

# The Actorness of the EU in Its Energy Relations with Algeria<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** *The EU is now considered as an actor in international relations in many ways. Considering that it is dependent on energy imports, it is interesting to watch the actorness of the EU in energy relations as well. In this article, the external actorness of the EU in its energy relations is analysed and specified based on a set of predefined criteria of a modified concept: (i) the diplomatic apparatus and policy tools the actor uses in its energy relations; (ii) the consistency and specificity of the external energy policy and the goals and interests pursued by the EU in regard to it, and (iii) the actor's perception of a third party which is accepted and recognised as an autonomous actor in the energy field by other actors. The criteria are then applied to a case study focused on Algeria in order to demonstrate whether the EU can be considered as an actor.*

**Keywords:** European Union, External Actorness, Energy Relations, Algeria, North Africa

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## Introduction

**T**he European Union (EU), or more specifically the European Commission (EC), in order to ensure energy security, adopted a number of important measures within the internal and external dimensions of the EU's energy policy. Above all, these measures involve diversification of external energy supplies, and strengthening of energy relations with existing and potential energy producers. North Africa plays an important role in this respect,<sup>2</sup> since countries in this area control about 64.2 billion barrels of oil, and about 7.8 trillion cubic meters of gas.<sup>3</sup>

The article is based on the conviction that the EU external energy relations with partner states can be analyzed through the concept of the external actorness of the EU. This is due to the fact that the EU, as a major consumer, solves its dependence and tries to influence its surroundings as an actor. Thus, the analysis of mutual relations may not take the form of an empirical case study based on research into the material form of relationships, but it is also possible to use the concept of external actorness of the EU applied to energy.<sup>4</sup> The aim is hence to define the criteria for the EU's external actorness in its energy policy and their application to analyze the EU's energy relations towards Algeria, with an emphasis on the related potential for strengthening energy security, especially in the case of natural gas exports to the EU. The following research questions have been identified: (i) How can the criteria for EU action relating to the external dimension of EU energy policy be identified and measured? (ii) How can the EU actorness be characterized in the analyzed case, namely the case of its energy relations with Algeria?

Algeria was selected on the basis of some essential facts. Firstly, Algeria has the largest verified natural gas reserves in North Africa, approximately 4.3 trillion cubic meters. Algeria is the largest gas producer on the African continent, and after Russia and Norway (Nord Sea gas reserves are rapidly declining and the Ukrainian crisis sharpened the EU's relations with Russia), it is the third most important gas supplier to the EU, as it provides nearly 13.5 percent of the EU's overall annual gas imports<sup>5</sup> through pipelines and in the form of LNG.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, it is therefore crucial for the EU's energy security, and the EU is aware of this and is trying to change Algeria's energy sector.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, Algeria has deeper relationships with some EU member states<sup>8</sup> (it particularly has specific historic ties with France), which can have an important impact on the ability of the EU to act. Thanks to Algeria's importance as an energy supplier to Europe and its importance for energy security, a number of studies have been carried out either directly on Algeria's energy or on the bilateral energy relations of Algeria and the EU,<sup>9</sup> or, more broadly, on the Mediterranean region and its energy importance for Europe.<sup>10</sup> The specifics of Algeria as a difficult partner for the EU were also pointed out.<sup>11</sup> EU energy

actorness has not yet been assessed as a specific concept in this respect.

On the methodological level, the article is based on the case study method, which is understood to mean a detailed analysis of the case that was chosen as the subject of research. Its aim is to provide a profound comprehension or causal explanation of the case, its depth of analysis and its relatively large scope of facts.<sup>12</sup> In this treatise a “case” of the external energy actorness of the EU is understood to mean a specific form of the ability of the EU to influence its external energy relations with neighboring countries. The case study then applies the modified concept of the EU actorness in energy relations to the case of Algeria in the period between the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration (1995) and 2018.

The structure of the present article corresponds to the defined aim. The first part presents a modified concept of the EU actorness in energy relations and deals with the identification of its criteria. The second part of the study analyses dimensions of actorness in the external energy relations with Algeria based on a predefined methodology.

## **The Modified Concept of the EU Actorness in Energy Relations**

### ***The Concept of the External Actorness and Energy Policy of the EU***

On the theoretical level, the article is based on the concept of EU external actorness in connection with EU energy policy.<sup>13</sup> In contemporary literature on the topic, there are several concepts revolving around the actorness of the EU.<sup>14</sup>

Some scholars studying the topic opt for combining the issue of actorness with agency theory.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the European Union, its “actorness” refers to its ability “to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, agency theory refers to the situation “when one party, the principal, enters into a contractual agreement with a second party, the agent, and delegates to the latter responsibility for carrying out [a] function or set of tasks on the principal’s behalf.”<sup>17</sup> Although these concepts are different from each other, they are also interrelated because EU Member States (MS), as principals, delegate competences to EU institutions –most often to the EC– in order to pursue certain common policy goals.<sup>18</sup> They are also well applicable in external energy relations, especially after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty.

