

European energy security or acquiescence?

A critical review of the 24 February 2026 United States-Central and Eastern Europe Joint Statement

22 April 2026

Authors¹:

Raffaele Piria	<i>Ecologic Institute, Berlin (Germany)</i>
Hannah Lentschig	<i>The Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’, The Hague (Netherlands)</i>
Ana-Maria Boromisa	<i>Institute for Development and International Relations, Zagreb (Croatia)</i>
Anca C. Sinea	<i>Babeş-Bolyai University and Center for the Study of Democracy, Cluj-Napoca (Romania)</i>
Borbála Takácsné Tóth	<i>Corvinus University of Budapest and REKK, Budapest (Hungary)</i>
Loyle Campbell	<i>German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin (Germany)</i>
Sabrina Schulz	<i>German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin (Germany)</i>

Going largely unnoticed across much of Europe, a “*Joint Statement on Enhancing Security of Natural Gas Supply to Central and Eastern Europe*” was signed in Washington, D.C, on 24 February 2026 on the sidelines of a Ministerial meeting organised by the White House, its National Energy Dominance Council, and the ‘Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace’.

The signatories comprise the United States (US) and ministers or other senior representatives from eight EU Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia) and four candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine).

This Statement – hereafter referred to as the US-CEE12 JS – constitutes, in essence, a declaration of intent by these twelve European countries to “*enhance energy security by increasing the liquidity of regional natural gas markets and by entering into commercial contracts with U.S. LNG suppliers*”.

The US-CEE 12 JS was signed four days before the US and Israel started their war against Iran. As a direct consequence of this decision, taken by the US administration without consultation with its European partners, Europe faces a severe energy supply crisis and significant economic disruption. While the US-CEE12 JS aligns with the Trump Administration’s ‘energy dominance’ doctrine, it is questionable to what extent it will de facto support (Central and Eastern) Europe’s energy security or, rather, risk fostering European fragmentation and entrenching dependency on a new dominant gas supplier.

Lack of transparency?

While some of the ministries involved have publicly communicated that they signed a Joint Statement and have published photographs of the signing ceremony², eight weeks after the signature none of the governments involved has published the actual text.

¹ Disclaimer: This document represents the personal views of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the positions of institutions with which they are affiliated.

² Official and media sources relating to the US-CEE12 JS are referenced and briefly presented in the annex to this paper.

The convening country is particularly reserved. A US Department of Energy (DoE) website mentions a related meeting ('Transatlantic Gas Security Summit') involving partly the same countries; however, no official communication by the White House or other government departments refers to the existence of a signed Joint Statement. That such a diplomatic achievement would not be mentioned by the convenor suggests an intention to maintain confidentiality around the US-CEE12 JS.

However, some specialised media outlets in South-Eastern Europe have reported on the matter. At least three media sources³ have made full versions of the US-CEE12 JS publicly available. This text (identical across all published versions) is analysed here. Whether it corresponds to the version actually signed remains officially unconfirmed, publication by one or more of the governments involved.

The full US-CEE12 JS text and the relevant sources can be found in the annex to this document.

Inconsistent with European interests?

The US-CEE12 JS is not consistent with core interests and long-term objectives underpinning EU energy policy making, including security, resilience and climate change mitigation.

According to Article 194 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁴, promoting energy efficiency, energy saving and renewable

energy is a central objective of EU energy policy. In light of two energy crises within less than five years, it has become increasingly obvious that these strategies are also critical for Europe's *energy security* and *energy resilience*. It is therefore highly unusual for an energy security statement signed by EU Member States to omit all of these elements entirely.

Climate change constitutes an existential threat to humanity.⁵ For almost a decade, the Council of the European Union has recognised that "climate change has direct and indirect implications for international security and stability".⁶ In its 2023 Communication on the climate and security nexus, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy addressed the impact of climate change on peace, security, and defence, recognising that "the green energy transition is the only way to simultaneously ensure sustainable, secure, and affordable energy worldwide."⁷

By excluding any reference to reducing Europe's dependence on energy imports, to the energy transition and climate change mitigation, the US-CEE12 JS omits a critical dimension of security and resilience. This omission is also misaligned with public opinion in the region: the June 2025 Eurobarometer survey confirmed that an overwhelming majority (85%) of the EU population considers climate change a serious or very serious problem. In the eight EU Member States that signed the US-CEE12 JS, this share ranges from 65% to 92%.⁸

³ For example, on 2 April 2026, the full text could be retrieved, inter alia, from the Athens News Agency - Macedonian Press Agency (ANA-MPA): <https://www.amna.gr/en/article/972770/Joint-Statement-by-the-US-and-12-European-countries-on-strengthening-the-security-of-natural-gas-supply-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe>

⁴ [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) – Part Three: Union Policies and Internal Actions - Energy - Article 194.

