



Joint statement: Europe and Poland must stop Turów’s negative impacts and bring water and climate justice

The undersigned NGOs, Members of the European Parliament, Members of Parliament and local authorities urge the European Commission, the International Commission for the Protection of the Odra River, and the government of Poland to stop the Turów mine’s transnational water grab and defend people from destructive coal extraction.

At the Polish border with the Czech Republic and Germany, the Turów open-pit lignite mine is draining water resources and leaving entire villages dry. The mine is currently operating under a six-year mining licence extension obtained without public participation and a proper environmental impact assessment. Since May 2020, the mine has therefore worked illegally.

The Polish state-owned company PGE threatens to expand the mine and re-license its operation until 2044. If this happens, thousands of people may lose access to water, amid a global health and climate crisis, and in a blatant violation of EU laws.

The expansion of the Turów mine is incompatible with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), as it would cause inadmissible deterioration of water bodies, as well as the Environmental Liability Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

EU laws are agreed to protect people, communities and public goods, but they are useless if they are not enforced. Poland is responsible for implementing EU laws on its national territories, and ensuring they are respected. As the “Guardian of the Treaties”, the European Commission must intervene where citizens’ rights are violated, and hold member state governments accountable.

The project is also incompatible with Europe’s zero pollution and climate neutrality ambition. Coal is a major source of toxic air pollution as well as greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate breakdown. We cannot afford to continue with business as usual. A just transition from coal to renewable energy is not only inevitable, but also urgent and necessary to build greater resilience in our societies, and allow the Czech-Polish-German region Neisse-Nisa-Nysa to move together towards a cleaner and fairer future.

We call on the government of Poland to respect EU laws, to stop the Turów mine from taking water away from people and nature, to take ambitious steps to replace coal with renewables, and to ensure a just transition for workers in the region.

We call on the International Commission for the Protection of the Odra River against Pollution to listen to the citizens of the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland, and include brown coal mining and specifically the Turów mine in the list of supraregional issues to be dealt with by all three countries in a coordinated manner.

We call on the European Commission to immediately start an infringement procedure against the government of Poland for illegal mining and the violation of EU directives in Turów, and to demand that the Polish government complies with EU laws and stops the mine expansion.

Communities at the frontline with the Turów mine are already experiencing water shortages, as well as extremely high particulate content in the air they breathe. They are paying a high price for PGE’s greed. They cannot wait any longer.

Signatories:

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Diana Lelonek - photographer and visual artist
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Europe Beyond Coal

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

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Greenpeace Poland

Frank Bold

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Calla - sdružení pro záchranu prostředí

Centrum pro dopravu a energetiku

Chebsko za klima

ClientEarth

Coal Action Network

Děti Země

Doctors for future Czech Republic

Extinction Rebellion Czech Republic

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Fundacja Strefa Zieleni

Fundacja Zielone Światło

Global Energy Monitor

Grüne Liga

Hnutí DUHA

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Instytut Energetyki Odnawialnej
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Kolektyw Siostry Rzeki
Konopa z.s.
Les Amis de la Terre France
Na mysli, z.ú.
Polish Green Party
Přátelé přírody Praha
Reclaim Finance
ReSet
Rodiče za klima Liberec
Síť ekologických poraden STEP
Společnost pro zvířata, ZO ČSOP

Stop tunelům, z.s., Ústí nad Labem
Stowarzyszenie Ab Ovo
Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne EKO-UNIA
Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne
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Stowarzyszenie "NIE DLA ODKRYWKI
ZŁOCZEW
Stowarzyszenie "Nie Kopalni Odkrywkowej"
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