, the program includes the construction of new substations and the installation of advanced transmission lines. This will enable electricity generated by solar and wind power plants in the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez regions to be connected to the national electricity system.

The investments are expected to help reduce transmission losses, improve the reliability of electricity supply, and strengthen energy security. In addition, they will support regional cooperation and create opportunities for future trade and integration of clean energy across the Mediterranean.

The initiative represents one of the first concrete actions under the Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy and Clean-Tech Cooperation Initiative (T-MED), part of the Pact for the Mediterranean, which aims to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and its Southern Mediterranean partners.

The EIB-supported phase of the project will be implemented between 2027 and 2030.

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# WASTE INCINERATORS AS THE WRONG RESPONSE TO THE WASTE AND ENERGY CRISIS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

**W**hile the Western Balkan countries have yet to establish even basic systems for separate waste collection, we are increasingly hearing governments and investors promote waste incinerators as a modern solution, a source of green energy, or even part of the circular economy. In Podgorica, Montenegro, a 50 MW waste-to-energy plant has been announced; in Bosnia and Herzegovina, plans are being developed for waste co-incineration in thermal power plants, as well as for new incinerators in Zenica, Bosanski Petrovac, Sarajevo, and Mostar; while similar projects have in recent years been problematically implemented in Albania and Serbia.

The justifications are always the same: the region has a waste problem, an energy problem, and incineration will supposedly solve both at once. However, the opposite is true: waste incineration threatens to deepen both the waste management crisis and the region's energy dependence.

The study by the CEE Bankwatch Network, "Waste Incineration Trends in the Western Balkans for the Purposes of Electricity and Heat Generation", shows that this is a technically, financially, and environmentally risky model, one that is increasingly misaligned with the

requirements of the European Union, which we all aspire to join.

### **Waste Incineration Means Burning Resources and Does Not Represent a Circular Economy**

One of the greatest misconceptions and dangerous narratives promoted by advocates of waste incineration is that incinerators supposedly contribute to the circular economy. This claim is not only incorrect but contrary to the basic principles of circularity.

A circular economy means keeping the value of materials within the system for as long as possible, through waste prevention, reuse, repair, and recycling. Incinerators do exactly the opposite: they destroy materials that could be reused. When paper, plastic, textiles, or organic waste are burned, they disappear from the economic cycle. Instead of becoming raw materials for new production, they become ash, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and toxic pollutants. A true circular economy encourages treatments such as anaerobic digestion, which produces biogas and digestate from bio-waste, with the digestate used as fertilizer, or mechanical recycling, which turns plastic into new plastic products, while incineration represents the ultimate form of a linear process.



Nataša Kovačević

Coordinator of the Campaign for the Decarbonization of District Heating in the Western Balkans CEE Bankwatch Network

It is paradoxical that the narrative of circular incinerators is being pushed precisely in a region with almost non-existent waste separation systems. In most Western Balkan countries, waste is still predominantly disposed of in landfills, while separate collection of recyclable materials is minimal or merely symbolic. According to the study, the municipal waste recycling rate in Montenegro is only around 3.7 percent, in Bosnia and Herzegovina around 1 percent, and in North Macedonia just 0.3 percent. Under such conditions, an incinerator does not receive residual waste that cannot be recycled, as required by the EU waste hierarchy, but instead burns mixed municipal waste containing huge quantities of materials that could have been recycled, composted, or reused.

The climate picture is no brighter. Municipal waste incineration emits approximately 1,700 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per kilowatt-hour, which is more than coal-fired thermal power plants, at around 1,000 g CO<sub>2</sub>e/kWh. Oil-based plastic, which accounts for the highest-calorific

component of waste, further worsens the climate footprint. When cities such as Belgrade sign contracts obliging them to deliver 510,000 tonnes of waste per year to the Vinča incinerator, even though the incinerator's capacity is only 340,000 tonnes, they structurally move away from recycling and the circular economy.

### **An Incinerator Must “Feed” for Decades**

Once a waste incinerator is built, it becomes an infrastructural anchor that ties a municipality or state to it for several decades. These facilities require enormous initial investments, often between EUR 100 and 150 million, as in the case of the planned incinerator in Podgorica, and their financial sustainability depends directly on a constant, guaranteed supply of large quantities of waste.

This creates a bizarre incentive whereby, instead of reducing waste and encouraging recycling, operators and local authorities are forced to secure ever-larger quantities of mixed or pre-treated waste so that the incinerator can operate at full capacity and repay the investment. This “lock-in” phenomenon means that cities sign long-term delivery contracts, often for 20, 25, or even 30 years, obliging them to provide guaranteed quantities, even if more efficient recycling systems are developed in the meantime or waste volumes are reduced through effective measures.

The consequences of such an approach can be seen even in countries with high environmental and social standards, such as Austria, Sweden, and Switzerland, which invested heavily in incinerators and large incineration capacities several decades ago. In Austria, for example, between 2015 and 2021, the recycling rate increased by only 2–3 percent, from around 58 percent to 60.4 percent. In Sweden, which incinerates an enormous 1.3 to 1.5 million tons of waste imported from abroad in order

to fill its incineration capacity, the recycling rate has for years stood at only around 27–35 percent, far from EU targets. A similar situation can be seen in Switzerland, one of the countries that generates the highest amount of municipal waste per capita and is among the leaders in the share of waste incinerated annually; after an initial increase in the recycling rate up to 2010, it has practically stagnated over the past 10–15 years.

These examples clearly show that once an incinerator is built, it is difficult for any government to later decide to shut it down before the debt repayment period expires, even if this means postponing circular economy goals and undermining its own legal obligations towards the EU.

If countries with strong institutions and developed waste separation systems have failed to significantly increase recycling after building large incineration capacities, the logical question arises: how will Western Balkan countries succeed in doing so when they have yet to introduce even basic waste separation?

### **Waste Incineration as a Last Attempt to Save Coal**

A particularly dangerous trend is the attempt to co-incinerate waste-derived fuel in old coal-fired thermal power plants in Tuzla, Kakanj, Obrenovac, and elsewhere. These facilities, built between 1970 and 1980, were designed for homogeneous fuel with stable characteristics, not for materials with high chlorine content, variable particle size, and an increased share of volatile matter. Adapting these power plants to the best available techniques standards for waste incineration would require investments of EUR 80 to 150 million per unit, including completely new flue gas cleaning systems, continuous emissions monitoring, and hazardous ash treatment.

One example is the recent attempt by Elektroprivreda Bosne i Hercegovine in Tuzla. The planned pilot project was suspended in July 2025 only after the Tuzla City Council convened an emergency session and requested its suspension, amid justified concerns that environmental and health





the basins of Sarajevo or Tuzla would further worsen an already critical situation.

### **Instead of Burning Resources, Invest in Sustainable Renewable Energy Sources and Efficient Waste Management**

The greatest absurdity in this entire story is that Western Balkan countries are skipping the basic steps and immediately attempting to build the most expensive and riskiest infrastructure. The region does not lack incinerators but rather lacks systems for separate waste collection, recycling infrastructure, composting plants, reuse centers, and serious waste-reduction policies. At the same time, there are proven, more environmentally acceptable solutions for energy production, from solar and geothermal energy and large heat pumps to the use of surplus industrial heat, which are already successfully operating across Europe. Combined with recycling, bio-waste treatment, and composting, these solutions create 10 to 50 times more jobs than incinerators and encourage a genuine circular economy. This is why international financial institutions and national governments should abandon investments in waste incineration and direct funds where the region is truly lagging behind: recycling infrastructure, energy efficiency, and the modernization of district heating systems, while aligning policies with the European waste hierarchy and ensuring greater public participation in decision-making.

The Western Balkans should learn not only from Europe's successes, but also from Europe's mistakes. And one of the greatest mistakes would be to invest hundreds of millions of euros in infrastructure that requires us to burn, for decades, resources that we have not yet even seriously tried to preserve.

