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Technical Assistance for Capacity Building on European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR) in Turkey

TR2013/0327.06-01-02/001

Technical Assistance for Capacity Building on European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR) in Turkey

Activity 2.3 Training Session

EPTRR Data Use – A Dark Outlook



Presenter:

Scott Crossett

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A Dark Outlook The Health Impacts of Coal Fired Power Plants in Spain



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Coal burning affects us all. Its phase-out is a unique opportunity to reduce emissions, preventing the premature death of hundreds of people each year and mitigating climate change.



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Law at the service of the environment



Founded in 1997, **IIDMA** is an environmental law centre whose goal is to contribute to the protection of the environment and to promote sustainable development through the study, development, implementation and enforcement of law from an international and multi-disciplinary approach.



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Wake-up call to Spain concerning the impacts of coal power plants on children's health from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has published its Concluding Observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Spain, including a wake-up call based upon the Parallel Report submitted by the Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Medio Ambiente (IIDMA) together with CIEL (Centre for International Environmental Law) concerning the adverse impacts that Energy policies of the Spanish Government cause on the rights of children.

The Committee recommends that Spain must design a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation and regulate strictly the maximum emissions of air pollutants. This will only be achieved through an orderly coal phase-out with the aim to tackle climate change and air pollution. CO₂ and other pollutant emissions from coal power plants have a direct impact on children's health both in Spain and beyond, and they also contribute to climate change contravening other rights protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



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In the paragraph concerning Environmental Health, the Committee

“recommends that the State party carry out an assessment of the impact of air pollution from coal-fired power plants on children’s health and on the climate as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation and regulate strictly the maximum emissions of air pollutants, including by private businesses”.

The Committee shows particular concern for the lack of investment by the Spanish Government on protecting children’s rights, which are paramount rights, and strongly states that Spain must allocate more resources to comply with the recommendations.

Moreover, Spain must submit a follow-up report on its compliance with these Concluding Observations by January 2023, when the next periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child will be due.



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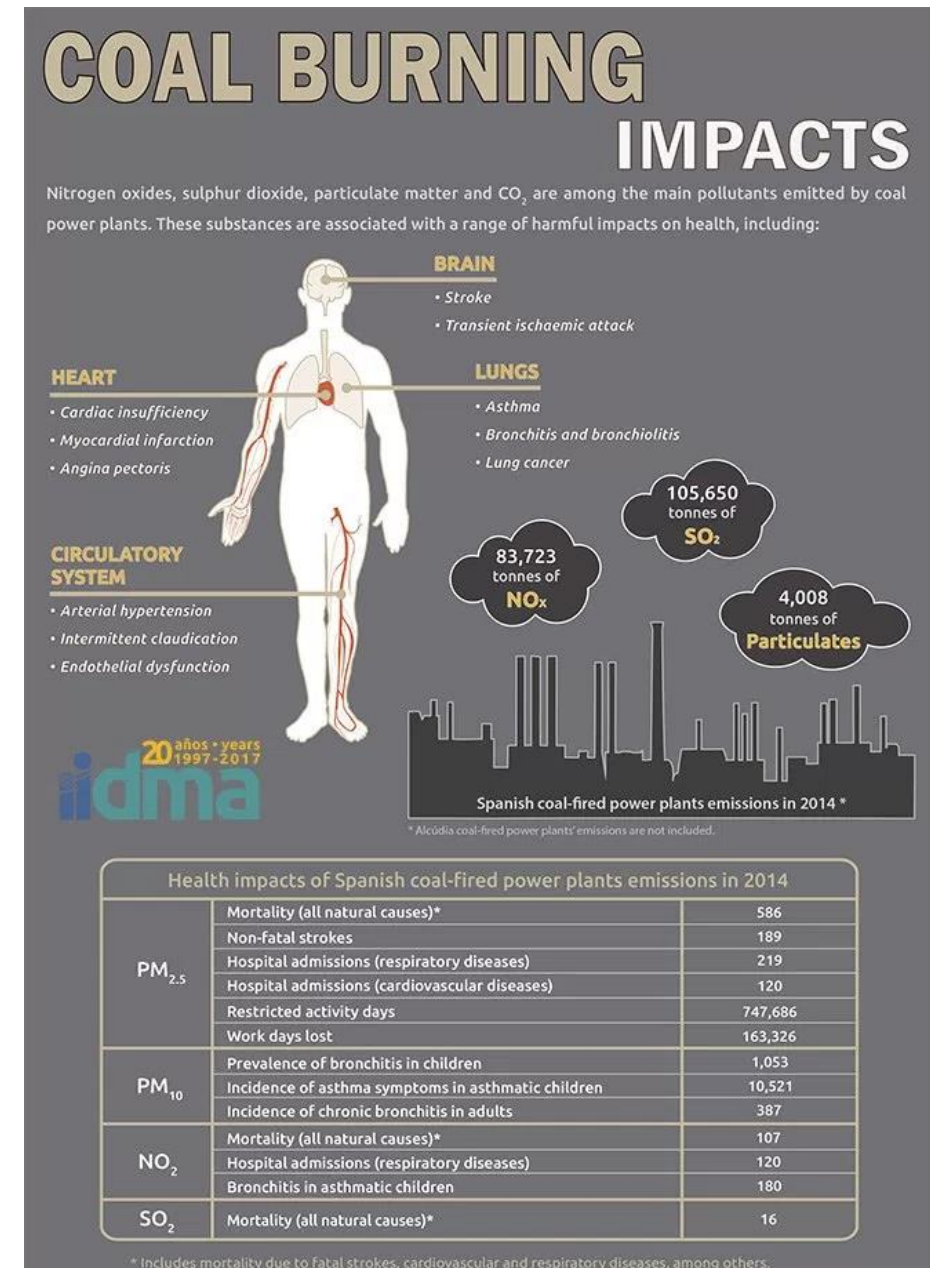
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A DARK OUTLOOK

