



Greenpeace as a Non-State Actor in Politics: Lobbying Against Fossil Fuel Expansion in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks into the activities of Greenpeace as a non-state actor in environmental governance within the European Union, with an emphasis on the organization's lobbying for fossil fuels reduction over the past two decades. Within the scope of the topic, this paper will look at the use of different kinds of strategies, including but not limited to research, public mobilization, coalition formation, and institutional participation. This will be done with reference to the concept of advocacy coalitions and using the case study of Greenpeace's activities related to reducing the impact of fossil fuels. In particular, it is possible to say that the organization uses its capacity for both insider and outsider lobbying and, thus, can influence the policy process from within and from outside. It can be seen that Greenpeace has succeeded in its attempts to shape the policy debate, stimulate energy transitions, and reduce the dominance of fossil fuel industry. At the same time, it cannot be said that the results of its activities have been fully effective because of different kinds of structural constraints. The findings suggest that although non-state actors like Greenpeace play a critical role in accelerating climate governance, their influence is complementary rather than decisive, requiring strong governmental action to achieve long-term decarbonization goals.



Introduction

The European Union is at a crossroads in its environmental governance, experiencing an unprecedented pressure to make rapid progress in the transition of its energy use out of fossil fuels, while it addresses the geopolitical conflict and energy security issues. In such a complicated environment, the non-state actors have also turned out to be the key actors in the policy outcomes and the discourse. Greenpeace is one such powerful organization that has been the thorn in the flesh in relation to the spread of fossil fuel in Europe. There is a statistical reason as to why this

transition is urgent: as of 2024, the coal, oil, and natural gas fossil fuels continue to constitute 67.4 percent of the total amount of available energy in the EU, but the percentage is steadily decreasing (Author, 2024). The number of hard coal consumed has decreased significantly compared to 176,019 thousand tonnes in 2019 to an estimated 128,000 thousand tonnes in 2023 by 27.3 percent (Author, 2024). On the other hand, at the same time, renewable energy has become the 24.6 percent of gross final energy consumption in 2023, almost twice as much as fifteen years ago (Author, 2025). These changes are the achievements of the advocacy campaigns, as well as, the continued reliance on fossil fuels that environmental groups such as Greenpeace have objections to. This essay discusses the role of Greenpeace as a non-state actor in EU politics, in particular, it will be discussing the lobbying campaigns by Greenpeace against the growth of fossil fuels over the last 20 years. The organization is a unique alternative of transnational advocacy, a blend of direct action, evidence-driven research, strategic coalition- building and institutional engagement in order to impact policy processes at various governance levels (Koliev et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). The knowledge of the strategies, tools, and the performance of Greenpeace is a good admission of how organizations in the civil society may find their way through a complex EU policy- making system and still achieve their ambitious environmental goals.

What is important about learning of the advocacy of Greenpeace is not only the fact that it documents the activities of the organization, but also the fact that it enlightens one on the dynamics of influence of non- state actors in environmental governance itself. The European Union has also come to appreciate the importance of using non-governmental organizations in making policies, establishing institutional mechanisms, which presumably welcome civil society involvement (Selin & VanDeveer, 2015; Wang et al., 2025). The effectiveness of this kind of participation is, however, disputed especially when organizations threaten the interests of the incumbents industrialists that are well-endowed with political and economic resources. The Greenpeace campaigns targeting the growth of fossil fuels can help to understand the potential and constraints of the power of non-state actors to reveal the nature of the complex advocacy tactics used by environmental NGOs to engage with well-funded industry players in enabling policy contexts.

Characteristics of Greenpeace as A Non-State Actor

Historical Development and Organizational Structure

Greenpeace was established in 1971 in Vancouver, Canada, as a result of the environmental activism and anti-nuclear activism. What started as an extension of a grassroots movement of activists protesting the nuclear weapons testing was transformed to be one of the largest global environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS). Greenpeace International is an organization that was founded in 1979 which functions with a network of national and regional offices and a big presence in the European Union. Its activity in Europe is especially strong, where it has its own chapters in the key EU member countries, Germany, France, and Spain, among other countries, which makes it a major player in the European environmental politics.

Being a non-state organization, Greenpeace has a special place in the world of environmental governance. It is not a government agency or any individual company that tries to make profits but instead, it is a members organization with a stated purpose of protecting the environment and establishing peace (Affwa et al., 2025). The specified position provides Greenpeace with some benefits and limitations to its advocacy efforts. The organization organizes membership base of millions of supporters in Europe and all over the world which gives it financial resources, volunteer capacity as well as grassroots political power. At the same time, its position as a non-formal institution implies that it has to exercise its influence, not by being able to make final decisions, but by other mechanisms.

Greenpeace has a transnational nature as seen in its organizational structure. The global strategy and campaign priorities are arranged by Greenpeace International, but regional and national offices conduct campaigns which are adjusted to local and national political situation. This multilevel form allows Greenpeace to work successfully within the complex system of EU governance, but using different structures, which are the European Commission institutions, European Parliament, national government, and local stakeholders. The organization has separate advocacy groups in Brussels who specialise in environmental policy in the EU which enables it to be directly involved in policy-making processes in addition to being unbound by institutional practices as well.