**In the case of the European Union, its “actorness” refers to its ability “to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system”**

## When we examine EU energy relations with Algeria, further attention is paid to linking the EU's external actorness with its energy policy in order to develop a concept of EU external energy policy

In addition to the internal dimension of the EU actorness,<sup>19</sup> a part of the discussion about actorness revolves around the EU's actions in an international context.<sup>20</sup> As it is part of the external dimension, the authors seek to take account of the growing role of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as an indispensable and potentially influential component of the EU's actorness<sup>21</sup> in demonstrating that

the EU as an actor can develop international relations and implement policies through the CFSP and not regardless of it.<sup>22</sup>

One particularly highly quoted and applied theory in regard to this topic is Charlotte Bretherton and John B. Vogler's theory of actorness.<sup>23</sup> It is based on a constructivist approach and three interrelated concepts: (i) opportunity (i.e. the factors of the external environment that make the given actorness stronger or weaker), (ii) presence (i.e. the EU's ability to influence its external environment just by merely existing), and (iii) capability (i.e. the EU external policies' internal organization and functioning). In connection with the last concept, Bretherton and Vogler put forth four basic criteria of actorness: (i) shared values, (ii) the legitimacy of the external policy (particularly the decision-making process and priorities), (iii) the ability to prioritize and formulate coherent policies, and (iv) the availability of external policy tools and the ability to use them effectively.<sup>24</sup>

Such an approach to the EU's actorness requires a qualitative methodology, with Elman presenting explanatory typologies as appropriate tools in the qualitative study in international relations and proposes different forms of cell compression.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the operationalisation of the EU's criteria for action, it is also appropriate to analyse the degree of actorness. In different policy areas, the EU can demonstrate different degrees of actorness, Conceição-Heldt and Meunier evaluated external effectiveness of the EU in global governance; Dandashly and Kourtellis defined the individual degrees in the case study oriented on evaluating the Implementation of the EU's Normative Power in its Southern Neighbourhood.<sup>26</sup> For the purposes of this article, the extent of actorness can range from none to minimal, moderate, and high (Table 2). This will depend on the extent of delegation of competences to the EC as a main agent and on the form of the EU representation in international negotiations. In this respect, Thomas seeks to take into account the increasing role of the CFSP in his approach. Thomas<sup>27</sup> defines actorness as the ability of the EU to unify the preferences of the MS and EU institutions, create a sufficiently clear common policy and ensure its implementation in the EU's relations with other

states, non-state actors, and international institutions.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Dryburgh,<sup>29</sup> who examines the EU's actorness in its relations with Iran, highlights the importance and role of the EU as a global actor. In her view, alongside its external policy relations, the EU's actorness is also rooted in the CFSP, whose development after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty has added a new dimension to the EU.<sup>30</sup>

From December 2009, when the Treaty was adopted, energy and related issues –such as the internal energy market's functioning, energy supply security, the interconnectedness of energy networks, energy efficiency, and environmental protection– are among the policies that are shared by the EU and its MS.<sup>31</sup> On the one hand, the activity of the MS is still determined by their energy priorities, and some of them still prefer bilateral relations over the negotiations within the EU.<sup>32</sup> On the other, the MS delegated some of their energy-related powers to the EU institutions, particularly the EC, which acts as a proxy for the EU in the external energy relations with third-party actors.<sup>33</sup>

The EC's rising significance and its stronger role as an actor in the EU's international energy relations are demonstrated by, among other things, the fact that the position of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), whose agenda also included the question of energy in the EU's external relations, was set up by the Lisbon Treaty. The European External Action Service (EEAS) as both a bureaucratic body and a group of diplomatic personnel is at the HR's disposal.<sup>34</sup> Five years later, in 2015, the importance of the external dimension of the Energy Union (EnU) was recognized, and its greater engagement in energy diplomacy was recommended. These innovations represent an attempt at a better cohesiveness of the EU's foreign policy and an establishment of a united body that would represent the EU on the international level, including the energy sphere.<sup>35</sup>

When we examine EU energy relations with Algeria, further attention is paid to linking the EU's external actorness with its energy policy in order to develop a concept of EU external energy policy. However, an analysis of energy relations has not yet been directly connected to the concept of the EU's external actorness.<sup>36</sup> For the external dimension of the EU energy policy, the actorness concept offers means to analyze the worldwide role and position of the EU in a manner exceeding the framework of institutional analysis or efficiency research.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the concept of EU actorness allows the EU to exploit the knowledge, objectives and tools of other policies in its external energy relations, in particular the CFSP and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as well as external or development policies, including Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), and Development Cooperation Instruments (DCI).

