

Fwd: Europe's top fossil fuel lobbyist eyes Trump-style climate rule bonfire

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By Gabriel Gavin · Feb 24, 2025, 6:00 AM · [View in your browser](#)

BRUSSELS — Europe can only avoid a trade war with Donald Trump if it slashes climate bureaucracy and commits to extended gas purchases, the fossil fuel industry's top lobbyist in Brussels told POLITICO.

"We need to reassure the Americans that we will be a solid buyer for gas for the long-term," said François-Régis Mouton, the European director of the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers.

While such advice is not unusual from an oil and gas lobbyist, Mouton spies an opening to push his case after years of being left out in the cold by climate-conscious bureaucrats.

The European Commission, the EU executive, is [offering](#) to buy more American liquefied natural gas (LNG) as part of a potential deal to prevent hefty U.S. tariffs. It's even [considering](#) backing investments in overseas LNG projects as part of a plan to lower energy costs.

In other words, Mouton said, things are changing.

"Three weeks after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, we had a meeting with the [European] Commission and one of the officials said, well, in three to five years time, we won't need gas any more in Europe. And that was three years ago," he said, speaking from an expansive office on the outskirts of Brussels, where a team of more than two dozen staffers represents the interests of almost 100 energy firms from across the globe, including U.S. giants Chevron and ExxonMobil.

"So there's a mindset change some have to do to accept the fact that yes, in the energy transition, we need gas even in the long term," he added.

Mouton's companies stand to benefit if Europe [gets on board with Trump's "drill, baby, drill" goals](#). The EU is certainly trying, dispatching a top energy official, Ditte Juul Jørgensen, to Washington for talks with gas exporters earlier this month.

"The visit of Jørgensen was to establish better relationships to secure our security of supplies," said Mouton, "that's very good news. The bad news is, she isn't the one who signs contracts to buy gas — that's for the market."

According to Mouton, cementing a positive relationship with Trump will require the EU to reverse several policies that limit gas consumption and chart an end to fossil fuels.

Firmly in the oil and gas industry's crosshairs is an EU methane regulation, which will require importers to monitor and report methane emissions. Starting in 2027, the rules could lead to fines on gas importers if producers abroad don't meet EU standards.

Mouton argued the rules may scuttle a deal with Trump.

The EU is clearly keen to buy more American LNG, he said, “but then at the same time, they put in place a methane emission regulation that totally jeopardizes this. We’re doing everything to reopen the methane regulation.”

However, the oil and gas industry has sensed a change in this approach, pointing to the “competitiveness” rhetoric Commission President Ursula von der Leyen adopted as she assumed a second term last year.

That approach will feature prominently in the Commission’s upcoming Clean Industrial Deal, a grand plan to marry economic revitalization and climate goals due out on Wednesday.

“What we like is the shift from focusing totally on sustainability — which we support but not as the only priority — shifting to securing energy [supplies], affordability and so on,” Mouton said.

“The climate is perhaps an existential threat to us, but we have many others,” he added. “We have threats to our security. We have threats to our industry. So we need to be more reliable partners, and respect the Americans have their own way.”

Mouton said Europe could learn a thing or two from Trump.

“What is our vision? We keep pulling Trump’s leg, but at least he has a vision,” the lobby boss said. “He makes his people dream, and they vote for him.”

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