

## What Next for Coal?

### Presentation

[Panel discussion](#)

### Date

8 May 2018

### Location

Berlin, Germany

### Panel discussion

[Prof. Dr. Claudia Kemfert](#) (German Advisory Council on the Environment, SRU)  
Hendrik Fischer (The Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy Brandenburg)  
Dr. Hans-Rüdiger Lange (Innovationsregion Lausitz)  
Gunther Mäüller (Vattenfall Wärme Berlin AG)  
[Frank Peter](#) (Agora Energiewende)  
[Dr. Camilla Bausch](#)

How can the German government's planned "gradual reduction and end of coal-fired electricity generation" succeed - and what are the concrete implications of it for the state of Brandenburg? This was the focus of discussion at a Berlin Energy Days event hosted by the German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU). Panelists included the SRU's Professor Kemfert and undersecretary Fischer of Brandenburg's Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. Dr. Camilla Bausch of Ecologic Institute contributed conceptually as well as with introduction and moderation to the event.

The [coalition agreement](#) [pdf, 1 MB, German] of Germany's new government foresees the creation of a commission for "growth, structural change and employment." Its mission is to develop an action programme containing the following elements:

- Reducing the gap between current annual German greenhouse gas emissions and the country's goal of reaching 40% below 1990 levels by the year 2020
- Measures for reaching the German energy sector's climate targets for 2030
- A concrete plan for gradually reducing and ending coal-fired power generation with a fixed completion date
- Securing financial resources to facilitate the structural change (e.g. employment shift) resulting from ending coal power, including a designated fund for this purpose

The panel discussion, hosted by the [German Advisory Council on the Environment](#), took place as the new government was in controversial behind-closed-doors negotiations about both the mandate of this new commission as well as who will be on it. This was a good time to discuss the implications of

structural change in the power sector – especially given the Council’s many years of work on coal and climate change. Besides [Kemfert](#) and Fischer panelists included practitioners in the energy field – Mr. Mller from the Berlin district heating arm of utility Vattenfall, and Dr. Lange of the [Innovationsregion Lausitz GmbH](#) (an agency representing commercial enterprises in the Lusatia region) – as well as Mr. Peter of the Berlin-based Think Tank "[Agora Energiewende](#)". They had an animated and at some points controversial discussion among each other and the more than 200 audience members.

The two guiding questions were:

1. How should Germany structure its exit from coal?
2. How should this happen in Brandenburg specifically?

Several topics were broached, with broad consensus existing around the need to let coal-fired power generation run its course – the temporal corridor for this was outlined roughly. There was also consensus on the fact that long term prospects for the future are an issue, with a need to look beyond the boundaries of the power sector in terms e.g. of an employment shift. Participants emphasized the importance of "investing in minds" – creativity, entrepreneurship, new solutions and future-oriented skills. The discussion also underscored the significance of local decision making and a guiding framework in the course of structural change.

When it came to how specific policy ideas would work in practice, however, there was some controversy especially between the academics and representatives of Brandenburg state. The Council's budget approach (a maximum emissions budget, with coherent smaller budgets defined e.g. for individual states) was perceived to be unfair by some because of its disproportional negative repercussions on Brandenburg. There was also no agreement about the orders of magnitude of the financial resources necessary to support large-scale structural change in Brandenburg – not surprising, given the ongoing political negotiations and upcoming state elections. Furthermore, the discussion touched on generally controversial topics such as power prices and emissions trading.

But participants noted with interest some examples of how structural change is being designed in Brandenburg, and how the coming shift away from coal is already reflected in vocational training plans of e.g. Vattenfall's Berlin heat and power utility. Participants even expressed the hope that Lusatia (as a coal dominated part of Brandenburg) could become a role model for climate change mitigation and successful structural change.

## **Event**

[Podiumsdiskussion des SRU "Wie weiter mit der Kohle?"](#)

## **Organizer**

[The German Advisory Council on the Environment](#) (SRU), Germany

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