### ***The EU External Energy Actorness and Its Main Criteria***

In particular, when analyzing the EU's energy relations with Algeria, we use a modified form of the EU's external energy action based on three criteria. There are: (i) the diplomatic apparatus and policy tools the actor uses in its energy relations with other actors,<sup>38</sup> (ii) the consistency and specificity of the external energy policy and the goals and interests pursued by the actor in its external energy policy,<sup>39</sup> and (iii) the actor's perception of a third party which is accepted and recognized as an autonomous actor in the energy field by other actors.<sup>40</sup> These features are developed in the context of the current debate on the EU's external actorness. Here, it is possible to summarize three categories (or three criteria) of exploring external actorness, which are: (i) the actor's effectiveness and capabilities (the use of external policy instruments and the CFSP), (ii) coherence (consistency of external policies and their goals/interests and values, and consistency in the negotiations between MS and institutions and the fulfilment of goals/interests), and (iii) external recognition (recognition by third parties).<sup>41</sup>

The significance of the proposed model of EU external energy actorness lies in several respects. First, the concept of EU external energy actorness is even more closely linked to the retreat from the debate focused on the dichotomy of supranational versus intergovernmental perception of the EU, and conversely helps one to understand that the EU is not only a political system but also an actor. It allows one to grasp the issue holistically, i.e. not only to analyze what the EC does and what the MS do in the field of energy, but what the EU as a whole does.<sup>42</sup> Second, the concept of energy actorness and its criteria offer concrete and testable hypotheses related to external dimensions of EU energy policy. In this respect, great attention is paid to the EU's behavior in the international environment, where the model assumes that the Union is recognized as an independent energy player in a country or region in relation to the energy security/policy segment.<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, the concept of EU external energy actorness combines the discursive component of actorness with non-discursive practices, i.e. the institutional and material components of social activity and the ways in which actorness is exercised. "Discourses are not only a simple reflection of material reality, but that they have the power to change the behavior of actors and the nature and form of institutions that these actors form among themselves."<sup>44</sup>

The first reason for the modification of the external energy actorness concept is the need to take into account the CFSP's specific link to and impact on the newly emerging common EU energy policy and its objectives, tools and interests, even if the two policies must still be viewed as separate and different from each other. The second reason for modifying it is the distinction between the relatively autonomous internal and external dimensions of the

EU energy policy. In each of these dimensions the EU's actorness may be significantly different. For example, the growing respect of the member states for the intervention of the EC in negotiations with third countries (external energy policy) does not necessarily mean that there is an increase in the degree of influence of the EC in the liberalization of the member states' domestic energy markets (internal energy policy) and vice versa.

## **The consistency of the EU's energy policy in relation to Algeria is determined by the goals and interests of the EU in energy cooperation**

### ***The Diplomatic Apparatus and Tools of the EU Energy Policy***

If the EU acts as an actor in external energy relations, it must be equipped with the appropriate institutional framework. The first criterion focuses on the diplomatic apparatus and the political tools with the aim of analyzing the key leaders representing the EU in external relations and identifying the main tools of implementation of this policy in relation to Algeria.<sup>45</sup> The authors of the present study focus on the role and importance of the MS and the EC as the main actors responsible for the EU external energy policy.

In addition to the political, diplomatic, economic, and legal measures of the CFSP and external relations, the authors also deal with the specific EU energy policy instruments that help the EU to achieve its goals and interests.<sup>46</sup> To give an example of a similar approach, Thomas explores EU foreign policy instruments in the context of the EU's effectiveness (*Effectiveness*), which is defined as the EU's ability to shape international issues in line with the goals it takes on regarding specific issues, while pursuing its goals by using traditional policy tools and convincing arguments by leaders of the EU, its institutions and the MS.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in the same context, Brattberg and Rhinard examine capability (*Capability*), which they define as the availability of tools, mechanisms and other things of this sort.<sup>48</sup> Given the specific focus on the external dimension of energy security and the EU policy towards Algeria, the authors, in addition to utilizing political, diplomatic and legal measures, use the specific EU energy policy instruments to help achieve the stated goals and interests. In external energy relations, the EU has two-fold decisive energy tools for third parties. These tools are either of a bilateral or a multilateral nature.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Consistency and Specificity of the EU Energy Policy and Its Goals and Interests***

The actor must be able to define and implement its policy. The second criterion of EU actorness is the consistency and specificity of the EU policy towards a third-party actor.<sup>50</sup> In this case, it rests on an analysis of the external dimension of the EU energy policy towards Algeria.<sup>51</sup> The consistency of the EU's energy policy in relation to Algeria is determined by the goals and interests of the EU in energy cooperation.