Financial Resources and Capacity

Greenpeace is well-funded, and its budget is obtained mostly on an individual donation, as well as foundation basis, as opposed to government funding, which the organization has highlight in its list of essential factors that renders it autonomous. The Greenpeace International and other related organizations have annual budgets exceeding several hundred million euros, which is enabling them to run their campaigns, research, and advocacy structures at a sophisticated level. (Michael, 2023). This financial capacity distinguishes Greenpeace from many smaller environmental organizations and enables it to sustain long-term campaigns against entrenched industrial interests, a critical advantage in addressing climate and energy issues characterized by path dependencies and incumbent power.

The organization invests significantly in research and technical expertise, maintaining scientific capacity to develop credible evidence challenging fossil fuel expansion. This combination of financial resources and scientific capacity positions Greenpeace as a particularly influential non-state actor within environmental governance, capable of competing with industry actors in the provision of technical information and policy analysis. However, the organization's financial independence requires continuous fundraising efforts, which shapes its strategic choices and campaign visibility organizations must maintain public engagement to sustain donor support.

Ideological Positioning and Core Values

Greenpeace has a clear ideological basis of environmental protection, nuclear disarmament and social justice. The principles of organization focus on challenging influential industrial and governmental forces to reveal the damage to the environment and force changes in policies (Cremer, 2025) This is one of the ideological orientations that separate Greenpeace with other more pragmatic environmental organizations that are ready to compromise on collaborative problem-solving with industry and government. The fact that Greenpeace has placed itself as a challenger of existing actors demonstrates its realization that the major change to be brought about regarding the environment environment would have to be grounded on fighting existing interest as opposed to satisfying them.

The strategy used by the organization is a mixture of what scholars call the outsider and insider strategies. Greenpeace being an outsider does the public campaigns, media work and direct action to mobilize the popular opinion and generate political pressure (Wen et al., 2026). At the same time, Greenpeace uses its Brussels office and network of policy experts to conduct institutional lobbying, technical consultation and coalitions building-activities typical of insider advocacy. Such a twofold effort can be seen as a strategic calculation, according to which to be effective in influence, it is necessary to have external pressure through mass campaigns and internal involvement in policy work (Kazanskaia, 2025).

Profile of Greenpeace's Activities in European Energy Politics

Scope and Scale of Operations

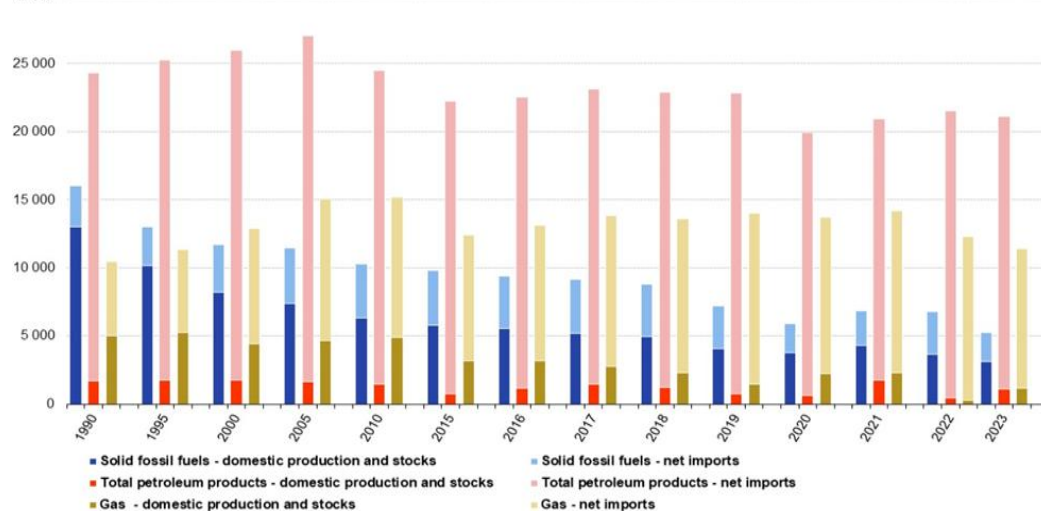
The Greenpeace action in the European Union covers various aspects of the environmental governance and the fossil fuel development is one of many areas of priority issues. The company has been consistently focused on energy transition, climate change, and resource extraction throughout the last 20 years, and it has turned out to be an outspoken proponent of speedy decarbonization and renewable energy development (Suhardi et al., 2024). Greenpeace has also held campaigns in the European setting on the issue of fossil fuel infrastructure expansion such as opposing coal mining, natural gas infrastructure construction and oil and gas mining and exploration initiatives.

The organization's activities within EU governance are substantial and multifaceted. Greenpeace maintains representation in policy networks addressing energy, climate, and environmental issues at both European and national levels. The organization participates in public consultations, provides technical input on proposed regulations, and engages in coalition-building with allied organizations. Simultaneously, Greenpeace conducts public advocacy campaigns designed to mobilize public opinion and create political pressure for policy change. These activities reflect recognition that influence in EU governance requires engagement across multiple levels and through diverse channels. The scale of advocacy is substantial: the EU's energy dependency remains significant, with 90 percent of natural gas demand and 94.9 percent of oil demand met through imports in 2023 (Author, 2026).

