

# Amasra coal mine and power plant Turkey

**Sectors:** energy plants - coal, mining - coal

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## Status



## About Amasra coal mine and power plant

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The Amasra coal mine and power plant is an energy project on the Black Sea coast next to the town of Amasra in Turkey's Bartın province. The power plant is a proposed 1,320 MW 'ultra-supercritical' coal plant project, consisting of two units of 660 MW each that would use hard coal (anthracite) as a feedstock. It is planned by Hema Enerji, a subsidiary of Turkey's Hattat Holdings Energy Group.

The project plans have changed several times since the initial agreement in 2005 because of problems with attracting financiers and partners, difficulties in aligning the project with environmental regulations and the huge opposition of local movements. Over the last 13 years, local communities in Amasra and beyond have fought against the coal power plant.

According to plans from the project sponsor, the nearby Amasra B coal mine should extract the coal required to fuel the coal plant. Hema has rented the 56 million tonnes of hard coal reserves from the state for 20 years for mining, targeting the extraction of **10 million** tonnes per year, but has not extracted any coal from the mine since 2005. The expansion of Tarlaağzı harbour is included in the coal plant project's EIA, which implies that the company intends to import coal for the power plant.

## Brief history

In 2005, Hema signed a royalty agreement with the state agency Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises (TTK) for the Amasra B coal mine site, with the aim of extracting 56 million tons of hard coal over 20 years. The company failed to inform residents of their plans to build a coal power plant alongside the mine until their application to Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Agency (EPDK) in 2006. They sought original permission for a plant of 600 MW which, in 2009, was then increased to 2,640 MW, with the option to increase to 6,400 MW. Ultimately, the company applied for pre-licenses for two power plants of 1,320 MW each, one next to the other: the Bartın and Amasra power plants.

In response, local communities formed the [Bartın Platformu](#), which consists of 120 non-governmental organisations and different municipalities. This broad platform has consistently organised a wide range of demonstrations and [protests](#).

## History of the EIA process

The project's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), submitted in 2009, was rejected on the grounds of missing documentation. Following this, the company decided to divide the project and submit different EIA reports for each of the power plants, the ash storage area, the harbour, the coal preparation facility and an electricity transmission line. As these facets are part of the same project, and thus their cumulative impacts ought to be considered, separate EIA submissions are [unlawful](#).

In 2013, the Ministry of Forestry found the EIA to be inadequate due to the project's potential adverse environmental impacts on the town of Amasra. However, in June 2014, the [final EIA](#) report was submitted – separately, as described above. Under Turkish law, in the ten days following the final EIA of a project, citizens have the right to object to it. In this period, the people of Amasra and Bartın managed to collect 42,000 individual objection letters. In spite of all these objections, and the Ministry of Forestry's negative opinion, the EIA was approved in 2015. To immediately challenge this, a court case with 2,019 individual plaintiffs was initiated straight away by Bartın Platform's attorneys. This is a record number of individual plaintiffs in an environmental court case in Turkey.

In January 2016, the Engineering, Procurement and Construction contract (EPC) was signed between Hema Elektrik Üretim Anonim Sirketi (the project owner) and a consortium, consisting of Dongfang Elektrik Corporation (China), Dongfang Elektrik Turkiye and Hattat Insaat (Turkey). The contract price is a lump sum of RMB 6,018,188,000 (appr. USD 914,624,000) of which DEC Int. receives RMB 3,592,148,000 (USD 22 million, DEC Turkey USD 66 million, and USD295 million for Hattat Insaat.

In August 2016, Hattat Holding's chairman, Mehmet Hattat, issued a [press release](#) clearly stating that, because of so much opposition on the ground, the project's EIA process is taking too long and that the promoters are finding it difficult to attract international finance because of these delays, to which the Bartın Platformu responded ([see here](#)).

According to Bartın Platformu, in February 2017, Credit Suisse was approached by the company for financing for the coal mine, and a Turkish consultancy firm, 2U1K, conducted a survey and interviewed local communities on behalf of the Swiss bank.

## What must happen

The project's impacts on the local ecology, economy and community are expected to be severe and long-lasting. They include the clearing of forests, impacts on local livelihoods based on small-scale farming and fishing, and the coal plant's contribution to climate change. Banks and financial institutions should avoid financing the coal power plant and the mine. The Turkish authorities should reject the Environmental Impact Assessment of the coal power plant project.

## Issues

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### Social issues

#### Community impacts

According to the Western Black Sea Development Agency, the coal power plant threatens the local economy. Small-scale farming, fishing and tourism are major sources of income in the surrounding villages of Gömü, Tarlaağzı and Amasra.