## The EU being recognized and perceived as an independent energy actor by Algeria is seen as a prerequisite for a successful external dimension of the EU energy policy and security regarding countries in the region

At the same time, this criterion presupposes the existence of defined goals and interests which the EU follows in its CFSP and, mainly, its energy policy towards other international actors.<sup>52</sup> This has been confirmed, for example, by Ginsberg, according to whom the outside world recognizes the EU's ability to influence other actors, speeding up the EU's demands for international action, and the EU itself is building the internal trust it needs to act in re-

sponse to external incentives and in promoting its own goals and interests.<sup>53</sup> Thomas then combines the objectives of the EU's foreign policy with its coherence (*Coherence*), which is measured through: (i) a policy determination that reflects two variables: how clearly EU policy is formulated within the EU's objectives, and how narrowly it specifies the behaviour of member states, and (ii) political cohesion, which reflects to what extent the EU is supported by all other actors in formulating the common policy and its objectives.<sup>54</sup> In other words, aspects of cohesiveness focus on the ability of the actor to formulate and amass values, preferences, institutional processes and policies while attempting to project its influence as a global actor.<sup>55</sup> This means that this criterion will serve us as a condition or source of recognition of the EU as an energy actor in regard to Algeria. Simultaneously, we may then explore what goals and interests the EU advances in its energy relations towards Algeria by using this criterion.

### *External Acceptance and the Perception of the EU by Third Parties*

The last criterion is the perception of the EU as an international actor. It is based on the recognition of the EU as an international energy actor from both outside of the EU (in various regional organizations, third-party countries or international organizations) and within the EU itself (in the MS themselves).<sup>56</sup> In this context, Kratochvíl and Šimon draw attention to a relatively intensive debate on the question of recognition in connection with the expectations of external actors (the so-called capabilities-expectations gap).<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, most of the authors who recognize this perspective conclude that the expectations of external actors (and the associated recognition rates of the EU as a separate actor) far outweigh the EU's capabilities and structural assumptions.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, there is a group of authors who, on the contrary, believe that the internal sources of EU involvement exceed the expectations of the outside world. For these authors, the most frequent reason for denying the EU a greater role in international relations is usually a strong state-centred view on the part of some actors.<sup>59</sup> This opens up a debate about the nature identity of the EU and its perception by other actors.



Thus, the authors will examine if the EU is perceived as an actor in its external relations in the area of energy by Algeria. The EU being recognized and perceived as an independent energy actor by Algeria is seen as a prerequisite for a successful external dimension of the EU energy policy and security regarding countries in the region.<sup>60</sup>

For the purpose of this article, we understand the concept of EU external energy actorness as the ability of the EU to act in its external energy relations with other actors, which perceive and accept the EU as an energy actor which has both the ability to actively pursue the goals of its energy security in international relations, and the ability to develop and implement its energy policy and its interests by using its diplomatic apparatus and political tools. In other words, the EU as an external actor should be recognized by other actors in energy relations. They should perceive and accept the EU's ability to formulate, monitor and promote its energy objectives and interests towards other energy actors by using a set of foreign and energy policy measures and instruments and its diplomatic apparatus. The identified criteria can then be operationalized and used when applied to the case of Algeria. Table 1 summarizes the criteria of the EU external actorness and their operationalization. At the same time, Table 2 evaluates individual criteria according to different degrees of the actorness.

**Table 1: Criterias of the EU External Actorness**

Criteria	Operationalization
<b>The Diplomatic Apparatus and Tools of the EU Energy Policy</b>	Through identifying the main actors of the EU external action in energy policy and the existence of a set of political, diplomatic, economic and legal measures and energy policy instruments that the EU has and uses in its energy relations with Algeria.
<b>The Consistency and Specificity of the EU Energy Policy and Its Goals and Interests</b>	Through the presence of the importance of Algeria for EU energy security in time (as this is communicated by the EU), and the number of joint planned projects and areas of energy cooperation. Through the existence and formulation of the goals and interests of energy policy that the EU monitors and promotes in its energy relations with Algeria.
<b>External Acceptance and Perception of the EU by Third Parties</b>	Based on the presence of the importance of the EU or the MS in the statements and speeches of the Algerian political leaders which focus on energy security and mutual energy relations.

*Source: Compiled by the authors*

Table 2: Evaluation of Individual Criterias

Criteria	Degree of the Actorness			
	High	Moderate	Minimal	None
The Diplomatic Apparatus and Tools of the EU Energy Policy	<i>The main actors of the EU's external action generally:</i>			
	can be identified.	can be identified.	can be identified.	cannot be identified.
	<i>The existence of political, diplomatic, economic and legal measures and energy policy instruments that the EU has and uses in its energy relations specifically with Algeria:</i>			
	can be confirmed.	can be only partly (in some areas) confirmed.	cannot be confirmed.	cannot be confirmed.
The Consistency and Specificity of the EU Energy Policy and Its Goals and Interests	<i>The presence of the importance of Algeria for EU energy security in time is:</i>			
	communicated by the EU.	communicated by the EU.	communicated by the EU.	not communicated by the EU.
	<i>Formulation of long-term goals in energy relations with Algeria by the EU:</i>			
	is achieved	is achieved	is not achieved	is not achieved
	<i>Formulation of long-term interests in energy relations with Algeria by the EU:</i>			
	is achieved	is dependent on the internal political problems and the willingness to cooperate	is not achieved	is not achieved
	<i>Joint planned projects and areas of energy cooperation:</i>			
External Acceptance and Perception of the EU by Third Parties	a number	a small amount	a small amount or none	a small amount or none
	<i>The importance of the EU (or the MS), in the statements and speeches of the Algerian political leaders which focus on energy security and mutual energy relations:</i>			
	is present	is present	a very weak presence	absent
	<i>Designation of the EU as an energy actor in the statements and speeches of the Algerian political leaders is:</i>			
	explicit	not explicit	not explicit	not explicit

