

Report on the moderated online consultation

## Unit 6 of Sostanj Thermal Power Plant: Slovenian Future?

held at the Citizens' Forum debates<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Information on the moderated online consultation

Organised by: Umanotera, The Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development  
Web address: Sostanj Thermal Power Plant: Slovenian Future?  
<http://www.evropske-volitve.si/forum/35.html>  
Time frame: 15 January - 15 February 2010  
Number of submitted contributions: 26  
Number of visits: 1703  
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### 2. Purpose and topic of the on-line consultation

Purpose:

- (1) to record and exchange opinions of professional and general public regarding the planned modernization of Sostanj Thermal power plant that includes constructing of a new Unit 6 and
- (2) to send the debate summary report to the Slovenian Government and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Topic: Modernizing the Thermal power plant Sostanj by constructing its Unit 6 would significantly mark the future of Slovenia. We are not only talking about its investment value, which estimated at 1,2 billion EUR, but the fact that its developmental, energy, financial and environmental impacts would last until 2050 and beyond. Despite the importance and long-term impacts of this decision, no comprehensive public debate at the national level was carried out. Present procedures in construction preparations are based on outdated documents, while decisions were made in narrow circles of investors, owners, Ministry for the Economy and banks. Public is mostly only served random newspaper articles and political statements. Most people do not understand what the project entails, how procedures are carried out, who will pay the bill for the investment, whether or not any final decisions have been made, who are competent decision makers and how it is possible (if at all) to influence these decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Online Citizens Forum 2009 European elections is operated and moderated by non-governmental organization Institute for Electronic Participation (INePA) as part of the VIDi - Visualising the Impact of the legislation by analyzing public discussions using statistical means.



### 3. Substantive report of the consultation

In discussions three themes were opened: "Sostanj Thermolectric power plant: Slovenian future?", "Meh`'s article" and "Presentations of speakers at the forum TEŠ6 held in Ljubljana on 26.1.2010".

Most contributions from participants in the online consultation were about the Sostanj Thermal Power Plant project, its possible alternatives and about the supply of energy in Slovenia in general. One contribution was addressed directly on environmentalists, arguing that discussing modern engineering problems is in vain, and one contribution was directly addressed at the Minister for the Economy, Matej Lahovnik. Otherwise, the opinions on the construction of the Unit 6 were divided, but opinions against prevailed.

Participants in the discussion made the following arguments **against** the Sostanj Thermal Power Plant project:

- Pollution.
- The operational life of Unit 6 will be very short.
- Emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases will be such that as a result, Slovenia will pay serious environmental penalties.
- Coal Thermal Power plants are an outdated energy source.
- The money set aside for the construction of Unit 6 should be used for the expansion and development of renewable energy sources.
- The Sostanj Thermal Power Plant project is wasteful and economically unjustified.

Participants in the discussion made the following arguments **in support of** the Sostanj Thermal Power Plant project:

- Fuel is available.
- Construction and operation would bring many employment opportunities.
- Slovenia is in need of alternate and variable electricity and this can only be achieved in Sostanj.
- Electricity from the Sostanj Thermal power plant or the Krsko Nuclear power plant can not be replaced by renewable energy sources - all renewable energy sources combined (hydro power excluded) in Slovenia today make for less than 1% of all electricity and could with a great effort in the next few decades reach only up to 10% of the total electricity production.
- The coal stocks are virtually boundless. In Velenje the lignite layers are among the thickest in the world and are exploited with a modern underground mining technology. Stocks ready for further digging without specific investments exceed 120 million tons and are in the current production of 4 million tones sufficient for a further minimum of 30 years. For Slovenia, it would not be economically wise to abandon the current mining operations in the mine Velenje, nor in mine-Trbovlje-Hrastnik.

Participants in the discussion presented the following **alternatives** to Sostanj Thermal Power Plant project:

- Renewable sources of energy as a decentralized energy source.
- New hydroelectric power plant, which would be more economical, cleaner and less harmful to the environment.
- Efficient use of energy and renewable sources of energy - the answer is wood, which is the only renewable natural resource we have in Slovenia.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> reactor of nuclear power plant Krško.

- The system of nuclear and hydro power combined with solar and other clean and renewable energy sources.

Participants in the discussion pointed out the following:

- Why do we even need so much energy.
- For this investment decisions are made without having taken into account the views of experts, which are retained in regards to the investment.
- Minister Lahovnik probably has close personal ties with people who will have a substantial material benefit from this project.
- Environmental organizations should persist in renewable energy sources. Their opinion may prove to be crucial in the final decision, even if it will result in a referendum.
- It is necessary to obtain a comprehensive expert advice and analysis on the health and ecological aspects from independent experts in all municipalities of Celje basin and Šaleška and Savinjska valley.