#### Pollution from the plant

Pollution due to mining and the power plant would increase emissions of carcinogenic particles and, hence, threaten the health and livelihoods of locals. Amasra's geographical location makes it subject to an **inversion effect**, a meteorological deviation that captures emitted particles and fine dust and allows them to settle on the town of Amasra. As Professor Erdoğan Atmış has **explained**, "Air cannot rise in Amasra due to the temperature difference between land and sea surfaces. The fog layer descends and stays suspended in the air if there is a mountain. If you emit carbon dioxide or sulphur in a place like this, it will mix into the atmosphere, come down and settle. This is a serious, lethal danger." The plant emissions would further affect small-scale farming, e.g. strawberry farming and hazelnut harvesting. Ash and toxic elements will settle on fields and contaminate the plants.

#### Impact on fish stocks

The coal plant's cooling water would be taken from the same source where drinking water for the local villages is withdrawn. Bartın Municipality, which is responsible for the distribution of drinking water, has won a court case against the company on the grounds of ineligibility to use the same water source for cooling the plant. The heated water from the coal plant's turbines would then be expelled into the Black Sea where it would endanger aquatic life. This inflow of heated water from the power plant would affect local fish stocks and is thus raising the fears of local fishermen whose income depends on fishing. Moreover, the fishermen use the small fishing port in Tarlaağzı which faces restructuring in order to give way to the planned harbour. In the project EIA, Hema admits that "the water quality of the port is likely to be affected by the construction activities and ongoing activities during the hard coal mine project" (**EIA, page 22**).

#### Impacts on tourism

The increasing importance of tourism for the region would be undermined by the coal plant. Beaches would have to be destroyed to make way for the harbour. The town of Amasra is temporarily on the **UNESCO World Heritage list** because parts of the ancient town date back to the Byzantine age. It is visited by 250,000 people every year. Turkey's Tourism Strategy 2023 has proposed the region around the plant to become an eco-tourism region and, in the 2007-13 Tourism Action Plan, the region was placed in the "Ecotourism Focused Development Zone".

The operations of the plant, the mine, the port and associated transportation would also involve noise pollution that could have negative impacts on the health of locals as well as Amasra's appeal as a tourist location. As trucks would have to continue transportation throughout the night, "the noise levels are expected to exceed both national and IFC standards" (**EIA, page 23**).

#### Further impacts

Until the port starts to operate, the EIA states that coal would be transported by lorries via main roads which pass small villages and schools. These may be affected by the pollution resulting from such transportation.

Most parts of the required areas have already been purchased by Hema, but 11 parcels of land remain to be expropriated. Further resettlements of local villages will result from the plant's construction.

While the investors are placing emphasis on the potential economic benefits which could accrue from the project, such as the standard implied 'benefit' of an increase in job opportunities for locals, the investors' proposed actions suggest something different: the project is based primarily on foreign supplies of technology, capital, employees, partners and even imported coal. The overwhelming negative consequences for the local economy which the plant would involve can not be compensated for or offset by any 'short-term' benefits it may (or may not) bring.

### Environmental issues

#### Forest impacts

To make room for the power plant project (including the mine, industrial facilities and power lines), large areas of forest land would have to be felled. The land to be allocated for the power plant alone would require 380 hectares of natural forest to be cleared, next to the Küre Mountains national park. Other associated facilities would require additional hundreds of hectares of forest land to be cleared.

**Hurriyet Daily News reported** in 2014 that most sections of the transmission line, which would connect the plant to the national grid, would pass through forest ecosystems. The authorities have already begun cutting down trees, thereby damaging sensitive parts of the ecosystem.

#### Air impacts

Coal power plants emit large amounts of greenhouse gases which cause climate change. Furthermore, they also emit gases and fine dust that can penetrate the lungs and cause respiratory diseases. To date, the project sponsor has not disclosed an appropriate desulphurisation system to filter out nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and dioxide, and fine dust and ash. Without these filters, toxic particles would fall around the plant and increase health issues for local residents.

### Water impacts

Cooling water for the plant would be extracted from the same source where drinking water for local villages comes from. Bartın Municipality has won a court case against the company on the grounds of ineligibility to use the same source for the cooling of the plant, as Bartın Municipality is in charge of distributing drinking water from the water source.

### Waste concerns

The project EIA report is not clear about what will be done with the coal launder facility's dangerous waste. The previously established practice of dumping waste from coal facilities in ash dams in the middle of forests in the Aegean region of Turkey gives major cause for concern regarding the proposed Amasra project and its intended approach to coal ash disposal.

### Human rights

Nine mine workers have died underground during the first 12 years of the mining project.

Agriculture, fishing and tourism - the main economic activities for local communities - will be heavily impacted.

The rights of local inhabitants to a healthy environment are threatened with more than 40,000 trees already cut for the passing electricity circuit, and more will be cut to realise the construction.

Amasra, as is the case for the rest of the Black Sea coast in Turkey, is prone to floods. Contributing to the warming of the climate will exacerbate these risks for local people.

