

reactors. This amount will be paid by the Bulgarian company NEC as a result of the arbitration case brought by Atomstroyexport. The equipment was ordered in the absence of a signed contract for construction, with no implementation deadlines, and even without an order from the competent minister!

A review of the various costs reveals that huge amounts were paid by the Bulgarian taxpayer for illogical and meaningless activities, considering the failure to realise a functioning plant.

Dismantling the existing buildings, structures and parts cost 199 million BGN / 101 million euro.

Architectural engineering of the project by Worley Parsons and Bulgarian subcontractor Risk Engineering cost 393 million BGN / 200 million euro.

Evidently, we are dealing with corruption on a large scale.

Unfortunately, so far the Prosecutor's Office has been investigating only two former heads of NEC, as well as ex-Minister of Economy and Energy, P.Dimitrov, for concluding a disadvantageous transaction to the detriment of NEC, amounting to 77.1 million euro. The transaction in question concerns the old equipment for NPP Belene produced by Skoda, which was sold to the Russian Atomstroyexport.

Former Minister of Economy and Energy D.Dobrev is being investigated for damages in the amount of 4.5 million euro for continuing payments to the consultant of the project, following the decision of the Council of Ministers from 28 March 2012 to discontinue construction of a nuclear power plant on the Belene site.

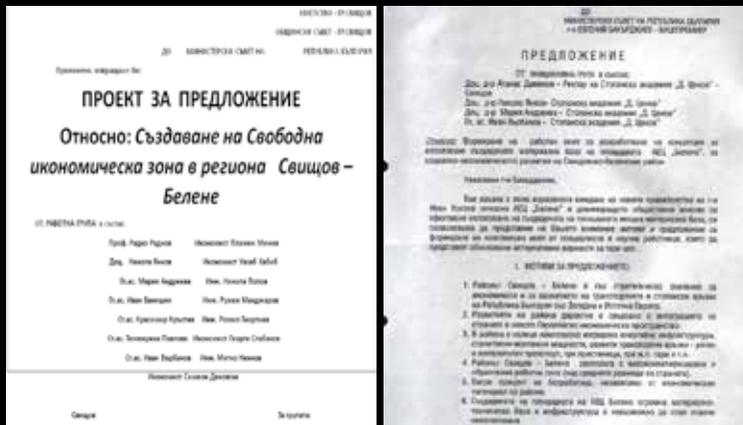
Isn't it odd how the investigation of this project ailed by corruption reaches only as far as external costs, which comprise a tiny part of the huge loss of over 2,3 billion BGN / 1,18 billion euro incurred to the state budget as a result of the project.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NUCLEAR-FREE FUTURE FOR THE BELENE SITE

Both decisions taken by Bulgarian governments to stop the project (once in 1992 and again in 2012) were accompanied by a proposal to build a steam-gas plant on the Belene site. Clearly, the idea of a nuclear-free future for the site was not new to the government.

The Belene site covers 270 hectares, with infrastructure and communications in place, in a geographical location that is favorable for the supply of any necessary equipment and materials for construction via the cheapest means of transport – water, via the Danube river. No nuclear reactor has ever been operational on the Belene site.

In 1993 the Committee for Ecological and Economic Protection of Svishtov Region proposed the idea of creating a free economic zone in place of the already existing site.



In 2012 Za Zemiata launched a nation-wide competition, collecting ideas for a nuclear-free use of the Belene site, in which very interesting proposals were received. All good ideas were sent to the government, with the suggestion that the state should organize a similar national or international competition that would be open to business as well. Unfortunately, there was no answer, so today we continue asking: For how much longer will the Belene site incur only costs? Following the decision of the arbitration court that Bulgaria should pay 620 million euro to the Russian complainant, on September 20, 2016 the Bulgarian Parliament adopted a special law for granting to NEC an interest-free loan (state aid) from the state budget to cover the entire amount of the debt. This development makes it even more imperative to accelerate the transformation of the site into a functioning, revenue-generating enterprise, in order to repay this enormous debt.

Independent experts, in cooperation with local businesses and academics, propose the site's transformation into a multi-functional business network, an economic zone that includes Svishtov, Belene and Nikopol, similarly to the Plovdiv economic zone. Such an economic zone would help improve the balance in the uneven development between Northern and Southern Bulgaria. This economic zone could certainly be extended to include the Romanian part of the region.

All of this requires the creation of a national-level vision, strategy and plan to transform the Belene site into an undertaking that is useful for the whole society, for the region and for adjacent villages in the vicinity of the business complex.

To this end, the government and relevant state institutions should issue a decision for the Belene site to be removed from the assets of NEC. This outcome would be the result of strategic statesmanship, political will and actions.

There is no way to compensate for missed opportunities, so the next best time to start is right now!