Nataša Kovačević

guarantees were completely lacking. The planned testing of co-incineration with coal, with a waste share of 100 tons over two days, without public consultation or an environmental impact assessment, represents a dangerous gamble with citizens' health and democratic governance.

And when it comes to health consequences, the evidence, even from modern European incinerators, is devastating. Studies from 2025, published by ToxicoWatch and Zero Waste Europe, documented dangerous levels of dioxins, PFAS chemicals, and heavy metals in soil, moss, surface waters, and even food in the vicinity of waste incineration plants in France, the Netherlands, and Spain. The Western Balkans already has some of the poorest air quality in Europe. Adding new sources of high-temperature combustion in



# IS THE WESTERN BALKAN ENERGY MARKET MOVING AWAY FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION?

**T**he first quarter of 2026 could be remembered as the moment when the first visible consequences of the European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) began to emerge in the energy market of Southeast Europe. The latest quarterly report by the Energy Community Secretariat shows that the region's electricity market is changing rapidly, while the former price links between the Western Balkan countries and the European Union have begun to weaken.

Although CBAM was designed as an instrument to prevent carbon leakage and encourage decarbonization, the initial results indicate that its introduction is having much broader



consequences – from changes in electricity trade to new challenges for integrating the Western Balkan energy markets with the European market. What is particularly interesting is that the changes are reflected not only in administrative procedures or additional costs for exporters, but also in the very dynamics of electricity price formation, trade flows, and the investment signals the market sends to energy companies.

### **Hydrology Brings Record Hydropower Generation**

The beginning of 2026 was marked by exceptionally favorable hydrological conditions. Electricity generation from hydropower plants in the

Western Balkan countries and neighboring EU Member States increased by up to 33 percent compared with the same period of the previous year. Total generation reached 22.18 TWh, which is 5.48 TWh more than in the first quarter of 2025.

Serbia increased its hydropower generation by more than half a terawatt-hour, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia also recorded significant growth. North Macedonia and Montenegro stood out in particular, more than doubling and increasing their hydropower generation by almost 80 percent, respectively.

At the same time, Albania, whose electricity system largely depends on

hydropower, increased its generation by up to 70 percent compared with the same period the previous year.

These results once again confirm the extent to which weather conditions can influence the region's electricity sector. Unlike large European markets, which have a more diversified generation mix, the Western Balkan countries remain relatively sensitive to hydrological conditions. In years with abundant precipitation, hydropower plants significantly reduce the need to rely on more expensive and more emission-intensive generation capacity, while during dry periods, electricity generation from thermal power plants increases or electricity imports rise.

For this reason, the first quarter of 2026 provided a kind of natural experiment, showing how increased generation from renewable sources can affect the market. Greater availability of hydropower led to lower electricity prices in the region, but at the same time, it became clear that the mere existence of cheaper electricity is not sufficient to ensure its competitiveness on the European Union market.

## Coal Is Losing Its Primacy, but Remains Crucial for Serbia

While hydropower plants recorded exceptional results, electricity generation from coal declined by 16 per cent across the observed region. The largest decreases were recorded in Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, while among the Energy Community Contracting Parties, Serbia registered the greatest reduction.

Nevertheless, Serbia remained the largest producer of coal-fired electricity in the region, generating 5.47 TWh in the first quarter. This shows that the domestic electricity system still largely depends on thermal power plants, despite the growth in generation from renewable energy sources.

The only exception in the region was Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, where coal-fired generation increased by eight per cent.

In the long term, the decline in coal-fired generation represents a trend present across Europe. However, the pace of this transformation is not the same in all countries. While some EU Member States are rapidly closing thermal power plants and developing renewable energy sources, the Western Balkan countries still rely on existing lignite capacities as a key pillar of energy security. This applies particularly to Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where thermal power plants continue to account for the largest share of total electricity generation.



In such circumstances, CBAM gains additional significance. The mechanism is not aimed solely at trade, but represents a strong economic signal that electricity generated with high carbon dioxide emissions will become increasingly less competitive on the European market.

## Unexpected Decline in Electricity Prices in Serbia and the Region

One of the most interesting findings of the report concerns movements in electricity prices on the day-ahead market.

While prices in Hungary and Italy remained in the EUR 127–130 per megawatt-hour range, Serbia recorded an average price of only EUR 94.7 per megawatt-hour during the first quarter. Similar levels were recorded in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Greece.

This created a price difference of more than EUR 30 per megawatt-hour between certain European Union and Western Balkan markets.

Such developments represent a significant shift compared to previous years, when prices in the region were generally aligned. During 2025, the difference between Serbia and Hungary mostly ranged between EUR 5 and 15 per megawatt-hour. By the beginning of 2026, this difference



had increased sharply and remained at a historically high level throughout the quarter.

For energy analysts, it is particularly interesting that such a large price gap was not the result of an energy shortage in the European Union, but rather a combination of regulatory changes and market expectations. Under normal circumstances, significantly lower prices in one market would encourage traders to export electricity to higher-priced markets, thereby gradually reducing price differences. However, during the first quarter of 2026, this mechanism did not function to the same extent as it had in previous years.



## The First Consequences of CBAM

According to the Energy Community Secretariat, the implementation of CBAM is one of the key reasons for these market disruptions.

As of 1 January 2026, the mechanism entered a new phase of implementation for electricity imported into the European Union. Although the Western Balkan countries are not formally subject to the same obligations as EU Member States, electricity trade between the region and the Union is now taking place under completely different economic circumstances.



The essence of the problem is simple: even when electricity generated in Serbia, Montenegro, or Bosnia and Herzegovina is significantly cheaper than electricity on the European Union market, the additional costs associated with CBAM reduce or completely erase the economic benefit of exports.

In other words, the price difference is no longer sufficient to encourage traders to use available cross-border capacities to the same extent as before.

This is particularly important for countries that have traditionally generated significant revenues from electricity exports. If the trend continues,

producers will have to seek new business models, invest in lower-emission generation, and adapt their strategies to the increasingly stringent climate rules coming from Brussels.

## Markets Are Moving Apart Instead of Becoming More Connected

Perhaps the most significant conclusion of the report is that the process of market integration between the Western Balkans and the European Union is facing new challenges.

The Energy Community Secretariat states that price correlations between Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Hungary were very high during 2025. However, at the beginning of 2026, these links weakened significantly. At one point, the correlation between prices in Montenegro and Hungary fell almost to zero.

This means that markets no longer respond to the same factors as before, and that price formation now follows a different logic than before the introduction of CBAM.

At first glance, this may seem like a technical detail intended for market analysts, but the consequences could be highly significant. A high price correlation is one of the indicators of successful market integration. When it declines, the efficiency of cross-border trade decreases, investor uncertainty increases, and planning new energy projects becomes more difficult.

## What Does This Mean for Serbia?

For Serbia, which remains the largest producer of coal-fired electricity in the region, CBAM represents much more than an administrative challenge.

In the coming years, the competitiveness of domestic electricity on the European market will increasingly depend on the decarbonization of generation, the development of renewable energy sources, the construction of

battery storage systems, improvements in energy efficiency, and the potential introduction of a national carbon pricing system.

Planned investments in solar power plants, wind farms, and energy storage systems will play a particularly important role, as they should enable a gradual reduction in dependence on coal. At the same time, the development of market coupling with neighboring EU Member States remains one of the key priorities of the region's energy policy.

## The Beginning of a New Energy Era

The first quarter of 2026 represents only the beginning of observing the effects of CBAM, and the Energy Community Secretariat itself emphasizes that it is too early to draw final conclusions. Nevertheless, the initial data show that the energy map of Southeast Europe is changing faster than expected.

The growth in hydropower generation, the decline in coal-fired generation, and record price differences between the European Union and Western Balkan markets indicate that the region is entering a new phase of the energy transition. At the same time, CBAM is proving to be not only a climate instrument but also a factor changing trade patterns, investment priorities, and relations among markets.