Source: Compiled by the authors

## The EU External Actorness in Energy Relations with Algeria

The modified concept of EU external actorness in energy relations will now be applied in a case study that focuses on analyzing the EU's relations with Algeria. These are examined through the prism of the set of the three above-mentioned criteria of EU external energy actorness.

### ***The Diplomatic Apparatus and Political Tools of the EU Energy Policy***

The first criterion focuses on (i) the diplomatic apparatus, aiming to identify the key representatives who are responsible for the EU energy policy's external dimension, and (ii) political tools such as financial assistance, loans and other CFSP measures, economic sanctions, or specific bilateral and multilateral energy policy instruments that help the EU to promote its goals and interests in its relations with Algeria.<sup>61</sup>

#### ***The Diplomatic Apparatus***

With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, energy policy moved from the hands of the individual states and has become an area of shared competence for both the EU and its MS.<sup>62</sup> The creation of new positions like the HR, the Vice-President of the EC responsible for the EnU, or the Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy (formerly known as the Commissioner for Energy) clearly demonstrates the ambition of the EC to engage in energy policy decision-making, and in negotiations with present-day (e.g. Algeria) and potential energy suppliers. In addition, it is worth noting that the interests in the MENA region (including Algeria) have been driven by three (outgoing) EU officials with strong Mediterranean backgrounds: the Climate Action and Energy Commissioner, the Director General for Energy and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, namely, Miguel Arias Cañete (Spain), Dominique Ristori (Corsica), and Federica Mogherini (Italy).<sup>63</sup>

### **The Union for the Mediterranean secretariat and the Energy Diplomacy Action Plan are examples of the EU's multilateral policy instruments**

#### ***Policy Instruments Used in the Energy Relations***

Besides the EU's stronger position within the energy policy decision-making since 2009, the EU also uses various economic and diplomatic tools of the CFSP and other external policies in its external relations. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) secretariat and the Energy Diplomacy Action Plan are examples of the EU's multilateral policy instruments. The former was created in 2010 in Barcelona; it functions as the operational institution that strengthens the regional dialogue and promotes various regional energy projects.<sup>64</sup> The latter was adopted in July 2015 by the Foreign Affairs Council as part of the Council Conclusions on EU Energy Diplomacy. Its purpose is to help establish and further develop energy cooperation, support diversification, enhance the global energy architecture and multilateral initiatives, and strengthen energy diplomacy capacities.<sup>65</sup> In parallel, the creation of three UfM high-level energy platforms<sup>66</sup> in 2015 confirms the importance of energy cooperation.<sup>67</sup> Conversely, the Association Council and the Delegation of the EU to Algeria might be considered as bilateral policy tools. The former was created to hold a political dialogue at regular intervals or whenever necessary to examine any

## Renewable energy is gaining in importance in view of the EU's priorities. Algeria joins them because it has great long-term potential in this regard

issues arising within the framework of the Association Agreement (AA).<sup>68</sup> The latter deals with a broad political and economic agenda, including energy matters,<sup>69</sup> and, in the context of the ENP,<sup>70</sup> also plays an important role in the implementation and monitoring of recently adopted Partnership Priorities.<sup>71</sup> In addition, two events that oc-

curred in 2016, namely the first-ever Algeria-EU Business Forum on Energy and the visit of 18 Algerian energy experts to Brussels, show that the reliability of the mutual energy partnership has developed significantly.<sup>72</sup>

However, the key political tool is the EU's financial assistance, which is distributed through various instruments such as bilateral financial assistance, Neighborhood Investment Facility Programmes, Twinning, Thematic Programmes and other budget lines. From 2007-2017, the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) have been the main EU financial tools. Between 2007-2013 the EU committed €366.1 million to bilateral assistance for Algeria under the ENPI.<sup>73</sup> Between 2014-2017, €10 million out of the €148 million invested through the ENI bilateral assistance in Algeria went directly to energy projects.<sup>74</sup> Since 2015, the EU-Algeria twinning project on energy sector regulation, which is financed under the Support Programme for the Implementation of the AA, is endowed with a budget of €1.25 million.<sup>75</sup> For the period 2018-2020, the EU's assistance to Algeria under the ENI ranges from €108-132 million, and energy is the priority sector.<sup>76</sup> The funding of many energy projects also goes through the European Investment Bank (EIB). The EIB provided more than €2.1 billion to support projects in the energy, water, road transport and industry sectors as it supports the EU's energy policy, namely its attempts to increase and diversify energy supplies.<sup>77</sup> For instance, the EIB supplied over €1.1 billion for the Maghreb-Europe gas pipeline, which transports gas from the Hassi R'Mel field in Algeria to Europe via Morocco and the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>78</sup>

Beyond that, Algeria also has a long-standing partnership with the EU in the ENP.<sup>79</sup> Even though Algeria has not adopted the Action Plan which normally underpins the ENP, the EU has offered Algeria tariff-free access to some of its markets, and financial and technical assistance.