⁵ United Nations News, 15 May 2018: [Climate change: An 'existential threat' to humanity, UN chief warns global summit](#).

⁶ European Council, Council of the EU: Press Release, [Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions on climate diplomacy](#), 26 February 2018.

⁷ European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: [A new outlook on the climate and security nexus: Addressing the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on peace, security and defence](#). Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, JOIN (2023) 19.

⁸ Hungary 92%, Greece 89%, Bulgaria 87%, Croatia 85%, Slovakia 84%, Poland 80%, Romania 65%. See: Special Eurobarometer 565: Climate Change, February-March 2025. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3472>

Ignoring affordability?

Even more surprisingly, the US-CEE12 JS makes no reference to energy affordability, which has long been a legitimately, core and repeatedly expressed concern of its European signatories in EU energy policy processes.

The preliminary observations by the Participants in the preamble to the US-CEE12 JS include:

“NOTING U.S. leadership in energy abundance (...) and enhanced transatlantic energy commerce”

What is the promise of US energy abundance for Central and Eastern European citizens and economies if it is not linked to a US commitment to EU’s objectives for sustainable, secure, *affordable* energy?

In practice, the average price paid by European importers for US liquefied natural gas (LNG) is higher than that for LNG from the second- and third-largest suppliers after the US.⁹ With the global crisis triggered by the US-Israeli war on Iran, that price is set to increase significantly.

Violating the principle of sincere cooperation?

The US-CEE12 JS includes a commitment of a group of EU Member States and accession countries to collaborate with Washington on a series of core EU energy policymaking dossiers with direct implications for EU security:

“The Participants seek to enhance the resiliency of natural gas markets (...), seek to continue their cooperation to promote transparent and non-discriminatory access to gas infrastructure (...) intend to work to increase gas market transparency, harmonize gas exchanges, promote efficient and cost-effective tariff frameworks, and mitigate,

or where possible eliminate, regulations that will hinder gas imports, the construction of new gas infrastructure, and the long-term stability of natural gas trade (...) Participants express their intention and desire to consult regularly to implement the principles of cooperation affirmed in this Joint Statement” (our marking)

This paragraph covers a broad range of European gas market issues regulated by both national and EU legal acts. As far as national regulations are concerned, subset of EU Member States may choose to enhance cooperation while others are not yet prepared to harmonise. However, the harmonisation of national technical and regulatory standards to improve cross-border trade lies at the core of European market integration and is usually pursued through EU legislation and *intra-European* cooperation (e.g. the Energy Community).

The text should therefore be understood as implicitly referring to key EU legal acts, including the Gas Market Directive and Regulation, the Methane Emissions Regulation, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. In principle, its scope could extend to any existing or future EU policy perceived as hindering gas imports, including measures aimed at strengthening European energy security through enhanced energy efficiency and the deployment of domestic renewable energy sources, thereby reducing the EU’s dependence on gas imports.

Committing to cooperate with an external actor that is questioning core pillars of EU energy and climate policy is arguably inconsistent with the ‘principle of sincere cooperation’ established in Article 4(3) of the Treaty on European Union of 2007. This provision mandates that “Member States shall facilitate the achievement of the Union’s tasks and refrain from any measure which

⁹ Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA): European LNG Tracker, update October 2025, section “EU27 spending on LNG”: <https://ieefa.org/european-lng-tracker>

could jeopardise the attainment of the Union's objectives.”¹⁰

Beyond any potential legal considerations, this declaration risks fostering division within the EU, reducing its capacity to act coherently, and thereby undermining European energy security.

Equating energy security and diversification with ‘more US LNG’?

The US-CEE12 JS appears to equate energy security for the CEE region, and diversification of energy supply, with increased imports of US LNG:

“Acknowledging that the diversification of gas supplies and routes is vital for Europe’s energy security and that previous supply dependencies underscored the importance of resilient and varied energy sources, and that partnership with the United States will reinforce Europe’s energy resilience and ensure secure, reliable access to natural gas”.

Yet, this assertion contradicts current energy and geopolitical realities. The US is already Europe’s dominant gas supplier by a wide margin. In 2025, US LNG accounted for over 59% of LNG imports and about 38% of total gas imports into the European Economic Area (EEA, including the EU27, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

The volume of LNG imports from the US into the EEA in 2025 was 61% higher than in 2024, and almost sixfold compared to 2019.¹¹ Supply diversification means therefore reducing, rather than increasing the US share in Europe’s gas import portfolio.

