



National press release BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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PRESS RELEASE

Coal's unpaid health bill in B&H estimated at €3.1 billion

- A new study quantifies the public health costs of polluted air from existing coal-fired power plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at up to 3.1 EUR billion per year in annual health damages
- Three of the 10 most polluting coal-fired power stations in Europe are located in Bosnia and Herzegovina adding to air pollution as a serious health problem
- Phasing out coal for electricity generation would improve air quality and health and reduce carbon emissions

Sarajevo/Brussels, 15 March 2016 – First-ever estimates of the health costs associated with air pollution from coal power plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina are released today as part of a report covering the Western Balkans region produced by the Health and Environment Alliance, a European non-profit alliance. (1)

“The Unpaid Health Bill - How coal power plants in the Western Balkans make us sick” (1) puts the costs to health from existing coal plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina at up to 3.1 EUR billion per year representing one third of the total costs from this source in the Western Balkan region (2).

The calculation of health costs directly related to air pollution from coal-fired electricity plants takes into account premature deaths, respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions, new cases of chronic bronchitis and lower respiratory problems, medication use and days of restricted activity due to ill-health, including lost working days. The costs, which are paid by individuals and governments and not by the coal industry, include both health costs for the Western Balkans as well as for the European region because wind carries pollutants across national borders. (3)

Using coal to create electricity adds very significantly to air pollution, which is a major health risk in the Western Balkans. Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to three of the 10 most polluting coal-fired power stations in Europe. (4) The Ugljevik plant is the most polluting plant in Europe for emissions from sulphur dioxide (SO₂) followed by the Kakanj and Tuzla plants. Sulphur dioxide is of particular concern for health because it reacts in the atmosphere to form particulate matter, which causes a range of health impacts.

“Our new report quantifies the huge damage to health associated coal power plants both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in other countries of the Western Balkan region,” says Vlatka Matkovic Puljic, Health and Energy Officer, Balkans Region, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). “We hope that

the findings will encourage the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to reconsider national energy plans for coal and lignite and to increase investment in wind and solar power alternatives.”

The combination of coal and other exhaust from industrial, transport and domestic sources in the air robs countries of health and prosperity. Figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) show the economic cost of early deaths from air pollution in Bosnia and Herzegovina at 21.5% of national GDP compared with 4.5% in Germany. (5) Bosnia and Herzegovina experiences episodes of poor air quality which last several months.

“Higher levels of air pollution result in more asthma attacks and an increase in hospital admissions for lung and heart problems,” states Professor Dr. Zehra Dizdarević, a pneumologist. “Patients with asthma and other respiratory problems suffer greatly during smog episodes. Children with breathing conditions cannot play outside and may not be able to go to school. Some adults may be prevented from going to work because of the air pollution and older people are more likely to need hospitalisation.”

HEAL and SEE Change Network, a regional think tank on sustainable development, are joint hosts of the press conference to launch the findings in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1). They are calling for an end to coal in Europe by 2040 in order to promote health through cleaner air and to reduce carbon emissions that fuel climate change. They want the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to close existing coal plants and not to build any new ones.

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Notes for journalists

1. The new report, “The unpaid health bill, How coal power plants in Western Balkans make us sick” is available here (<http://bit.ly/1QMCIYd>). It is being released today at a press conference at 11 am in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be released in Brussels at the same time.
2. Health costs for the region as a whole are up to 8.5 EUR billion annually. This is made up of health costs from coal plants in the five Western Balkan countries covered by the report. They are: Bosnia and Herzegovina with health costs of up to 3,145 in EUR millions; Kosovo up to 352 in EUR millions; Macedonia up to 720 in EUR millions; Montenegro up to 257 in EUR millions; and, Serbia up to 4,086 in EUR millions. Albania would normally be included in this region, however, it has been excluded since there are no coal plants there. The report package includes separate documents devoted to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the four other countries in the Western Balkans featured in the report.
3. Not all the health costs caused by the plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina are borne by residents of the country or even within the Western Balkans region. Approximately 1.1 EUR billion of the total 3.1 EUR billion damages affects populations in countries of the Western Balkans. About 2.0 EUR billion in health damages falls on EU28 member states plus Albania, Belarus, Moldova, Norway, the Western regions of Russia, Switzerland, and Ukraine.
4. Coal power plants with the biggest emissions of SO₂ in Europe

The biggest SO₂ emitters

Country	Plant name	SO ₂ (t)
B&H	Ugljevik	154,385
Serbia	Nikola Tesla B	93,200
Serbia	Kostolac B	89,100
Greece	Amintaio	85,600
B&H	Kakanj	73,123
Macedonia	Bitola	66,892
Poland	Belchatow	61,000
Bulgaria	Maritsa iztok 2	54,100
Serbia	Kostolac A	51,700
B&H	Tuzla	51,644

Emissions data: EEA 2013 European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register for EU plants.
For data sources for Western Balkan plants, see Methodology at Glance box of the report

- World Health Organization (WHO): Annex: *Economic cost of deaths from air pollution (outdoor and indoor) per country, as a percentage of GDP*:
http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/276956/PR_Economics-Annex_en.pdf?ua=1 WHO estimated the economic cost of early deaths from air pollution in Serbia at 33.5% of its GDP; Bosnia and Herzegovina 21.5%, Macedonia 19.9% and Montenegro 14.5%. By comparison, Germany is losing 4.5% and the UK 3.7%.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org. Follow HEAL on Facebook and Twitter [@HealthandEnv](#) [@EDCFree](#) [@CHM_HEAL](#)