

Bulgarian government violated the law when it gave the biggest coal plant in the Balkans permission to pollute beyond EU legal limits

The **Court of Justice of the European Union** said that Bulgarian authorities should not have granted a derogation to [coal-fired thermal power plant Maritsa East 2](#) to allow it emitting sulfur dioxide above the EU limits.

The ruling said that, when considering a request for a derogation, the competent authority must refrain from granting such a derogation when that derogation is capable of contributing to exceedance of the **air quality standards** or being contrary to the measures included in the plan intended to ensure compliance with those standards.

The court ruling was given at the request of environmental organizations Greenpeace Bulgaria and Za Zemiata, following a derogation granted by the [Bulgarian Government](#) in 2018.

In 2020, the **EU Commission** referred Bulgaria to court over the country's failure to comply with a previous court ruling which found it in breach of the **EU's air quality legislation**.

In May 2022, the EU court ruled that Bulgaria contravened EU rules on air pollution in its failure to address sulfur dioxide pollution from coal-fired power plants.

Bulgaria has four large coal-fired power plants: Maritsa East 2, ContourGlobal Maritsa East 3, AES Galabovo and Bobov Dol. With a total installed capacity of 4,119 MW, these power plants represent 31.7 % of the country's total electricity generation capacity.