Energy dependency by fuel, EU, in selected years, 1990-2023

Petajoule (PJ)

30 000



Note: the upper part of the column shows net imports with respect to gross inland energy consumption (including international maritime bunkers), which is represented by total column height.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_s)

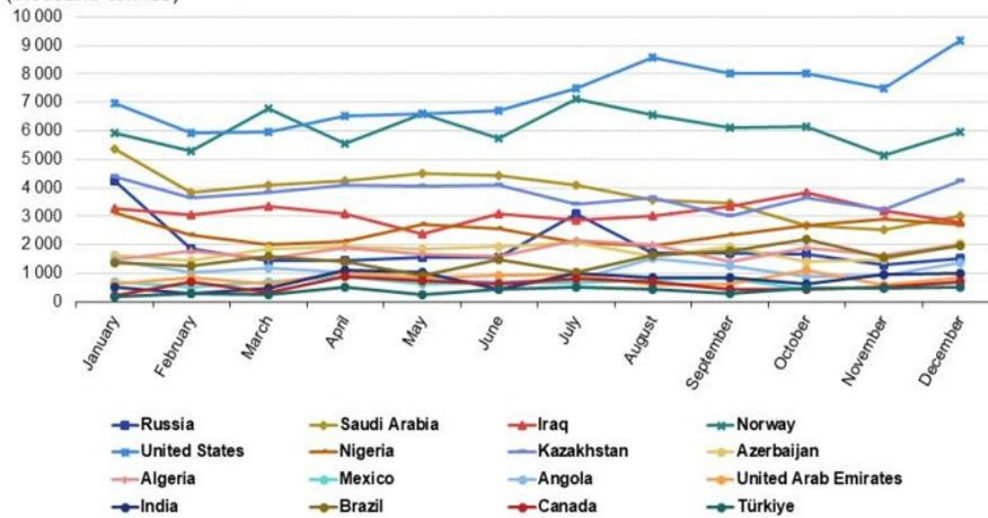
eurostat

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Energy_statistics_an_overview#Energy_dependency

Russian oil and gas imports to the EU have been dramatically curtailed following the 2022 Ukraine invasion, with Russian crude oil imports to the EU declining by 86.5 percent between 2021 and 2023 from 171,302 thousand tonnes to 23,107 thousand tonnes (Author, 2024). These energy security developments have created political space for Greenpeace and allied organizations to argue for accelerated renewable energy transition rather than diversified fossil fuel sourcing.

Imports of oil and petroleum products by partner country, 2023

(thousand tonnes)



Source: Eurostat (nrg_ti_oilm)



<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/96531.pdf>

Geographic Focus and Campaign Priorities

Within the European Union, Greenpeace has concentrated campaign efforts in regions with significant fossil fuel infrastructure and in policy venues where energy decisions are made. Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom (historically) have been focal points for Greenpeace campaigns addressing coal mining and coal-fired power generation. Central and Eastern European countries dependent on fossil fuels for energy security have also received campaign attention from Greenpeace organizations concerned with coal and natural gas expansion (Newell & Adow, 2022) More recently, as renewable energy has expanded and coal's role has declined, Greenpeace campaigns have increasingly targeted natural gas infrastructure and the narrative around gas as a "transition fuel."

The organization's campaign priorities have evolved in response to shifting energy dynamics and policy opportunities. During the early 2000s, Greenpeace campaigned extensively against coal expansion and fossil fuel power plants. As the EU established increasingly ambitious climate

emphasis toward challenging gas infrastructure development and opposing projects such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals, which the organization characterizes as locking in fossil fuel dependency for decades. This evolution reflects strategic calculation regarding where advocacy efforts are most likely to influence policy outcomes and prevent fossil fuel expansion.

Engagement with EU Institutions

The experience of Greenpeace in its relations with EU institutions indicates its ability to have complex institutional relations as well as the restrictions that come along with being a non-state actor. The organization maintains a Vienna office that also has policy analysts and advocates to keep track of what is happening in the European Commission, in the European Parliament, and the Council. Greenpeace also makes formal comments on proposed regulations through technical consultation, which tends to offer research-based commentary on draft rules on energy, climate, and environmental protection (Jordan et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2026).

Greenpeace's engagement with the European Parliament has been particularly significant, as the Parliament has emerged as a venue where environmental concerns find greater resonance than in other EU institutions. The organization works with sympathetic members of the European Parliament (MEPs), providing technical expertise and helping to frame climate and energy issues. Environmental coalitions often emerge around particular legislative initiatives, with Greenpeace serving as a key coalition partner providing research capacity and public campaign support (Ydersbond, 2025).

