

Poland – Coal miners demand pay rise

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Soaring energy prices are boosting demand for coal, and that's a problem for Polish coal miners. Miners recently launched a two-day blockade of coal shipments from state-owned mining company PGG to protest what they say is inadequate pay for extra work.

For several months now, miners have been working overtime and on weekends to avoid interruptions in the supply of energy and heat according to Solidarność. They want their wages boosted to compensate fast-rising inflation, which was 7.8% in November 2021 and is predicted to rise even higher in 2022.

PGG says the company will start talks once a mediator is appointed. Miners staged a protest between December 21 and 23 last year, complaining about a failure of talks with PGG. They are particularly outraged because reviving economies are increasing demand for power, leading to higher coal sales, but they're not getting more cash.

PGG said last year it won't be able to raise wages because Poland is waiting for the European Commission's approval of public aid for the mining sector. The government aims to spend 30 billion złoty (€6.5 billion) to keep coal mines operating through the end of the decade. The long-term plan is to phase out coal mining by 2049, only a year before the EU has committed to becoming climate neutral.

Poland uses coal to generate about 70 percent of its electricity, the highest level in the EU. Although there is an upsurge in demand for coal, the fuel is doomed by the EU's decarbonisation drive and by increasing prices on the EU Emissions Trading System.

Edited by industriAll Europe