

+ + + Joint press release by ROBIN WOOD and Biofuelwatch, 21 October 2025 + + +

*** Berlin is burning the future!**

*** Spectacular protest against Berlin's plans for a heating transition on the International Day Against Burning Wood**

In protest against the burning of wood in power stations, activists from ROBIN WOOD and Biofuelwatch today unfurled a 20-metre-long banner above the treetops of Berlin's Grunewald forest on Teufelsberg with the slogan: 'Berlin, save the future! Don't burn our forests!'. The climate activists are calling for a halt to all power plant projects for burning forest wood and waste wood in Berlin. Instead, they say, the city should promote alternative technologies such as large heat pumps, geothermal energy, waste heat utilisation, efficiency measures and storage solutions. With this action, they are supporting the 'International Day of Action Against Burning Wood', where in numerous countries around the world is being demonstrated.

The burning of fresh and waste wood for district heating harms the climate, forests and public finances. Nevertheless, the state of Berlin wants to significantly expand wood combustion in power plants. For example, 'Berliner Energie und Wärme' (BEW) (a energy supply company) plans to build a new wood-fired power plant on the site of the current 'Reuter West' coal-fired power plant. 'Berliner Stadtreinigung' (BSR) (the city sanitation department) wants to build a new waste wood power plant on Gradestraße in the Neukölln district. BEW and BSR are both state-owned companies.

"What Berlin is planning is not a heat transition – it is the accelerant of an ecological disaster. The cosmopolitan city of Berlin is thus well on its way to becoming a global negative example of failed climate policy. The dystopia of a destroyed civilisation represented by this well-known 'lost place', a former listening station on Teufelsberg, could become the reality for our grandchildren. We must prevent this and urgently protect our forests!", demands Jana Ballenthien, ROBIN WOOD forestry consultant.

"Berlin can and must do better!" adds Luzie Arndt from Biofuelwatch. "With every new wood-fired heating plant, Berlin is destroying its chance for a genuine, ecological heating transition. The damage would be irreversible. This policy is a relapse into fossil fuel thinking with green colour plastered on top. Other cities such as Hamburg and Leipzig have recognised this and have distanced themselves from wood burning."

Burning wood produces CO₂ emissions that would only be reabsorbed by the forest after decades or centuries – assuming that Germany's drought-stricken forests recover at all and continue to grow under the new climatic conditions. Wood is a valuable and scarce raw material. Burning it in large quantities in power stations puts additional pressure on the forest ecosystem.

Burning waste wood is not a solution either. Much of our waste wood could be put to better use as a raw material, for example in wood fibre insulation boards. However, the growing consumption of wood for heating is increasing competition for its use as a raw material. As a result, the wood-based materials industry is increasingly using fresh wood from forests instead of using waste wood.

Once built, combined heat and power plants are operated for decades – with the associated emissions and follow-up costs – and block any socio-ecological change. The costs of providing wood will rise and pose a growing economic risk.

The money that is currently being invested in large biomass power plants and the procurement of millions of tonnes of wood is lacking for climate protection measures, energy conservation, genuine renewables and socially equitable heating planning.

Background:

The International Day of Action Against Burning Wood has been held on 21 October for several years. On this day, environmental groups around the world draw attention to the destructive consequences of industrial wood burning – for forests, biodiversity and the climate. They are calling for restrictions on the use of wood for energy production and for genuine climate protection measures instead. In Stade and Wittenberg-Piesteritz, too, protests are being held today against the wood-fired power plants planned there.

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Editorial note:

Photos of the action in Berlin (as well as other actions from the day of action) will be available from Thursday afternoon at the following link and may be used freely with the credits indicated in the file title:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/18Q67HDsUau_tcThh2sDUQRDG8Sz57DKG

Further information:

- This ROBIN WOOD press release in german language:
<https://www.robinwood.de/pressemitteilungen/berlin-verbrennt-die-zukunft>
- "Plans to expand wood combustion for district heating in Berlin", german information paper by NABU, DUH, Biofuelwatch and ROBIN WOOD (January 2025): https://www.robinwood.de/sites/default/files/2025-01-16-infopapier_holzverbrennung_berlin.pdf
- German ROBIN WOOD campaign "Don't burn forests and savannahs":
<https://www.robinwood.de/waelder-und-savannen-nicht-verfeuern>
- Press release from the Environmental Paper Network on the International Day Against Burning Wood 2025: <https://environmentalpaper.org/2025/08/idoa-25/>
- Press release regarding the protest in Wittenberg- Piesteritz:
<https://www.robinwood.de/sites/default/files/pressemitteilung-von-180deg-waermewende-leipzig-nabu-robin-wood-und-biofuelwatch-vom-21-10-2025.pdf>

- Press release against the construction of a wood-fired power plant in Chemnitz-Siegmars: https://www.robinwood.de/sites/default/files/pm2025-10-21_chemnitz_eins-energie-holzverbrennung.pdf
- Press release on the protest in Stade: https://www.robinwood.de/sites/default/files/pm2025-10-21_stade-buetzfleth-protest.pdf