According to the study “A Dark Outlook” published by IIDMA in 2017, emissions from coal power plants in Spain were related to 10,521 asthma and 1,233 bronchitis cases in children during 2014, in addition to associated health costs of € 1.14 million. Currently, there are 15 coal-fired power plants in Spain with an installed net capacity of 10,004 MW, emitting 105,650 tonnes of SO₂, 83,723 tonnes of NO_x and 4,008 tonnes of dust per year. These emissions are associated with more than 700 premature deaths. IIDMA has filed a lawsuit before the Spanish Supreme Court against the Spanish Government’s Transitional National Plan (TNP), a mechanism that allows coal power plants to emit above EU limits. This is contrary to UN’s recommendations as the CRC now requires pollutant emissions to be strictly regulated.





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“Spain should seize the opportunity offered by these recommendations to consider the heavy social and environmental costs of its reliance on coal-fired power plants. As rightfully recognised by the UN Committee on the Rights of Children, children in Spain and other countries are the first victims of the government’s exception that allows coal power plants and ignores atmospheric pollution standards.

Unless the government intends to place the interests of a few business actors above the rights of the country’s younger generations, Spain should join the twenty countries that recently announced that they will shut down all coal power plants in the next few years”

commented Sébastien Duyck, Senior Attorney at CIEL.



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“These UN recommendations are good news for Spanish children. It is of utmost importance that a UN body is warning Spanish State in such a strong manner of the impacts of the emissions from coal-fired power plants on children’s health as well as on climate change, as it sets an important precedent.

A Climate Change and Energy Transition Law as well as an orderly coal phase-out plan which includes the closure of coal power plants should be developed as soon as possible by Spanish government. In addition, we must not forget that Spain should soon elaborate a Climate and Energy Plan as established in the EU’s Winter Package.

Despite being a highly vulnerable country, Spain it is not preparing itself to tackle climate change”

says Ana Barreira, IIDMA Director.



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The International Institute for Law and the Environment has called on the Spanish Government to take urgent measures to design an orderly and progressive closure plan for its coal plants, in light of the recently launched European Commission investigation on State aid granted to them, which amounts to 440 million Euros since 2007.