As a direct consequence of the US-Israeli war against Iran, EU gas importers have limited short-term alternatives to further increasing their already substantial exposure to US LNG. While the share of Europe’s LNG supply transiting the Strait of Hormuz prior to the war was relatively modest (around 10% in 2024–2025),¹² Asian and other buyers are now competing for LNG cargoes unaffected by the war and may outbid European importers. Gas (and oil) producers and exporters based in the US, Russia, and other regions not directly affected by the war are earning substantial windfall profits,¹³ at the expense of households, industry and public budgets in Europe and elsewhere. Beyond price increases, Europe also faces a risk of physical supply shortages in the coming winter.

Even prior to this war, domestic US gas prices had been rising sharply;¹⁴ in 2025, this was largely driven by booming LNG exports.¹⁵ Increasing electricity demand, particularly from the rapid expansion of data centres, is to a considerable extent being met by gas-fired power generation, thereby exerting further upward

¹⁰ [Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union](#) and of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. See also Peter van Elsuwege, (2019). [The Duty of Sincere Cooperation and Its Implications for Autonomous Member State Action in the Field of External Relations](#). In: Varju, M. (eds) *Between Compliance and Particularism*. Springer, Cham.

¹¹ All data in this paragraph, and the argument for why it is meaningful to consider the import shares of the entire European Economic Area rather than only those of the EU, are provided in: Raffaele Piria, Kacper Szulecki, Hannah Lentschig and Louise van Schaik: [Europe’s Selective Blindness on Gas: US LNG and the Limits of Supply Diversification](#). Clingendael, Ecologic Institute, Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, January 2026.

¹² Institute for Energy Economics and Financial analysis (IEEFA): [European LNG Tracker](#). This data covers the period from January 2024 to June 2025.

¹³ Fortune, 12 March 2026, by Jordan Blum: [Exxon, Chevron, and other US oil and gas producers and refiners hit all-time-high stock values amid Iran war while consumers pay the price](#). Fortune, 12 March 2026. The Washington Post, 23 March 2026: [At least one winner emerges from Iran war: U.S. natural gas exporters](#). Sergey Vakulenko: [What the Russian Energy Sector Stands to Gain From War in the Middle East](#), Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, March 2026. The Guardian, 12 March 2026: [Russia earned €6bn from fossil fuel exports since start of Iran war, data suggests](#).

¹⁴ The Henry Hub natural gas spot price during the period November 2025 to February 2026 was 44% higher than during the same period one year earlier, and 91% higher than two years earlier. Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Natural gas data: <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/ng/hist/rngwhhdm.htm>

¹⁵ Reuters, 18 February 2026: [Booming LNG exports may get dragged into US cost-of-living debate](#). See also: Rystad, 25 February 2026: [Cheap no more: How rising demand is reshaping US natural gas](#).

pressure on gas prices. This dynamic is prompting calls from US manufacturers and opposition leaders to halt the expansion of LNG exports, or even to reintroduce export restrictions.¹⁶

Absent such restrictions, the surge in global LNG prices driven by the US-Israeli war against Iran and wider tensions in the Middle East will inevitably drive up US domestic gas prices, especially as additional LNG export capacity comes online in 2026-27.¹⁷ While the White House in March 2026 denied rumours of an imminent oil export ban,¹⁸ it is worth recalling that the Trump Administration could legally halt the issuance of new LNG export licenses by the Department of Energy through an Executive Order, as the Biden Administration did in 2024.¹⁹

Moreover, recent events indicate that the Trump Administration could, in practice, revoke existing LNG export licenses. Although such a move would likely be challenged successfully by license holders, this would not necessarily guarantee continued gas deliveries to European buyers. A comparable, recent precedent exists: the Trump Administration ordered the suspension of offshore wind projects already under construction and holding valid leases, for which developers had paid substantial sums to the federal government. After a federal judge subsequently ruled the order unlawful, a settlement was reached under which the Administration agreed to compensate a developer with nearly USD 1 billion in exchange for relinquishing construction rights.²⁰

This precedent indicates that it is entirely conceivable that existing LNG export licenses could be revoked, with US gas-exporting companies

compensated for lost export revenues - resulting in lower domestic gas prices and thus aligning with the expectations of many US voters under an 'America first' approach.

In short, diversifying Europe's gas supply requires reducing, not increasing, the US share in its import portfolio. Further deepening Europe's reliance on US gas constitutes neither diversification nor enhanced energy security; rather, it implies the opposite.

Ignoring the US's ongoing political coercion?

Potential political coercion is another reason for Europeans to question the security implications of their high dependence on US gas imports. The US-CEE12JS text postulates that the energy supply relationship between the signatories is free from manipulation or coercion:

“The Participants are united in their commitment to strengthen Europe's energy security and diversification, ensure a stable and resilient energy supply free from manipulation or coercion, and foster mutually beneficial opportunities for American and European companies.”

