

EURACOAL Press Release

European Coal Days, European Parliament, 8-12 November 2010

Brussels (9 November 2010) – This week, at the European Parliament in Brussels, hundreds of stakeholders with an interest in coal will gather at the European Coal Days. Hosted by Dr. Christian Ehler MEP, this is a first for the coal industry, represented by Mr. Petr Pudil of the Czech Coal Group and President of the European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL).

At the opening ceremony later today, the two gentlemen will welcome Mr. Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy who is expected to outline key aspects of the European Commission's energy strategy to 2020 and its roadmap to 2050. A more interconnected Europe would, he has said, lead to greater security and more competitive energy markets. On coal, he recognises its value as part of a diversified fuel mix, especially for power generation, but links its future with technologies to capture and store carbon dioxide (CCS technologies). He has promised that the EU will maintain its leading position by pushing ahead with the six large CCS demonstration projects located across Europe. Mr. Oettinger will praise those companies, including EURACOAL members, who have already established CCS pilot projects and who are now developing commercial-scale demonstration projects.

During the Coal Days, RWE and Vattenfall will host side events to present their coal businesses and debate with MEPs issues that affect the future of coal in Europe, including mine permitting, renewal and modernisation of older coal-fired power plants and investment conditions. On the latter point, Mr. Brian Ricketts, Secretary-General of EURACOAL, observed that, "short-term investment decisions are too often favoured over the long-term ones needed to secure sustainable and competitive energy supplies".

At a special hearing of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), EURACOAL member Mr. Nigel Yaxley, representing UK coal importers, will say that coal is the No. 1 fuel for electricity generation. Its use is growing faster than any other energy source, because it is the fuel of choice for electrification in developing countries, nowhere more so than in China. He predicts that coal, the most significant indigenous energy resource in Europe, will continue to be needed there for many decades to come and that the challenges it faces will be solved with the evolution of clean technologies.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. Pudil will point out that consumers want affordable energy, which often means coal, helpfully balancing the high cost of more sustainable renewables. Speaking on behalf of the coal industry, he will call for:

- a European energy policy that recognises the role of coal;
- incentives to those who wish to invest in high-efficiency low-emission coal-fired power plants; and
- politicians to lead public opinion on the need to balance the three crucial elements of good energy policy: energy security, price competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

At a press conference today, Mr Ricketts said that, "a quarter of a million people are proud to mine coal in the EU because citizens of the EU value our end product – an electrified economy at an affordable price".

Notes for editors:

- Coal meets over one quarter of world energy demand (27%), second only to crude oil (33%).
- The EU consumes around 720 million tonnes of coal each year, 11% of the world total of 6 800 million tonnes. China is the largest consumer (3 100 million tonnes) followed by the USA (920 million tonnes).
- 28% of the EU electricity demand is met by coal, compared with 41% globally.
- Indigenous coal production of 560 million tonnes brings security of supply benefits and added value to the EU economy.
- 280 000 people are directly employed in the EU coal industry.
- EU directives ensure that some of the world's cleanest and most efficient coal-fired power plants are found in European countries. For example, the Nordjyllandsværket power plant in Denmark where half of the country's electricity comes from coal, all imported from a competitive global market.
- Investing in new coal-fired power plants, up to 30% more efficient than many existing plants, reduces CO₂ emissions at a much lower cost and with greater certainty than any alternative.
- Planning for a low-emission future means that new coal- and gas-fired power plants must be built with enough space for CO₂ capture to be retrofitted and a potential route to CO₂ storage identified.

Contact:

Brian Ricketts, Secretary-General, EURACOAL, mobile +44 7804 646620, ricketts@euracoal.org

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