

Members of European Parliament across factions urge the European Commission to act promptly regarding the Turow coal mine

Brussels / Prague - July 14, 2020: Vast majority of members of the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament asked the European Commission for immediate action, to start the infringement procedure regarding the violations of several directives in prolongation process of open pit mine in Turow. The calls for action were heard today on the meeting of the Committee during the discussion of petition against the Turów mine, which was signed by more than 13,000 people in a few months. The Committee will send the letter of concern to Poland asking for explanations and demanded from Commission details of the violations in the proceedings.

The petitioners (Liberec region, 10 municipalities and Greenpeace Czech Republic) were represented by legal company Frank Bold who provides support in the case for the local authorities and citizens concerned. Also, a resident of Czech village Uhelná, Mr. Starec was present. They informed PETI Committee that all possible legal steps were taken without any effect as Poland goes around the EU Directives systemically and brought the testimonies of families and farmers that are living without access to potable water already today.

The European Commission was represented by Aurel Ciobanu Dordea, who informed the Committee that European Commission has already enough information and good understanding about the case. The plan of commission for next six months is to carry out a process of “moderating” the discussion between the Poland and Czech Republic based on article 12 of European Water Framework Directive. According to his words, Commission feels optimistic about this procedure.

“We do not find this advancement sufficient. Despite all the different discussions about the Turów mine in past years the mining license was prolonged, and the illegal mining is happening for months now. The water is running away each day and the mine is coming 70 metres from the Liberec region in only 2 years. Waiting six months for result of another discussion in such an urgent situation is truly insufficient, there is nothing more to wait for” stated Petra Urbanová, lawyer from Frank Bold.

Vast majority of the discussing Members of European Parliament supported the petitioners and called for faster action to ensure that thousands of Czech and German families that are endangered by the lack of potable water in the middle of the health and climate crisis will be protected.

The mining in the open pit mine Turów was prolonged despite the negative statement of the Czech Republic and disagreement of the local citizens who are fighting the water scarcity due to the mining already today. Number of directives were violated in the process of prolongation. Polish majority state owned company PGE denies both negative impacts on the Czech Republic together with paying any compensations for measures that must be taken at the Czech Republic due to the decades of the water drainage. Initial estimations are calculated around EUR 80 million.

The full footage of Committee is available here: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/es/peti-committee-meeting_20200714-0900-COMMITTEE-FEMM_vd

The stories of Czech citizens struggling with water are available here: <https://www.waterorcoal.org/>

Members of European Parliament statements:

The German MEP **Peter Jahr** (EPP) described the situation as a bit of grotesque as in time of intense discussions about the phase out we still must deal with such cases and appealed for stronger dialogue between the Commission and the member states.

Spanish MEP **Cristina Maestre** (S&D) pointed out that this case is also issue of fundamental rights of EU citizens and it is important Commission moves forward with this case.

Slovak MEP **Martin Hojsík** (Renew) urged the commission to act as soon as possible, as this problem is not the future one but is happening already now.

The German MEP **Anna Cavazzini** (Greens–EFA) pointed out that it make no sense to work on European Green Deal and path to carbon neutrality, when in the same time there is process of prolongation of the mining of coal until 2044.

Czech MEP **Tomáš Zdechovský** (EPP) stressed out that this case is not Czech people against Polish people as they always had good relations. This is failure of Poland government. He also addressed the issue that citizens were not heard and their comments to project not answered.

Czech MEP **Kateřina Konečná** (GUE-NGL) said that accepting directives that provide security for people is not enough when member state violates many of them and people are endangered. She calls for discussing this case also on the ENVI Committee and for immediate launch of infringement process.

Czech MEP **Luděk Niedermayer** (EPP) pointed out that there are funds for decarbonisation of regions and new technologies, so such cases do not happen anymore and Turow is clearly contradicting this policy. He called for as strong action as possible.

Vice president of the Committee **Tatjana Ždanoka** (Greens–EFA) said Commission should act now and not in 6 months. The discussion does not solve the illegal licence prolongation and violation of directives.

Czech MEP **Mikuláš Peksa** (Greens–EFA) stressed the link between the health crises and necessary hygienical standards which are impossible to maintain without water. He also invited Polish colleagues defending the Turow mine to come and drink the Czech local water.

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