Question for written answer E-002477/2024
to the Commission
Rule 144
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Subject: Increased pollution in the Western Balkans

The end of 2023 marked six years since pollution control rules for large combustion plants came into force under the Energy Community Treaty. However, a new report[1] shows that last year, sulphur dioxide emissions from coal plants included in the national emission reduction plans of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia were still collectively 5.7 times higher than allowed. Dust and nitrogen oxide emissions also remained above the legal limits. Clearly, pollution control investments are either not happening, or are not producing results. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia are now also violating the 'opt-out', or limited lifetime derogation, by failing to close plants after their permitted operating hours have been reached.

Despite these persistent breaches, none of the Western Balkan coal power plant operators has been fined by the national environmental authorities. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism will weaken the region's coal industry, but this will take several years. People's health cannot wait: immediate action is needed.

What action is the Commission taking:

1. to make it clear to the Western Balkan governments that countries participating in the EU energy market must enforce pollution control legislation?

2. to include effective, dissuasive and proportionate penalties for non-compliance in the Energy Community Treaty?

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[1] by CEE Bankwatch Network.