The question is no longer whether CBAM will affect the electricity sector of the Western Balkans, but how quickly the countries of the region will adapt to the new rules. The answer to this question will determine not only their position in the European energy market but also the pace of implementing the energy transition, which will mark the coming decade.

*The article is based on the findings of the Energy Community Secretariat's first quarterly CBAM report, published on 29 April 2026.*

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



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# CARBON FARMING COULD CHANGE THE WAY WE FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

**T**he fight against climate change is no longer only a matter of reducing emissions – it also involves rethinking the way we use land. Soil can capture and store carbon on a large scale, preventing emissions from entering the atmosphere while also helping farms become more resilient.

Across the Mediterranean, this makes carbon farming more than a climate concept: it is becoming a practical way to strengthen agriculture, improve soil health, create additional environmental benefits, and open up new economic opportunities

for farmers. Carbon Farming MED shows how this can work in practice.

## **What Carbon Farming Actually Means**

Carbon farming is a way of managing land that helps farms increase carbon removal and reduce emissions from agricultural land. In practice, it includes methods such as cover crops, reduced tillage, agroforestry, and other regenerative techniques.

These practices are not only used to capture carbon: they can improve soil health, increase water retention, support biodiversity, and strengthen farm resilience in the long term.

## **Why the Mediterranean Needs It Now**

Across Southern Europe, around 74 percent of land is covered by soil with less than 2 percent organic carbon in its top layer. The region is characterized by long, dry summers, irregular rainfall, and the risk of drought, erosion, and soil degradation – conditions that make healthy soil essential for resilient agriculture and long-term food security. In this context, carbon farming is important not only because it can store more carbon, but also because it can help soil retain more water, reduce erosion, and support stronger agricultural systems.

**Carbon farming is not only about climate change mitigation. It can also bring financial benefits to farmers through lower input costs, more stable yields, access to premium markets, public incentives, schemes linked to agri-food chains, and potential income from carbon credits**

including an Italian case with a 53 percent increase in SOC over 22 years.

- Cover crops were associated with increases of 0.5 to 7.3 tons of carbon per hectare per year.
- Crop rotation increased SOC by an average of six to eight per cent compared with monoculture.

At the same time, the project results clearly show that these benefits are not automatic. Success depends on whether practices are adapted to local soil, crops, water constraints, and farm structure.

perennial systems. The findings of the Carbon Farming MED project point directly to high monitoring costs, complex data requirements, and limited capacity among small producers.

This matters because carbon farming is not only about climate change mitigation. It can also bring financial benefits to farmers through lower input costs, more stable yields, access to premium markets, public incentives, schemes linked to agri-food chains, and potential income from carbon credits.

To make this possible under real Mediterranean conditions, Carbon Farming MED combines an MRV approach adapted to the Mediterranean with a digital MRV platform and a Mediterranean carbon credit marketplace.

This digital platform:

- brings together the project's tool and protocol in a single digital environment;
- helps reduce time and costs, improve traceability, and facilitate the presentation and purchase of carbon credits.

### From Potential to Practice

Carbon farming will expand only if farmers can use it, if the results can be trusted, and if the system works under real conditions. This is where Carbon Farming MED makes a practical difference: by connecting soil health, credible verification, and access to the carbon market within a more functional framework.

More information about the Carbon Farming MED project, its research, tools, and Mediterranean approach to carbon farming is available at: [carbonfarmingmed.interreg-euro-med.eu](http://carbonfarmingmed.interreg-euro-med.eu).

Prepared by Jasna Dragojević



Visit to one of the pilot farms included in the project – Verdcamp Fruits, Spain

Findings from the Carbon Farming MED project, presented in the publication *Benefits and Drawbacks of Selected Carbon Farming Actions*, show that this is not just theory. Under Mediterranean conditions, several practices have already been linked to measurable increases in soil organic carbon (SOC):

- No-till systems delivered some of the strongest long-term results,

### How Carbon Farming MED Helps Make Carbon Farming Work

One of the biggest obstacles is Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV). Carbon farming requires MRV to measure results, demonstrate credibility, and generate real value. Still, in Mediterranean agriculture, MRV can become too complex and expensive – especially for small farms and



**CARBON FARMING MED**



Co-funded by the European Union





# THE ELDER VULTURE AND HIS SUCCESSORS: THE STORY OF SERBIA'S VULTURES

**T**he recent poisoning of a cinereous vulture near Svrlijig once again drew public attention to one of the most endangered groups of birds in Serbia. Although the suspect in this case was quickly identified and arrested, the incident raised important questions about the state of vulture populations, their importance to the ecosystem,

and the measures needed to ensure these magnificent birds can once again become more numerous in our region.

We spoke with Vuk Popović, Secretary of the Foundation for the Protection of Birds of Prey, about what vulture protection in Serbia looks like today, an organization that has been actively working for decades to conserve these species.

## **From the Brink of Extinction to a Successful Recovery Story**

One of the most important activities carried out by the Foundation is monitoring the griffon vulture population. This includes ringing chicks in nests and fitting them with modern satellite transmitters that enable detailed tracking of their movements.

Ringling is one of the basic scientific methods used in bird research. Each individual receives a unique metal ring and often also colored markings that make it easier to identify in the wild. Thanks to these data, researchers can learn how long the birds live, which routes they migrate along, and how far they travel.

Even more precise information is provided by satellite transmitters. They make it possible to track a bird's position several times a day, as well as to record data on flight speed, temperature, and the altitude at which it is located.

The results of decades of work are also visible in the recovery of the griffon vulture population.

– By 1992, the number of griffon vultures had fallen to only 10 breeding pairs due to poisoning and a lack of food. After 30 years, thanks to the efforts of the members of the Foundation, the managers of the Uvac protected area, and the local population, the number of pairs has exceeded 250 – Popović points out.



## Why Vultures Are So Important

Vultures are an irreplaceable part of natural ecosystems. Their primary role is to remove dead animals from the environment, thereby preventing the spread of disease and accelerating natural decomposition.

In the middle of the last century, as many as four species of vultures

nested in Serbia – the cinereous vulture, the griffon vulture, the Egyptian vulture, and the bearded vulture. Each of them had a specific role in removing carcasses.

The cinereous vulture, also known as the “elder vulture”, was the first to approach a dead animal thanks to its powerful beak, which enabled it to pierce the skin. After it, griffon vultures would feed, removing soft tissue and entrails. The Egyptian vulture would extract small remains of meat from between the bones, while the bearded vulture would finish the job by taking the bones and breaking them by dropping them onto rocky slopes, the so-called bone-breaking sites.

In this way, this “fantastic four” completely removed carcasses from nature.

Today, however, the situation is significantly different. Of the four species that once nested in Serbia, only the griffon vulture has survived, while the others are seen only occasionally in passing.

## Poisoning Remains the Greatest Threat

Although the griffon vulture population has successfully recovered, the dangers have not disappeared. Vultures are particularly vulnerable to poisoning because they feed in groups and are at the top of the food chain.

A single poisoned carcass can cause the death of dozens of individuals who gather to feed. This is precisely why the case near Svrljig attracted so much attention from the professional public.

The positive news is that, thanks to many years of educating the local population in Western Serbia, no vulture poisoning has been recorded for more than two decades. However, Popović warns that it is necessary to continue raising awareness of their importance and the role they play in preserving healthy ecosystems.

## Feeding Stations as the Key to Survival

In addition to poisoning, a serious problem is the lack of food. This is precisely why feeding stations have become one of the most important tools for vulture conservation.

By taking dead domestic animals to controlled feeding stations, a safe food source is provided for the birds while reducing the costs of animal waste disposal and the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

– Negotiations are underway with the competent institutions regarding the opening of a feeding station near the Sićevo Gorge. This would be a good opportunity for vultures to nest in this area again, says our interlocutor.

## How Citizens Can Help

Vulture protection is not only the task of experts and institutions. Citizens can support the Foundation's work through membership and donations, as well as by participating in various educational activities.

A particularly interesting program is the “sponsorship” of griffon vulture chicks. Donors can name one or more marked birds and follow their life journeys.