### *The Consistency and Specificity of the EU Energy Policy and Its Goals and Interests*

As Algeria is a long-term gas supplier to Europe, the consistency of the European policy towards it should be confirmed. The first discussions and exchanges of views covering energy matters between Algeria and the European Economic Community started in 1976 with the Cooperation Agreement.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless,



The then Algerian Energy Minister Khelil (R) and French Economy Minister Lagarde (L) sign an agreement on Civilian Nuclear Cooperation on June 21, 2008 in Algiers.

FAYEZ NURELDINE /  
AFP via Getty Images

the pivotal role of the energy sector in the economic partnership between MS and the southern Mediterranean countries was first acknowledged in the Barcelona Declaration (BD).<sup>81</sup> The EU's ability to identify its goals and explicitly present its interests towards Algeria was pre-eminently noticeable in its intention to promote the interconnection and development of energy networks and link-ups.<sup>82</sup> The EU also promoted its interests via the so-called Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which is considered as a turning point in the Euro-Mediterranean "energy" relations.<sup>83</sup> In 2008, the EMP was re-launched as the UfM and since then it has been promoting economic integration (including energy projects) across fifteen of the EU's southern neighbors.<sup>84</sup> The UfM platform has been working towards the enhancement of synergies in the fields of renewable energy sources (RES), energy efficiency, and integration of electricity and gas markets.<sup>85</sup> However, the relations between Algeria and the EU in the field of energy gained further momentum since the AA came into force in 2005<sup>86</sup> and launched the two actors' regular bilateral meetings on energy cooperation. According to the AA, the main goals in the field of energy are institutional, legislative, regulatory and technical upgrades to ensure that energy activities are regulated, and energy companies are prepared for the future demands of the economy. The priority areas have been oil and gas exploration, production, processing and distribution, electricity production, transit of gas, oil and electricity, and network interconnection with the EU.<sup>87</sup>

In 2013, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) facilitating and promoting European investments in the natural gas, RES, and energy efficiency sectors was signed and was considered a very important instrument of EU influence.<sup>88</sup> Also,

## The Algerian view of its relations with the EU (and its MS) is determined by its fundamental position as a natural gas exporter

as of 2015, two groups of EU and Algerian experts on natural gas, RES, and energy efficiency have been working on enhancing the two parties' cooperation in these areas.<sup>89</sup> In March 2017, the EU and Algeria adopted their shared Partnership Priorities (PP), which set up a renewed framework for political engagement and cooperation.

In the context of the EU-Algeria relations up to 2020, the energy sector has become one of the five major subjects of the PP.<sup>90</sup> In line with the goals of the EnU and according to the Global Strategy for the CFSP (EUGS), the EU seeks diversifications of its suppliers and routes, and employs its energy diplomacy in order to strengthen relations with reliable energy producers worldwide (including the Maghreb).<sup>91</sup> As a result, various multilateral and bilateral energy projects have been undertaken. In addition to the interest in Algeria's natural gas, the EU had an ambition to develop the country's solar resources.<sup>92</sup> Renewable energy is gaining in importance in view of the EU's priorities. Algeria joins them<sup>93</sup> because it has great long-term potential in this regard.<sup>94</sup>

A case in point is the Mediterranean Solar Plan, a joint initiative of the UfM, the EIB, the EC and the German government-owned development bank *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*.<sup>95</sup> However, to date, such efforts have faltered.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, in 2016, at the ministerial meeting in Rome, the ministers in charge of energy, including Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete, acknowledged their awareness of and willingness to promote the massive RES and conventional energy potential that the Mediterranean region possesses.<sup>97</sup> In 2018, the EU and Algeria reaffirmed their common strategic interests, and pledged to consolidate their partnership in the domain of energy trade, promotion of RES and energy efficiency.<sup>98</sup> Nowadays, the EU is Algeria's largest trading partner and consumes the major part of Algerian exports.<sup>99</sup>

