

Germanwatch assessment of the coal commission outcome of 26 January 2019

Important step towards reaching Germany's 2030 climate target

1. The commission recommends the **last coal power plant of Germany to shut down in the corridor 2035 to 2038**. The government shall decide in 2032 the latest, if the earlier date works or if 2038 stays as the final year. NGOs have called for a final shut down year around 2030, others have called for the 40s. The final phase-out corridor of 2035-2038 comes too late for being Paris Agreement consistent. However, with progressing market developments and further pressure from NGOs there is a **good chance, 2035 will be the very last year for coal combustion in Germany**.
2. This is a **big step forward and was unthinkable just a few years ago. Nevertheless, it is not enough to bring the energy sector on a path to comply with the 1.5°C-limit** of the Paris Agreement. On the other hand, the reduction path, according to the commission, can be revised in 2023, 2026 and 2029. It is likely that this will happen if Germany accepts higher 2030 targets in the EU context or if the Green Party will be part of the next government.
3. With its phase-out plan recommendations, the **commission is on a path to reaching Germany's current 2030 emissions target for the power sector**. Now, the pressure is rising for the other sectors of transport, buildings, industry and agriculture, to deliver on reaching their respective 2030 sector targets. The Government wants to fix these targets before the summer of 2019 in a climate law. This can help to restart the debate on a higher EU climate target in the country in autumn 2019 – if by then the coal compromise has been transferred into law and the climate law has passed the Bundestag.
4. The commission recommends a **modestly fast start into the coal phase-out**. According to the compromise, 12,5GW or about 24 big combustion blocks will go off in the next four years, which amounts to almost 30% of Germany's current overall coal plant capacity. Around 2/3 of that number will be closed additionally to already existing plans. Furthermore, the commission recommends cancelling the construction of a 1GW coal power plant that was scheduled to go online in 2019. Unfortunately, these numbers would not be sufficient to reach Germany's 2020 emission target even up to 2022 (which is mainly due to the transport and buildings sectors).
5. The **Hambach Forest is now almost secure** – and with it the villages around the Hambach open pit mine. This huge symbolic win is due to the quick additional closure of combustion capacity in the Western lignite basin. The compromise text states that preserving the Forest “is desirable” and the gigawatts closed down in that region until 2022 make it possible.

6. The outcome is legally non-binding for the government – but a **strong and likely lasting societal compromise** that has the power to pacify the country to quite some extent on the coal issue. Therefore, the Federal Government and the Bundestag will likely copy-paste most of the commission’s proposals into legislation. Only one commission member – a regional anti-coal activist – voted against the compromise text, as the villages in the Eastern coal region are not yet safe. The three environmental NGO members (Greenpeace, BUND/FoE, DNR), another regional anti-coal activist and climate scientist John Schellnhuber all voted in favour of the final text. The environmental NGOs added a minority vote on the final date and the reduction path of 2023 to 2029.

7. Germany still has to implement this compromise and strengthen it at the first revision in 2023. Nevertheless, **the country can now better move on towards solving also the other pressing climate policy issues**. A stronger focus of politicians can and must now be on the mobility sector with stagnating emissions since 1990, on accelerating the energy efficiency buildings refurbishment rate, and on the carbon-neutral industry transition. In 2018 CO2 emissions in Germany already decreased by 6% – a sign of hope.

Authors: Oldag Caspar, Christoph Bals

Editing: Rebekka Hannes

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Germanwatch e.V.

Office Bonn

Kaiserstr. 201

D-53113 Bonn

Phone +49 (0)228 / 60 492-0, Fax -19

Website: www.germanwatch.org

Office Berlin

Stresemannstr. 72

D-10963 Berlin

Phone +49 (0)30 / 2888 356-0, Fax -1

E-mail: info@germanwatch.org