The funds raised are used, among other things, to purchase expensive satellite transmitters that enable griffon vultures' movements to be tracked across the Balkans and Europe.

The Foundation also organizes expert field trips dedicated to birdwatching and the popularization of science, giving an increasing number of people the opportunity to get to know these impressive birds firsthand.

The case of the poisoned cinereous vulture near Svrljig showed how vulnerable vultures still are. At the same time, the successful recovery of the griffon vulture population confirms that protection delivers results when science, institutions, and the local community join forces around a common goal.



Prepared by Milena Maglovski

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# RESIDENTS OF A VILLAGE NEAR VRANJE ESTABLISH AN ENERGY COOPERATIVE FOR JOINT ELECTRICITY GENERATION

**R**esidents of the hamlet of Popovci in the village of Beli Breg near Vranje have established the Beli Breg Popovci Energy Cooperative. The cooperative was founded within the Beli Breg REC – Citizen Shared Energy project, implemented by the Platform for Energy Transition (PET) with the support of the European Union, the Emilia-Romagna Region, and ART-ER from Italy.

The founders are local residents who joined forces in order to produce and use energy from renewable sources jointly. The cooperative will begin by developing smaller solar power plants, while the benefits – savings, revenues, and future investments – will remain within the community.

– We did not establish any kind of company here. We reached an agreement as neighbors, just as we have always agreed on everything

important. Only this time, the topic was electricity – the residents told us.

## **A New Model: Citizens as Producers, Not Just Consumers**

An energy cooperative represents a new way of organizing around energy. Unlike the traditional model in which citizens simply pay a bill to the distributor, the cooperative turns them into active participants – they

jointly decide what is built, how it is used, and where the savings go. In this way, energy returns to the community as a development resource rather than as a cost.

This model is not reserved for large cities or major investors. It can start with an agreement among neighbors, joint planning, and the smart use of local resources – exactly as happened in Beli Breg.

– When I started working in the energy sector, talking about energy communities in rural Serbia was theoretical. Today, I am standing in a village where neighbors themselves decided to jointly produce, share, and manage electricity. This is not a small step; it is proof that the transition can be just and that it can start from the bottom up, where it is needed most, says Bojan Gajić, Program

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The Platform for Energy Transition (PET) is a leading think tank based in Niš, dedicated to accelerating the energy transition and environmental protection in Serbia and the Western Balkan region. The organization's main mission is the democratization of energy, namely, empowering citizens and actively involving them in the transition process by developing energy cooperatives and communities. PET serves as a strategic bridge between local self-governments and key regional and international actors, initiatives, and European Union funds. By providing top-level expertise, innovative models, and systemic solutions, the organization actively works to improve energy efficiency and expand the use of renewable energy sources. Its work is based on five key pillars of cooperation: with citizens and communities, local self-governments, national authorities, the expert public, and international partners.

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Director and one of the founders of the Platform for Energy Transition.

## Energy as a Basis for Village Renewal

The initiative is particularly significant because it connects energy with the broader development of the community. At a time when many rural areas are facing population decline, weakening local infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities, energy cooperatives can serve as a new model for local development.

The cooperative is a legal framework through which residents jointly decide on priorities, launch new initiatives, and invest in improving local life. At the founding assembly, four development directions were defined: energy, through joint investments in solar power and cost reduction; agriculture, through shared equipment and better organization of production; rural tourism, through the promotion of local products and nature; and mobility, through shared transport and e-mobility that would better connect the village with the town.

When neighbors in a village agree to produce electricity jointly, it is not just about energy – it is a sign that the community still exists.

## About the Project

The Beli Breg Popovci Energy Cooperative was established during the first phase of the Beli Breg REC – Citizen Shared Energy project, which aimed to establish the social, organizational, and legal foundations for the collective production and sharing of clean energy in this community. The project was implemented through a series of public events and workshops with local residents, and concludes with the formal establishment of the cooperative and the definition of directions for its further work.

The Platform for Energy Transition (PET) is responsible for project management and regulatory support,



**BOJAN GAJIĆ** is a graduate mechanical engineer and Program Director of the Platform for Energy Transition (PET). With decades of experience in both the public and private sectors, he is recognized as a leading expert in energy management, district heating systems, and climate policies. For more than 15 years, he has been dedicated to developing energy efficiency at the local level. As a long-standing city energy manager, he has gained a reputation beyond Serbia's borders. For over ten years, he has also been actively working as a consultant, providing technical and strategic support to municipalities, government institutions, and the non-governmental sector. He has extensive international experience in cooperation with European Union institutions and donor organizations, as well as in leading professional conferences.

while ART-ER from Italy provides the technical framework, training, and tools for monitoring results. The project is financed by the European Union, the Emilia-Romagna Region, and ART-ER.

The Beli Breg Popovci Energy Cooperative is one of the first practical examples of citizen energy in rural Serbia and perhaps the beginning of something much bigger.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



# A STORY OF SUSTAINABLE ART WOVEN INTO PAPIER-MÂCHÉ OBJECTS

In an age of mass production and objects without a personal touch, there is a growing appreciation for things created with patience, skill, and dedication to handcraft. One such story is woven into the unique objects Mariana Pop creates using the papier-mâché technique. Her life in Podgorica, the city where she now lives and creates, began 25 years ago, after she moved from Ukraine, the country where she was born. As she says, ever since childhood, she has loved imagining, repairing, and making things with her own hands.

Over the past two years, she has devoted herself to making unique papier-mâché objects, which grew from an initial experiment and a desire to try something new into a great passion. Her works combine recycling, imagination, and handcraft, transforming ordinary paper into objects with character, texture, and their own stories. Mariana receives her greatest support, as well as the first critical reflections on her work, from her family – above all from her husband and son.

At the beginning, one of the greatest challenges was understanding the material itself. This technique, she says, requires time, patience, and a great deal of repetition, because each layer and each drying phase directly affect the final result. It was precisely through this process that she learned to slow down, accept the rhythm of the work, and enjoy creating without haste or pressure.

Almost any type of paper can be used to make the pulp, while, as she points out, she most often avoids glossy paper and packaging that contains a thin layer of foil. Other materials can easily take on a new function and enter the process of recycling and shaping. She finds the texture created by using cardboard rolls and egg cartons particularly interesting.

Over time, she has tried different recipes, and today she most often uses a combination of soaked and blended paper, dry wall filler, or



plaster, with a small amount of detergent. After preparation, the pulp is shaped, dried, processed as needed, and painted, and the final layer is sometimes coated for protection.

The production process depends on several factors – the size of the piece, the thickness of the layers, and drying conditions – so smaller objects can be completed in a few days, while more complex works may require several weeks. Paper pulp is highly suitable for shaping and allows for the creation of a wide range of objects – from decorative bowls, plates, and vases to wall decorations and sculptural forms.

However, as with every handmade object, it is important to know its limits. These works are intended primarily for decorative use – although paper pulp can be very strong, it does not favor prolonged contact with water or direct exposure to sunlight. Their longevity does not come from resistance to all conditions, but from the care with which they are preserved: it is enough to remove dust and treat them with a little attention occasionally. Over time, they can also be refreshed with a new layer of paint and adapted to a different space or taste.

She finds inspiration for her designs in nature, interesting textures,

and the shapes that surround her, as well as on the internet. However, the final appearance of a piece is rarely known in advance – it most often develops spontaneously and freely through the very process of creation, which, as she points out, is what she enjoys the most.

Most of her works are created from personal inspiration and are only later found by their owner. When it comes to clients' wishes, she tries to incorporate them into her own way of working, noting that with handmade work, it is difficult to achieve complete uniformity.

As with every artist, it is important to her that her objects captivate people at first glance – not only because of their appearance, but also because of the story they carry. It is especially meaningful to her when people recognize the effort, time, and attention woven into her works, as well as the moment when they are surprised to learn they are made of paper. She adds that many people have prejudices about this material, but are often surprised by its strength and possibilities.

