

In Belgium, at least one new large coal-fired power plant is being planned. Environmental organisations are opposed, but the government and the general public are not yet showing much concern.

## *Belgium set to diversify*

| by Remco de Jong

German energy producer Eon is preparing for the construction of a large coal-fired power station on a Bayer-owned industrial site in the port of Antwerp. It will have a capacity of 1100 MW and could supply about 8% of Belgium's total electricity demand. Bayer will purchase electricity from the plant and use the steam released during electricity production. Eon has started up environmental procedures and hopes to apply for a building permit next year so that construction can start in 2010.

In Belgium, 42% of electricity comes from nuclear power, 31% from gas, and just 12% from coal. Eon's plans in Antwerp have so far not generated much debate. 'We must first wait and see what the Environmental Impact Report has to say. Only then can they apply for a building permit,' says Bart

fired power station, rather than from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. 'Flanders already is unable to meet the nitrogen emissions standard. A new power station will not make it any easier.' He believes that chemical companies in Antwerp are concerned about the construction of a power station because it will put them under greater pressure to reduce nitrogen emissions.

Flemish Minister of Energy Hilde Crecits does not reject the construction of a coal-fired power station out of hand, but she does want the project to be studied in greater detail. She anticipates problems mainly arising from the nitrogen emissions. She has also stated that there is no possibility of CO<sub>2</sub> storage in the close vicinity of Antwerp.

Eon wants to build a new power station in Belgium because the country has a shortage

source will develop.' Most new power stations run on gas, says De Bruyckere, 'but we have deliberately opted for coal because it is dangerous to put all your eggs in one basket.'

New coal-fired power stations have a 45% efficiency rate as opposed to 30% for older plants, De Bruyckere says. 'And we will reuse the heat that is released.' Eon assumes that as a result of the new power station, older coal-fired stations will be shut down over time. 'If the older, more polluting stations are closed down, then our new installation has a favourable impact on the country's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.'

Belgian environmental organisations like the well-known "Bond Beter Leefmilieu" ("Union for a Better Environment") are opposed to coal-fired power stations. Spokesperson Bram Claeys says there is another reason why Eon opts for coal. 'The company will lessen its dependence on Suez-subsidary Electrabel, which dominates the gas supply.'

In the meantime, several electricity producers have contacted the port authority of Ghent to see if there are possibilities to build new coal power stations there. Chairman of the Ghent port authority Sas van Rouveroj refuses to disclose the names of the interested parties. He defers to the Flemish government, which he says must first decide whether or not new coal-fired power stations are desirable. 'If they say yes, we cannot avoid this social duty.' ■

*'We have deliberately opted for coal because it is dangerous to put all your eggs in one basket'*

Martens, energy specialist of the SPA, the socialist party in the Flemish parliament. The construction of power stations in Belgium is a matter for the regional governments.

Martens believes that problems will arise from the power station's nitrogen emissions, which are twice that of a gas-

of production capacity, says Tom De Bruyckere of Eon Kraftwerk. The company made a conscious decision to build a coal-fired station. 'We want to diversify the energy sources we use and have a good mix. Belgium still makes a lot of use of nuclear power, but nobody knows how the political and social consensus around that energy