



Lifting Europe's Dark Cloud: How cutting coal saves lives Effective coal regulation could slash deaths from toxic fumes by 85%

Brussels, Belgium - EMBARGOED until Tuesday 11 October, 00:01 CET

Effective emissions limits could save thousands of lives every year, yet more than half of coal power stations in Europe are operating with 'permission to pollute' above limits set in EU law. These are the findings of a new report '**Lifting Europe's Dark Cloud: How cutting coal saves lives**' published today by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, WWF and Sandbag.

'Lifting Europe's Dark Cloud' shows how improving environmental performance at European coal power stations could save 20,000 lives every year. By setting and enforcing pollution limits in line with the best industry-recognised, tried-and-tested techniques, **the annual number of premature deaths caused by burning coal could be reduced from 22,900 to 2,600 deaths.**

The report also finds that current legislation is failing to deliver its intended health benefits because special exceptions have been granted that allow for emissions over the agreed 'safety net' levels. At the time of publication, **more than half of the coal power plants in Europe have 'permission to pollute' beyond the limits set in the Industrial Emissions Directive.**

Before the end of the year, the EU and Member States will have the opportunity to adopt improved environmental performance standards, the 'revised LCP BREF'. By agreeing these standards and implementing effective limits on coal pollution, real progress can be made in improving the health of people across Europe. The revision process has already been delayed for more than two years, leading to 5,600 unnecessary deaths and a total health bill of more than 15.6 billion euros.

"The best available techniques we call for in this report are all tried-and-tested and were already being demonstrated under technically and economically viable conditions decades ago. The EU considers itself a world leader on environmental issues but when it comes to coal, decision makers have their heads stuck in a dark cloud!", says **Christian Schaible, Policy Manager on industrial production from the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).**

Medical professionals have expressed support for the report; *"Air pollution kills,"* says **Professor Bert Brunekreef of the European Respiratory Society.** *"Experts in lung health want to see immediate remedial action. Inaction cannot be justified when it is human health and lives that are at stake."*

As there are no techniques which completely eliminate emissions from burning coal and with coal power plants responsible for 18 per cent of all of Europe's greenhouse gases, **truly lifting Europe's Dark Cloud will require the complete phase-out of coal power in favour of sustainable renewable energy sources and reduced energy consumption.**

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Notes to the editor:

- [See embargoed full report, infographics here](#)
- **Materials under embargo until:** Tuesday 11 October 00:01 CET

Quotes from the other authors**Julia Gogolewska, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)**

“The health damage resulting from coal fumes today is neither necessary nor inevitable because the means to reduce this pollution already exist. The new regulation will finally require polluters to bear some of the costs that are currently forced on society in the form of illness, health services and lifetime lost.”

Joanna Flisowska, Coal Policy Coordinator at CAN Europe

“The health of European citizens cannot afford any further delay in enforcing new pollution standards (BREFs). While the EU's ultimate goal should be to commit to the complete phase out of coal and to a transformation pathway to renewable energy and reduced energy consumption, the EU still needs to limit pollution from coal power plants with its deadly and costly impacts on people, health and the environment.”

Darek Urbaniak, Energy Policy Officer at WWF European Policy Office

“The EU does not need to reinvent the wheel. Legislation that can help improve the health of EU citizens affected by coal power is ready and waiting. It is now up to EU leaders to demonstrate political courage and take responsibility for adopting and implementing it swiftly.”

About the authors

The European Environmental Bureau is the largest federation of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. It currently consists of over 150 member organisations in more than 30 countries (virtually all EU Member States plus some accession and neighbouring countries), including a growing number of European networks, and representing some 15 million individual members and supporters. The EEB stand for environmental justice, sustainable development and participatory democracy. Our aim is to ensure the EU secures a healthy environment and rich biodiversity for all.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). We demonstrate how policy changes can help protect health and enhance people's quality of life. HEAL has more than 70 member organisations, representing networks of health professionals, non-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth and environmental experts working at the

international, EU, national and local level. Together, we help to bring independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

The European Policy Office contributes to the achievement of WWF's global mission by leading the WWF network to shape EU policies impacting on the European and global environment.

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe is Europe's largest coalition working on climate and energy issues. With over 130 member organisations in more than 30 European countries - representing over 44 million citizens - CAN Europe works to prevent dangerous climate change and promote sustainable climate and energy policy in Europe.

Sandbag is an evidence-based non-profit organisation to help European decarbonisation. We focus on phasing out coal generation across Europe, getting a higher carbon price through EU ETS reform, and working on long term ways to decarbonise energy intensive industries.