– If, after that, they start looking differently at the materials we discard every day, I believe my work has fulfilled its purpose. And if I inspire someone to start creating, experimenting, or giving new life to old materials themselves, I see that as the greatest compliment and the most beautiful confirmation that what I do makes sense, says Mariana.

All the paper she uses comes from her household – paper that has already been used, and often there is more of it than she can process. As she says, this is also a reminder of how much waste is generated in our homes each day. Through her work, Mariana wants to show that creativity and sustainability can go hand in hand, and that beauty is often hidden precisely in the things we would otherwise throw away.

Prepared by Katarina Vuinac



# STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY THROUGH THE FEM2FORESTS PROJECT

**T**he project *Innovative Pathways for the Effective Involvement of Girls and Young Women in the Forestry Sector* (Fem2Forests) aims to increase women's participation in forestry by 2030 through empowerment, education, and the creation of a more inclusive professional environment. Given that the forestry sector is still predominantly marked by gender stereotypes and the unequal representation of women in managerial and operational positions, the project promotes equal opportunities and the professional development of women through innovative approaches, knowledge exchange, and networking.

Fem2Forests brings together 14 partners from nine countries of the Danube region and is co-financed by the European Union through the Interreg Danube Transnational Program. The implementation of project activities in Bosnia and

**Fem2Forests brings together 14 partners from nine countries of the Danube region and is co-financed by the European Union through the Interreg Danube Transnational Program**

Herzegovina is led by FEA – Forestry and Environmental Action, with support from its associated partner, the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Sarajevo. The activities focused on raising awareness of forestry as a dynamic and promising field, particularly among young people, and on bringing the sector closer to girls and young women by presenting realistic career paths and successful professional role models.

In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the forestry sector faces challenges such as an aging workforce and limited inflows of new personnel, such initiatives add value by directly expanding the pool of potential experts and strengthening capacities for sustainable forest management.

As part of the project, two pilot activities were implemented to

nine authentic stories of male and female professionals in the sector, including six women and three men. The stories cover different areas of activity – from academic and research work, through public institutions and the private sector, to engagement in international organizations – thereby showing the breadth of career opportunities in forestry.

To make the content as accessible as possible to the target group, QR codes linking directly to the digital stories were created and distributed, and the materials were shared across more than eight secondary vocational forestry schools. The activity achieved significant reach, with more than 500 social media interactions and over 250 QR code scans, indicating strong interest among young people in this form of communication.

pupils, and female experts from public institutions, academia, and the non-governmental sector.

During the event, six successful women presented their career paths, highlighting the key challenges, turning points, and factors that shaped their development. The discussion raised issues of gender equality, the visibility of women in the sector, and the need to strengthen mentoring and networking as forms of support. A particular outcome of this activity was interest in the future National Ambassador Program, with five young women applying to participate, thereby initiating the formation of the first national network of female ambassadors in forestry.

In addition to quantitative indicators, the qualitative effects of the activities are reflected in increased interest among young people in the forestry sector and in the strengthening of the perception of forestry as a multidisciplinary field encompassing environmental, social, and economic aspects. This approach helps redefine the sector beyond the traditional framework of a technical profession.

In conclusion, the experience gained from implementing the Fem2Forests project indicates that the combination of digital tools, personal professional narratives, and direct interaction with the target group is an effective model for increasing women's participation in forestry. However, the long-term sustainability of these results depends on their integration into education systems, employment policies, and institutional strategies for sector development. In the coming period, it is recommended that the gender perspective be systematically incorporated into strategic documents and forest resource management plans, and that formalized mentoring and professional development programs be established to ensure the continuity and scalability of the results achieved.

Prepared by Jasna Dragojević



strengthen the visibility of women in forestry and motivate young people to pursue careers in this sector.

The first pilot activity, entitled *Inspiration Corner – Career Stories of Students*, focused on promoting the diversity of professional paths in forestry through digital content. In cooperation with the Faculty of Forestry at the University of Sarajevo, a special section titled “Career Stories of Students” was created, presenting

The second pilot activity aimed to empower young women by laying the groundwork for the National Ambassador Program. In February this year, a workshop and panel discussion entitled *Women in Forestry – Stories That Inspire* was held at the Faculty of Forestry of the University of Sarajevo, bringing together more than 40 participants from different segments of the sector, including female students, secondary school



# A HOLIDAY IN THE RHYTHM OF EARTH, WATER, AND AIR

In the village of Donji Nikšić, not far from Slunj, the road slowly leaves the rhythm of everyday life behind and leads into a corner of Kordun unlike the landscapes most of us are used to. The forests along the Korana River and the sense of peace become the main reasons for coming here. It was precisely in such surroundings that Tree Elements was created – a space conceived as a true escape from everyday life and everything it brings.

Slunj is situated on two rivers, about an hour and a half from Zagreb, around two hours from the sea, while Plitvice Lakes National Park is in the immediate vicinity. This proximity to well-known places does not diminish the sense of peace, but gives it a special measure: it is far enough

away to offer silence, yet close enough for guests to have coffee, fresh bread, a restaurant, or an excursion within easy reach.

Behind the project is the owner, Ivona, together with her small, carefully chosen team – her parents – and she transformed her desire to create a place where nature is the main attraction into Tree Elements.

– I have always been drawn to the idea that architecture can be part of the landscape, rather than something that disrupts it. I wanted to create a space that is not just accommodation, but an experience – a place where guests can slow down, rest, and find balance again, says our interviewee, Ivona.

When the project was being developed, this type of concept was



almost non-existent in Croatia, and even in the wider region. Inspiration came from examples of sustainable architecture around the world. Still, from the very beginning, Tree Elements was conceived as an authentic space rooted in the local environment and way of life.

This idea is most clearly reflected in the three houses named after natural elements – Earth, Water, and Wind. They are the same in size and layout, but each has its own character.

Earth is conceived as a space of stability and calm. It is dominated by earthy tones, natural materials, and a strong connection to the

surroundings. Water introduces somewhat livelier tones, reflected in the colors of the sofa and kitchen, while Wind carries the symbolism of freedom, movement, and airiness. Large glass surfaces open the space towards the surroundings, blurring the boundary between the interior and nature.

Above all, as a kind of crown of the complex, stands the main house, Ether. It is conceived as a space where all the elements meet, but also as the owner's personal signature. A large open space, a wooden staircase, plants, and natural materials make it warm, pleasant, and intimate.

and heat pump systems that draw part of their energy from the air all contribute to this.

Special attention has also been paid to water. Rainwater is collected and used for watering the garden, maintaining green areas, and technical needs. Wastewater is treated using bio-septic systems adapted to this type of location, with the aim of minimizing environmental impact.

Solar panels are currently used to power the garden and outdoor systems, and one of the next steps in development is further investment in solar energy. The goal is for an even larger part of the complex to be



### Less Energy, Less Concrete

At Tree Elements, sustainability does not appear as an additional value, but as the very way the space was conceived from the beginning. Many natural materials were used in the construction, primarily wood. The façades are made of larch, while the warmth of natural materials has also been preserved in the interiors.

Large glass surfaces bring in plenty of daylight and create a constant connection with the forest, making the landscape an integral part of the interior.

All houses are prefabricated and built according to the principles of passive construction, which means they are designed to reduce the energy required for heating and cooling. Good insulation, large glass surfaces,

powered by renewable sources in the future. Out the entire project, particular care was taken to avoid unnecessary concreting and to preserve as much of the existing greenery as possible.

Tree Elements is visited by guests from Croatia and abroad, most often those seeking a quieter stay in nature or a starting point for visiting Rastoke and the Plitvice Lakes. The space is also used for smaller workshops, retreat programs, intimate weddings, private gatherings, and team-building events.

It seems that the core idea is recognized in this — that there are still ways for tourism today to adapt to nature, rather than the other way around.

