

THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE A

FOSSIL-FREE FUTURE

BRIEFING BY FRIENDS OF THE
EARTH EUROPE

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**Friends of
the Earth
Europe**

THE ISSUES CAUSED BY GAS

Fossil gas is a major cause of the climate crisis, with its harmful impacts becoming increasingly apparent. By phasing out fossil gas no later than 2035, the EU can lead the global charge towards a clean and sustainable energy future. A healthier planet, a more just society, and a resilient economy are within our grasp.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS CLIMATE CHAOS

Fossil gas serves us a climate crisis cocktail: its burning results in **CO₂, the single largest cause of climate change**, and in its raw form it is primarily made up of **methane, the second largest cause of climate change**. Expert calculations show that gas can be on par with coal in terms of climate impact. By all estimates, **the EU's carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) budgets** - the total amount of CO₂ or GHG that can be emitted while still staying within a certain temperature increase limit - **are running out**. Dividing the budget into regional shares is **not merely a mathematical question**; there is an important ethical dimension that cannot be ignored. Principles such as **fairness and justice must underpin these calculations**. Under estimates based on criteria such as ability to pay or historical emissions, the **EU has already exhausted its fair share of the budget**[1].

Meanwhile, scientists are sounding the alarm about a potential "semi-dystopian future" with global heating reaching 2.5°C or more[2].

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS SECURITY RISKS

Europe's gas dependency is a **security risk**: relying on fossil gas ties energy systems to volatile global markets, geopolitical tensions, finite resources, and makes them dependent on the exploitation of local communities.

True **energy security lies in the adoption of sustainable, renewable sources like wind and solar**, which are abundant, resilient, and not subject to the same supply constraints and environmental risks as fossil gas.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS ENERGY POVERTY

Energy poverty is a structural issue in a system dependent on fossil fuels. **Over 40 million Europeans are unable to keep their houses adequately warm**[3], a problem that is exacerbated by the **volatility of fossil gas prices**, which disproportionately affects those in precarious circumstances. **Incentives and subsidies for renovations and energy efficiency** upgrades are sorely needed to deliver enhanced wellbeing and welfare, while decreasing overall energy consumption. **Coupled with a switch to renewable energy, this is the economically sound, socially just and environmentally sustainable** path out of energy poverty.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS STRANDED ASSETS

Investing in new gas projects at this point is **economically unsound** given the climate **urgency and comparatively slow return on investment** in gas.

THE ISSUES CAUSED BY GAS

Gas pipelines, LNG terminals and gas-fired power plants all have a **technical lifetime of several decades, way past the time when Europe must have phased out all fossil fuels** to stave off the worst of the climate crisis. Ultimately, new gas projects spell **financial loss** for Europe. Fossil gas equals a **costly distraction**.

Every investment in gas is an investment not made in renewable energy. Investments in gas infrastructure **divert financial resources from true solutions, leading to technological stagnation and missed opportunities for progress** through renewable technologies and sustainable projects.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS CORPORATE CAPTURE AND DECEIT

The fossil fuel companies have enjoyed a baffling level of access and influence over EU policy. The 2019-2024 von der Leyen Commission had almost **900 reported meetings with fossil fuel lobbyists, the equivalent of one meeting per workday**[4]. Given the pressing need and the responsibility that the EU carries to phase out all fossil fuels as soon as possible and no later than 2035, it is inadmissible for this **polluting and destructive industry** to continue capturing the EU decision-making process.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS ENDANGERED HEALTH

Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is an air pollutant that results from burning fossil gas.

Exposure to it can not only exacerbate or cause **new cases of asthma, but it is also linked to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, preterm birth, and diabetes**[5].

In addition, the World Health Organization recognises climate change as **“the single biggest health threat facing humanity”**[6], with its impacts ranging from facilitating the spread of water- and vector-borne diseases, to exacerbating chronic conditions and putting a strain on mental health.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS SACRIFICING HUMAN RIGHTS

Fossil gas extraction is frequently linked to **human rights violations and large-scale corruption**, with those who resist encountering violence, intimidation, or legal repression. Furthermore, displacement, **exploitation and environmental degradation** are often inescapable realities for the **communities where gas extraction projects are set up**.

