

Coal production and consumption in European Union member states have been gradually declining since 1990, and have declined particularly in the last two years. Compared to 2018, the consumption of hard coal last year decreased by 35 %, and the consumption of brown coal by 33 %.

According to Eurostat, only 56 million tons of hard coal were excavated in the EU last year, 80 % less than in 1990. The number of countries still extracting coal also fell dramatically, from 13 in 1990 to just two in 2020 - the Czech Republic and Poland, with the latter contributing as much as 96 % of all accumulated quantities. In parallel with the reduction in accumulated quantities, its consumption also decreased during this period, with approximately 144 million tons of hard coal consumed in the EU last year, or 63 % less than in 1990.

A similar trend as in the case of hard coal was observed in the extraction of brown coal or lignite, with only 36 % of the quantities extracted in the EU last year compared to 1990, or 246 million tons. As much as 95 % of these quantities were used in thermal power plants in only six EU countries: Germany (44 %), Poland (19 %) and the Czech Republic (12 %), followed by Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. Most of that coal (93 % lignite and 53 % hard coal in 2019) was used to generate electricity, with the share of coal-fired power plants in total electricity production declining dramatically.