



Embargoed: 00:01 BST 25.05.2022.

Ukrainian lawyer, climate campaigners file legal complaint claiming imports of Russian fossil fuels breach EU law and violate international human rights

BRUSSELS, 25 May, 2022 – Ukrainian environmental lawyer Svitlana Romanko, supported by the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and several climate campaign groups, filed a legal complaint today claiming that the European Commission's failure to take sufficient steps to end its reliance on Russian fossil fuels violates EU law and human rights obligations.

They argue that the EU's continued imports of Russian oil and gas are financing Russia's war in Ukraine, and that the European Commission is not taking into account all the available measures to end imports as quickly as possible.

Romanko, co-founder of the [Stand With Ukraine](#) campaign, lodged the complaint with European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly, responsible for investigating complaints about poor administration against EU institutions and bodies. The other co-complainants are the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN), the campaign group Avaaz, the French NGO Notre Affaire à Tous, and the German environmental group Deutsche Umwelthilfe.

The EU has so far proposed a gradual phase out of Russian oil by the end of 2022, and to build new LNG import terminals to substitute Russian gas. The REPowerEU plan released by the Commission last week contains some positive steps towards reducing dependence on Russia and accelerating the clean energy transition, but it doesn't go far enough, the complainants say.

The complaint points to research showing immediate steps the EU could take to reduce oil and gas demand from transport and buildings, and states that the Commission's current plans would fuel further human rights threats from climate change.

The complainants are asking the Ombudsman to recommend that the European Commission assess the impact of its Russian imports on Russia's human rights violations in Ukraine, and to identify the most climate-friendly way to rapidly reduce those imports. In 2019, EU institutions complied with the Ombudsman's opinions [in 79% of the cases](#).

Svitlana Romanko, environmental lawyer and co-founder of Stand With Ukraine, said: "The EU says it stands in solidarity with Ukraine, yet the billions of euros EU members are still paying for Russian fossil fuels are directly funding Putin's war machine and outrageous war crimes, while deepening the climate crisis. It's time for the European Commission to assess the true impacts of its actions and take all necessary measures to end its Russian fossil imports – immediately."

Russia's oil and gas exports made up 45% of its federal budget in 2021, according to the [International Energy Agency](#). The EU is its biggest customer, paying over €50 billion for Russian energy imports since Russia invaded Ukraine, according to the [Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air](#). Meanwhile, the bloc has sent just €1 billion in foreign aid to Ukraine.

Gerry Liston, legal officer at the Global Legal Action Network, said: "The EU cannot seek to limit its contribution to the Ukrainian crisis by worsening its contribution to the climate crisis. Yet, in order to

substitute supply of Russian gas with sources from elsewhere, the EU is proposing to build new fossil fuel infrastructure. This is the very thing UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres recently described as “moral and economic madness” based on the latest IPCC science.”

Additional quotes:

Oleh Savytskyi, climate and energy policy expert of Ukrainian Climate Network: "The EU is doing too little too late to cut Russian fossil fuel supplies, which are the bloodline of this war. Most discussions centre around replacing Russian gas with LNG supplies and finding alternative oil suppliers, while solutions for structural economic change, long overdue in face of the climate emergency, are largely missing from the debate. We call upon the European Commission and national governments to follow their commitments to climate action and phase out fossil fuels, starting with Russian supplies."

Nataliia Lytvyn, coordinator of the Energy Transition coalition of Ukrainian NGOs, municipalities and citizens, and project coordinator of the Ukrainian NGO Ecoclub: “Finances flowing from Russia’s oil, gas and coal are used by Putin to supply arms for his military forces that have killed thousands of Ukrainians already. We, as the Energy Transition coalition, have called multiple times on countries to ban the import of all Russian fossil fuels. The aggressor state can be stopped, and it has to be done now.”

Sascha Müller-Kraenner, CEO of Deutsche Umwelthilfe: “Simply changing the dealer by substituting Russian oil and gas 1:1 with other sources won’t solve anything. While we need to get rid of Russian energy imports as soon as possible, building lng-terminals will fuel the climate crises and create new dependencies. The EU has to find better answers than that. This is why we need a full assessment of all available measures.”

Paul Mougeolle, member of the French environmental NGO Notre Affaire à Tous: “The current EU’s strategy to gradually reduce dependency is inadequate as the slow Russian fossil fuel import’s reductions are driving the global fossil fuel prices up, ultimately meaning more money for Russia. The European Commission needs to propose more drastic measures to stop funding the Kremlin, cope with the climate crisis and make sure that no one is left behind in Europe, as the rising prices will also hit hard the most vulnerable consumers.”

Dominika Lasota, Fridays for Future Poland: “The European Union must realise that as long as the money is sent from its member states to Putin, it is responsible for supporting the Russian war machine. If we are to be a community that guarantees the protection of human rights, breaking free from autocrats and fossil fuels must be a top priority.”

Supporters of the complaint:

Environment – People – Law
Energy Transition Coalition
Ecoclub
Ecoaction
Ekoltava
ForestCom
Coalition of NGOs Enough Poisoning Kryvyi Rih
Extinction Rebellion Ukraine

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