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Hard coal world trade in 2018 rises by 3.7%; global hard coal production increases by 1.7%

German steam coal imports collapse by 17% in 2018 – use of hard coal for electric power generation has been cut in half since 1990

The existing hard coal- and natural gas-fired power plants will be needed to balance fluctuations in the feed-in from renewable energy sources as long as there are no practical and competitive means of storage

According to provisional calculations by the German Coal Importer Association (VDKi), hard coal world trade in 2018 rose by 3.7% to 1,202 million tonnes while global hard coal production increased by 1.7% to 7.1 billion tonnes. India's production alone rose by 54 million tonnes (8.2%) to 714 million tonnes. Seaborne exports in Australia, Indonesia, Russia and the USA (i.e. in all important export countries) increased.

The large producing countries China and India are simultaneously large consumers of import coal and important pillars of hard coal world trade. The growth in hard coal world trade is also a result of the growing demand in South-east Asia.

The German hard coal imports moved contrary to the global trend and fell massively by 7 million tonnes (about 13%). While imports of coking coal fell by 5%, the imports of steam coal collapsed by 17%. The causes for the collapse are the growing electric power generation from renewable energy sources and the heightened competition with natural gas after the strong rise in the CO₂ price.

These figures more than clearly demonstrate that the exit from hard coal-fired generation of electric power is already reality in Germany. Nevertheless, the existing hard coal- and natural gas-fired power plants will be needed to balance fluctuations in the feed-in from renewable energy sources as long as there are no practical and competitive means of storage. The Commission Growth, Structural Transformation and Employment ("Coal Commission") should therefore pay attention to establishing a target path that can be realised practically when making the decisions on the upcoming agenda and demonstrate appreciation for the emissions reductions already achieved by hard coal.

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Responsible pursuant to the German Press Act: Verein der Kohlenimporteure e. V., Dr Franz-Josef Wodopia, Managing Director