However, the Trump Administration has recently exercised significant coercion towards European companies and governments, including threats to annex Greenland by military force and the imposition, or threat, of extraordinarily high tariffs. The Trump Administration has also applied political pressure specifically in the energy domain, including repeated threats to jeopardise Europe's energy supply and an explicit

¹⁶ The Wall Street Journal, 10 February 2026: [The U.S. Is Awash in Natural Gas, but American Factories Still Can't Get Enough](#). The Guardian, 26 February 2026: [Democrats urge dropping plan to double gas exports as US energy prices soar](#).

¹⁷ International energy agency: [Global LNG Capacity Tracker](#).

¹⁸ The Economist, 18 March 2026: [What if Donald Trump decided to ban oil exports?](#) Bloomberg Law, 19 March 2026: [White House Takes Crude Oil Export Ban Off the Table](#).

¹⁹ U.S. Congressional Research Service: [Executive Orders and U.S. LNG Exports: Frequently Asked Questions](#), Updated February 6, 2025.

²⁰ CNN, 23 March 2026: [Trump administration will pay a French company \\$1 billion in taxpayer funds to not build wind farms](#). Associated Press, 24 March 2026: [Trump administration's \\$1B deal to stop offshore wind shows an evolution in its anti-wind strategy](#).

warning that US LNG exports could be leveraged unless the EU complies with US demands.²¹

The US is already in breach of the US-CEE12 JS

Just days after signing the US-CEE12 JS, the Trump Administration was in breach of its first commitment:

“The Participants seek to enhance the resiliency of natural gas markets (...)”

The US, in fact, did not uphold this commitment when it initiated its war against Iran, which triggered the disconnection of roughly 20% of the global gas and oil supply from the world market and plunged Europe and the rest of the world into what may become the most severe global energy crisis in recent history.

A few weeks later, as Europe faced sharply rising oil and gas import bills and a material risk of physical scarcity, the US Ambassador to the EU, Andrew Puzder, threatened the EU with reduced access to US LNG unless it complied with US demands, undiplomatically noting that “if they’re [EU member states] going to survive economically, they need energy”. In doing so, the current US Administration has de facto acted in contradiction to its US-CEE12 JS commitment “to strengthen Europe’s energy security and diversification, ensure a stable and resilient energy supply free from manipulation or coercion.”

US energy dominance meeting European acquiescent subordination?

In a photograph of the US-CEE12 JS signing ceremony published on a Bulgarian government website²², the central figure in the first row is Doug Burgum, US Secretary of the Interior and Chairman of the US National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC).²³

The NEDC was established by President Trump in 2025. In its announcement, the White House stated that the NEDC’s primary goal is “to ensure the stability and affordability of American energy prices”. It further declared that “American energy leadership is vital not only for our Nation’s economic and national security, but also for the security of our allies”.²⁴ However, the US National Security Strategy (NSS) of November 2025, while designating “American energy dominance” as a “top strategic priority”, explicitly frames the expansion of US energy exports as a means “to project power”.²⁵

While the US-CEE12 JS contains no explicit reference to US ‘energy dominance’, it clearly serves this broader foreign policy objective. However, contrary to the very notion of an ‘ally’, when one party openly declares its intention to ‘dominate’ others, and the latter – even if only implicitly - accept this framing, they enter a relationship of open subordination. This is the case in asymmetrical alliances, e.g. between a superpower and small dependent allies.

²¹ Euractiv, 15 September 2025: [How an ex-fracking CEO crashed Europe’s ‘independence moment’](#). U.S. Department of Energy, 22 October 2025: [U.S. Energy Secretary and Qatari Energy Minister Send Letter to EU Regarding Proposed Corporate Climate Regulations](#). Financial Times, 23 March 2026: [US warns EU to pass trade deal or risk losing ‘favourable’ access to LNG](#).

²² Unlike ordinary news items on the website of the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy, this specific page is not available in English but only in Bulgarian. <https://www.me.government.bg/news/balgariya-moje-da-poeme-vodeshta-rolya-v-dostavkite-na-amerikanski-lng-za-ukraina-i-regiona-3759.html> At the bottom of the page, there are four photographs, two of which feature Mr Burgum. For more information, see the annex to this document.

²³ The page dedicated to [Secretary Burgum on the website of the US Department of the Interior](#) does not mention his role as Chairman of the US National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC). The NEDC appears to have no dedicated website. However, Mr Burgum’s role as NEDC Chairman is mentioned in official documents, including: US Embassy in Caracas: [Visit of Energy Dominance Council Chairman and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum in Venezuela](#), 12 March 2026 and the announcement of the NEDC creation (next footnote).

²⁴ The White House: [Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Establishes the National Energy Dominance Council](#), 14 February 2025.

