

# Poland's Last Gasp

## The Polish coal power plants making Poland and Europe sick

A new report from Europe Beyond Coal, Sandbag, Greenpeace, the European Environmental Bureau and CAN Europe, [Last Gasp](#), launched on 20 November, used high-resolution atmospheric modelling to reveal how air pollution from each of the coal power stations in the EU is damaging public health.

The report shows that in 2016, the coal power plants of just ten companies are estimated to be responsible for two thirds of the health impact from coal across Europe, and cost society up to €22 billion. Plants located in Poland were responsible for an estimated 2,600 premature deaths, 1,100 new cases of chronic bronchitis and 42,400 asthma symptom days in children. This leads to an estimated 2,100 hospital admissions and over 775,000 lost working days.

Just three companies were responsible for approximately three-quarters of the health damage from Polish plants: *PGE, ZE PAK & ENEA*.

The modelling shows that the large cities of Łódź, Warsaw and Katowice and areas around these cities are the most affected by the country's power plants. However, it's not only Polish citizens that suffer. Air pollution from Polish coal power plants travels thousands of kilometers - leaving millions of European citizens with degraded air quality and poorer health as a result. Over two thirds of the modelled health damage took place beyond Poland's borders - with Germany, Ukraine and the Czech Republic particularly affected.

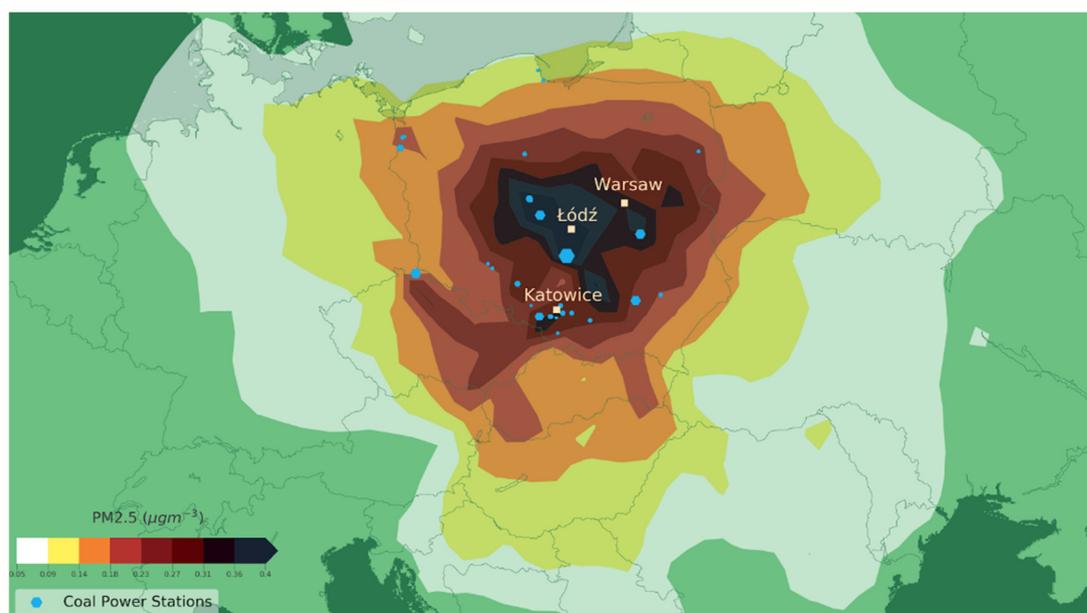


Fig.1 geographical regions and cities most affected by pollution from Poland's coal power stations.

## Worst in Europe

The report finds that Poland is home to the most polluting coal power plant in Europe, PGE's Bełchatów. There are 22 million people that live within 200 km of the plant, which in 2016 alone is estimated to have caused 489 premature deaths, almost 8,000 asthma symptom days in children and 140,000 lost working days.

PGE is currently seeking to expand the mines that feed Bełchatów. If successful, the health toll will continue for many years to come, and the costs of its impacts will continue to burden society.

Rank	Company	Plant Name	Premature Deaths	Asthma symptom days in asthmatic children	Chronic bronchitis in adults	Hospital admissions due to respiratory or cardiovascular symptoms	Work days lost, working age population	Total Cost High Case [€]
1	PGE	Belchatow	489	7864	205	398	141993	€ 1,418,848,952
2	PGE	Turow	209	3982	102	168	81417	€ 611,739,195
3	ENEA	Kozienice	199	3036	79	163	54342	€ 575,852,880
4	ZEPAK	Adamow	195	3371	89	150	60233	€ 567,284,729
5	ENEA	Polaniec	193	2843	74	158	50507	€ 556,670,980
6	PGE	Rybnik	175	2841	74	141	51163	€ 507,729,490
7	ZEPAK	Patnow I	89	1369	36	71	24296	€ 256,848,139
8	PGNIG	Zeran	85	1492	39	68	27112	€ 248,988,274
9	PGE	Dolna Odra	85	1411	36	68	28481	€ 246,156,136
10	Tauron	Laziska	62	991	26	50	17836	€ 178,416,864

Fig. 2: the ten most polluting coal power stations in Poland.

## Myth of low cost energy

In 2016, the health damage caused by Poland's coal power stations cost society up to €7.5 billion. This is equivalent to €59 for every MWh of electricity generated - **roughly equal to the price of the electricity coal plants sell**. These health costs are not covered by the coal companies, but rather by society in the form of increased national healthcare budgets, personal costs for individual treatment and economic losses caused by reduced productivity.

The health costs associated with coal power generation are a hidden subsidy. When properly accounted for, electricity generation from coal is very expensive, especially compared to the rapidly falling cost of renewable generation such as onshore wind and solar.

## Recommendations

Air pollution from Poland's coal power plants is driving a public health crisis, and burdening people in Poland and across Europe with huge, unnecessary costs. By clinging to this terminally declining industry and not planning for a responsible phase out that protects human health and the wellbeing of coal communities, the Polish government is undermining the future of its people.



What is needed is to:

- Commit, including in the 2030 national energy and climate plans, to a rapid-build programme of renewable generation, as well as storage, demand-response, interconnectors and investment in energy efficiency.
- Put in place policies to make coal pay its way: tighter air pollution limits, higher carbon pricing, and a cessation of subsidies to coal including capacity mechanisms.
- A legally-binding coal phase-out date that puts Poland and Europe on track for a 2030 coal phase out and a just transition plan for affected communities and workers.