

Portugal on Track to Become Coal-free by Year End

By [Frederic Simon](#)

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The Sines coal plant in Portugal went offline at midnight yesterday evening (14 January), leaving the country with just one remaining coal power station in operation, which is scheduled for closure in November.

Portuguese energy utility EDP announced its decision to shut down the 1,296 MW Sines coal plant in July last year, bringing the closure forward by two years - from 2023 to 2021. EDP's initial plans were to close Sines in 2030.

The decision is “part of EDP group's decarbonisation strategy” and was taken in a context where energy production increasingly depends on renewable sources, the company said back in July.

EDP's decision to accelerate the phase out of coal was “a natural consequence of this energy transition process,” “in line with European carbon neutral targets” and the country's national energy and climate plan, which puts the emphasis on renewables, [EDP said in a statement](#).

This leaves Portugal with just one remaining coal power plant in operation, Pego, which is already scheduled for closure in November this year, campaigners said.

When it does, Portugal will become the fourth country in Europe to completely eliminate coal in electricity production - following in the footsteps of Belgium (2016), Austria and Sweden (2020), according to Europe Beyond Coal, an environmental NGO.

Campaigners applauded the move, underlining that Sines had until then represented, on average, 12% of Portugal's total greenhouse gas emissions.

“In four years, Portugal has gone from having a rough strategy to exit coal by 2030, to concrete plans to be coal free by year's end. Sines going offline even earlier than expected underscores the reality that once a country commits to clean energy, the economics of renewables deliver the transition very quickly,” said Kathrin Gutmann, campaign director at Europe Beyond Coal.

“Countries like Germany, Czech Republic and Poland who have committed to, or are considering coal phase out dates well after the needed 2030 end for coal

in Europe should take note: not choosing ambitious phase-outs will leave you playing catch up as they happen anyway.”

In addition to Portugal, five more European countries are expected to end coal by 2025: France (2022), Slovakia (2023), the UK (2024), Ireland (2025) and Italy (2025), according to Europe Beyond Coal.

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Featured image: The decision is part of EDP's decarbonisation strategy, which involves the early closure of plants in the Iberian Peninsula, the Portuguese utility said. [EDP]

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