FOSSIL GAS EQUALS ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

The process of extracting and transporting fossil gas often leads to the **disruption and destruction of the local habitat and environment**. Such disruptions can have cascading effects on **entire ecosystems**, as species struggle to adapt to the altered conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ENSURE A PHASE OUT OF FOSSIL FUELS AND FOSSIL GAS

A phaseout of fossil fuels, including gas, is imperative if the EU is to **respect its climate commitments** and address the global climate crisis effectively, in a way that reflects its **historical responsibility**.

SET A CLEAR AND AMBITIOUS PHASE-OUT DATE FOR FOSSIL GAS IN EUROPE

The EU must establish a **firm and ambitious deadline** for ending the use of fossil gas within its 2040 climate targets, aiming for a **complete phaseout in all sectors by 2035** at the latest. Setting a clear timeline would **accelerate the implementation of policies** aimed at transitioning away.

RESIST ATTEMPTS TO KEEP THE GAS INDUSTRY ALIVE

The EU must **resist false solutions such as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and hydrogen**, which run the risk of prolonging reliance on fossil fuels while **distracting** from reliable, cheap and effective alternatives, as well as from the need to **degrow energy and material consumption** overall.

DEVELOP A CLEAR PATH TO GAS INFRASTRUCTURE DECOMMISSIONING

The only future for gas is decommissioning. We must **proactively plan for a future fossil-free energy system**. Designing a clear path for decommissioning gas infrastructure will help transition to a **sustainable and clean energy future**.

STOP FINANCING FOSSIL GAS

The EU must put an **end to all subsidies** for fossil fuel companies, closing loopholes that allow for the funding of hydrogen-readiness and other **forms of fossil gas in disguise**. The next Multiannual Financial Framework can become an important instrument in the fight against climate change by **excluding all fossil fuels from receiving European public investments** and **supporting** truly sustainable and affordable green **solutions** instead.

END FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY ACCESS TO EU DECISION-MAKING

The EU must institute a firewall to **protect its decision-making processes from the undue influence of lobbyists** employed by the fossil fuel industry. The companies that have brought about and benefited from environmental destruction and the climate crisis cannot be trusted to shape policies that do nothing more than line their own pockets, and extend the life of their business model.

We call on you to take bold, decisive action in setting a clear and ambitious timeline for phasing out fossil gas by 2035. Your mandate presents a unique opportunity to advance a vision and implement a comprehensive plan aligning with climate commitments, ensuring energy security, and promoting environmental justice.

We stand at a crossroads, and your leadership can guide the EU towards a sustainable future free from fossil gas.

NOTES

[1] European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change. Scientific Advice for the Determination of an EU-Wide 2040 Climate Target and a Greenhouse Gas Budget for 2030–2050. LU: Publications Office, 2023.
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[2] Carrington, Damian. 'World's Top Climate Scientists Expect Global Heating to Blast Past 1.5C Target'. The Guardian, 2024, sec. Environment.
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[3] Eurostat. 'Inability to Keep Home Adequately Warm'. Eurostat, 2024.
https://doi.org/10.2908/ILC_MDES01.

[4] Fossil Free Politics, 'Von Der Leyen 2019-2024 Commission - Full-Time Report-1.Pdf', 2024.

[5] Kashtan, Yannai, Metta Nicholson, Colin J. Finnegan, Zutao Ouyang, Anchal Garg, Eric D. Lebel, Sebastian T. Rowland, et al. 'Nitrogen Dioxide Exposure, Health Outcomes, and Associated Demographic Disparities Due to Gas and Propane Combustion by U.S. Stoves'. Science Advances 10, no. 18 (2024): eadm8680.
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[6] World Health Organization. 'Climate Change and Noncommunicable Diseases: Connections', 2023.
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