

## Bulgaria backup power

NEK intends to invest in two floating solar power and two pumped storage hydropower plants and battery energy storage projects

The national electricity system is increasingly facing periods of lots of excess electricity and shortages. It highlights the balancing issue in Bulgaria and the need for energy storage, but the projects are slow, Capital reported. Government-controlled electricity producer NEK is betting on pumped storage hydropower.

The country hosts the largest so-called water battery in the Balkans, the Chaira facility. The pumped storage hydropower plant has been offline for two years after a series of breakdowns and failed repair attempts.

A tender is ongoing for the reconstruction of the fourth unit, out of four in total. The utility valued the project at EUR 27.3 million. Most of its hydropower projects didn't reach the financing phase.

The trouble with the renewal of Chaira is not so much in financing as in finding experts, technicians and engineers, the media outlet pointed out. It added that a significant number of European specialists are in Asia and Africa, handling the boom of such projects.

Another investment, under development for several years, is for the construction of the Yadenitsa dam between Belovo and Yundola. The facility would be part of the Belmeken-Sestrimo-Chaira cascade and lift the pumped storage hydropower plant's operating capacity.

NEK is also leaning on hydroelectric plants with dams to store energy as water, Executive Director Martin Georgiev said. In addition, the company is developing a pilot battery storage project at the Vacha hydropower plant, he revealed.

The two planned underground pumped storage hydropower plants at the Dospat and Batak dams will have 800 MW to 1 GW each in capacity, NEK's chief said. He stressed that the utility would seek EUR 150 million from the REPowerEU scheme for feasibility studies and other activities.

Total storage capacity of the two future facilities, at existing dams, amounts to 3.05 TWh, according to the Bulgarian news website.

However, Georgiev stressed that the technology isn't regulated in Bulgaria.

Of note, German company Profine Energy has proposed to install a floating solar power plant of 500 MW to 800 MW on the Ogosta artificial lake in northwestern Bulgaria. Initially, it considered as much as 1.5 GW.



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NEK owns 31 hydroelectric systems, with an overall capacity of 2.74 GW. According to the report, there are delays in maintenance and modernization projects.

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