These subsidies, wrongly called “environmental incentives” were granted to install desulphurization systems in those plants in order to comply with the emission limits for sulfur dioxide (SO₂) provided by EU law.



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Spain must take measures after EU Commission opens inquiry into its support of coal, say environmental lawyers IIDMA

The Commission has stated its concerns that the scheme did not actually have an environmental incentive effect, as the plants were already under an obligation to meet those emission limit values and the retrofits did not imply compliance with stricter limits than those provided by EU Law. In addition, these subsidies would be contrary to the “polluters pays principle” and would give an unfair competitive advantage to coal towards other forms of power generation.





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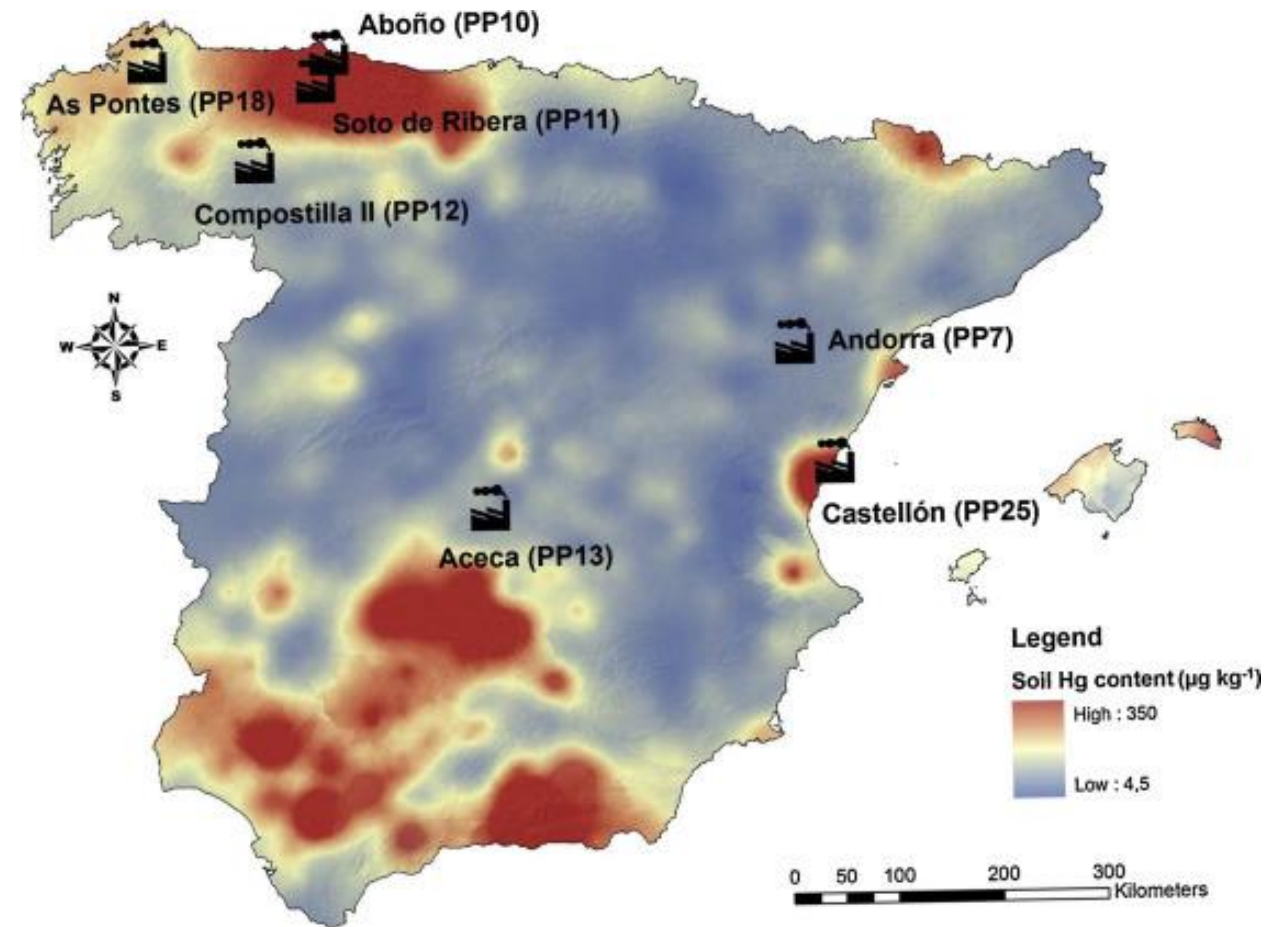
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“These subsidies do not comply with EU Law. Furthermore, the Government knows this State aid is contrary to international commitments concerning the protection of health and the environment. Meanwhile most western countries are phasing-out coal to comply with the Paris Agreement,”