However, there have been many obstacles to the energy cooperation in the past. The consistency of the EU energy policy toward Algeria has firstly suffered due to the protectionist policies enforced by Algeria's nationalistic government, and subsequently due to the country's decades-long civil war, which was not declared to be over until 2011. However, the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the EU-Algeria Association Council held in Brussels in May 2018 concluded that their joint partnership is moving forward and consolidating. Although the reform of the political governance system in Algeria is still at the core of the mutual interest, there has been progress in other sectors (including energy) due to the two sides' many high-level visits, and the mutual dialogue has increased and deepened.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the main goal of the EU energy policy towards Algeria is unambiguously the fostering of the energy cooperation and the security and safety of energy infrastructure and supply. The EC is presently courting the energy-wealthy



but authoritarian Algeria in an attempt to secure new gas supplies for the EU and promotes the integration of the two parties' energy systems and markets, the deployment of RES and energy efficiency. At the same time by doing so it keeps the North African instability in check. Even though the current rules make Algeria one of the least attractive energy investment destinations in the world, there might be seen a glimmer of hope in this regard (e.g. the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the presidential elections in December 2019). Furthermore, according to the EC, the Algerian hostility towards foreign investments has softened after several meetings with Brussels.<sup>101</sup>

### **The Perception of the EU Actorness by Third Parties**

The last criterion is the perception of the EU as an international energy actor by third parties. Hence, the authors here examine whether the EU is perceived as an actor in its external relations in the area of energy by Algeria.

The Algerian view of its relations with the EU (and its MS) is determined by its fundamental position as a natural gas exporter. However, given the importance of the energy relationship, this is only mentioned sporadically, and EU actorness is not mentioned at all. The main theme was cooperation in the case of natural gas supplies. In 2002, Chakib Khelil, the Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines, delivered an address in Florence at the 17<sup>th</sup> European Gas Conference. He focused in his speech on the future prospects of Algerian natural gas in European countries in the sense of whether it would properly meet the growing demand of the European gas market. He also mentioned the then planned projects aspiring to increase the energy exchanges between the Maghreb and Europe and facilitate the so-called Maghreb-European electricity market.<sup>102</sup> The same year in Houston, Khelil acknowledged that “[in] Europe, gas markets are undergoing deep changes (...) Algeria is the world[’s] third [largest] gas exporter with 95 percent of our exports supplying Europe.”<sup>103</sup> In 2003, at the Ministerial Summit in Rome, he stressed Algeria’s role as one of the biggest natural gas exporters to Europe.<sup>104</sup> A few months later, at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Energy, Khelil reminded the audience of Algeria’s lasting willingness to act as and become a reliable supplier of natural gas for Europe.<sup>105</sup> In 2015, his successor Youcef Yousfi, after a discussion with the Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete, stressed to the press that Algeria is working to develop its energy relations with the EU.<sup>106</sup> In the same year, there was a meeting at the highest level, during which the then recently resigned Algerian authoritarian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was considered as the biggest obstacle to the EU’s energy hopes for Algeria,<sup>107</sup> met with the HR Federica Mogherini.<sup>108</sup>

In 2017, Cañete met with the Algerian Minister of Energy Noureddine Boutarfa in Brussels. The purpose of this meeting was to review the energy cooperation



Oil refinery in Hassi-Messaoud, Algeria. One of five oil refineries belonging to NATEC, which can process 22 million tons of crude oil per year.

ALI DJENIDI /  
Getty Images



progress that had been made since the MoU was signed, addressing European investments in Algeria's gas supply and production, and RES.<sup>109</sup> Both agreed to incrementally increase the EU's funding of the Algerian energy sector and stressed Algeria's capacity to "contribute to the security of the supplies of the EU."<sup>110</sup> In November 2018, Boutarfa's successor Mustapha Guitouni stated at the EU-Algeria Energy Dialogue that Algeria had always been a reliable supplier of energy in Europe, intends to remain so for a long time and has all the assets necessary to achieve this goal.<sup>111</sup> Finally, former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, at the opening of the Algeria Future Energy meeting in 2018, acknowledged Algeria's proximity to European markets, to which it is connected by pipelines, and its willingness to even increase their transport capacity.<sup>112</sup>

Algeria therefore wants to be not only a supplier, but a strategic partner.<sup>113</sup> In 2016 the Director-General of the Ministry of Energy, Mustapha Hanifi, stressed that Algeria is "keen" to respect its international commitments in the field of supply stipulated with its customers and that he considers this as the position that makes Algeria a "reliable energy partner" for Europe.<sup>114</sup> Moreover,

Algeria sees this energy partnership as quite specific and strategic. In 2017 the Algerian ambassador to Belgium said to el-Khabar that “the partnership between Algeria and the EU is strategic and ambitious” and added that this work “is based on high-level strategic dialogue in the energy sector (energy security, renewable energy and energy efficiency), strengthening the human dimension of the bilateral cooperation and finally continuing consultation on the global and regional challenges that [we] face jointly.”<sup>115</sup> This strategic partnership was also highlighted in 2018 at a time when the EU criticized the measures taken by Algeria to protect the economy after the collapse of oil prices.<sup>116</sup>

**Despite the importance of Algeria in the EU’s energy security, it was found that the EU does not fully meet the conditions for fulfilling its energy actorness in any of the monitored criteria**

