

Ukraine's risky energy experiment

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In 2023, Ukraine plans to completely get rid of dependence on Russia and Belarus in the energy sector and join the European energy system ENTSO-E.

American and European politicians, in particular, the EU High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, declared their approval of this intention and their readiness to help Kyiv to implement this plan.

Disconnection of the United Energy System of Ukraine from the unified grid with Belarus and Russia should take place in February. This was stated by Prime Minister Denys Shmygal. The head of the Ukrainian government said that "test operation of the power system in isolated mode is planned for February during the passage of winter load peaks. It is planned to carry out system tests of the operation of the energy systems of Ukraine and Moldova as part of a single control unit in a mode isolated from the synchronous zone of the CIS and Baltic countries". The politician also clarified that Russia agreed to such a step by Ukraine.

To integrate with the European energy system, Ukraine must demonstrate that the country's energy sector can operate in isolation. Both from Russia with Belarus and from the EU. Initially, Europeans talked about a test period of a year. Then it was about isolated work for a month in summer and winter. Then a week was called. As a result, the Europeans agreed with that the Ukrainian energy system needs to be worked out independently for three days in winter and summer.

Isolated operation is necessary to demonstrate the self-sufficiency of our energy system and the absence of a negative impact on neighbors.

The Ukrainian energy industry entered the current heating season with tangible problems. The country's underground storage facilities have an extremely low level of gas reserves. Coal reserves in the country also left much to be desired. In addition, stable purchases of electricity from Belarus began in November. To ensure the heating season, 14 of the 15 power units of nuclear power plants had to be used. In addition, in the last days of January, due to technical problems, the first block of the Khmelnytsky NPP was switched off. On January 25, the fourth block of the Zaporizhzhya NPP was turned off for emergency repairs. Two blocks of the Burshtynskaya TPP, which usually operates as part of the European energy system, were switched over to meet domestic needs. Ukraine had to request additional supplies of electricity in Belarus.

However, they decided not to refuse an attempt to conduct a test for the possibility of independent work. To form coal reserves and prepare for independent operation of the Ukrainian energy system, all 15 power blocks of the nuclear power plants were put into operation. The problematic power units of the Khmelnytsky and Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plants seem to have been repaired. Works on carrying out scheduled maintenance of the first and fourth power units of the Rivne and the second power unit of the Khmelnytsky NPP have also been postponed.

In the issue of disconnecting the country's energy system from the Russian and Belarusian ones, one could refer to the example of the Baltic countries. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO and the EU almost 20 years ago. And they prepared systematically and for a long time to break off energy ties with Russia. European funding was received and paired with the power lines of the Scandinavian countries – Finland and Sweden. At the same time, the final break should happen in 2025.

The leadership of our country is full of optimism and

determination. For several years in a row, a moratorium on the import of Russian and Belarusian electricity has been introduced in the summer, which is canceled with the start of the heating season.

Unlike the Baltic countries, Ukraine has huge energy capacities. True, they have a high degree of wear and tear, and there is not enough funding for their repair in the country's budget, and Europe does not allocate. The support promised by Josep Borrell so far appears only in words.

In addition, it must be kept in mind that in the event of an unsuccessful experiment, Europe may not accept Ukraine as part of the ENTSO-E energy system. And if at the same time Russia and Belarus refuse to accept it back?

Experiments with nuclear power plants are very dangerous. And we must not allow a repetition of the tragedy that occurred in April 1986 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

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