“Emissions from coal-fired power plants are responsible for climate change, environmental damage and health problems. The lack of planning and strategic vision of the Ministry of Energy’s measures can have serious consequences, as Spain is lagging behind despite the wake-up calls from different actors, from NGOs to the European Commission. The rule of law is key for energy transition.”

says Ana Barreira, Director of IIDMA.



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The European Commission had already investigated capacity mechanisms. Back in June 2016 IIDMA reported the existence of State aid to desulphurization systems in its submission to the Interim Report on the Sector Inquiry into Capacity Mechanisms. These so-called “environmental incentives” subsidies offer no incentive for the protection of the environment.

Moreover, most coal-fired power plants benefiting from them have always been included in derogations allowing coal plants to emit above the stricter EU’s limits. In first place, they were subject to the National Emissions Reduction Plan and, secondly, the Transitional National Plan (TNP), a derogation under the EU Industrial Emissions Directive that allows governments to exempt certain combustion plants from stricter emissions.



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Furthermore, the Ministry of Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda has recently published a Draft Royal Decree to avoid the closure of coal-fired power plants. These measures are unacceptable considering that emissions of NO_x, SO₂ and dust from coal plants are responsible for more than 700 deaths per year and the costs of the health impacts range between 880 and 1,667 million Euros.



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The Spanish Government must follow the example of its neighbouring countries and reduce emissions from coal to comply with the Paris Agreement, top priority of COP 23

The Spanish Government must commit to coal phase-out to be in line with the priorities of the United Nations Climate Summit, COP 23, which is currently taking place in Bonn, Germany, and in which this fossil fuel is monopolizing large part of the debates which are happening. In this context, on 4 November, civil society took part in the biggest environmental march in the history of Germany asking for the adoption of measures to fight climate change, including the end of coal for electricity production.



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The United Nations revealed that **CO₂ levels in the atmosphere had reached all-time highs** and warned that with the current level of emissions it will be **impossible to meet the objectives set out in the Paris Accord**. In Spain, **CO₂ emission levels have rocketed since 2011**, following a tendency opposite to the rest of its neighbouring countries, largely due to the protection and subsidies granted to coal power plants, which accounted for 51% of the total CO₂ emissions of the electricity sector between 2011 and 2017, one of the major causes of climate change.



