

## ***Ende Gelände***

### **A mass action targeting Europe's biggest source of CO2**

Rhineland coalfields, Germany  
14-16 August 2015

The Rhineland coalfields – as Europe's biggest source of CO2 emissions – will become the target of a mass act of civil disobedience in the lead-up to the Paris climate negotiations this year. The weekend of 14-16 August, around a thousand people from Germany, neighbouring countries and other parts of Europe will force utility company RWE to stop the diggers, and call for an end to coal in the face of increasingly dangerous climate change. The name of the action *Ende Gelände* translates literally as 'here and no further'.

#### Facts and figures:

- RWE's lignite mines and coal power plants in the Rhineland are the biggest source of CO2 in Europe. Three of its power plants are in the top 5 of Europe's largest CO2 emitters.<sup>1</sup>
- The *Bagger 228* diggers used in the vast open-pit lignite mines are 220 metres long — the world's biggest land vehicles.
- Over 70 info events and trainings were held across Germany to prepare and mobilise for the action.
- Buses to the action are organised from Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, France, Spain and the UK.
- Friends of the Earth Germany, Oxfam, Campact and many other German NGOs issued a statement in solidarity with Ende Gelände.
- To keep global warming below 2 °C, at least 80% of fossil fuels need to remain underground. For Europe, this translates into 89% of coal reserves.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sandbag: [For the first time, 4 out of 5 largest EU emitters are German lignite power stations](#), 1 April, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Carbon Brief: [Meeting two degree climate target means 80 per cent of world's coal is "unburnable". study says](#), 7 January 2015

## Comments on Ende Gelände

**Naomi Klein**, award-winning journalist and bestselling author:

"Germany's rapid energy transition has been driven by the people, a victory that now serves as a model to the rest of the world. But as long as the German political class insists on using massive machinery to tear up the earth, producing the continent's single largest source of carbon emissions, that transition will remain woefully incomplete. These coalfields pose an existential threat to humanity, which is why our movements need to step in once again and shut them down. This August, there is no more important place to be."

**Bill McKibben**, environmentalist, journalist and co-founder of 350.org who was awarded the *Right Livelihood Award* (also known as Alternative Nobel Prize) in 2014:

"I'm so glad to see people drawing a firm line in the coalfields, and stopping the planet's largest coal-digging machines. We're driven not by ideology but by physics: there's simply no way to burn all this lignite and keep the climate intact. These protesters are lifeguards for an endangered planet."

**German NGOs including Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, Campact, attac and many others** issued a statement in solidarity with Ende Gelände. Extract:

"In the face of impending climate catastrophe, we understand that people feel moved to take actions of civil disobedience against coal. We stand in solidarity with their peaceful protest."<sup>3</sup>

**Dorothee Häußermann**, Ende Gelände spokesperson:

"The massive resistance from RWE and Vattenfall lobbyists that we've seen over the past few months against the proposed coal levy has made it once more crystal clear that we need to take climate action into our own hands. That is why we will blockade the coal diggers in the Rhineland this August. There is no longer a place for lignite."

**Emma Biermann**, 350.org European Organiser:

"Germany has been leading the way with its transition to renewable energy but is still far too reliant on coal. The vast majority of Germans want to move away from coal to 100% renewable energy, and people are no longer prepared to be held back by the outdated business model of fossil fuel companies like RWE. Governments need to phase out fossil fuels now – starting with coal."

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<sup>3</sup> More details: <http://350.org/broad-support-from-german-ngos-for-direct-action-against-coal/>

## Germany's coal problem

Despite a rapid growth of renewable energy, Germany's greenhouse gas emissions have risen in the years before 2014 due to an increase in coal electricity generation. According to experts<sup>4</sup>, this is largely due to the collapse of the carbon price in the EU's emission trading scheme rather than the country's phase-out of nuclear power. Coal accounts for over a third of Germany's greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>5</sup>

In July, the German government scrapped plans to put a levy on CO<sub>2</sub> from the most polluting lignite plants and adopted an 'alternative' measure proposed by the big lignite operators (RWE and Vattenfall) and the mining union. The measure has been criticised to fall short on the required emission cuts, for being significantly more expensive and for making consumers and taxpayers rather than polluters pay.

Germany's big lignite (brown coal) mining areas are located in Lusatia (owned by Vattenfall) and the Rhineland (RWE). The expansion of the mines comes with forced displacements of entire villages and communities suffer from air and groundwater pollution.

RWE heavily relies on lignite (37%) and hard coal (23%).<sup>6</sup> The company's failure to adapt its business model to Germany's energy transition led to an existential economic crisis: Forty-five percent of its fossil fuel power stations are no longer commercially viable,<sup>7</sup> its share price has dropped 70% since 2007<sup>8</sup> and its net debt stands at €31 billion.

## Photos

- [The Rhineland coalfields](#)
- [Anti-coal human chain in the Rhineland, April 2015](#)
- [Ende Gelände Flickr account](#)
- [350 Ende Gelände photos](#)

*[Ende Gelände](#) is a coalition of individuals, environmental and social justice groups. It sees itself as part of the international grassroots movement that fights against fossil fuels and stands up for climate justice and a global energy transition from the bottom-up.*

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<sup>4</sup> Energy Post: [The myth of the dark side of the Energiewende](#), 17 February 2015

<sup>5</sup> IEA: [CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fossil fuel combustion](#), 2014

<sup>6</sup> Bellona: [RWE and E.ON face self-inflicted existential crises](#), 19 March 2015

<sup>7</sup> Financial Times: [RWE warns core earnings will fall amid energy market shake-up](#), 10 March 2015

The Wall Street Journal: [RWE Plans Further Cost Cuts](#), 10 March 2015

<sup>8</sup> Energy Post: [Quo Vadis RWE? A power giant's struggle with the Energiewende](#), 27 April 2015

For more information visit <http://350.org/ende-gelände/> or contact Melanie Mattauch, 350.org  
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