²⁵ President of the United States: [National Security Strategy of the United States of America](#), November 2025.

Subordination comes at a price. In this case, the dominant superpower could decide to prioritise its own energy demand and reduce supplies to Europe, as discussed above. It can – and already does – leverage its energy-dominant position to pressure Europe into accepting other US political or economic goals. This could undermine Europe’s core security interests and sovereignty, for example on Ukraine and Greenland, but also on digital and technology regulation.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis above, certain elements of this Joint Statement and its wider (geo)political context should raise alarm for all stakeholders committed to safeguarding European integrity, values, strategic autonomy, and resilience.

Perhaps most importantly, the US-CEE12 JS could be a warning sign for other EU Member States and the European Commission that policymakers in several CEE countries might not consider their countries’ (energy) security concerns to be adequately addressed by existing EU policies, or that they are particularly exposed to external political pressures.

As the EU has committed to phasing out gas imports from Russia, the entire Union faces a fundamentally altered geography of gas flows. CEE countries are particularly challenged, as most LNG imports enter through terminals in Western Europe, while infrastructure originally designed for unidirectional flows from Russia to CEE countries (and beyond) requires substantial adaptation to enable reverse flows.

The EU is already investing significant resources to improve gas and electricity supply security in CEE countries, both in the Baltic region and in South-Eastern Europe. These investments include ending the isolation of the Baltic states

(Balticconnector between Finland and Estonia, LNG terminal in Lithuania), new LNG terminals in Poland and Croatia,²⁶ enabling reverse flows on legacy east-west routes, and strengthening north-south interconnectivity through new bidirectional pipelines between Poland and Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, Slovakia and Hungary, Hungary and Croatia, Hungary and Romania, Romania and Bulgaria, and Bulgaria and Greece.

These measures have already substantially increased the resilience of CEE gas infrastructure and markets to supply shocks²⁷. This infrastructure has been developed to a significant extent with substantial EU cofinancing, covering 30-75% of construction costs.²⁸ At least as important as the physical infrastructure is the EU legal framework governing the internal gas market, which ensures transparent and non-discriminatory access to infrastructure for all market participants.

Nevertheless, energy security concerns remain acute in the CEE region, shaped by decades under Soviet rule and by high exposure to Russia’s weaponisation of its dominant gas supplier position. In South-Eastern Europe, high reliance on coal raises concerns regarding energy system stability and security in the context of its ongoing coal phase out, concerns further amplified by still limited investment in the region’s significant potential for domestic renewables and energy efficiency measures.

Moreover, several CEE countries were particularly affected by the negative geopolitical and economic implications of Germany’s ill-advised Nord Stream 1 and 2 projects, facing the risk of losing the benefits of being transit countries and of becoming expendable pawns in Russian-German gas supply infrastructure cooperation.

²⁶ The LNG Terminal in Krk (Croatia) alone received more than €149 million in EU funding, including from the Connecting Europe Facility and NextGenerationEU.

²⁷ Adrienn Selei, Borbála Takácsné Tóth, A modelling-based assessment of EU supported natural gas projects of common interest, Energy Policy, Volume 166, 2022, 113045, ISSN 0301-4215, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2022.113045>

²⁸ Detailed information on projects and actions supported by CEF-Energy is published on the CINEA website: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/cinea-data-hubs_en

All of this has made the US an important alternative supplier and security partner. The US has indeed been instrumental in ensuring gas supply security during the supply shock triggered by Russia's strategic gas squeeze in 2021 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. None of the authors of this paper questions that US LNG supplies will remain essential for this region and, more broadly, for Europe's energy security in the immediate future.

However, while ensuring those supplies in the short-term is paramount, Europe must also focus on a medium- and long-term strategic imperative: expanding domestic renewable energy sources and rapidly reducing its structural reliance on imported energy supplies. Imported fossil gas is expensive, volatile, and vulnerable to weaponisation – a reality European consumers and economies are likely to continue facing in the coming winter months.

Reducing its dependency on gas imports will make Europe not only cleaner, but also more resilient and less vulnerable to price volatility and external pressure. This may not align with other actors' foreign (energy) policy objectives, but it is essential for Europe's prosperity and sovereignty.

Recommendations to policymakers

All EU Member States, candidate countries and the European Commission will need to strike a careful balance between, on the one hand, the short-term necessity of mitigating the impact of the US-Israeli war against Iran on European

energy prices and supply security and, on the other hand, the imperative to rapidly reduce Europe's exposure to external coercion and economic damage arising from fossil fuel supply disruptions. Being confronted with two major energy crises within five years is putting a spotlight on this. A further imperative is to strengthen Europe's capacity to act coherently and to jointly confront external pressure, including by improving EU energy and economic diplomacy in the region. As one of the world's largest energy-importing regions, Europe has greater collective leverage than is often assumed – provided it acts in unity.

