

Press Release

EURACOAL comments on the Commission communication on an EU strategy to reduce methane emissions

Brussels (14 October 2020) – For some months prior to the publication today of its methane strategy (COM(2020) 663), EURACOAL has been in discussion with the European Commission on the important topic of methane emissions from coal mines.

The published strategy covers several areas of human activity. For the energy sector, the focus is on fugitive emissions from oil and gas production, supply infrastructure and end use, rather than from coal mining. In light of the international nature of emissions from EU energy-supply chains, this is the right approach and the strategy should be used as a tool in climate diplomacy.

In relation to the coal sector, EURACOAL has raised a number of points with the Commission.

On monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV), there are no EU-wide rules and this omission should be addressed. Currently, the sector reports “Tier 2” emissions according to the UNFCCC reporting framework, these being maximum values. With time and with progress on measuring methods, the sector will be able to move to a “Tier 3” reporting framework. Introducing MRV standards will be indispensable for any effective legislation.

Methane emissions from coal have been measured in detail over recent decades. Hence, methane emissions from lignite, which is produced widely across Europe at open-pit mines, are known as being marginal from a climate perspective. This is valid for lignite mining as well as lignite-fired power plants. Hard coal is now mined in only a small number of Member States and emissions of coal mine methane (CMM) from active mines are currently a tiny fraction of past emission levels, given the industry’s contraction since 1990. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that ventilation of methane at the remaining active underground coal mines is a necessary part of health and safety procedures to keep mineworkers safe.

Given the declining trend of EU coal mining, more focus should be placed on abandoned mine methane (AMM). This requires smart closure plans for coal mines, with repurposing of assets to limit emissions and maximise the use of the available methane. The sector is rich in knowledge and there are already several pilot projects and initiatives in Europe, including the world’s first International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane established in 2017 in Katowice, Poland under the auspices of the UNECE. However, there remains a gap between what is economic and what is needed to meet EU climate goals.

Methane is widely used for heating and power generation, and the potential exists to use more CMM and AMM if suitable financial incentives are created. Therefore, EURACOAL welcomes the Commission’s statement to support more methane emission reduction projects using EU funds, such as pillar 2 of the Just Transition Mechanism, EFSI or LIFE, as well as the modernised Research Fund for Coal and Steel. EURACOAL together with its partners in the CoalTech2051 consortium noted in *Changing the face of coal: a strategy for future coal-related RTD in the European Union* (September 2020) the need for further work on technologies related to CMM and AMM.

EURACOAL continues to be open to work with the European Commission to share knowledge and experience on how to best address the reduction of methane emissions from all coal mines.

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Note for editors:

- The European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL) represents the interests of coal producers, coal importers and coal users in Brussels. The Association has 26 members and observers from 15 countries. The Association publishes regular market reports and *Coal industry across Europe*, a detailed review of the European coal industry with sections on the world coal market and climate policy (www.euracoal.eu).
- EURACOAL has been a partner in the EU-supported CoalTech2051 project which has developed a future coal-related research strategy with input from many stakeholders (www.coaltech2051.eu). Led by the IEA Clean Coal Centre, with the GIG Research Institute and the Centre for Research and Technology Hellas, the project has provided advice on the future of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel. A public version of the project [report](#) is available from the project website.

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