### Other issues

Legal forms of intervention and opposition by local residents against the evaluation of the EIA are being ignored, including the 42,000 collected signatures from the region's inhabitants opposing the project.

## Governance

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## Updates

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### Cancellation of EIA decision for HEMA coal preparation plant

Aug 20 2019

Following the rejection of the HEMA coal power plant project in February (see below), the Zonguldak Administrative Court has overturned an 'EIA positive' decision for the coal preparation plant at the facility. This follows an appeal from the Bartın Platform. See [news update](#) (in Turkish).

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### New EIA application from HEMA

May 7 2019

Hattat Energy and Mining Company (HEMA) once again applied for an EIA for the cumulative project, including all the parts that had different EIAs and the port. The Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urban Planning announced a [public participation meeting for May 10, 2019](#). Around 200 local people [prevented the meeting from taking place with non-violent protests](#).

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### Hema Power Plant rejected by the Supreme Administrative Court in Amasra, Bartın

Feb 22 2019

The Supreme Administrative Court of Amasra, Bartın in Turkey has decided to overturn the decision of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and to reject the construction of the Hema Thermal Power Plant. The project was owned by the Turkish company [Hattat Holding and was supposed to be built](#) in the region of Amasra, Bartın – a city that figures in the list of UNESCO's Temporary World Heritage ([350.org](#)).

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### Legal hearing of Bartın Platformu's lawsuit against the project

Apr 16 2018

Legal hearing of Bartın Platformu's lawsuit against the project, the one with the record number of pleads (2,019 individuals).

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## 148 mine workers are fired

Mar 10 2018

148 mine workers were fired by the mining subcontractor of Hema, the workers started resistance action outside the company premises. The subcontractor company claimed that Hema (Hattat Holding) hadn't paid their fees so they had to fire the workers; in response, Hema claimed that their contract was already over and had nothing to do with their debt. Hema also said that the new contracting company should be able to accommodate these workers. However, the workers told Bartın Platformu that they were still unable to extract any coal from the gallery, and that they have been directly paid by Hema in the last couple of months, rather than the subcontractor. Moreover, following the agreement between Hattat and Eren Holdings signed in 2017, the mining activities in Amasra should have been accelerated now as the plan on paper was to extract local hard coal to transport to Eren's Zonguldak power plants to be burned, whereas now all miners are fired and Hema still could not manage to extract even 1 ton of coal which is absurd, according to Bartın Platformu. News in Turkish: [Gazete Duvar](#), [Bartın info](#).

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## Villagers wake up to their olive trees being cut

Dec 26 2017

Hema's employees clear fell olive groves, the company was fined for their violation of the special regulation on olive groves, and the 180 olive trees they cut. The local communities resisted on the ground since the moment they heard about the clearfelling. More details: [350.org/amasra](http://350.org/amasra).

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## Sponsors sign a protocol to use local coal instead of imported coal

Nov 6 2017

Hattat and Eren Holding companies signed a protocol with the presence of the Minister of Energy, Berat Albayrak. Both Eren and Hattat are among the companies on coal expansion course listed by urgewald in the top 120 coal plant developers of [the Global Coal Exit List](#). According to the protocol, Eren Holding's Zonguldak power plants which currently operate on imported hard coal, will use the local hard coal extracted by Hattat Holding (Hema) in Amasra. This fits in with Turkey's political push towards local coal and away from imported coal, due to the country's external debt and current account deficit. The problem raised by Bartın Platformu, is that Hema has been trying to extract coal for the last 12 years, and they haven't managed to do so despite the existence of their galleries; so it remains unclear how it will now supply 7 mn tons of coal/year to Zonguldak. Moreover, there's no means of transportation between Amasra and Zonguldak as such. In parallel, the new subsidy schemes for local coal in Turkey gives incentives to the coal sector to use local coal, in spite of the fact that there's no transparent monitoring system in place to report whether a plant burns local or imported coal. News pieces in Turkish and English: [Daily Sabah](#) ; [Argus Media](#) ; [Bartın Halk Gazetesi](#) ; [Hurriyet](#) ; [CAN Europe](#) (see the first article in the newsletter on the latest capacity mechanisms scheme).

## Related companies

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### Project sponsor

**HEMA Enerji Turkey**

### Other companies

#### **Datong Coal Mine Group China**

Datong Coal Mine is responsible for drilling wells.

#### **Harbin Electric China**

In 2013, Chinese Harbin Electric International (HEI) entered a contract worth \$2.4 billion for the construction of the power plant. As HEI is a state-owned company, the 'Guidelines for Environmental Protection in Foreign Investment and Co-operation' issued by the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China apply to this project, as to which low-carbon and environment-friendly technology shall mark foreign investments.

#### **Hattat Holding Turkey**

#### **SRK Consulting - international -**

In coordination with SRK, in 2009 Hema analysed the geographical conditions and the drafted bankable feasibility report showed potential reserves of 265 million tonnes.