

## Coal

*What role will coal and lignite fired generation have in the EU power system in the medium term, with or without CCS, and how is this consistent with the EU's Climate Action goals and its security of supply objectives?*

Coal-fired power plants are the biggest source of man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. According to James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Space Institute, ending emissions from coal "is 80% of the solution to the global warming crisis"<sup>1</sup>. Hansen thus advocates a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants and a phase-out of existing coal fleet.<sup>2</sup>

The window of opportunity to act is now. The construction of each new coal-fired power plant locks in additional annual emissions of millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> over the next 30-40 years (the lifetime of these plants).

The climate activist Bill McKibben published an article in July 2012<sup>3</sup> doing some maths around climate change. He explained what reaching the target of limiting global warming at 2 degrees Celsius means in terms of carbon dioxide that can be poured into the atmosphere: 565 gigatons of carbon dioxide is the estimation of scientists, which would leave reasonable hope of staying below 2 degrees. At the same time 2.795 gigatons is the amount of carbon already contained in the proven coal and oil and gas reserves of the fossil-fuel companies, and countries acting like fossil-fuel companies. This is the fossil fuel currently planned to burn, which is five times higher than the 565 gigatons. McKibbens points to the fact that if the 2 degree target is being taken seriously "effective action would require actually keeping most of the carbon the fossil-fuel industry wants to burn safely in the soil, not just changing slightly the speed at which it's burned."<sup>4</sup>

### **Recommendation:**

This means that no public money can go into building coal fired power plants, neither new plants nor retrofitting which would allow existing plants to operate longer and lock us into a high carbon paths for decades to come jeopardising the 2 degree target.

Regine Richter, urgewald  
Mona Bricke, klima-allianz deutschland

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from James Hansen to Nevada Governor Gibbons, April 14, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Heffa Schucking, Lydia Kroll, Yann Louvel and Regine Richter, Bankrolling Climate Change, December 2011.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>

<sup>4</sup> ibid.