Prepared by Milica Vučković



# DATA CENTERS AS A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EUROPEAN POWER SYSTEM

**D**igital transformation, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, and the growth of cloud services have led in recent years to the explosive development of data centers across Europe. What until recently represented specialized infrastructure for data storage and processing is today becoming one of the most important factors shaping the future of the power system.

According to the latest report by the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity ENTSO-E, *Data Centers and Power Systems: Expected Trends, Challenges and Opportunities*, electricity consumption by data centers in Europe could increase by more than 50 percent by 2030. Such growth is changing how electricity grids, generation capacity, and electricity markets are planned.

## **Demand Growing Faster than the Grid**

Today, there are more than 10,500 data centers in Europe with at least 50 kW of IT power, while their total capacity is estimated at around 12.7 GW. European Union countries alone account for almost 10 GW of this capacity.

The main drivers of growth are the development of artificial intelligence, the expansion of cloud

infrastructure, and the increasing need for processing vast amounts of data. Particularly notable are large hyperscale data centers built by technology giants, which require amounts of electricity comparable to the consumption of smaller cities.

The challenge for the power sector is not only the growth in consumption, but also the fact that data centers can be designed and built much faster than new energy infrastructure. While the construction of a large data center often takes only a few years, the development of new generation capacities and transmission networks requires significantly longer timeframes.

For this reason, system operators across Europe are warning of the need for earlier planning and better coordination between investors, regulators, and energy companies.

### **Artificial Intelligence Increases Energy Needs**

The new generation of AI applications is further increasing the energy requirements of data centers. Modern server racks intended for training large language models and other advanced AI systems can have a capacity of more than 50 kW per rack, which is many times higher than traditional servers.

Greater processing power also means more heat generation, making cooling systems among the largest energy consumers in the facility. In some cases, they can account for more than 30 percent of a data center's total electricity consumption.

To respond to these challenges, the industry is rapidly developing new cooling solutions, including liquid and immersion cooling. Thanks to these technologies, the energy efficiency of data centers is improving significantly. The most advanced facilities today achieve a PUE (Power Usage Effectiveness) of less than 1.1, while some leading operators record values below 1.05.

## **Experts believe that in the coming years, data centers could participate in grid balancing, the provision of ancillary services, demand-side management, and the integration of renewable energy sources**

### **New Challenges for Grid Stability**

For transmission system operators, it may be even more important that data centers exhibit different electrical behavior from traditional industrial consumers.

Many facilities use sophisticated UPS systems and advanced power electronics to ensure uninterrupted server operation. Such systems enable an immediate switch to battery power in the event of a grid disturbance, but they also change how the load behaves from the power system's perspective.

ENTSO-E warns that existing connection standards for large consumers were not developed with such characteristics in mind. Software-controlled consumption patterns, a high concentration of power in a small area, and the increasing use of power electronics require new rules and more advanced grid management models.

A particular challenge is that many large data centers are built near major urban and business centers, further increasing the load on already congested parts of the power grid.

### **From a Major Consumer to an Energy Partner**

Although they are often viewed as a challenge for the power system, data centers could, in the future, become an important part of the solution.

Large battery systems, advanced energy management systems, and the ability to flexibly adjust certain processes represent significant potential for providing services to the power system.

Experts believe that in the coming years, data centers could participate in grid balancing, the provision of ancillary services, demand-side management, and the integration of renewable energy sources. In this way, they would move from being passive consumers to becoming active participants in the energy market.

However, realizing this potential will depend on the regulatory framework, market incentives, and operators' willingness to allocate part of their capacity to support the power system.

### **The Time to Prepare Is Now**

The message of the ENTSO-E report is clear: the development of data centers is no longer merely a matter of the digital economy but also a key energy issue of the coming decade.

If Europe wants to achieve its ambitious goals in the fields of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and decarbonization, the power system must be ready for a new generation of large consumers. This requires better grid planning, timely investment in infrastructure, harmonized regulatory frameworks, and active cooperation between the energy and digital sectors.

Otherwise, the pace of digital economy development could outpace the energy system's ability to support it. This is precisely why the next few years represent a critical period in which the relationship between two strategic sectors of the future — energy and artificial intelligence — will be defined.

Prepared by Milena Maglovski



# HOW ONE ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGN MOBILIZED CHILDREN ACROSS SERBIA

There are things that cannot be rushed. Their creation requires patience, natural rhythms, and time. Plants are among them. For a flower to grow from a seed, a certain amount of time is needed. It needs soil, water, and sun, but also someone we often take for granted – bees and other pollinators.

Today, when attention spans are getting shorter and cities are becoming larger, it is easy to forget that even the most carefully maintained park, the most beautiful garden, or a tree-lined street depends on tiny creatures that tirelessly carry pollen from flower to flower. Bees and other pollinators play a key role in food production – according to earlier international research, around three-quarters of the world’s leading crops depend, to some extent, on their work. Yet bees, butterflies, and other pollinators are precisely among the species that have come under increasing pressure in recent decades due to urbanization, habitat loss, and climate change.

It is no coincidence that words often attributed to Albert Einstein, although without reliable confirmation that he actually said them, have been quoted for years: “If bees disappeared from the Earth, humans would have only a few years left to live.” Regardless of the origin of the quote, however, its message remains clear – pollinators are far more important than they may seem at first glance.

Urban spaces with a small number of plant species become poorer food sources for pollinators. Monotonously greened parts of a city often bloom briefly and at the same time. Hence, the idea of bringing honey plants back into cities – not only to make them more beautiful, but to bring more life back into them.

It was precisely out of a desire to bring the importance of bees and other pollinators closer to people that the initiative “Baci nešto lepo”



(Throw Something Beautiful) was created, launched in early 2026 by the association “Zelena generacija” (Green Generation). The idea was to offer everyone the opportunity to contribute, with one small gesture, to greening the space where they live and to creating new food sources for pollinators.

Instead of large campaigns and complicated instructions, small balls made of soil and seeds became the center of the story. It is enough

and rosemary. Once they reach the soil, they begin to open within just a few days, and the germination process soon becomes visible. After about ten days, the first shoots appear.

What sets this campaign apart is the fact that it did not remain merely symbolic. The organizers say they receive daily feedback from people who are monitoring the growth of plants from the thrown seed balls, and they consider this feedback one of the most beautiful parts of the project.

– We believe that the greatest success is the sense of community and the bringing together of people and organizations around a noble goal. The campaign will continue for as long as there is interest and a need to further raise awareness of the importance of such initiatives for the benefit of local communities, representatives of “Zelena generacija” point out.

However, as the community gathered around the project grew, so did the ambitions. From an idea that began with a single seed ball, a much broader vision emerged.

For 2027, the Green Generation Global Summit has been announced, an international event that the organizers aim to develop into one of the largest regional gatherings dedicated to sustainability, innovation, education, and socially responsible initiatives. Unlike many gatherings that remain focused on diagnosing problems, the goal of this event is to place the focus on solutions.

Asked what would represent the greatest success of the summit for them, they answered that it would not be merely the number of participants. True success, they say, would be new projects, collaborations, and partnerships created after the event;; greater public awareness of environmental topics, and inspiration that encourages individuals and organizations to launch their own initiatives.

In addition, the association “Zelena generacija” recently announced the launch of the “Baci nešto lepo” podcast, hosted by Marija Stakić. As they stated, after three months of activities across Serbia, the idea is to broaden the conversation to topics that connect ecology, education, culture, humanity, empathy, and togetherness.

Because sometimes change really does begin with a small step. Or, in this case, with a single seed ball thrown in the right place.

Prepared by Milica Vučković



to throw them onto a suitable spot, gently press them into the ground, and let nature do the rest.

– The flower mixture we currently use was developed through careful testing and experimentation with different species, with the aim of creating the most resilient combination, closest to the meadow mix that bees would favor in nature. Diversity in bees’ nutrition is very important because a monotonous diet results in genetically weaker swarms that are more susceptible to diseases and environmental conditions, explains Marija Stakić, President of the association.