The European Commission and EU Member States that did not sign the US-CEE12 JS – including three Central and Eastern European Member States – could proactively engage with governments and businesses from the European signatory countries to better understand their security and energy supply concerns and explore how these can be addressed through existing or new EU policy measures. In times of crisis, intra-EU dialogue is essential to ensure that the Union maintains and strengthens its capacity to act coherently.

Finally, given that the circumstances under which the US-CEE 12 JS was signed have been fundamentally altered, CEE leaders could revisit and rediscuss some of its contents. A first opportunity for this will arise at the upcoming Three Seas Initiative Summit in Dubrovnik on 28-29 April 2026.

Annex 1 – Text of the Joint Statement

JOINT STATEMENT ON ENHANCING SECURITY OF NATURAL GAS SUPPLY TO CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The energy ministers and representatives of The Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Bulgaria, Hungary, the Republic of Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United States of America, hereinafter referred to as the “Participants”,

RECOGNIZING the strategic relationships among the Participants and the long-standing cooperation among the Participants in the fields of energy, commerce, security, and other fields;

IN RECOGNITION OF the ongoing strong cooperation under the framework of the Partnership for Transatlantic Energy Cooperation (P-TEC) and the Three Seas Initiative (3SI);

ACKNOWLEDGING that the diversification of gas supplies and routes is vital for Europe’s energy security, and that previous supply dependencies underscored the importance of resilient and varied energy sources, and that partnership with the United States will reinforce Europe’s energy resilience and ensure secure, reliable access to natural gas.

RECALLING the threats to Europe’s energy security in 2006, 2009, 2014, 2018, and since 2022;

NOTING U.S. leadership in energy abundance, the objectives of enhanced regional integration, and enhanced transatlantic energy commerce;

CONSIDERING the increasing importance of liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects in countries such as Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, and Poland as significant investments contributing to energy security and economic prosperity in central and eastern Europe;

COMMENDING the regional efforts to enhance energy security by increasing the liquidity of regional natural gas markets and by entering into commercial contracts with U.S. LNG suppliers; and

RECOGNIZING that Ukraine possesses one of the largest underground gas storage facilities in Europe, which should be integrated into regional gas markets and commercial trading hub, supporting Ukraine’s economic recovery and reconstruction;

SUPPORTING the shared urgency of reindustrializing manufacturing capacity through strategic policy, capital deployment, and supply chain derisking, particularly to facilitate energy system and infrastructure deployment and expansion as a means of driving mutual prosperity, economic resilience, and national security;

HAVE REACHED THE FOLLOWING UNDERSTANDING:

The Participants seek to enhance the resiliency of natural gas markets, taking full advantage of existing infrastructure while making additions, if needed, to increase deliveries and build economies of scale in order to meet strategic energy priorities.

The Participants seek to continue their cooperation to promote transparent and non-discriminatory access to gas infrastructure in central and eastern Europe to enhance security of natural gas supplies for the Signatories.

The Participants intend to work to increase gas market transparency, harmonize gas exchanges, promote efficient and cost-effective tariff frameworks, and mitigate, or where possible eliminate, regulations that will hinder gas imports, the construction of new gas infrastructure, and the long-term stability of natural gas trade.

The Participants are committed to mobilizing public and private sector financing including export credit agencies and multilateral financial institutions to meet the national and regional energy objective of ensuring the secure and affordable supply of natural gas throughout central and eastern Europe.

The Participants express their intention and desire to consult regularly to implement the principles of cooperation affirmed in this Joint Statement.

The Participants are united in their commitment to strengthen Europe’s energy security and diversification, ensure a stable and resilient energy supply free from manipulation or coercion, and foster mutually beneficial opportunities for American and European companies.

Annex 2 – Where the Joint Statement text can (not) be found

This paper is based exclusively on publicly available sources. All sources cited here have been accessed by the authors on 14 April 2026. Screenshots of all relevant sources have been archived.

Greek language media reports (only sources with full US-CEE12 Joint Statement text)

As of 14 April 2026, the full (English-language) text of the US-CEE12 JS is available from at least the following sources:

- 1) https://air.euro2day.gr/media/files/1476923-TGSS%20Joint%20Statement_FINAL.pdf
euro2day.gr claims to be the leading Greek financial news portal. It is available in Greek language only.
- 2) https://www.in.gr/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/TGSS-Joint-Statement_FINAL-1.pdf
In.Gr is a large news web portal available only in Greek language.
- 3) <https://www.amna.gr/en/article/972770/Joint-Statement-by-the-US-and-12-European-countries-on-strengthening-the-security-of-natural-gas-supply-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe>
Amna.gr is the site of the Athens-Macedonian News Agency (AMNA).

