

Green electricity belarus

Belarus is one step closer to building its largest wind farm and reaching its 2030 renewables target. Turkey-based construction company GURISH (Gurish Construction & Engineering Co. Inc.) was selected for investing into the construction of a 25 MW wind farm near the village of Veleshkovichi in Liozno district of Vitebsk region in Belarus. The company is a world-known developer of green engineering solutions.

The agreement on the sale of the pre-investment asset was signed between Belarus and the Turkish company on 30 August 2019 following its clearance from the side of the Belarusian Ministry of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade. The estimated total investments into the new wind energy farm will be around US\$ 40 million.

"Thanks to the project, direct investments come to Belarus that are aimed at development of green economy and renewable energy. Wind farms make our environment cleaner and contribute to improving the lives of local people," said Alexander Korbuto, the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus

Work is set to begin in 2020 after the investor will develop the detailed project documentation. Once completed, Veleshkovichi wind farm will be Belarus' largest wind energy producer supplying green energy to over 20,000 households in the area.

The operation of the wind farm over the next 20 years is expected to offset over 500 thousand tonnes of CO₂. Five new full-time jobs will be created to support the operation and maintenance of the facility. The construction of the farm will also provide jobs to the local construction organizations and equipment suppliers.

A large solar power plant will open this summer in the Brahlin district, changing the landscape of the Chernobyl-contaminated lands: 85,000 solar panels will occupy an area the size of about 80 football fields.

Proponents of green energy praise it as a win-win solution: sustainable, ecological, economically profitable, and a diversifier of energy supplies in the country. The authorities publicly acknowledge the need to support the renewable energy sector, promising tax incentives and preferential treatment for investors.

However, most green energy projects in Belarus are in the shadow of the Astravets nuclear power plant (NPP). In a few years, Astravets will provide an effective and fast solution to Belarus' energy needs, further marginalising the renewable energy sector.

Belarusian society has swallowed the nuclear power pill, despite the trauma of Chernobyl, since the state began marketing it as the single best way to secure the country's energy independence. However, the new nuclear power plant as an energy independence project does not eliminate Russian dominance in the

Belarusian energy sector. Development of renewable energy in this respect looks more promising in terms of diversifying energy production.

Wind energy came to Belarus in 2000 with the construction of two wind turbines in Miadzel district. Currently, the largest Belarusian wind farm has only 11 wind turbines. It started operating in Navahrudak district in spring 2016. Each of the wind turbines has an average capacity of 1 MW – enough to supply energy to about 500 households.

The hilly landscape of the Navahrudak region makes it one of the most suitable areas in Belarus for the development of wind energy. According to estimates of energy sector specialists, renewable energy sources here have the potential to produce up to 24m kWh per year – enough to cover about 25 per cent of needs of the entire Navahrudak district.

In recent years, cell phone operator Velcom invested €23m in the solar power plant project in Brahlin district. The official power capacity of the station is 22.3 MW – enough to provide evening street illumination for the entire Belarusian capital.

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