The balls contain seeds of honey-bearing flowers and herbs, including lavender, mint, oregano,

The initiative gained particular momentum after kindergartens and schools became involved. At a time when it is increasingly difficult to hold children’s attention, a concept that combines play, nature, and direct experience has proven to be extremely successful. Instead of learning about ecology only through lectures, the youngest participants were given the opportunity to take part in the process and follow the results of their own activity.

So far, more than 2,000 school and kindergarten groups have participated in the activities, while more than 300 educational sessions and field activities have been held across Serbia.



# ALMOST 22 MILLION ELECTRIC CARS PRODUCED IN ONE YEAR

**T**he world is rapidly shifting towards electric mobility – last year, every fourth new car sold on the global market was electric. With more than 20 million vehicles sold and growth of 20 percent, the electric car market continues to break records, according to the International Energy Agency’s report *Global EV Outlook 2026*.

Among the major markets, Europe stood out the most, with electric car sales increasing by more than 30 percent, accounting for 28 percent of total sales. However, this growth is also linked to the tightening of the European Union’s CO<sub>2</sub> emission standards for cars.

**Almost all battery cells used worldwide are supplied by companies headquartered in China, Korea, or Japan**

China remains the largest and most dynamic market, although sales growth has slowed slightly, partly due to a temporary pause in the old vehicle replacement program. Even so, electric vehicles accounted for around 55 percent of total car sales in the country. In the United States, the market remained stable, with the share of electric cars slightly below 10 percent.

However, smaller markets in Southeast Asia are particularly interesting, with annual electric car sales more than doubling to almost one-fifth of total sales, led by Vietnam, Indonesia, and Thailand. Latin America also recorded a strong increase, mainly thanks to Brazil and Mexico.

### Import and Export Dynamics in the Largest Markets

Globally, almost 22 million electric cars were produced, around a quarter more than a year earlier. The report highlights China not only as the largest market, but also as the main production center for electric vehicles. In 2025, Chinese manufacturers



accounted for around 60 percent of global electric car sales, while almost three-quarters of all electric cars worldwide were produced in China.

Taking this into account, it is not surprising that Chinese electric car exports doubled in 2025, reaching more than 2.5 million vehicles. However, China had already

overtaken the European Union in 2024 to become the world's largest car exporter.

As for exports of electric cars from the European Union, they increased by 25 percent, while imports also rose by around 35 percent, to more than 900,000 vehicles, with China accounting for almost 60 percent of those imports.

### Fuel Developments Affect the Appeal of EVs

Interest in electric vehicles is increasingly influenced by fuel prices, especially among drivers who cover long distances or companies with large fleets.

However, the beginning of 2026 once again showed that the electric car market is not growing at the same pace everywhere. Global sales in the first quarter were eight per cent lower than a year earlier, primarily due to weaker sales in China and the United States following changes in support policies. Behind this overall decline, however, lies a different picture in individual markets. Europe continued

to grow strongly, with sales increasing by almost 30 percent, while Asia-Pacific countries excluding China recorded growth of 80 percent, and Latin America 75 percent.

Despite these current fluctuations, the report's forecasts indicate that global electric car sales are expected to reach 23 million vehicles

in 2026, accounting for 28 percent of total car sales.

One reason for this growth is that electric vehicles are becoming increasingly price-competitive. In China, for example, a large share of electric cars was already cheaper than the average conventional car.

Electrification, however, does not stop at passenger cars. Sales of electric trucks in 2025 more than doubled, reaching 9 percent of total truck sales worldwide. China also played a leading role here, as every fourth truck sold in that market was electric.

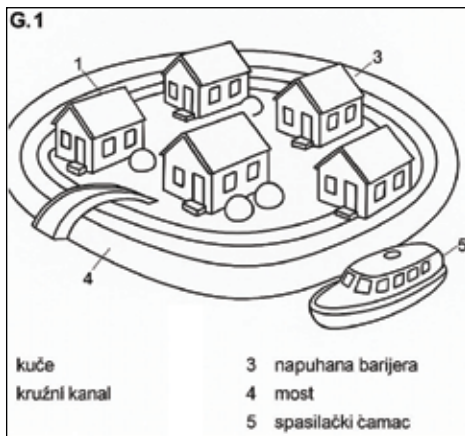
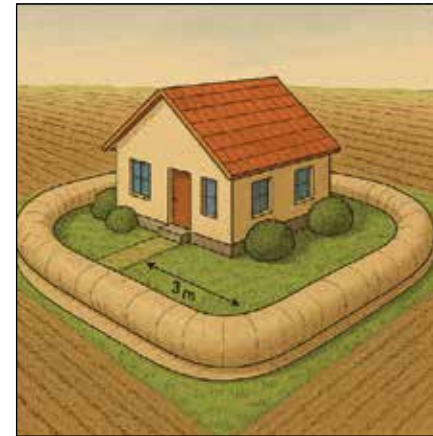
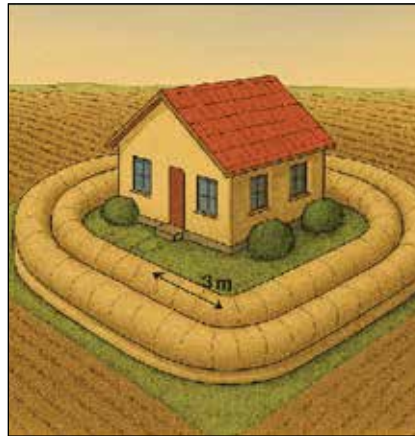
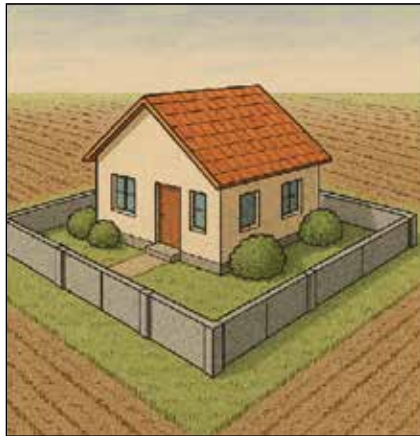
It should be taken into account that electric trucks are still significantly more expensive to purchase than diesel trucks, as are their total operating costs. In addition, the accompanying infrastructure is essential. According to data from the report, the number of chargers intended exclusively for electric trucks in the EU exceeds 1,000.

Battery production is, however, inevitable for all these trends. Here again, we return to China, which also dominates this field, accounting for more than 80 percent of battery cell production in 2025. Almost all battery cells used worldwide are supplied by companies headquartered in China, Korea, or Japan.

At the same time, electric vehicles are becoming increasingly dependent on software. Most major automotive companies are developing vehicles with more centralized software systems that enable key functions to be updated remotely.

The further growth of electric vehicles will therefore depend not only on customer demand, but also on battery availability, infrastructure development, government policies, and manufacturers' ability to offer more affordable models. The electrification of transport has already been a global process for some time, but its pace will continue to differ significantly from region to region.

Prepared by Milica Vučković



# INNOVATION FROM SARAJEVO AS A SOLUTION TO POLLUTION AND ENERGY CHALLENGES

Innovations in energy and environmental protection are becoming a key driver of sustainable development and the transition to cleaner energy sources. They enable more efficient use of resources, reduction of harmful gas emissions, and the development of technologies that place less pressure on nature. As a developing country, Bosnia and Herzegovina has significant potential

in this field, especially through the growing number of innovators developing new ideas and technologies. It is precisely this innovative spirit that represents an important foundation for the country's future economic and environmental progress.

Air pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in Sarajevo during the winter months, has long been a serious environmental and

health problem. High concentrations of harmful particles are most often associated with coal and wood heating, traffic, and unfavorable meteorological conditions in basin-shaped cities. In this context, innovation is becoming an important part of potential solutions.

One example is the idea of Sarajevo-based innovator Enes Hodžić concerning mini power plants for

households. His patent on a reversible turbine for household power plants could enable local electricity generation. Such solutions could directly help reduce emissions from individual heating systems, which are among the main sources of air pollution in cities.