These sources were identified by searching for keywords derived from the English-language media reports listed below, using standard search engines – Google and Bing.

While it is unusual for an intergovernmental joint statement signed by 13 democratic governments to be available only on the websites of three Greek news outlets, the authors of this paper consider the text provided by these sources to be plausibly original for the following reasons:

- The text across all three sources is identical and fully consistent with, though not fully reflected in, reports by some European ministries and specialised media (see below).
- The AMNA source – which provides the full US-CEE12 JS text in html – reports that it was signed on behalf of Greece by the Minister of Environment and Energy Stavros Papastavrou on the sidelines of the "Transatlantic Gas Security Summit" organised by the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace in Washington, the White House, and the US National Energy Dominance Council, and was chaired by the Minister of the Interior and Head of the US Energy Security Council Doug Burgum, and by the US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright. This account is consistent with photographs published on a news page of the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy (see below), which shows Mr Burgum, Mr Wright and room decorations bearing the insignia of the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace.
- The first two sources (euro2day.gr and in.gr) provide a PDF file with identical file names and document metadata. A screenshot of the text is included in Annex 1 of this paper. The metadata lists a file author whose name corresponds to the LinkedIn profile of a Foreign Service Officer at the US Department of State, based on the US East Coast. When viewed from a system set to Central European Time, the PDF file appears last modified on 24 February 2026 at 2:17 am, which corresponds to 8:17 pm on 23 February 2026 – the day before the US-CEE12 JS was signed, according to the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy. The metadata information is consistent with, though not proof of, a file saved by an US officer at the end of a workday in Washington on the evening prior to the signing.
- There is no plausible explanation for why someone would forge such a document.
- A plausible interpretation of the events is provided at the end of this annex, following the presentation of all relevant facts.

English language media reports (without the full US-CEE 12 Joint Statement text)

The authors of this paper became aware of the existence of the US-CEE12 JS through reports in the following three specialised regional media outlets, all published on 25 February 2026: CEE Energy News, Balkan Energy News and SeeNews.²⁹

²⁹ CEE Energy News: [12 CEE countries sign a gas supply statement with the US](#), by Emese Fabian, 25 February 2026. Balkan Green Energy News: [US landing LNG deals to supply Central and Eastern Europe](#), Balkans, 25 February. SEENews: [Twelve CEE countries, US agree to work to boost gas supply security](#), 25 February 2026.

All of these reports mention the signing of a Joint Statement and include photographs of the signing ceremony, sourced from the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy and the Serbian Ministry of Mining and Energy, respectively. None of these reports provides the full text of the Joint Statement or a direct link to it. The CEE Energy News report includes a link to a page of the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy (see next section) containing several photographs of the ceremony. Unlike similar pages, this one is available only in Bulgarian and not in English (see further details below).

Notably, no reports could be found in EU-wide or Western European media.

Official sources (without the full US-CEE 12 Joint Statement text)

Despite extensive research, including verification by native speakers of the websites of the relevant ministries in most signatory countries, the authors of this paper were unable to locate an official source providing the full text of the US-CEE12 Joint Statement.

Some ministries have officially declared the signing of a Joint Statement and reported on certain, but not all, of its contents. Others have provided more generic reports about the series of meetings during which the Statement was signed. The following are examples:

United States: A press release by the Department of Energy (DoE) states that it hosted officials from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and the European Commission on 25 February to advance work on the Vertical Gas Corridor. Participants included representatives from Energy Ministries, national regulators, and Transmission System Operators.³⁰ US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright is identifiable in the front row of the group photo of the signing ceremony, as published by the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy. However, the DoE press release does not mention the signing of a Joint Statement, nor does it reference several countries that signed the US-CEE12 JS. Instead, it mentions the European Commission, which is not a signatory. No other DoE press releases from the weeks before or after 25 February mention this Joint Statement.³¹

Although US Secretary of Interior Doug Burgum is the central figure in the signing ceremony photograph, and his presence is confirmed by numerous press reports from various European media, no mention of this meeting appears on the Department of Interior's website. Similarly, no reference is found on the websites of the White House or the Department of State.

Bulgaria: The website of the Bulgarian Ministry of Energy features two related news:

- A 24 February news stating that the Joint Statement was signed, accompanied by five photographs of the ceremony, but without providing the full text. Unlike most news on this Ministry's website, this news is available only in Bulgarian.³²
- A 25 February news on additional, apparently smaller meetings in Washington that focused on the Southern section of the Vertical Gas Corridor, featuring further photographs. This news does not mention the Joint Statement and is available in both Bulgarian and English.³³
- In the Public Consultation Portal of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, the protocol of the 23 February session authorising the Minister of Energy to sign the Joint Statement is available (in Bulgarian only). The text of the Joint Statement itself is not provided.³⁴

³⁰ US Department of Energy: [U.S. Department of Energy Brings Together Vertical Gas Corridor Countries to Strengthen Energy Coordination](#), 25 February.

