

Coal mining and coal use: the European perspective

The Lancet Planetary Health addressed the issue of coal mining in the USA and the need for a fast reduction in intensive coal use.^{1,2} It should be noted that the USA and the EU are adopting different policies concerning coal mining incentives and coal use. The EU has adopted a general framework to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 2050, including decreasing extraction and burning of coal. Some countries, such as the UK and Italy, have set their withdrawal from coal use even earlier (by 2025). In February, 2018, the new EU Emission Trade System was approved, fixing a limit to coal price reduction and funding technological innovations. Moreover, applied research projects have been funded for coal-free steel production in Austria (Voestalpine), Germany (Salzgitter), and Sweden (Lund-HYBRIT) to test steel production by use of hydrogen and natural gas, in the frame of a general perspective of Clean Steel fostered by the European Commission. These pilots were presented at the Europe Beyond Carbon conference held at the European Parliament (Brussels, Belgium) on June 20, 2018, with the involvement of the *Lancet* Commission on Pollution and Health, and in Taranto (Italy) on Nov 26, 2018. The EU has also launched the Coal Regions in Transition Platform, in which the European Commission and financial institutions (eg, World Bank) set up bilateral meetings with mining regions to fund transition to a coal-free economy. A specific Horizon 2020 Call was opened to support actions for the development of regional roadmaps towards decarbonisation in coal-intensive regions. The European perspective on decarbonisation and long term emissions reduction was officially presented (EU's vision for a modern, clean, and competitive

economy) by the European Commission on July 10–11, 2018, at the University of Brussels (Brussels, Belgium) as an important step towards COP24 held in Katowice, Poland, promoted by the UN to address the issue of climate change and its consequences on planetary health. The ambitious objective of coal use reduction set for 2050 should promote a deep reconsideration of the future of the EU steel industry, in which the traditional and low-value steel coming from coal-intensive processes does not have a long-term future. The EU should promote a new generation of plants able to produce clean and intelligent steel (with innovative material properties and characteristics). The new multiannual financial programme (2020–27) should devote relevant resources to stimulate and accelerate these changes and support Member States to create favourable conditions for a new sustainable and intelligent steel market.

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1 The Lancet Planetary Health. Mining the USA. *Lancet Planet Health* 2018; 2: E324.

2 The Lancet Planetary Health. Is the time for coal in Europe over? *Lancet Planet Health* 2018; 2: E233.

