

PRESS RELEASE

Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe) calls for methane reduction strategy: Emissions from German opencast lignite mining probably hundreds of times higher than officially reported

- New study by DUH and Ember Climate: Opencast lignite mining in Germany could cause 184 times more climate-damaging methane emissions than known
- German government has committed to reducing methane emissions in all sectors by 30 per cent by 2030 with the Global Methane Pledge
- The EU methane regulation being voted on today is not enough: DUH calls for national cross-sector methane reduction strategy

Berlin, 10 April 2024: Climate-damaging methane emissions from opencast lignite mining in Germany are massively underestimated by the responsible regulatory authorities and in the German government's greenhouse gas inventories and projection reports. This is confirmed by a new study published jointly by Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) and Ember Climate. According to the study, opencast lignite mining in Germany could emit 184 times more methane than officially stated.

This increases the pressure on the German government to quickly and consistently implement the methane regulation being voted on in the EU Parliament today. However, DUH does not believe that this is enough to fulfil the obligations of the Global Methane Pledge, which aims to reduce emissions by 30 percent by 2030. The environmental and consumer protection organisation is therefore calling for a national cross-sector methane reduction strategy with specific targets and measures, particularly for agriculture.

Sascha Müller-Kraenner, CEO of DUH: *"In order to stay within the 1.5-degree limit, global methane emissions must be massively reduced. With the Global Methane Pledge, the German government has committed to making a contribution to this. However, this is just an empty promise as long as Germany continues to underreport a significant proportion of its emissions by a factor that could be in the three-digit range. We urgently need an independent measurement campaign, especially for lignite, where the shortfall is particularly large. However, the methane problem also affects other sectors, especially agriculture. We are therefore calling on the German government not to rest on its laurels under the EU Methane Regulation, but to present a cross-sectoral reduction strategy as soon as possible."*

Satellite images show particularly high methane emissions from the Hambach and Welzow-Süd open-cast mines and from the open-cast lakes in the Lusatian Lakeland. Official emissions reporting is based on figures from RWE subsidiary Rheinbraun AG from the 1980s. According to these figures, Germany claims to emit only one per cent of methane emissions from lignite in the EU - although it is responsible for 44 per cent of the fossil fuel's production.

Sabina Assan, methane analyst at Ember Climate: " *Germany's opencast lignite mines are much dirtier than the government thinks. As a 'champion' of the Global Methane Pledge, Germany should be consistently implementing methane measurements and reductions. Instead, the country is flying blind when it comes to the second most dangerous greenhouse gas. Closing the information gap between estimated and actual emissions is the first step towards reducing methane emissions and therefore an important lever in the fight against the climate crisis.*"

Methane is the second largest greenhouse gas emitter and is fuelling the climate crisis on a massive scale. At the same time, methane is a precursor to ground-level ozone and is harmful to human health and the environment. Despite this, the German government has not yet presented a methane reduction strategy and, according to a recent survey by the Global Methane Hub, only 30 per cent of respondents in Germany are aware of the devastating impact of methane on the global climate, air quality and health. This reflects not least the inadequate communication of the German government in this regard.

Links:

- Study: [Urgency to update Germany's coal mine methane emission factor 3](#)
- To the survey: <https://www.globalmethanehub.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/6242-Global-Methane-Hub-Global-Report-032224.pdf>

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