Analysis of Greenpeace's Anti-Fossil Fuel Expansion Campaign

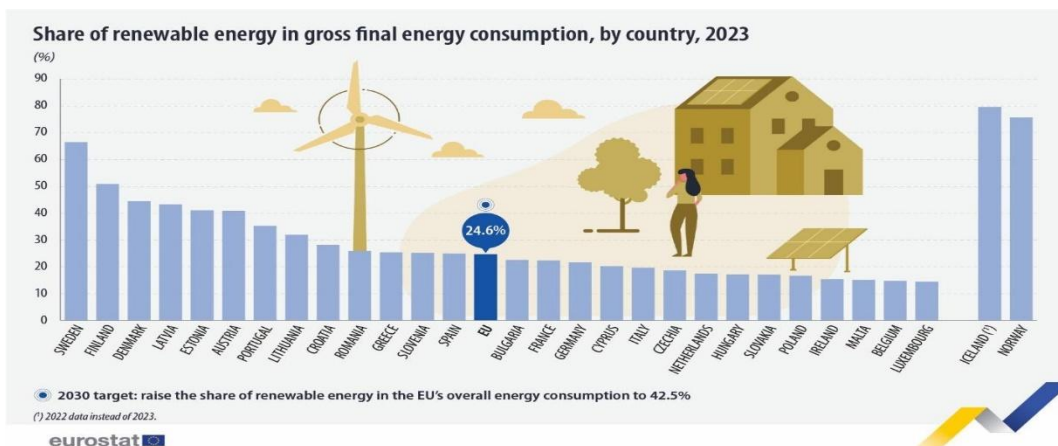
Campaign Issue Definition and Goals

Greenpeace's core contention regarding fossil fuel expansion in the European Union can be synthesized as follows: continued expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure contradicts the European Union's stated climate and energy objectives, locks in carbon-intensive energy systems for decades, wastes capital that should be invested in renewable alternatives, and perpetuates the political influence of incumbent fossil fuel industries over energy policy (Arcuri et al., 2024). The organization's fundamental goal is to end fossil fuel expansion throughout the EU, specifically targeting new coal mines, coal power plants, natural gas infrastructure, and oil and gas extraction projects.

More specifically, Greenpeace has pursued campaigns with specific, measurable objectives linked to identifiable policy outcomes. When advocating against particular projects, Greenpeace campaigns target concrete outcomes: preventing approval of specific infrastructure projects, eliminating government subsidies for fossil fuel industries, and establishing binding legal commitments to fossil fuel phase-outs.

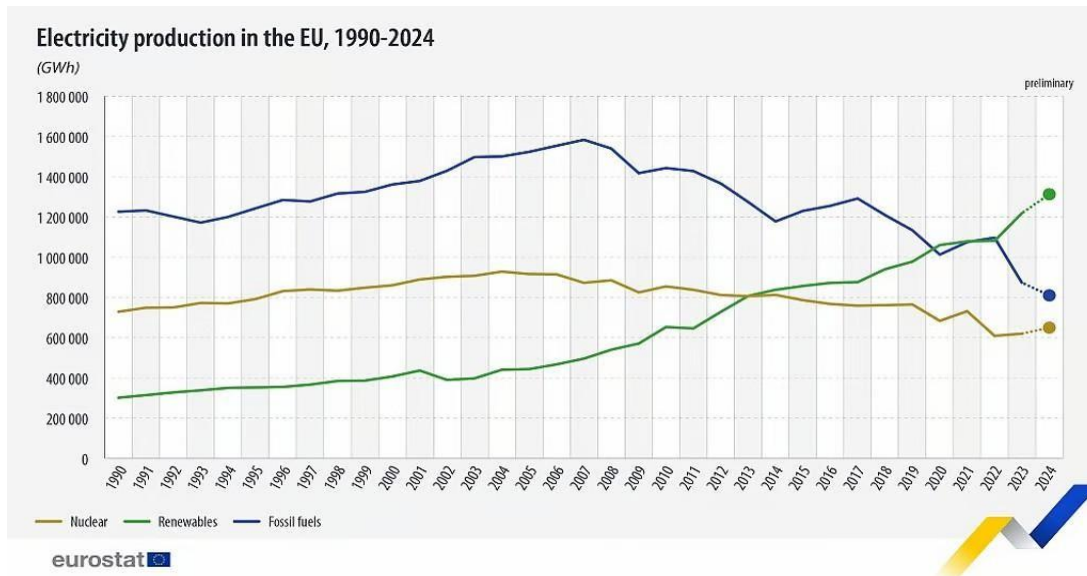
Simultaneously, Greenpeace advances broader systemic arguments regarding the necessity of rapid energy transition, the economic viability of renewable alternatives, and the imperative of climate action.

The framing of fossil fuel expansion as inconsistent with climate commitments reflects Greenpeace's effort to leverage the European Union's own policy frameworks and stated values. The EU has established legally binding climate targets, including the European Green Deal framework promising climate neutrality by 2050 and a 55 percent emissions reduction by 2030. Moreover, the EU has set an ambitious renewable energy target requiring 42.5 percent of gross final energy consumption to come from renewable sources by 2030 (Author, 2025).



<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/edn-20250612>

Current progress demonstrates movement toward this target: renewable electricity generation reached 1,313 TWh in 2024, representing 47.3 percent of all EU electricity production, with solar photovoltaic generation increasing by 150.2 percent between 2019 and 2024 (Osuma & Yusuf, 2025). Greenpeace utilizes these official commitments and actual achievements as reference points, arguing that fossil fuel expansion contradicts established EU policy and binding legal obligations. This framing strategy attempts to transform fossil fuel expansion from a matter of economic preference into a question of legal compliance and institutional integrity.



<https://taiyangnews.info/markets/eurostat-2024-european-union-energy-mix>

Campaign Stages and Timeline

Greenpeace has been involved with fossil fuel politics in the European Union in distinct stages that are indicative of overall change in energy politics, climate anxiety, and policy prospects. In the early 2000s, after the commitment of the Kyoto Protocol, Greenpeace paid much attention to coal phase-out campaigns, organizing the opposition of people to the coal-generation power plants that were planned to be built, and the regulation against coal-fired generation. These campaigns were being held under a situation where the environmental impacts of coal were being realized more, although the fossil fuel industries and governments that were relying on coal was an influential political force in their way (Sun et al., 2025).

