

Press release

"End cooperation with EPH because it is destroying the climate and democracy," demanded representatives of civil society at the general meeting of Société Générale.

Prague 23.05.2023

Representatives of the environmental organizations *Stop the Dirty Money and Reclaim Finance* will speak at the general meeting of Société Générale to address the bank's management and shareholders directly. They criticize the bank for supporting the business of the Czech coal tycoon and oligarch Křetínský, whose company was recently named by the Ukrainian authorities as a sponsor of the invasion. They also consider it serious that EPH is one of Europe's largest emitters of coal emissions. It is responsible for deforestation and unsustainable biomass burning. More than 500 people from the Czech Republic already sent a letter to Komerční banka, the Czech branch of Société Générale, asking them to end cooperation between Société Générale and EPH.

"EPH poses a threat to the climate and democracy. They are an energy company with the biggest gas expansion plans in Europe, with more than 7 GW of power plants they plan to add to the European grid. Also, they are impeding the phase-out of coal in Germany. According to new information they even plan to buy STEAG company, so they can invest into more coal power plants in Germany. Furthermore, EPH burns wood chips sourced from forests worldwide in their biomass power plants, like Gardanne in France, and cooperates with companies involved in illegal practices and land grabbing. Société Générale is supporting all the dirty plans of Czech oligarch Daniel Křetínský. It needs to stop immediately," said Radek Kubala, campaigner, and researcher from Re-set: platform for socio-ecological transformation.

Threat for climate

EPH is one of Europe's three largest coal companies. It has more emissions than the whole economy of Finland just from coal burning. The business strategy is to buy up old coal-fired power plants and make a profit from the transition process. EPH is hampering the coal phase-out while demanding compensation from states for closing coal plants. It owns the largest mines and power plants in German Lusatia.

EPH has the worst decarbonization plans among European energy companies. According to the Ember study, EPH is the company with the largest gas infrastructure development plans of all European energy companies. It already operates many gas-fired power plants.

Threat to social cohesion

Criticism of EPH is growing in the Czech Republic. Especially after the company announced record profits it made during the energy crisis. While hundreds of thousands of households

struggled to find the money for heating this winter, EPH's owner bought a chateau next to Paris and a number of other luxury properties. It is thanks to the profits from overpriced fossil gas. Even before the energy crisis, there were more than 500 000 households in energy poverty in Czechia.

Biomassacre: the world's forests are disappearing in EPH pockets

EPH is also involved in unsustainable biomass management. It imports biomass from as far away as the United States for its Lynemouth power station in the UK where local people protested just this week. At the same time, it is involved in the clearing of healthy forests. It then covers up a quarter of its emissions through biomass co-firing. [2]

Almuth Ernsting, Codirector of Biofuelwatch, says "EPH has added big biomass plants to its dirty portfolio. Two of its most egregious biomass investments are the EPH biomass power stations in Lynemouth, England, and in Gardanne, France. In Lynemouth, EPH is burning up to 1.6 million tonnes of wood pellets from North America, many of them sourced from the clearcutting of highly biodiverse coastal hardwood forests in the Southeastern USA, and some of them linked to the clear-felling of old-growth forest in British Columbia. In France, EPH's power station has sourced some of its wood from a Brazilian company implicated in illegal land-grabbing for eucalyptus plantations in the Amazon state of Amapá."

Another protest this week took place in Germany where the initiative Robin Wood called on Wismar Pellets company and its parent company LEAG (that is connected to EPH) to change their business model in such a way that the scarce raw material wood does not end up in the pellet industry and power plants. [3]

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Sources:

[1] <https://re-set.cz/download/2022/Fossilni%CC%81%20hyenaEN2.pdf>

[2] <https://www.fern.org/fr/publications-insight/a-carbon-bomb-in-the-heart-of-europe-2552>

[3] [Climate protest at Wismar Pellets: Wood is too valuable to burn! | Robin Wood](#)

