

**Question for written answer E-005361/2021  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: Bankwatch report on air pollution from Western Balkan coal plants

A recent Bankwatch report<sup>1</sup> concludes that in 2020 coal plants in Western Balkan countries breached legal limits by emitting as much as 6.4 times more sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) than allowed under their National Emissions Reduction Plans (NERPs). Total emissions resulted in over 19 000 deaths, of which 10 800 were in the EU.

While imports of electricity from Western Balkan countries only cover 0.3 % of the EU's total energy consumption, the SO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with these imports amounted to 50 % of the total SO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all power plants in the EU in 2020.

How will the Commission ensure that Western Balkan countries comply with their NERPs in the upcoming years?

Is the Commission working on carbon pricing measures in the Energy Community with a view to incentivising decarbonisation efforts in the Western Balkan?

The Western Balkan Economic and Investment Plan has funding of EUR 9 billion and aims to promote the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement and internationally agreed biodiversity goals, although it does not include concrete benchmarks or indicators.

Will environmental impact assessments be conducted for individual flagship projects, and how will the Commission measure and ensure overall progress?

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<sup>1</sup> CEE Bankwatch Network, 'Comply or Close: How Western Balkan coal plants breach air pollution laws and cause deaths and what governments must do about it', September 2021.