A second step, which was approximately in the 2010s, is characterized by the growing interest of Greenpeace in natural gas infrastructure, especially as coal started to fall further in Western Europe. The group launched campaigns against the planned LNG import infrastructure, especially in Central Europe, describing natural gas as an illusion that would continue to maintain fossil fuel lock-in. This was strategic accommodation to the evolving energy forces, with gas industries positioning themselves as clean climate

change transition fuels when they were in fact increasing the quantity of fossil fuel infrastructure (von Malmborg, 2025). Greenpeace's response involved both technical critiques of gas's carbon intensity and broader arguments regarding the imperative of transition directly to renewables rather than through fossil fuel intermediates.

The campaigns of Greenpeace have more recently been directed towards seeing ambitious decarbonization policies put in place, against the weakening of regulations that could allow further

expansion of fossil fuel use, and the government policy that directly supports fossil fuel industries. The energy crisis and Russia- Ukraine conflict provided new avenues of campaigns to Greenpeace as they claimed that fossil fuel independence demanded fast transition to renewable energy instead of more alternative sources of fossil fuel(Bonafé, 2022)

Campaign Tools and Strategies

Greenpeace has a wide range of advocacy tools that it uses to shape policy outcomes in various ways. These instruments include research and evidence creation, citizen campaigning and media appeals, institutional lobbying, coalition-making as well as direct action.

An advocacy approach of Greenpeace is relying on the use of research and technical expertise. The organization has scientific capability to draw up reports on the analysis of fossil fuel expansion projects, measurement of greenhouse gas emission levels, and recording of economic impacts of fossil fuel infrastructure lock-in. These technical products are used in various ways: they create authority information in policy discussions, create media coverage that conveys the positions of Greenpeace, and make the organization a trusted participant in policy debates. Greenpeace is trying to change the context of information on which policy decisions are made by generating independent research that disputes industry claims and government assumptions(Koliev et al., 2024)

The other important element of the Greenpeace strategy is public campaigns. The group uses its membership and other wider constituencies of people to create political pressure over specific issues (Nazir et al., 2025). Public campaigns are a mix of direct action like protests against fossil fuel infrastructure projects or protests at government offices and media outreach and social media use. These actions have a variety of purposes: they help keep Greenpeace visible as an organization and keep the members active, publicize the policy stances of the organization to wider groups, impose political costs on political elites perceived to be helping the expansion of fossil fuels, and provide media coverage that brings the environmental issues to the fore. (Koliev et al., 2023).

A third dimension of strategic dimension is institutional lobbying. Greenpeace professionals working in the EU policy area have the chance to meet with members of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the government, and would offer their technical analysis and policy suggestions to these individuals. Such institutional involvement takes place via institutional consultation, informal gatherings, and the representation in advisory organs on energy and climate policy. Greenpeace aims at influencing directly policy design and regulatory development through these mechanisms.

Greenpeace has found coalition-building as an important factor in its performance in EU politics. The organization does not campaign alone but also in larger groups of environmental organizations, climate action groups, and progressive policy advocates. These alliances increase the political influence on the policy-makers and give the impression of wider support towards environmental standpoints(von Malmborg, 2025)Greenpeace often serves as a lead coalition partner, providing research capacity, public campaign infrastructure, and strategic direction to multi-organizational campaigns.

Coalitions and Alliances

The campaigns of Greenpeace against the growth of fossil fuels exist within the frames of the alliances of other environmental and climate-related organizations. These partnerships include international environmental NGOs, European-based environmentalists, climate action alliances, and scientific networks. The European Environmental Bureau, WWF, Transport and Environment, the

climate action network Europe and many national environmental organizations are some of the core partners in the fossil fuel campaigns by Greenpeace.

Depending on the situation of the campaign, these coalitions are structured and composed in different ways. Other coalitions are grouped on the basis of a project or policy agenda that enables organizations to align in the context of only a short time. Other coalitions represent the longer term relationships relating to common values and strategic goals. Such partnerships increase the power of the Greenpeace because they combine resources, experience, and political resources. They also give an illusion of larger social agreement on energy transition, which provides legitimacy to environmental stands.

A particularly significant coalition emerged around maritime transport decarbonization, where Greenpeace partnered with Transport & Environment and allied organizations to advocate for ambitious fuel regulations (Malmborg, 2024). Similarly, coalitions have formed around specific infrastructure projects, with Greenpeace joining with local environmental organizations and affected communities to oppose LNG terminals or coal mines. These localized coalitions leverage local knowledge and community legitimacy while benefiting from Greenpeace's technical expertise and campaign infrastructure.

Campaign Effects and Policy Outcomes

Causality and attribution, in addition to dynamics of the change in policy, should be evaluated in more detail in order to determine the impact of the Greenpeace campaigns. Greenpeace cannot be accused of acting in single handedly bringing about policy changes as there are many factors leading to changes in energy policy and one of them is the economic interest, favor of the government, opinion of the masses and the technical aspect of the energy systems. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the policy discussions have been influenced by the campaigns of the Greenpeace, in addition to the policy outcomes that are achieved through the campaigns in a multi-dimensional way.

