

Bulgaria Balks at Nuclear Plant Price

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A protester rallying in Sofia on Saturday against Putin's visit. The Belene power plant project was on the agenda. **Anton Popov**

SOFIA, Bulgaria — Russia and Bulgaria disagree over the cost of a planned 2,000-megawatt nuclear power plant at Belene on the Danube River, Bulgarian Energy and Economy Minister Traicho Traikov said Monday.

Rosatom, Russia's nuclear power company that won a contract to build the two-reactor plant for 4 billion euros (\$5.45 billion) in 2005, has increased the price to 6.3 billion euros because of the delayed construction, he said.

"The proposed price is unacceptably high for us," Traikov said in Sofia. "The power plant should not cost more than 5 billion euros in our estimates."

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said during a Saturday visit to Sofia that Rosatom has given a "precise cost estimate" for the Belene nuclear plant near Svishtov that the Bulgarian government will assess. He gave no figure then.

Construction of the Danube plant has stalled since Prime Minister Boyko Borissov's government came to power 16 months ago and refused to provide state funding, which prompted RWE, Germany's second-largest utility, to withdraw.

Atomstroieexport, a unit of Rosatom, was chosen in 2005 to build the plant, with Areva and Siemens as subcontractors.

Bulgaria will choose a consultant Monday to estimate the total cost of the project, including the adjacent infrastructure and interest payments due, Traikov said. The consultant will also seek new investors in the project.

Russia and Bulgaria plan to invite German and Italian companies to participate in the Belene plant with 1 percent to 2 percent stakes, the Russian government said in documents distributed to reporters in Moscow on Saturday. They did not specify the companies.

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