

Bulgaria Clings to Coal, Going Against Europe

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As the European Union seeks to wean the continent off coal, Bulgaria is digging in, postponing tough decisions to the ultimate detriment of coal workers, taxpayers and the energy grid, experts warn.

When it comes to coal, Bulgaria and the European Union are pulling in very different directions.

While the EU has pledged to decarbonise its economy by 2030, Bulgaria, which has been part of the bloc since 2007, is seeking yet another exemption for its dirty, cash-strapped coal sector.

While the rest of the EU is closing down coal-fired thermal power plants, or TPPs, Bulgaria's government is expanding or granting new permits for coal mining and promising workers at the largest state-owned power plant, Maritza East-2, that they and those who follow them will be safe in their jobs until the country exhausts its reserves of low-quality lignite, in about 60 years.

Industry observers and environmental watchdogs say Sofia's coal policy ignores the fact that market forces and the expansion of carbon quotas mean coal-produced energy will become too expensive to compete, forcing the state to either bail out producers or shut them down with the loss of most of the 27,000 jobs in the sector.

Source: balkaninsight