



Media briefing, July 2023

## A DRIFTING CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY - LE HAVRE LNG TERMINAL EXPOSES FRANCE'S AND U.S.' CLIMATE HYPOCRISY

*“The boom in transatlantic gas trade is burning the last remaining bridges to preserve a livable future by keeping the world below the 1.5°C (2.7°F) heating threshold.*

*“Greenpeace France's investigation demonstrates how both European customers and low-income communities in the southern U.S. could needlessly pay a hefty price merely to enrich major polluters like TotalEnergies.” - Anusha Narayanan, global campaign lead to stop fossil fuel expansion at Greenpeace USA.*

### Background

*In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered an energy crisis in Europe. At the time, the EU imported 41% of its gas from Russia through pipelines<sup>1</sup>, to be replaced primarily by liquefied natural gas (LNG) — especially U.S. shale gas. Pressure from the gas industry and its lobbyists amid a general sense of public panic and rising energy prices has pushed European governments into an energy strategy that deepens their dependency on a technology with a carbon and methane footprint that is even worse than piped gas. The European economy is now locked into a spree of infrastructure build-up and contracts, extending many years beyond the necessary exit date from fossil gas.*

*In April 2023, Greenpeace International published its investigation “Who Profits From War: How Gas Corporations Capitalise on War in Ukraine” on how the gas industry and governments capitalise on Russia's invasion of Ukraine and lock Europe and the U.S. into fossil fuels reliance. [This subsequent investigation by Greenpeace France](#) dives into the particularities of the complicity of France with TotalEnergies and the LNG industry.*

### France's U-turn on climate commitments

In 2022, France became the top global importer of American shale gas as LNG. It would appear that the future energy policy of the EU — and therefore of France — is going to continue moving in this direction, geared towards ever more shale gas in the years to come<sup>2</sup>.

In February 2022 [President Emmanuel Macron gave assurances](#) that within 30 years France would become the first major country to phase out fossil fuels. However, the political and economic decisions

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<sup>1</sup> Greenpeace International, [Who Profits From War: How Gas Corporations Capitalise on War in Ukraine, 2023](#) (p. 11).

<sup>2</sup> [WhiteHouse. Remarks by President Biden and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Joint Press Statement,](#)

that France is taking in response to a short-term energy crisis seem to run contrary to this promise by locking us into fossil gas.

Turning to LNG imports goes against France's climate commitments, a contradiction showcased by the government's green light to the development of the Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU) Cape Ann - a new floating LNG terminal in Le Havre.

Benefiting from a special regulatory framework<sup>3</sup>, the floating terminal, chartered by TotalEnergies, was hastily passed through in August 2022 and is due to be commissioned in September 2023, for a period of five years.

## **The report: new LNG terminal in Le Havre only profits gas industry**

While this terminal is supposed to guarantee “security of supply” in the exceptional circumstances created by the energy crisis, [Greenpeace France's findings](#) question how useful it will be in practice, and reveal the various benefits granted to TotalEnergies so that it could be installed, including 50% of the regasification capacity of the facility for the company's own gas. TotalEnergies was also allowed to submit the proposal without providing any environmental impact assessment.

The authors compare import data with consumption data and regasification capacities in France and Europe since the start of the war in Ukraine in order to assess whether or not this additional terminal really is essential for the country's energy security.

The analysis is the result of a collaboration with the investigative media outlet Disclose, which published two articles on the [dark side of the installation](#) of this floating LNG terminal in Le Havre and its [industrial risks](#).

The [full Greenpeace report \(English\)](#) is available here. A [French version](#) is also available as well as a [blog](#).

## **Key findings**

- According to the research conducted by Greenpeace France and Disclose, there is no indication that the FSRU terminal in Le Havre is needed to maintain energy supplies to France or its neighbours; in fact, the opposite is true.
- In 2022, France's gas import capacity was at least 64,77 bcm (including 17,41 bcm that France exported in 2022), with 43,57 bcm used in 2022. French gas consumption went down in 2022, and this is just the beginning of the necessary ongoing reduction, expected in light of climate threats and policy scenarios.
- Data show that France has enough gas supplies to address consumption needs, with French stocks securing sufficient cover for the winter 2023-2024.
- France currently has a good margin to address its energy needs and is not facing any supply crisis that would justify the installation of a floating supply terminal in Le Havre to allow additional imports.

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<sup>3</sup> [France Nature Environnement, 2022](#)

- France's EU neighbours are also facing an overdevelopment of gasification capacity, and they do not need the additional floating facility to receive 5bcm of LNG of additional supply.
- [TotalEnergies will benefit](#) greatly from this new facility, as it will use 50% of the regasification capacity to import its own LNG from the US and maybe even from Russia (knowing that LNG resulted in profits of billions of EUR in 2022).
- The French government has supported TotalEnergies in multiple ways, both with public funds and allowing the company to move forward with the project without presenting any Environmental Impact Assessment. French authorities also decided not to publish or make public a “study of risks and dangers” (NB: “*Etude des dangers*” is the official name of the document in French), which included some concerning elements.
- While the floating terminal in Le Havre has been promoted by the French government as a temporary measure to address immediate needs, the research highlights how GRTGaz has already been looking at options to extend its operations beyond 5 years. According to GRTGas' 10 year plan for 2022-2031, the company envisages the development of:
  - An LNG terminal in Antifer, to replace in time the Le Havre terminal;
  - A second FSRU in Antifer to complement the Le Havre FSRU;
  - [An LNG terminal to complement the FSRU in Le Havre.](#)

## Conclusions

The installation of the Le Havre LNG terminal (FSRU Cape Ann) is financially supported by the French government, while requiring no environmental impact assessment or consultation with citizens. These measures contravene earlier French and European climate and environmental commitments,<sup>4</sup> while the argument put forward by the French government to justify this state support to the project — the need to secure energy supply to France and its neighbours during an energy crisis — doesn't hold up.