³¹ For a complete list of DoE press releases, see: <https://www.energy.gov/newsroom>

³² Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of Energy: [България може да поеме водеща роля в доставките на американски LNG за Украйна и региона](#), 24 February 2026.

³³ Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of Energy: [Bulgaria enters the final phase of the vertical gas corridor on its territory affirming itself as a key route for U.S. LNG towards Ukraine and the region](#), 25 February 2026.

³⁴ Republic of Bulgaria, Acts of the Council of Ministers. Protocol Decision N° 9.5/2026. See: <https://www.strategy.bg/bg/pris/legal-information/protokolni-reseniia/168933>

Hungary: On 24 February, the Hungarian government website published two short news items on a series of meetings in Washington, both available in Hungarian only, neither of which mentioned the signing of any Joint Statement:

- “Hungary is open to diversification but will not replace existing cheap and reliable energy sources with more expensive and less reliable ones, as this would mean giving up on reducing utility costs, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó stated in Washington on Tuesday at the Transatlantic Gas Cooperation Summit.”³⁵
- “The United States is interested in Hungary's secure energy supply. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó met with US Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum and Secretary of Energy Chris Wright in Washington on Tuesday.”³⁶

Poland: The Polish Ministry of Energy published two extensive reports, available only in Polish³⁷:

- On 24 February: “Poland Strengthens Its Position as a Regional Energy Leader: Energy Minister Miłosz Motyka in Washington”
- On 25 February: “Poland: One of the Architects of Central and Eastern Europe’s New Energy Security. Minister Miłosz Motyka at the Transatlantic Gas Security Summit.

The 25 February report mentions the signing of the Joint Statement but does not provide its text or address the main critical issues discussed in this paper.

Romania: A Facebook post of 26 February by the Romanian Embassy in Washington reports about a series of high-level meetings held in Washington by Romania’s Minister of Energy, Bogdan Ivan. It reports that “Minister Ivan also participated in the Transatlantic Gas Security Summit: hosted by the National Energy Dominance Council,” but does not mention the signing of a Joint Statement.³⁸ A report by a Romanian specialised media agency contains the verbatim text of a Facebook post by Minister Bogdan Ivan, where he declared that he “signed, on behalf of Romania, the joint declaration to strengthen the security of natural gas supply in Central and Eastern Europe, within the Transatlantic Gas Security Summit, hosted by the Donald J. Trump Institute of Peace.” However this post, does not contain the text of the Joint statement and summarises it in an incomplete manner.³⁹

Interpretation

A plausible explanation for the situation is as follows: The original intention was to publish the US-CEE12 JS. Some European signatories, likely including the Greek government, prepared an outreach campaign, which involved distributing the PDF of the final draft to selected media under embargo. At the last minute, the signatories decided to maintain a low profile regarding the Joint Statement, at least internationally, and to restrict access to its full text. At the same time, national government were left free to announce publicly that a Joint Statement had been signed, partially presenting its contents as they considered more suitable.

However, the full text became findable via standard search engines. It is possible that the Greek media outlets intended to make the document accessible only to a limited audience - such as internal stakeholders or individuals with the direct link - without realising that search engines would index and publicly surface the content, thus inadvertently publishing it.

³⁵ The Government of Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: [Magyarország nyitott a diverzifikációra, de nem fogja lecserélni az olcsó és megbízható energiaforrásokat](#), 24 February 2026.

³⁶ The Government of Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: [Az Egyesült Államok érdekelt Magyarország biztonságos energiaellátásában](#), 24 February 2026.

³⁷ Ministertwo Energii: [Polska umacnia pozycję regionalnego lidera energetycznego: Minister Energii Miłosz Motyka w Waszyngtonie](#), 24 february 2026; [Polska jednym z architektów nowego bezpieczeństwa energetycznego Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej](#). Minister Miłosz Motyka na Transatlantic Gas Security Summit, 25 February 2026.

³⁸ Romanian Embassy to the US, Facebook post of 26 February 2026: <https://www.facebook.com/romanian.embassy.us/posts/this-week-romanas-minister-of-energy-bogdan-ivan-was-in-washington-dc-for-high-/1326460232841701/>

³⁹ Bogdan Tudorache: Bogdan Ivan: [Romanian companies can earn profits of up to 250 mln. euro annually if we complete the Vertical Corridor](#), in energynomics, 25 February 2026.