

Coal use in Europe has been declining sharply since 2012. Thirteen European countries no longer use coal, and eleven more have adopted decisions to phase-out coal by 2030. In just five years since the historic Paris Climate Agreement, half of Europe's 324 coal-fired thermal power plants have either already closed or pledged to shut down by 2030. This significant milestone was reached when EDF announced the closure of the West Burton thermal power plant in the UK by 2022. All European coal-fired power plants must close before 2030 to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Even countries where coal is the main energy source, such as Greece - whose lignite share in the energy mix has fallen from around 50 to 20 % in the last five years - plan for an accelerated transition from coal to clean energy sources by 2023, namely five years earlier than expected. Hungary is another Eastern European country that has decided to accelerate the coal phase-out by 2025, instead of 2030.

It is imperative that the countries of the Western Balkans adopt a sustainable approach to the energy future as soon as possible and ensure a secure transition to renewable and clean energy sources. So far, Northern Macedonia is the only country in the Western Balkans that plans to phase-out coal by 2030. In the last 18 months, Northern Macedonia (TPP Oslomej reconstruction), Montenegro (expansion of TPP Pljevlja) and Kosovo (TPP Kosova e Re) have given up on new coal-based electricity generation projects, which is an important incentive towards a sustainable energy transition. Viktor Berishaj of the European Climate Action Network (CAN Europe) reminded that, in November last year, the leaders of the Western Balkan countries signed the Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, committing themselves to decarbonization by 2050, in accordance with the upcoming European Union climate law. Therefore, it is necessary to stop all plans for the construction of new coal-fired thermal power plants, and to build on the political framework that guarantees a sustainable path of energy transition towards a just social transformation, a healthy and clean future, which is also in line with the ambitions to join the EU.