

28th September 2022

Dear Energy Minister,

Solidarity means protecting the energy poor, not expanding fossil fuels in Europe.

The recent European Commission [proposal for a Council Regulation on an emergency intervention to address high energy prices](#) puts forward measures which could help protect Europe's energy poor and speed up the energy transition. It does this in part by addressing the currently skyrocketing fossil fuel industry profits in Europe; profits which stand in crude contrast to the increasingly challenging realities of many struggling Europeans. Yet, **a worrying loophole exists in the current proposal text that could allow for revenues to be spent supporting the oil and gas industry, even on new gas and oil infrastructure, instead of the energy poor.** We ask that you defend the increasing number of people in energy precarity across Europe and allocate finances to them rather than back into the hands of the fossil fuel industry.

In her State of the Union speech on the 14th of September, Commissioner von der Leyen said that "in these times it is wrong to receive extraordinary record profits benefiting from war and on the back of consumers...profits must be shared and channelled to those who need it the most." The Commission's latest proposal spells out how this should happen. Article 16(1)(d) of the text proposes a 'solidarity contribution' which the Commission estimates will generate around €25 billion.

However, the proposal indicates that proceeds from the 'solidarity contribution' could be spent on "financial support measures to develop the energy autonomy in particular investments in line with REPowerEU objectives notably projects with a cross-border dimension." Far from channelling funds 'to those who need it most' this article has the potential to recycle windfall revenues to the oil and gas industry. With the current text, **the door is left open to finance new fossil fuel infrastructure in Europe using fossil fuel industry profits, to fund the creation of the 13 new fossil gas projects** outlined in the 18th of May [REPowerEU Plan](#) **instead of supporting the energy poor and the necessary transition to a clean, affordable, energy future.**

Current **REPowerEU plans already allocate €12 billion for fossil gas and oil infrastructure** - a quite unimaginable sum in light of the current crises which have shown that reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is the answer to both the ongoing war in Ukraine, the rising prices facing Europe this winter, the climate crisis facing Europe, and the tough winters that will continue to come. With a minimum of 50 million Europeans already facing energy poverty from our broken energy system, money needs to be concentrated on sustainable long term solutions. The revenue claimed back from fossil fuel industry profits should be spent ensuring that Europe's citizens can heat their homes this winter, and in building a new energy system built on renewable energy.

We ask that you act in defence of Europe's most vulnerable, and ensure that Article 16(1)(d) is revised to ensure no 'solidarity contribution' is used to support the fossil fuel industry.

Yours sincerely,



Eilidh Robb, Fossil Fuel Campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe, and



European Commission Proposal for a Council Regulation on an emergency intervention to address high energy prices (14/09/2022)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0473&from=EN> Article 16(1)(d): "Member States shall use the proceeds from the temporary solidarity contribution with sufficiently timely impact for the following purposes; (d) financial support measures to develop the energy autonomy in particular investments in line with REPowerEU objectives notably projects with a cross-border dimension."

REPowerEU Communication Objectives. (08/03/2022)

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:71767319-9f0a-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1_0001_02/DOC_1&format=PDF (2) Eliminating our dependence on Russian Fossil Fuels: (2.1) Diversify gas supplies; (2.1.1) LNG and pipe imports; (2.1.2) Increase the EU production of biomethane; (2.1.3) Hydrogen Accelerator.