The war in Ukraine has once more exposed the dire implications of Europe's addiction to fossil fuel for its energy system, which is driving war and conflict, and the climate crisis. Once again it has laid bare how the fossil fuel industry continues to bankroll conflicts at the same time as benefiting from them.

The LNG terminal project in Le Havre exposes the inconsistency of France's energy policy choices and is indicative of how the government makes its decisions: listening to gas industry lobbyists rather than climate science. The main beneficiaries of France's energy policy are gas operators and developers such as TotalEnergies, which will be able to continue to make profits at the expense of the climate and the people. In the case of the Le Havre terminal, there is no need to add gas supply capacity to France, yet TotalEnergies stands to benefit from it, as it represents a chain link in its LNG strategy.

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<sup>4</sup> [Public life. Statement by Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, on energy policy, in Belfort, February 10, 2022](#)

Encouraging shale gas production in the U.S. for importing into Europe is a hypocritical, if not cynical, attitude, since France banned the hydraulic fracturing technique on its own territory back in 2011. By encouraging and profiting from such production overseas, France is accepting its indifference to the consequences of its energy policy for the climate and for the public health of the local people residing near extraction sites<sup>5</sup>.

## Greenpeace demands

The French government must be held accountable for choosing to install this LNG infrastructure, and must demonstrate, with clearly sourced and publicly available data, that it genuinely was the best option available. If it cannot do this, the directive of March 13, 2023 relating to the commissioning of the FSRU Cape Ann in Le Havre, and its continued operation for the next five years, should be cancelled. The directive in question is also the subject of an application for cancellation by France Nature Environnement Normandie, filed on April 15, 2023 with the Rouen Administrative Court<sup>6</sup>.

Only an energy transition policy that adopts a long-term vision can ensure true energy sovereignty for France and consistency with its climatic and environmental commitments.

To this end, Greenpeace recommends the following:

- Make a genuine commitment to ending the process of fossil expansion and never again support – directly or indirectly – the development of new fossil fuel extraction projects, the opening of new oil or gas fields, or the development of existing projects that are incompatible with the 1.5°C (2.7°F) climate objective and/or that pose risks to people and to biodiversity.
- Stop making decisions based on advice of the oil and gas lobbies. The representatives of these companies,<sup>7</sup> such as TotalEnergies, must be kept out of political decision-making circles.
- Set binding and permanent targets for reducing the demand for gas.<sup>8</sup>
- Commit to phasing out fossil gas permanently by 2035. As part of this, commit to phasing out liquefied natural gas by 2030. Ensure that political decision-making is in line with this commitment, considering the installation or extension of fossil infrastructure as in breach of this commitment.
- Reject all new gas infrastructure, such as the floating LNG terminal in Le Havre (FSRU Cape Ann), and any new expansion of existing fixed terminals that will lock France and the EU into fossil gas via long-term contracts and jeopardise meeting its climate commitments.
- End the double standard on the issue of shale gas extraction: banning shale gas extraction in France, but importing it from other countries, without taking into consideration the impacts on the climate, the

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy Q. Donaghy, Noel Healy, Charles Y. Jiang, Colette Pichon Battle, [“Fossil Fuel racism in the United States: How phasing out coal, oil, and gas can protect communities”](#), *Energy Research and social science*, Volume 100, 103104, 2023

<sup>6</sup> [“Le Havre. Un nouveau recours contre le terminal méthanier flottant” \(Le Havre: A new remedy against the floating LNG terminal\)](#), 76 *actu*, 2023

<sup>7</sup> [Fossil Free Politics. A Gastastrophie mistake. 2022](#)

<sup>8</sup> [“We call on TotalEnergies shareholders to vote against the firm’s climate strategy”](#), *Le Monde*, 2023 (NB: As the IPCC scientists explain very well in this forum, energy demand should not be confused with needs: the current demand for energy in no way corresponds to needs alone; this is attested to by the debates about private jets.)

environment and the health of the people living in those countries, is entirely hypocritical and does nothing to defend human rights or protect the planet).

- Impose annual targets on large companies for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and prohibit dividends from climate-killing companies, strengthen the due diligence obligations of large companies with regard to the environment and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and tax the profits of fossil companies like TotalEnergies, so that investments for the energy transition are not passed on to citizens, especially the most vulnerable and low-income parts of society.

A complete list of demands at national level is included in the recommendations section of [Greenpeace France report](#).

In addition, Greenpeace developed demands at European and international level. A full list of these recommendations is available in the Greenpeace International report “Who Profits From War: How Gas Corporations Capitalise on War in Ukraine”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [Who Profits From War: How Gas Corporations Capitalise on War in Ukraine](#), 2023, (p. 18)