Greenpeace has performed excellently in shifting the agendas of fossil fuels to the policy level of framing in the European policy. With the context where fossil fuel industries once established growth as economically necessary and manageable by environmental regulation, Greenpeace campaigns have reversed the rhetoric to demonstrate the incompatibility which emerged between a more fossil fuel expansion and EU climate responsibility (Dinan et al., 2025). This rebranding has changed its politics in terms of support of fossil fuel, with a clear backing of expansion becoming more expensive politically.

Regarding the undeniable policy outcomes, the strength of Greenpeace may be observed in several cases. Although causality is debated-economic, the anti-coal campaigns in the organization have been observed to contribute to acceleration of coal power reduction in Western Europe although it was also caused by low renewable energy cost. Despite the fact that it has not prevented the development of LNG and gas infrastructure projects, the Greenpeace opposition has decreased the size of them and delayed the development of some such projects. Following the war between Russia and Ukraine, despite the energy crisis, the European policy has been inclined towards contradicting new fossil fuel development that Greenpeace was against, which shows that the organization had a big voice in political opposition to fossil fuel lock-in.

The policies of the organization have influenced the procedures of the European policy too, by establishing Greenpeace as a credible source of information in the European policy debates concerning the energy policy area. The European Commission officials and the members of staff of the Parliament use the analysis of Greenpeace as a regular consultant and prepare a policy

proposal, which presupposes that the organization has already achieved the image of recognized specialists. Such institutional conformity will give Greenpeace an upper hand in policy specifications and planning although other players will decide on bigger political outcomes.

Methods of Exerting Influence

Advocacy Coalition Framework Perspective

Greenpeace exists in what scholars refer to as advocacy coalitions networks of actors who hold similar policy beliefs and coordinate their political strategies (Malmborg, 2023). In the European energy and climate policy there is an environmental coalition which focuses on rapid decarbonization against the old fashioned coalition which protects interests of fossil fuel. Greenpeace is one of the central leaders of the pro-decarbonization alliance that offers research, capacity-building, and political pressure and collaborates with the government and non-government partners.

The major contribution of Greenpeace in these coalitions is to create and spread evidence on the irrelevance of fossil fuel growth to climate goals, create and promote policy options that focus on renewable energy, and continue political pressure on governments and policymakers to adopt ambitious climate policies. The organization is what the scholars refer to as a policy entrepreneur, trying to control the policy images and change the political agendas towards environmental directions (Malmborg, 2024).

Public Opinion and Transnational Politics

The campaigns of Greenpeace take place along two main channels referred to in the literature about the effectiveness of INGOs: mobilizing popular opinion to impose political costs on governments and acting in transnational politics by coordinating the action across the boundaries (Koliev et al., 2023). The membership base of the Greenpeace is a great political resource, which is established by millions of Europeans who back up the environmental agenda of the organization with the financial resources and the ability to organize the popular protest.

Greenpeace aims to build fossil fuel expansion as a politically relevant topic among European citizens through media campaigns and advocacy of the issue at the grassroots. According to opinion polling, there is strong support among the European population in climate action and the phase-out of fossil fuels, which are the campaigns that Greenpeace campaigns support and reinforce. Political leaders advocating the use of fossil fuels suffer the consequences of electorate when voting masses focus on taking action on climate, developing incentives to change policy in line with environmental policies. The contribution of Greenpeace in ensuring the continued salience of the issue of fossil fuels to the masses indirectly affects the consequences of policies, through democratic systems of accountability.

The transnational approach to advocacy allows Greenpeace to operate on a national scope by using the institutional framework of the European Union. Through the same engagement with both the EU institutions and the national governments, Greenpeace provides the policy entrepreneurs in the various governments to further the environmental agenda by referring to the EU level environmental coalitions and the opinion of the people. EU directives are new sources of centralities in advocacy among member countries and Greenpeace uses these avenues to develop transnational pressure on policy-makers.

Coalition-Building and Strategic Alliances

As mentioned in the above discussions, the influence of Greenpeace is largely reliant on the

coalition- building with other allied organizations. These alliances have several strategic purposes: they combine resources and experience, bring the impression of larger support of environmental positions, and produce various political pressure points on the further expansion of fossil fuels (Michael, 2023). Alliances between Greenpeace, scientific networks, other environmental interest groups as well as progressive policy analysts, allow the environmental framing of policy agendas to prevail.

The formation of coalitions is not automatic but entails the choice of strategy. Greenpeace chooses to collaborate selectively with entities with whom they have common environmental interests even though the two organizations retain organizational autonomy and campaign identity. The organization occasionally coordinates coalitions of strategic guidance and campaign infrastructure, and in other settings it pours expertise in specialized information on larger environmental coalitions. This is made possible by the fact that Greenpeace can be involved in several policy areas and campaign situations at the same time.

Insider and Outsider Strategies

Greenpeace uses both insider and outsider advocacy tactics in that they are both a lobbying group that has direct access to the policy-making process and an external political pressure mobilizing group. Such a mixture is indicative of calculation, as the foundations of effective influence should be both institutional involvement and foreign political impact (Kazanskaia, 2025). Insider strategies are associated with involvement into policy consultations, technical expertise offered to policy-makers and negotiation on policy designing. The out sider tactics would include public campaigns, media participation, constituency mobilization and direct action.

This two-fold strategy allows Greenpeace to exert pressure in two directions at the same time. In the interactions between the policy-makers and the environmental demands, where the policy-makers oppose environmental demands using institutional procedures, the external pressure generated by the public campaign of Greenpeace raises the costs of political resistance. On the other hand, as the institutional possibilities of influence arise, the policy knowledge of Greenpeace enables the organization to influence the policy formulation and execution. The combination of the insider and outsider strategies is an indication of complex knowledge about the policy processes and the ability to use different influence mechanisms in a strategic manner.