As Hodžić points out, the development of such small energy systems for households would enable electricity generation while simultaneously reducing the need for coal combustion.

– Reversible mini power plants would have broad application both in households and in the business sector, and could also play an important role in the context of the growing number of electric vehicles. Such systems can contribute to the creation of local vehicle charging infrastructure, said Hodžić. He emphasizes that such solutions would be particularly relevant in the context of increasing reliance on renewable energy sources.

Hodžić further improved his original patent with a new patent application that integrates solar energy, enabling the system to operate continuously throughout the day. This, he says, has created a prerequisite for more stable and reliable energy generation from renewable sources.

As he stated for the Energy Portal Magazine, the solution is designed to be particularly efficient in urban areas, where it could be used, among other things, to charge electric vehicles. One of the advantages of this system is also the absence of losses in electricity transmission, which contributes to its overall efficiency.

– My patent is based on storing heat from solar energy using directed mirrors or focusing prisms. Solar energy is directed into a device through which molten salt circulates, accumulating thermal energy. This energy is then used to heat water and convert it into steam. High-pressure steam drives a turbine to generate electricity. The salt is heated to a



temperature of approximately 600°C, while the steam reaches a pressure of up to 120 bar, enabling efficient operation of the turbine and generator. The generated electricity can be delivered directly to the power grid, thereby reducing losses during transport to end consumers – the innovator explains.

Hodžić says he has been involved in innovation since childhood and that his main interests are focused on energy, ecology, and space research. So far, he has filed around fifteen patents, some of which have also received international recognition. He has also developed patents in the field of flood protection systems, as well as a drone for extinguishing forest fires.

For the further development of the project, Hodžić says it is now necessary to secure minimal financial resources to produce a prototype mini power plant and test it in practice, for example, in one municipality or local community, with the aim of assessing its concrete effects.

– I plan to apply for support from the competent institutions, including relevant ministries in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to obtain funds for the implementation of a pilot project that could contribute to reducing air pollution in Sarajevo and improving energy generation at the local level – Hodžić states.

He emphasizes that the use of renewable energy sources must be accompanied by additional research, especially in the field of energy storage, so that energy can also be used during periods without sun or wind.

– I am focused on very soon replicating the cycle as it renews itself in nature. Energy is everywhere around us; some of it is merely at rest, which is why we call it potential energy, and we need to set it in motion or force it to transform from one form into another so that we can use it – Hodžić concludes.

Prepared by Jasna Dragojević



# FROM TERMITE MOUNDS TO SOLAR TREES: HOW NATURE INSPIRES SUSTAINABLE ENGINEERING

**B**ehind great scientific achievements, the spark of an idea has often been born in nature. Sometimes it is a gaze into the sky, sometimes the flight of a bird, the movement of water, or the glow of insects on a summer evening. In stories and local museum exhibitions dedicated to Mileva Marić, for example, it is noted that the dance of fireflies above the Tisa River near

Titel was associated with her reflections on light, matter, and energy. There are truly countless examples that confirm how often nature has awakened scientific curiosity.

From many observations of nature, ideas emerged, and later the very concept of biomimicry — an approach in which humans do not seek to conquer nature but to understand it and adopt principles and concepts

from it that have proven successful over time.

Aircraft are not creations of nature, but they have borrowed a great deal from it, above all when it comes to aerodynamic logic. The wings of birds, which have used air currents for centuries better than any human-made machine, served as inspiration. A similar thing happened with whales. The bumps on the



leading edge of the fins of humpback whales, which at first glance appear to be imperfections, proved to be a mechanism for moving through water. It was precisely these shapes that inspired engineers to think differently about wind turbine blades and about how wind energy can be used with fewer losses.

One of the best-known examples of biomimicry in architecture is linked to termite mounds. In hot regions, biologists discovered that termites can maintain more stable internal conditions within their shelters despite large temperature differences outside. This principle did not inspire architects to construct buildings that look like termite mounds, but rather to try to discover what termites know that humans perhaps still do not know well enough. The Eastgate Center in Harare, Zimbabwe, is often cited as an example of this approach and system, as the building uses air channeling, the thermal mass of materials, and

natural heat dissipation to reduce the need for conventional cooling.

The hummingbird, a bird capable of hovering in place, changing direction abruptly, and controlling the movements of its wings with exceptional precision, has, according to many accounts, inspired scientists and engineers in the development of small flying robots and drones.

In all these examples, the same idea is repeated: long before humans, nature had been finding ways to solve problems of movement, cooling, ventilation, protection, water collection, and the use of sunlight. Moreover, its solutions rarely have only one function. A termite mound is not merely a shelter, but also a natural ventilation system. A tree is not merely a plant, but also shade, a water reservoir, a habitat, and a collector of solar energy.

It is precisely from this way of thinking that a question arises: can solar trees also be viewed as a contemporary attempt by technology to

take over some of the functions of a real tree?

Some solar trees have gone a step further — they are not only collectors of sunlight through solar panels, but also small-scale urban infrastructure capable of generating electricity, providing shade, collecting rainwater, powering lighting, charging devices, and becoming part of the public life of a city.

At first glance, solar trees look like a scene from a futuristic vision of the future: a metal trunk, a branched canopy, and solar panels instead of leaves. Just as a real tree spreads its branches to capture as much sunlight as possible, a solar tree arranges photovoltaic panels at different heights and at different angles.

This is why they most often appear in places where space is limited, while the need for energy, shade, and urban equipment is increasing — in parks, squares, parking lots, promenades, and in front of public buildings. Unlike conventional solar power



plants, which require large areas, solar trees use height and fit into spaces that people already use every day. It is therefore no surprise that they are particularly recognizable in Asia, where large cities are densely populated, and every square meter is carefully planned.

Of course, this does not mean that they can replace conventional panels when the goal is large-scale electricity generation. Their advantage is different — they bring energy into the everyday lives of residents and into spaces where conventional panels are often impractical or not visible enough.

Depending on their size and the number of modules, larger installations can generate tens of thousands of kilowatt-hours per year, thereby avoiding several tons of carbon dioxide emissions. This energy is most often used locally — for public lighting, chargers, sensors, Wi-Fi equipment, electric bicycles, or smaller vehicle charging stations. At the base of the tree, there is often a small energy center with batteries, inverters, and connection points, enabling electricity to be used

immediately or stored for later use. In simpler models, the panels are fixed in different positions, whereas more advanced solutions track the movement of the Sun.

The most developed example of this way of thinking can be found in Singapore, in the Gardens by the Bay complex, which features a total of 18 Supertrees, 11 of which have built-in sustainable functions. The trees range from 25 to 50 meters in height, but their role is not merely to attract tourists, although they have become globally recognizable for that as well. They are part of a much more complex system in which energy, water, plants, cooling, and public space are connected into a single whole.

These trees are covered with thousands of plants — orchids, ferns, bromeliads, and climbers — and therefore function as vertical gardens in one of the most densely populated urban environments in the world. Some of the trees have integrated photovoltaic cells that generate electricity for part of the lighting and systems within the complex.

The Supertrees also collect rainwater, which is then used to

irrigate the gardens and supply water features. In a tropical climate, where rainfall is abundant, water is not treated as an excess that should be channeled away as quickly as possible, but as a resource that should be retained, directed, and reused.

Even more interesting is their connection with the huge Flower Dome and Cloud Forest conservatories, which maintain special climatic conditions different from Singapore's humid outdoor climate and therefore require complex cooling and ventilation systems. The Supertrees also participate in this part of the system — they assist in air exchange and heat dissipation, acting as a kind of urban lung of the complex.

This is why Singapore has gone far beyond the idea of simply placing solar panels in the shape of a tree. There, the solar tree is part of an entire urban ecosystem. Its greatest value lies not only in the amount of electricity it produces but also in its ability to serve simultaneously as infrastructure, a garden, shade, a reservoir, a ventilation element, and a city landmark.

Prepared by Milica Vučković

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