

Bulgaria's Belene nuclear plant 'compromised' by delays – experts

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The Bulgarian energy ministry's 2 GW Belene nuclear project has been compromised by multiple interruptions and will probably be impossible to complete in its current form, two energy experts have told Montel.

Earlier this year, Bulgaria's interim ministry drew up a [30-year energy plan](#) which includes the construction of four new nuclear reactors with 4 GW of combined capacity. Two of them are expected to replace existing reactors (units 5 and 6) at the Kozloduy nuclear plant, while the other two are supposed to be installed at the [currently abandoned](#) Belene site.

While energy experts are lauding efforts to increase nuclear capacity during Bulgaria's coal phase-out, they have expressed doubts about Belene.

"The Belene project has been compromised by numerous construction delays. It is unclear whether it will attract new investors at this point," a regional consultant on electricity markets and power grid interconnections told Montel.

His opinion is echoed by a second expert specialising in energy resources and technologies.

"The legislative process has been paused, calling into question the availability of the necessary up to date licences or an active technical team to support the construction process. For the project to go ahead, it would have to be restarted completely," he said.

Both agree that building two new reactors (units 7 and 8) at Kozloduy would be much more straightforward, because the required infrastructure and investor interest already exist.

Earlier this month, the US-based Westinghouse Electric Company signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kozloduy on the potential deployment of one or more reactors at the site.

"Two new units at Kozloduy would be a far more reliable alternative than Belene," noted the first expert, emphasising that it might end up being more realistic to build all four reactors at Kozloduy.

Missing equipment

The reason for much of the uncertainty surrounding the Belene project is that only a part of the Russian equipment needed to build the reactors has arrived, and a continued relationship with the Russian supplier is questionable given the current geopolitical situation caused by the war in Ukraine.

There has been talk of a hybrid construction model using an alternative supplier, or indeed using the Belene equipment to renovate units 5 and 6 at the Kozloduy plant, but such solutions could face technical, logistical and legislative challenges.

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