

**Question for written answer E-000304/2020  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Demetris Papadakis (S&D)**

**Subject:** Toxic smog descending on the western Balkans

The western Balkans have recently been enveloped in a thick cloud of toxic smog mainly attributable to lignite-fired power stations. Lignite, the most pollutant type of coal, is widely available in the western Balkans, providing cheap energy. During the winter months in particular, the atmosphere is filled with micro-particles from domestic wood or coal heating appliances, making it unbreathable. According to a recent UN Environment Programme survey, air pollution accounts for 20 % of premature deaths in 19 cities in the Western Balkans.

Furthermore, the western Balkan countries remain heavily reliant on coal-fired plants for power, thereby jeopardising public health in not only these countries but also the EU Member States.

Given that high levels of air pollution, which knows no borders, are arriving in the EU from the western Balkans with resultant high costs in terms of health care:

Can the Commission say what measures it is taking to improve air quality in the EU and reduce carbon dioxide emissions in south-east Europe as a whole?