Dear President von der Leyen,

Please find enclosed an open letter from 226 scientists, financial institutions, and civil society organisations expressing their alarm about the attack against the European Taxonomy by fossil fuel lobbies and Member States.

We criticise the European Commission’s proposal to classify fossil fuels as environmentally sustainable. This directly contradicts all recommendations made by climate science and by the Commission’s Technical Expert Group and will turn the EU Taxonomy into a greenwashing tool.
We have no time for false solutions. This is why neither coal-to-gas nor cogeneration (CHP) should be included in the Taxonomy.

Furthermore, this move will undermine and discredit the European Green Deal and the EU’s global climate leadership. With countries across the globe developing similar taxonomies, this precedent could also lower global ambition, resulting in countries labelling a broad range of fossil fuel investments as sustainable.

We hope you will listen to this urgent call from scientists, financial institutions, and civil society, reject the proposal to classify fossil gas as sustainable, and produce a taxonomy that truly sets the EU on course to meet its Green Deal targets.

WWF would be happy to exchange with you and your staff on this pressing issue.

Kind regards,

Open Letter - Gas Attack in Taxonomy

Dear President von der Leyen,

Vice-President Timmermans and Dombrovskis,

Commissioner McGuinness,

We are alarmed by a new proposal allowing fossil fuels into the EU taxonomy.

This new proposal drafted by the European Commission suggests that fossil gas does no harm to the environment, and therefore could be included as Sustainable for Finance under the EU Taxonomy. These are baseless claims and are opposed to climate science. Introducing fossil gas in the EU taxonomy is firmly against the recommendations of the Commission’s Technical Expert Group and caves in to the demands of the gas lobby.

The EU taxonomy was conceived as a science-based gold standard to avoid greenwashing. With such a proposal the taxonomy itself would become a greenwashing tool.

Energy security, just transition, and grid reliability are critical for Europe, but are also fully addressed by other EU policies, funds, and regulations. The purpose of the EU Taxonomy is to correctly label green finance: this means following the best scientific evidence on an activity's environmental impact.

Counting gas as green ignores the significant environmental effects of methane, whose impact on climate change is up to 84 times greater than CO2 in a 20-year timeframe. This means if only 3% of the gas leaks, it can cause more warming than coal.1 Furthermore, many European gas companies do not properly measure methane emissions in their supply chain and are not seizing the available opportunities to reduce these emissions.2 We have no time for false solutions. This is why neither coal-to-gas nor cogeneration (CHP) should be included in the Taxonomy.

These unwarranted proposals are in direct contradiction with President von der Leyen’s Green Deal and the EU ambition for higher climate targets. They would also undermine and discredit the EU's global climate leadership.

With other countries developing competing taxonomies for sustainable investments, the EU Taxonomy can be a global gold standard, but including fossil gas in the EU Taxonomy will lower global ambition and set a precedent that could result in other countries labelling a broad range of fossil fuel investments as sustainable.

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For all of the above reasons, these gas lobby-promoted proposals must not be countenanced. For the EU Taxonomy to have any sustainable value, the Commission’s Delegated Act must be consistent with the independent Technical Expert Group’s science-based recommendations.

We urge you to reconsider this change in direction and reject the proposal. The undersigned remain ready to urgently exchange with you on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Scientists:

[Names and affiliations]

[Names and affiliations]
University of Athens (GR),
University College Dublin (IE)
University of Hamburg (DE)
University Lisboa (PT)
University of Oxford (GB)
University of St. Gallen (CH)
University College Dublin (IE)
University of Oxford (GB)
EIT Climate KIC Advisory Board Member, Club of Rome Co-President
National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology - Bulgaria,
Research Group on Energy, Economics and Systems Dynamics at the University of Valladolid,
Financial Institutions/Associations
Folkesparekassen,
Merkur Cooperative Bank, Denmark,
Association of Ethical Shareholders Germany
Triodos Bank,
Triodos Investment Management,
ASN Bank
ASN Beleggingsfondsen
Eurosif - the European Sustainable Investment Forum,

