

The Commission is working on an initiative to support coal mining regions during the transition towards a low-emission economy.

The era of coal may be coming to an end in Europe, but it will still take several decades before it is over, mining companies said at a roundtable debate organized by EURACTIV.cz. “France and Belgium accomplished their coal exit in the ‘50s and ‘60s. In the Czech Republic and Germany, it is expected by mid-century. Poland will probably be able to do that by the end of this century,” Vladimír Budinský, the vice-president of the European Association for Coal and Lignite, stated.

The coal industry respects the EU’s climate and energy goals and the effort to transform the energy sector, Budinský said. But he also stressed that the Union should take into the account the specific conditions of individual member states.

Thousands of workers

The debate took place in Ústí nad Labem in the north-western Czech Republic, which is the main lignite-mining region in the country with several brown coal power plants.

“By 2040, only the supercritical coal power plant in Ledvice will operate in the region, in view of the effective legislation and lifespan of the existing plants,” an advisor to Czech Industry Minister Vladimír Vlk said.

But at present, 48% of electricity in the country comes from coal. “It is not possible to exit coal at a stroke, because that would cause collapse,” he stressed.

In 2015, almost 8,000 people worked in the lignite industry in the Czech Republic, according to Euracoal, with 9,500 in Poland, 10,600 in Romania, 11,700 in Bulgaria and almost 15,500 in Germany.

For this and other reasons, coal mining regions need support to cope with the transition towards a low-emission economy.

Source: euractiv