

New research recently released by Oxford University and Institute for New Economic Thinking shows that in order for global warming to stay below 2°C and prevent catastrophic flooding and refugee crisis, all new power capacities will have to be carbon free by 2017. Since all the countries of the South East Europe (SEE) region participated in the Paris COP21 meeting in December 2015 and signed up to an agreement pledging that 1,5°C is a safer defence line against climate change, they should proceed on this path as well and cancel plans for new carbon powered capacities planned in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla, Banovići, Ugljevik), Serbia (Kostolac B3, Kolubara B1 and B2), Montenegro (Pljevlja 2), and other SEE countries.

The global market also shows that the end of coal is near. Just yesterday, the leading global coal producer Peabody Energy filed for U.S. bankruptcy protection. Some of Europe's last remaining coal producers, in the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland, are also grasping for government support to keep from going under and taking thousands of jobs with them. Recently the Czech company New World Resources failed to persuade the Czech government to bail it out before a debt deadline this week.

"There is a way for SEE countries to move forward: by switching planned investments away from coal and into renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and smart grids", says Garret Tankosić-Kelly, Principal of SEE Change Net Foundation. "This is what is already happening in Europe, and as a result, the trend of coal exploitation is slowly dying."

This solution is not unachievable. The policy tool South East Europe 2050 Energy Model shows that this change could happen for the same cost envelope as the current investments in the energy sector of SEE. The findings of the expert model - also used by the International Energy Agency - are based on public data that was collected in the SEE region during 2 years by a team of international experts working with regional civil society groups. And if the market and climate change arguments are not sufficient to act now, the public health costs should be. Polluted air from existing coal power plants in SEE causes up to 8.5 billion EUR in health costs per year, with 7,181 premature deaths per year in Europe.

"There is no need to invest more of the tax payers money for loans to build more coal power plants that will kill our children and destroy our environment. We should insist on the political will of our leaders to ensure a clean and efficient energy system, that will help decrease the effects of climate change in the future", said Garret Tankosić-Kelly.