

A complaint by the Renewables and Environmental Regulatory Institute (RERI) and CEE Bankwatch Network challenging Serbia's failure to comply with pollution control rules under the Energy Community Treaty was recorded yesterday by the the Energy Community Secretariat in Vienna.

Under rules which entered force on 1 January 2018, [Elektroprivreda Srbije's \(EPS\)](#) 120 megawatt **Morava coal power plant** was allowed to operate for a maximum of 20 000 hours until the end of 2023 at the latest. After that, it had to either close or achieve EU pollution control standards.

However, by the end of 2022, Morava had operated for a total of 23 051 hours since 2018, and continues to operate to this day.

In 2022, the plant pumped out 33 183 tonnes of sulphur dioxide - four times more than in 2021 (8,174 tonnes). It also emitted 1 580 tonnes of nitrogen dioxide and 125 tonnes of dust. Approximately half of these health and environment-damaging emissions were illegal, because they took place after Morava had exceeded its 20 000 operational hours. Since EPS had not made investments to bring the plant into line with EU legislation, it should have closed.

Morava is the fourth coal power plant in the Western Balkans to breach its operating hour limits. Montenegro's Pljevlja plant has been operating illegally since late 2020, and in March 2022, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Parliament also voted to illegally extend the lifetime of the Tuzla 4 and Kakanj 5 coal power plants beyond their allowed operating hours, without undertaking additional pollution control measures. For this reason, the Energy Community Secretariat opened dispute settlement cases against Montenegro in April 2021, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2022.

Hristina Vojvodić, legal expert at RERI - 'The [Western Balkan](#) governments and utilities are becoming increasingly brazen in their disregard for pollution control legislation. If they care at all about preventing needless deaths from air pollution, they need to show that they have a workable plan to make their coal plants comply with the law and to start closing the oldest and most polluting ones immediately.'

Ioana Ciuta, Energy Coordinator at Bankwatch - 'Considering the scale of the [air pollution](#) breaches in the Western Balkans, it's outrageous that the EU is still allowing the region's coal plants to trade on the EU energy market. The EU must introduce proportionate, dissuasive and effective penalties into the Energy Community Treaty if it wants to be taken seriously'.

Source: Bankwatch Network