Prepared by: Nikola Yankov and Todor Todorov

NUCLEAR-FREE FUTURE FOR THE BELENE SITE



За Земята
Приятели на Земята България

RESISTANCE TO THE PLANNED CONSTRUCTION OF BELENE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (NPP BELENE) STARTED BACK IN THE 1990s.

After having conducted in-depth research and analyses, in 1990 the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) published the so-called White paper by BAS - 412 pages of clear, scientifically-based arguments against the NPP Belene project.

**АЕЦ
“БЕЛЕНЕ”**

ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ
И СТАНОВИЩЕ
НА БЪЛГАРСКАТА
АКАДЕМИЯ
НА НАУКИТЕ

The Bulgarian scientists are decidedly of the following opinion: “The research and studies overall lead to the conclusion that from energy, economic, technical, seismic, environmental and social points of view, the construction of NPP Belene is poorly justified or unacceptable”.

In the early '90s the Committee for ecological and economic protection of the Svishtov region (CEEPSR) became a driving force of the resistance against the construction of NPP Belene. The Committee was a self-organized community of vigilant local inhabitants who understood the damage from the realization of the absurd Belene project. Their first action took place on January 7, 1990 when a group of locals from Svishtov went to the NPP Belene site where they met with the top management and demanded that construction be discontinued. This was followed up by the first organized protest on 20 January 1990 at the Belene site, at minus 20°C, despite the presence of serious security on site. Over 5000 people attended the first mass environmental protest in February 1990 in Svishtov.

Following the arguments of scientists and public discontent against the project, it was terminated by a decision of the government in 1992.



Eleven years later, in 2003, the idea of building a nuclear power plant with two 1,000 MW units was revived. The idea of a second nuclear power plant in Bulgaria was resurrected thanks to enormous manipulation of data, projecting future growth in electricity consumption, expected electricity shortages in the country, and the need to increase exports to neighboring countries.

Ministers, politicians, members of parliament, “experts” and journalists were involved in service to this fraud, huge resources were squandered in order to manipulate the media to reverse public opinion, which in the '90s was strongly against the construction of NPP Belene.

The aim of the politicians who proposed the restart of NPP Belene was to resume embezzlement and to subject the project to their own, and foreign, economic and political interests.

The fight against this organized criminal group, which continued to drain enormous amounts out of the state budget through the corruption-ridden Belene NPP project, persists in the twenty-first century.

A number of reports, studies, opinions of leading energy experts, economists, analysts were published, proving yet again the lack of economic sense in this project, the enormous seismic risk in the region (especially after the Fukushima accident) and its detrimental effects on the development of local industry and agriculture.

In 2005 activists from Za Zemiata, Greenpeace and volunteers from across the country participated in the Energy Revolution campaign, which aimed to inform the population in towns along the Danube of the dangers of building a nuclear power plant in Belene. An exhibition of alternatives to nuclear power was set up and information materials about the damage caused by the dangerous project were presented in Vidin, Lom, Nikopol, Silistra, Kozloduy, Belene.

The campaign against NPP Belene unfolded on local, national and international level. Local citizens protested and distributed information in cities and villages in the vicinity of the planned NPP. Seventeen Bulgarian NGOs formed a coalition called “NO to NPP Belene”. International organizations such as Greenpeace, CEE BankWatch, Urgewald, Campagna of La Riforma Della Banca Mondiale took action to inform banks and potential investors about the corruption risk arising from participation in this project.



In 2009 experts from Za Zemiata and other environmental organizations participated in a round-table on NPP Belene, organized by the Parliamentary Committee on Energy, during which they presented arguments against this corruption-afflicted project that was recognized by the current prime-minister as a “bog of corruption”.

In 2012, the Belene NPP project was discontinued once again, by a decision of the government, supported by the Parliament. The main reason was the inability to find financing for such an endeavor that is devoid of economic sense. Official data has since shown that the available energy generation capacity in Bulgaria is far greater than would be needed until at least 2030.

Over the past 15 years, all independent experts have concluded that there is no need to construct new nuclear capacity.

THE COST OF BELENE NPP: “BOG OF CORRUPTION”

During the construction phase, a secret internal expert analysis found “fatal” errors. In order to be able to continue with the project it was decided to demolish the structure that had been put up. The speedy destruction of the monumental foundation, and with it – the destruction of all evidence, followed in 2007. To that end were spent over 190 million BGN / 97 million euro. The concrete fragments were crushed and deposited on the east side of the site. According to the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy, as of June 2016, the bill for corruption-driven NPP Belene project is 2.389 billion BGN / 1.221 billion euro. Nearly half of that - 1.083 billion BGN / 554 million euro for procuring equipment, namely, the nuclear