Evaluation of Campaign Effectiveness

Challenges in Assessing Effectiveness

In order to assess the success of Greenpeace in stopping the growth of fossil fuel or speeding up the energy transition, one has to deal with the methodological issues. The causality of energy transitions is challenging to determine because it is caused by numerous factors such as economic changes, changed technology, state policy, and non-state advocacy. To be able to attribute certain consequences of Greenpeace activity, one inevitably resorts to counterfactual arguments concerning what would otherwise have happened without the activity of the organization. There are also several criteria by which effectiveness can be measured do we measure policy outcomes, changes in public opinion, institutional access, or campaign visibility which all provide a different conclusion about effectiveness.

In acknowledgement of these methodological issues, the analysis has shown that there are multiple dimensions of influence of Greenpeace. The organization has proven itself to be an influential policy maker, added its voice to the mass opinion in favor of the phase-out of fossil fuels, blocked or postponed a few fossil fuel projects and secured the rank of an acceptable policy maker. These

achievements are significant impact, but they are not as dramatic a social transformation as would be needed by the elimination of fossil fuels.

Policy-Level Impacts

Greenpeace's campaigns have contributed to policy developments restricting fossil fuel expansion within the European Union. The organization's advocacy has supported the acceleration of coal phase-out timelines across member states, contributed to tighter regulatory constraints on new fossil fuel infrastructure, and influenced the framing of energy transition debates around rapid decarbonization. While economic factors and renewable energy cost reductions have also driven these outcomes, evidence suggests that Greenpeace's campaigns accelerated and strengthened environmental policy by mobilizing political constituencies supporting fossil fuel restriction (Koliev et al., 2023).

Certain policy results indicate influence of Greenpeace along with other political influences. Enhanced climate targets of the European Union, such as the 2050 climate neutrality ambition and 2030 reduction aims are policy changes in favor of the policy positions of environmental advocates through which Greenpeace campaigns have made progress. The organization has continued to lobby against gas infrastructure, which has limited the growth of LNG even though the industry has encouraged it, and the government also partially supports it. The regulatory frameworks are more and more environmental-conscious, which Greenpeace has made a policy debate higher.

However, substantial limits to Greenpeace's effectiveness remain evident. Despite the organization's campaigns, fossil fuel industries continue operating within Europe, and some member states maintain coal generation or pursue gas expansion. Fossil fuel subsidies persist despite Greenpeace opposition: globally, fossil fuel subsidies reached \$5.9 trillion in 2020, equivalent to 6.8 percent of global GDP, with the EU accounting for approximately \$289 billion in subsidies (Coady et al., 2019). At the EU level, implicit and explicit fossil fuel subsidies continue through underpricing and tax policies that Greenpeace actively opposes. Some fossil fuel projects initially opposed by Greenpeace have proceeded despite public campaigns. These limitations reflect the substantial political and economic power of incumbent fossil fuel interests, the technical challenges of energy transition, and the constraints that non-state actors face in influencing policy outcomes.

Public Opinion and Consciousness-Raising

The impact of Greenpeace on consciousness-raising on the problem of climate and fossil fuels is significant. The European populace is becoming more climate-conscious and it endorses the notion of fossil fuel phase-out, which is also in line with the advocacy of Greenpeace. Although it would be improper media coverage to attribute the shift in public opinion to the campaigns by Greenpeace alone, scientific report, the experience of living with the environmental change, and other contributing factors shapes the consciousness of the population, making fossil fuel issues continue to be of political relevance and put into perspective in order to promote social action toward the environmental protection.

The direct actions, media campaigns, and the research publications of the organization have kept the issues of fossil fuel expansion in the limelight even though the energy policy issues have been given little attention in the media. The fact that Greenpeace has been able to create media attention over environmental issues is evidence that the organization has organizational communications capacity and efficacy in the manner in which it frames issues that appeal to the attention of the masses. This penetration of communications is converted to political power since policy-makers are aware of the general concern towards climate and fossil fuel problems.

Institutional Integration and Policy Influence

Greenpeace has been able to integrate institutionally in the policy processes of Europe though it is an outsider organization. The organization is represented in Brussels policy networks and it is involved in consultation processes as well as giving technical input to the development of the policies. The staff of the European Commission and the parliament is considering Greenpeace as a reliable source of information on the energy and environmental policy. This institutionalization is an indication of the success of the organization as a valid policy actor.

Integration brings opportunity to have an influence on policies, however it also brings about restrictions. With the institution of organization, there is the pressure of being pragmatic, comprising their goals, and being co-opted by policy process. Greenpeace has been able to tread these tensions by staying organizationally independent but involving institutions by not being encompassed by policy processes and using institutional opportunities to influence other institutions. Nonetheless, institutional integration can be obtained at the expense of the confrontational style that originally helped Greenpeace to acquire its unique flavor.

