

Most Western Balkan countries have failed to fulfil the first requirement to meet European Union industrial emissions standards despite commitments governments made in 2005, environmental campaigners warned.

Total sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions in EU aspirants Serbia, Bosnia, North Macedonia and Kosovo in 2018 were six times higher than the 98,696-tonne ceiling set by the bloc, according to a report to be presented to the European Parliament by central and eastern European advocacy group CEE Bankwatch Network.

In Serbia, the Kostolac B1 and B2 coal-power plants alone emitted more SO₂ than permitted in total for the four countries by the Energy Community, a body which transposes EU energy standards to the bloc's neighbours. The campaigners demanded the EU impose a tax on carbon dioxide or a border carbon tax to ensure the region's heavy polluters stop using a lack of investment in pollution control as a market advantage when exporting power to the bloc.

Bankwatch said the EU should also give more powers to the Energy Community, strengthen its dispute settlement mechanism and ensure adequate penalties in cases of non-compliance.

The most polluting coal, lignite, is widely available in the region, providing the major and cheapest energy source. Power plants produce pollution across the EU and beyond that incurs healthcare costs of up to 11.5 billion euros (S\$17.3 billion) a year, an earlier Bankwatch report showed.

The region plans to add 2.7 gigawatts (GW) of new coal power capacity in the next decade, mainly financed by Chinese banks.

Environmental advocacy groups have argued that most plants would not meet the EU's pollution control rules.

Source: [businesstimes.com.sg](https://www.businesstimes.com.sg)