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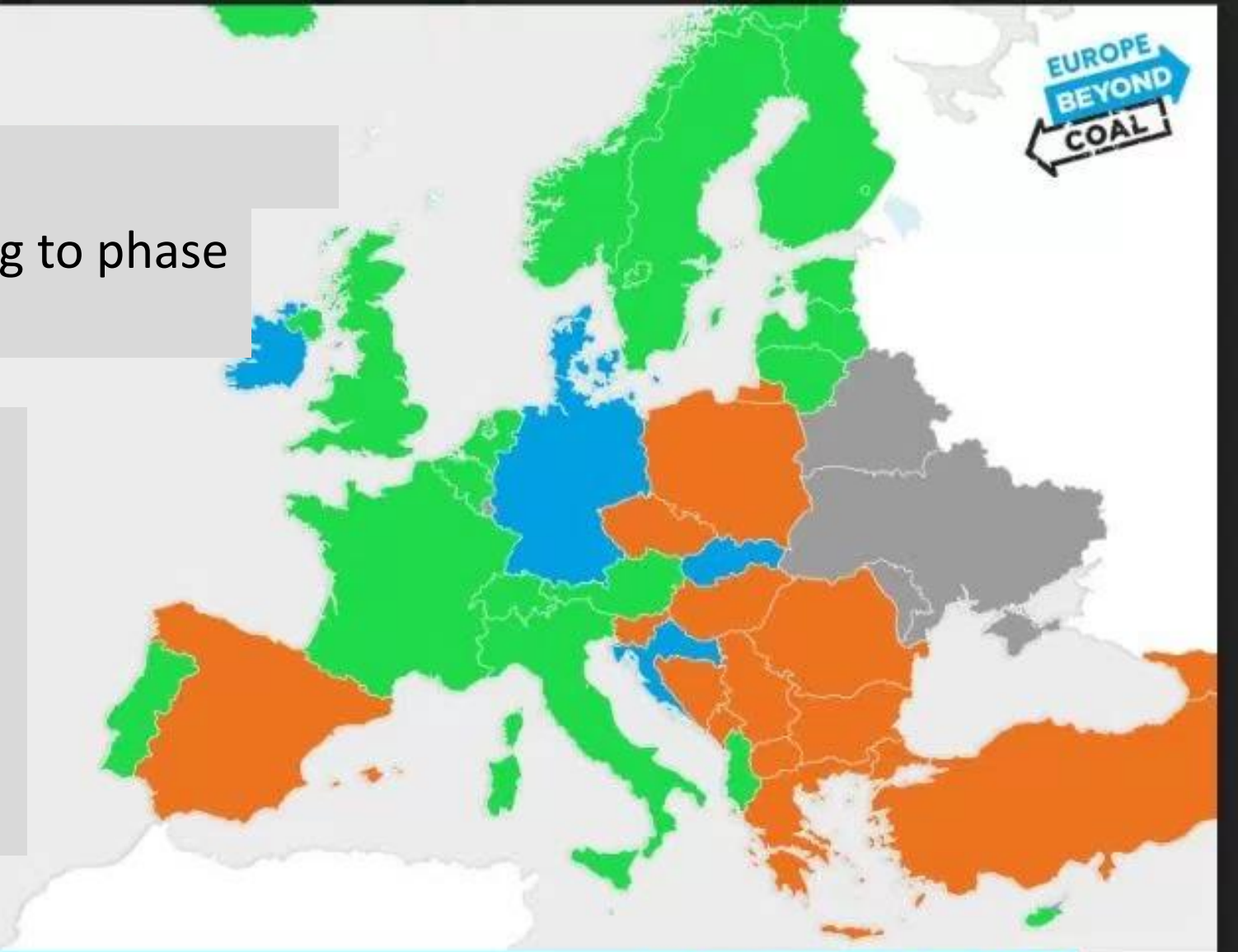
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Coal phase outs

These countries are planning to phase out coal by 2030 or earlier:

-  Phase out announced or no coal
-  Phase out possible
-  No discussion of phase out



www.beyond-coal.eu #BeyondCoal



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However, the Spanish Government continues protecting coal. In fact, it recently announced that they were preparing a Royal Decree to avoid the closure of these plants. In addition, most coal plants in Spain are operating under a Transitional National Plan passed in 2016 which allows them to emit severely harmful pollutants above the limits established by the European Union.



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“Spain must follow the example of its neighbouring countries and take measures to fight climate change, reducing its CO₂ emissions in line with the international commitments undertaken by our country”.

“Combustion plants are one of the main sources of CO₂. These days in COP 23 one of the priority debates is being the need to decarbonize the electricity system and adopt a model based on renewable energies to be able to comply with the obligations of the Paris Agreement. Climate change is real and Spain is especially vulnerable to it. It is urgent to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gas emissions drastically because the consequences of not doing so, are already very severe and costly”, Barreira concludes.



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Thank you



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