Pristina solar energy for the environment

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To support the green transition in Kosovo*, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a EUR33 million investment loan for the construction one of its largest solar photovoltaic plants near Pristina - with a capacity of up to 100 MWac (120MWp).

This investment project will introduce solar energy into the district heating sector in Kosovo. The facility will have a capacity of 50 MW including storage. Up to 38,000 residents will directly benefit from being connected to Pristina"s district heating system as part of the network expansion measures.

To support the green transition in Kosovo*, one of its largest solar photovoltaic plants will be constructed on former ash dump fields near Pristina with a capacity of up to 100 MW. The electricity sector in Kosovo is almost entirely dependent on coal-fired power plants.

The solar power plant will help save more than 130,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually. In total, 152 GWh of green electricity will be produced annually, benefiting Kosovo households, public institutions and companies.

Kosovo will become the first economy in the Western Balkans region to use solar power to heat homes. The Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers signed a financing agreement on the Solar4Kosovo district heating project on behalf of Kosovo in Pristina today.

"There is a country in Europe. A country where the sun shines for full 278 days of the year..." this is how the rock band "The Animals" would begin their lyrics if the famous song 'House of the Rising Sun' was written about Kosovo instead of New Orleans.

With 278 sunny days, Kosovo is an ideal place to use the sun for energy production. But, current solar energy, together with wind and hydropower output, makes up only 23.3% of the energy produced in Kosovo, while 77.7% comes from coal-based power plants. However, there are plans to gradually phase out this high number of coal-fired power usage, based on the goals of the Energy Strategy and the actions undertaken as part of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, which Kosovo signed in November 2020 at the Sofia Summit.

Solar energy works through panels consisting of voltaic cells, which convert sunlight directly into electricity. Installing these panels offers many benefits: it is sustainable and renewable since the sun is an inexhaustible energy source. Also, it does not cause air pollution and has minimal environmental impact.

There are big differences in the environmental impact of a kilowatt produced by coal-fired power plants and solar panels. According to Dardan Abazi, researcher at INDEP, "Just for the production of one kilowatt from burning coal with the current power plants in the country, about 900 grams of carbon dioxide are released on

average, while to produce one kilowatt from solar energy only 20 grams of carbon dioxide are released." In Kosovo, in the last years, traditional power plants manage to produce more than 900 thousand megawatts and every hour they release more than 800,000 tons of carbon dioxide.

In order to implement the Energy Strategy, the Ministry of Economy has undertaken the initiative to subsidize households and small and medium enterprises to install solar systems for self-consumption. Through the subsidy, this Ministry is supporting initiatives by households and companies in installing solar systems for their energy efficiency and environmental protection.

The Ministry of Economy says that by this initiative "it aims encouraging the saving of electricity by family consumers, small and medium-sized enterprises, supporting households through the increase of Energy Efficiency in residential units and buildings, as well as investments in efficient household appliances." Also, according to the Ministry of Economy, the support of investments in renewable energy systems for self-consumption affects the mitigation of global warming, does not cause pollution, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Solar photovoltaic power plants have started emerging in some parts of the Kosovo Energy Corporation (KEK). The installation of the solar photovoltaic power plant started in 2023 in the former ash dumps near the "Kosova A" Power Plant, with a capacity of up to 100 megawatts. This plant is expected to produce close to 150 gigawatt hours of electricity, reducing approximately 150 tons of carbon dioxide per year. This project by the Steering Committee of the Western Balkans Investment Framework will tenfold increase the installed capacity of the solar system in Kosovo from 0.2% to 2.3%.