Civil Society

WWF European Policy Office,

Climate Bonds Initiative,

Climate Strategy & Partners,

Transport & Environment,

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia,

E3G - Third Generation Environmentalism,

Greenpeace European Unit,

European Environmental Bureau,

Friends of the Earth Europe

ClientEarth,

Reclaim Finance,

Bellona Europa,

Climate & Company,

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe,
Oil Change International,

WeMove Europe,

Avaaz,

Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility,

ActionAid International,

NABU,

ECOS,

Alliance of Associations Polish Green

Zelena akcija, Croatia,

Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczne EKO-UNIA (Ecological Association EKO-UNIA),

Environmental Planning and Education Network,

Fundacja “Rozwój TAK - Odkrywki NIE”, Poland

Pasaules Dabas Fonds,

Institute for Circular Economy - Bulgaria,

Humusz Szövetség,

Fondation Nicolas Hulot,
Swedwatch,

Food & Water Action Europe,

Re-set: platform for socio-ecological transformation,

Umanotera, Slovenian Foundation for Sustainable Development,

BankTrack,

Bankwatch Romania,

Andy Gheorghiu Consulting,

Green Liberty,

Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot,

Clean Air Action Group (Hungary),

Society for Sustainable Living (STUŻ),

Éghajlatvédelmi Szövetség / Hungarian Climate Alliance,

Reflex Környezetvédelmi Egyesület,

Foundation for Environment and Agriculture, Bulgaria,

Climate Action Coalition, Bulgaria,

Environmental Association “Za Zemiata”, Bulgaria
Institute for Circular Economy - Bulgaria,
Bluelink Foundation,
Socio-Ecological Union international,
350 Denmark,
ASUFIN - Asociación de Usuarios Financieros
CEE Bankwatch Network,
Deutsche Umwelthilfe
Fair Finance International,
Veblen Institute for Economic Reforms,
Centre for Transport and Energy,
VedvarendeEnergi,
Association of European Energy Research Centres (EUREC)
Global Witness
National Ecological Center of Ukraine,
Fair Finance Guide Netherlands (Eerlijke Geldwijzer),
Estonian Green Movement,
Energiaklub,
The Common Good,
Abibinsroma Foundation,
Debt Observatory in Globalisation (ODG),
Treeunion Netherlands,
Energy Watch Group,
Focus Association for Sustainable Development,
ShareAction,
Ocean Energy Europe,
Re:Common,
EKOenergy Ecolabel,
ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System,
Réseau Action Climat France
Cittadini per l’Aria Onlus, Italy
Transport & Environment France,
Transport & Environment Italy,
Both ENDS,
Nodo Cantabria Plataforma por un Nuevo Modelo Energético,
Legalità per il clima,
Carbon Market Watch,
Climateka,
ECODES - Fundación Ecología y Desarrollo,
ActionAid Denmark,
Nesehnuti,
VCOE,
National Society of Conservationists, Hungary,
AnsvarligFremtid,
Rivers without Boundaries,
VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"
Stop Waste Incineration, Protect the Environment,
Natuur & Milieu
Divestera AP-fonderna,
Biodiversity Conservation Center,

Défense Des Milieux Aquatiques,

Baltic Pipe Nej Tak (Block Baltic Pipe),

Limity Jsme My,

CSOP Veronica (Ecological Institute),

Pensioen Vergroeners (the Netherlands),

Negative Emissions Platform asbl,

Milieudefensie - Friends of the Earth Netherlands

Partnership for Policy Integrity,

Sí Se Puede Canarias,

Red Tree Heritage Institute,

Eco-Union,

Forum Ökologie & Papier,

Etika,

Terra Cypria - the Cyprus Conservation Foundation,

Crimean Republican Association Ekologiya i Mir,
GLOBAL 2000, Austria

BirdWatch Ireland

France Nature Environnement

International Rivers,

Crimean Republican Association Ekologiya i Mir,

2Celsius,

Naturfreunde Internationale,

Coastwatch,

CEPA, Slovakia,

The United Reformed Church Bellingham Catford & Lee Green,

Lithuanian Consumers Alliance,

South Worcestershire Methodist Church, UK,

Czech Climate Coalition,

Signatories: 226