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Europe's failure to quit coal: Time for a rethink in EU climate and energy policy

Sandbag's new report released today show that coal emissions in the power sector have risen 6% since 2010, even as power demand falls and renewables massively grows. **Coal for power now represents 18% of total EU CO2 emissions, equivalent to all road transport.**

Growth in renewables has almost entirely displaced gas generation. If coal generation had been displaced, EU power emissions could have fallen by 18% instead of 7%, since 2010.

The report explores the question of how long high coal use in the EU could continue and concludes that unless there are changes in the EU's energy and climate policies it could remain stubbornly high into the next decade.

Sandbag today has also published a league table of the carbon intensity of Member States' electricity which reveals that, despite significant investments in cleaner technology, Germany, UK and Denmark have all failed to significantly improve their performance.

If EU politicians do not act urgently, Sandbag shows that current policy will not guarantee the end of unabated coal, calling in to question the credibility of Europe's climate change and energy policy. And with no guarantee of continued renewables and energy efficiency growth after 2020, coal's comeback could become permanent.

The report reveals that more than 40GW of old coal plant, mainly in Poland and the UK is considering investing to remain open, whilst **around 100GW of gas plants may close in the next few years.** This means **the EU risks being locked into a high carbon future where the ability to switch back to gas is lost.** Reform of the ETS, and other regulations to reduce carbon intensity across the EU, must happen immediately to avoid this.

Dave Jones, Policy Analyst at Sandbag, said: *"Even as countries like Germany massively increase renewables, the carbon intensity of their power sector is rising as they increase their coal burn. The good news is this means if we act quickly there is huge potential to reduce emissions quickly by switching back to gas but to do this this the EU needs a functioning carbon market. In addition, rather than its weak plan for non-binding renewables targets, each Member State should have a binding target to lower the carbon intensity of its power sector guaranteeing unabated coal can't continue at high levels and supporting renewables at the same time."*

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Sandbag Climate Campaign is a London-based climate change NGO and thinktank campaigning for an effective carbon market. www.sandbag.org.uk

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Carbon Intensity of Power Sector, tonnes/MWh					
(Source, Sandbag, ENTSO-E, ETS data)					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	% Elec from coal, 2013
Poland	0.91	0.89	0.88	0.87	88%
Germany	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.51	48%
UK	0.48	0.45	0.51	0.47	43%
Denmark	0.51	0.45	0.41	0.44	42%
Netherlands	0.39	0.39	0.42	0.44	27%
Ireland	0.40	0.39	0.43	0.39	27%
Czech Republic	0.48	0.47	0.42	0.39	47%
Romania	0.43	0.49	0.48	0.36	30%
Hungary	0.36	0.34	0.34	0.34	24%
Italy	0.38	0.36	0.35	0.31	16%
Slovenia	0.33	0.33	0.34	0.31	32%
EU	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.31	28%
Malta	0.28	0.31	0.35	0.30	23%
Portugal	0.25	0.30	0.36	0.26	23%
Spain	0.22	0.28	0.28	0.22	15%
Belgium	0.20	0.18	0.18	0.17	3%
Finland	0.22	0.18	0.13	0.16	16%
Slovakia	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.11	10%
Austria	0.15	0.16	0.11	0.09	7%
France	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04	4%
Norway	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%
Sweden	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1%