

Serbia's Nikola Tesla A thermal power plant exceeded the total SO₂ emissions of the highest-emitting EU country, Poland, a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) and Bankwatch has revealed. The figures also showed that Serbia was the biggest emitter of SO₂ in 2019.

The Western Balkans' 18 coal-fired power plants released twice as much sulfur dioxide in 2019 as all 221 such facilities in the European Union (EU).

By the amount of emissions per GWh of electricity produced, Ugljevik in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the biggest polluter in 2019, with 50 tons of SO₂/GWh, compared with Bełchatów in Poland, the EU's most polluting power plant, which released 1.1 tons of SO₂/GWh.

The overall 2019 data are in stark contrast with 2015, when SO₂ emissions from coal-based electricity generation in the EU were 20% higher than those in the Western Balkans. CREA and Bankwatch warned that pollution control rules have been repeatedly breached in the Western Balkans over the past few years, whereas the EU has closed 30 coal-fired power plants since 2016, with more of the remaining plants becoming compliant with the Industrial Emissions Directive.

The two organizations noted that 17 out of 18 coal power plants in the Western Balkans have been under legal obligation to implement the EU's Large Combustion Plant Directive (LCPD) since 2018, which should have resulted in significant immediate drops in SO₂, NO_x and dust pollution.

They also called on the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy to ensure that breaches of the Energy Community Treaty are penalized, particularly regarding non-compliance with the LCPD.

According to Davor Pehchevski, Balkan air pollution campaign coordinator at Bankwatch, the report highlights the urgent need to stop using coal for electricity production as well as for improvements in pollution control for those plants that will remain in operation for a few more years.

Phasing out coal would bring enormous benefits to Western Balkan countries seeking to improve their populations' health, while also helping in their aspirations to join the EU, according to Pehchevski.

Source: balkangreenenergynews.com