Limitations and Structural Constraints

Significant environmental constraints to the performance of Greenpeace indicate the larger structural process of the energy systems, the power of the incumbents, and the limitations of non-state actors. The fossil fuel companies have a lot of monetary assets, political ties as well as the benefit of established infrastructure that serves their goals (Nazir et al., 2026; Paul et al., 2017). Governments rely on the income of fossil fuels and have political constituencies that rely on the employment in fossil fuel industries hence the government has incentives to act in the interest of fossil fuels even after the government has committed to climate action. Such structural aspects limit the capacity of the advocacy organizations to do so based on campaigns and institutional involvement.

The technical nature of energy systems poses path dependencies that make it difficult to move fast out of fossil fuel. Infrastructure investments are also characterized by long life cycle of the assets which poses lock-in effects that limit quick transformation. Such technical limitations cannot be subject to policy advocacy and are structural processes that cannot be achieved through non-state campaigns (Arcuri et al., 2024). The time-frames needed to energy transition might be longer than the political processes can achieve the decarbonization that climate science suggests is needed in a short period.

Also, Greenpeace is limited in terms of constituency and geographical coverage. Membership of the organization is concentrated in Western Europe and other countries with high incomes, which restricts its ability to affect the policy in Eastern Europe or other areas with different political structures and energy reliance. The nature of international fossil fuel industries has seen them working in various regulatory jurisdictions thereby facilitating regulatory arbitrage limiting the success of jurisdiction-specific campaigns. The European focus of Greenpeace limits its ability to combat the growth of fossil fuels globally, and could hinder the success of the organization as the industries-heavy on energy seek to locate their production in areas with less stringent environmental laws.

Conclusions

Greenpeace is a good example of how non-state actors can and cannot impact the environmental governance. As an international environmental group that is a member organisation, Greenpeace has formulated advanced tactics involving the harmonisation of mass campaign,

research and technical skills, institutional involvement, and coalition development to resist the growth of fossil fuel across the European Union. The campaigns of the organization have proven to have influenced policy discussion, helped to shape the opinion of the masses towards decarbonization, become an accepted policy actor, and affect the direction of energy policy toward renewable energy as the primary focus and the elimination of fossil fuels.

Nevertheless, the performance of the organization is still constrained by the structural factors such as incumbent industrial power, the reliance of governments on the receipt of fossil fuels, the dependency on technical paths in the energy systems, and the lack of resources and access to politics that non-state actors have with respect to corporate and governmental actors (Michael, 2023). The campaigns by Greenpeace have helped to limit the spread of fossil fuels and hasten transition discourse, though it has not stopped the operations of fossil fuel industries, or the government support of fossil fuel development. These structural constraints are manifested in the disparity between the advocacy of the organization that wants to fully and quickly eliminate fossil fuel, and the actual rate of energy transition.

Organizational learning and strategic adaptation is indicated by the development of Greenpeace campaigns over the last twenty years. The organization has also diverted attention on campaigns because of the shift in energy politics no longer is it focused on coal campaigns but the opposition to natural gas infrastructure since coal has become unviable. This capacity of adaptation is an indicator of the institutional development and strategic planning ability of Greenpeace. At the same time, the organization has upheld fundamental values as to the need to decarbonize the organization in a very fast and comprehensive manner, in spite of the political pressures on concession and gradualism.

The two-pronged insider-outsider policy of Greenpeace is a valuable change of direction in advocacy strategies. The combination of institutional action and external pressure by the campaign gives the organization the added leverage of increasing their influence opportunities and establishing several pressure points against the expansion of fossil fuels. This is done to realize that policy change needs institutional persuasion as well as external political coercion, and that successful advocacy must be conducted both inside and outside institutionalized governing structures.

The example of Greenpeace and its actions opposing the spread of fossil fuel in the European Union adds to the general insight on how the influence of non-state actors can be applied to the policy outcome. Non- state organizations such as Greenpeace, instead of controlling policy by direct decision-making power, control policy in new ways: shaping public opinion, informing policy protocols with technical information, mobilizing constituencies that generate electoral incentives to change policy, and take part in coalition- building, which networks policy pressure (Koliev et al., 2023). These mechanisms also do not always work based on the political circumstances, agreement of non-state advocacy with the popular view and progressive political departments, and the lack of an intense counter-power of interests on the part of the incumbent.

To achieve climate objectives with the European Union transition to energy, the pace and extent of phase- out of fossil fuels should increase significantly faster than is seen in current trends (Newell et al., 2022). The campaigns by Greenpeace usher in political constituencies that will favor such acceleration and enable it to counter the move by the fossil fuel industry to sustain growth. Nevertheless, non-state advocacy could not provide energy transition on the magnitude and pace needed. Decarbonization needs to be facilitated through government intervention and binding phase-out plans, renewable energy infrastructure, the removal of fossil fuel subsidies, and support of just transitions among the workers and communities that rely on fossil fuel sectors. Non-state organizations such as Greenpeace can best act when they can organize political constituencies that

hold views on such government action and get into coalitions that can bring about systemic change.

The ability of the European Union to attain its proclaimed climate goals hinges greatly on how successful organizational actors such as Greenpeace can keep the political pressure on ambitious policies going and help to develop technically viable and economically viable alternatives to fossil fuels. The importance of non-state actors in ensuring political dedication to decarbonization gains more importance as energy transition quickens. The campaigns by the Greenpeace, their evidence-based analysis, coalition-building, institutional and mobilization of the people, are some of the examples of how non-state actors can affect governance outcomes with the aim of fulfilling the environmental goals despite facing the high pressure exerted by the saturation of vested interests and structural inertia.

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