



Shortlist 2009

Public Eye Swiss Award

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**Nominated for the Public Eye Swiss Award 2009  
by Greenpeace Germany:**

## **BKW FMB Energie AG**

Based in: Bern, Switzerland  
Industry: Energy  
Turnover / Net Profit: CHF 2'814 million / CHF 245 million (2007)  
CEO: Kurt Rohrbach  
Owned by: Canton Bern (52.5%), shareholders  
Workforce: 2'615 (2007)

### **In Brief**

*Out of sight, out of mind? No, climate sins do not lose their effects just because they were committed in another country. The Swiss energy giant BKW is expanding to Germany, causing more pollution there than at home. In Switzerland the Bernische Kraftwerke (BKW) like to present themselves as a forward-looking company that promotes renewable energies and energy-efficiency. But at the same time they invest 1.6 billion Swiss francs in coal-fired power plant in Germany. This monster would produce an estimated 4.6 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year - roughly the equivalent of what 10% of the Swiss population generate in an entire year. Of all the fuels used to produce energy coal is by far the most damaging to the climate. However, the power plant in Dörpen (Northern Saxony) is only one of many irresponsible projects that BKW wants to promote.*

### **Irresponsible Corporate Behavior**

The Swiss Energy Company BKW has plans to invest some 1.6 billion CHF in a coal-fired power plant in northwestern Germany. In other words, the Bernische Kraftwerke (BKW) is deliberately betting on what is by common consent the worst energy production technology for the climate – despite scientific studies like the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which show that greenhouse gas concentrations must sink rapidly if the worst effects of climate change are to be avoided. In Switzerland the company likes to distinguish itself as a responsible promoter of renewable energies but then turns around to invest huge sums of money in neighboring Germany to build a veritable pollution-monster. Construction at the site in Dörpen (population 4000) is scheduled to start in 2009. When it goes on the grid in 2014/15 the plant will produce 900 megawatt of electricity. But that is just the tip of the iceberg: BKW has more plans for dubious coal projects.

## **Consequences**

The numbers of this CO<sub>2</sub> export deal are impressive: the plant will burn 2.3 million tons of coal per year and produce 4.6 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in the process. This is nearly 10% of the annual CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions of Switzerland as a whole. Compared to natural gas, coal generates 70% more CO<sub>2</sub> per kilowatt-hour - an unnecessary added burden for the climate. With its massive investments in one of the dirtiest available fuels the company also undermines local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet Swiss climate targets. BKW's investment in a German coal plant also means billions of francs diverted from urgent efforts to promote renewable energies and improve energy efficiency. The power plant in Dörpen will eventually provide jobs for about 100 people; a comparable investment in renewable energies would create many times that number of jobs. Then there is the massive damage to the environment caused by mining for coal. Strip mining especially makes entire districts disappear. The Dörpen plant will also generate 4000 tons of dust every year; dispersed into the air this dust becomes a permanent strain and burden on thousands of people and on the environment. Energy production from coal also generates lead waste, approximately 6 tons in the case of Dörpen. A fair amount of these heavy metals will eventually find their way into the food chain.

## **Current Situation and Demands**

The project has not yet been approved. Greenpeace urges BKW to stop the planning process and abandon the project, as does the Clean-Energy-Initiative, a German-Dutch grassroots organization. Even the Canton of Bern, which holds the majority of the company's shares, opposes a BKW involvement in Dörpen. But BKW refuses to drop the project and is looking for investment partners to finance the dirty deed. It is patently absurd to see BKW promoting renewable energy in Switzerland while forging ahead with a project across the border that will do considerable damage to the climate. BKW cannot continue to ignore the future and should invest exclusively in climate-friendly energy sources, as the company's PR suggests it has been doing for a long time. Germany and Switzerland have pledged to lower their CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions to 30% below 1990-levels by 2020. BKW must contribute to this effort. It should, for instance, increase the efficiency of its current hydroelectric power plants by refurbishing them in accordance with Pro Natura ecology guidelines and without increasing their capacity. But when the International Carbon Disclosure Project inquired how the company might be planning to reduce its emissions, BKW proposed no strategy.

## **Further Information:**

- <http://www.greenpeace.ch/presse/pressemitteilungen/klima/klima-pressemitteilung-single-view/archive/2008/august/article/keine-kohle-fuer-kohle/>
- [http://www.saubere-energie-doerpen.de/BI/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=65](http://www.saubere-energie-doerpen.de/BI/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=65)