Importantly, it turns out that the energy relations with Algeria are also developed by the activity of the EU’s MS, which prefer bilateral relations with third-party countries over the negotiations within the EU. Hakim Darbouche is convinced that “[t]he EU’s proposed energy cooperation framework adds little value to the existing bilateral deals that member states have been prepared to conclude on the basis of more strategic dividends for Algeria.”<sup>117</sup> A notable case in point is France, which has a unique bilateral relationship in the area of investment with Algeria (where oil and gas industries are the main areas of its investments).<sup>118</sup> There were numerous state visits to Algeria by all the recent French presidents, namely by Chirac (2003), Sarkozy (2007), Hollande (2012), and Macron (2018). President Sarkozy was pushing for closer French ties to Algeria’s oil and gas giant Sonatrach,<sup>119</sup> whereas in 2012, President Hollande acknowledged the oil-rich North African state as a major trading partner.<sup>120</sup> Similarly important is the bilateral link with Italy (the Algeria-Sardinia-Italy Gas Pipeline [Galsi] and the cooperation in solar energy),<sup>121</sup> and Germany is also a potentially interesting investor for Algeria (unlike the previous ones, primarily in clean energy).<sup>122</sup>

## Conclusion

The presented concept of the EU actorness in energy relations is based on the combining of the ability and willingness of the EU to, on the one hand, be an actor and, on the other hand, be recognized by other states. The application of the selected criteria allowed us to evaluate its energy relations with Algeria (Table 3 presents the results of this analysis). Given the importance of energy cooperation it confirms that the EU behaves as a moderate actor which significantly complements EU MS’ external energy policies. However, the problem of recognizing the EU as an actor is crucial (Table 3).

Table 3: EU External Actorness in Its Energy Policy towards Algeria

Criteria	Evaluation of the Criterion	Degree of Actorness
The Diplomatic Apparatus and Tools of the EU Energy Policy	<p><b>Diplomatic apparatus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Climate Action and Energy Commissioner, the Director General for Energy, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs</li> </ul> <p><b>Tools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UfM</li> <li>EU-Algeria Association Council (Association Agreement entered into force in 2005)</li> <li>EU's assistance: ENP – ENPI/ENI</li> <li>EIB financial support</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The main actors of the EU's external action are identified</li> </ul> <p>The existence of political, diplomatic, economic and legal measures and energy policy instruments that the EU has and uses in its energy relations specifically with Algeria can be confirmed (however, Algeria has not signed the Action Plan)</p>	High
The Consistency and Specificity of the EU Energy Policy and Its Goals and Interests	<p><b>Goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional, legislative, regulatory and technical upgrades to ensure that energy activities are regulated, and energy companies are prepared for the future demands of the EU economy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Main areas of interest:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oil, gas, electricity exploration, production, processing, transit, distribution and network interconnection.</li> </ul> <p><b>Projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PP: Investments in natural gas, renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors</li> <li>EIB: It supports the EU's energy policy of increasing and diversifying energy supplies</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A presence of the importance of Algeria for EU energy security in time is communicated by the EU</li> <li>The EU's inability to formulate long-term interests in energy relations with Algeria</li> <li>A relatively small amount of joint planned and implemented projects and areas of energy cooperation.</li> </ul> <p><b>It depends on the internal political situation; there are projects related to the EU energy policy</b></p>	Moderate
External Acceptance and the Perception of the EU by Third Parties	<p><b>Perceptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the European investments contributes to the security of the supplies of the EU</li> <li>Algeria as Europe's potential "primary" partner in energy</li> </ul> <p><b>Acceptance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EU is an important actor defining the (general) framework for bilateral relations</li> <li>Europe/EU as a gas buyer and a "strategic" partner</li> <li>The EU is not an actor</li> <li>The main partners for cooperation and investment are, however, the selected MS, namely France, Italy, Spain and Germany.</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A weak presence of the importance of the EU in the statements and speeches of the Algerian political leaders which focus on energy security</li> <li>No explicit designation of the EU as an energy actor</li> </ul> <p><b>High perceptions, lower acceptance</b></p>	Moderate

Source: Compiled by the authors

It is confirmed that Algeria has a strategic role in ensuring the EU's energy security, especially in relation to the requirement of diversification, but also in meeting other EU energy policy objectives related to decarbonization and climate change (particularly the so-called "Clean Planet for All Europeans" package). Another priority is sustainability, which plays an important role in relations with Algeria. Therefore, the EU strives to behave as an actor in defining energy priorities. These priorities are generally set in relation to regions, but in cases of bilateral relations the specificities are reflected.

**Algeria's assertiveness has increased at a time when Russia's credibility as a gas supplier to Europe has been weakened in the context of the 2009 gas crisis and, in particular, in 2014**

Despite the importance of Algeria in the EU's energy security, it was found that the EU does not fully meet the conditions for fulfilling its energy actorness in any of the monitored criteria. The question of external recognition from Algeria seems to be the most controversial.

Three main reasons for this can be identified. First, although Algeria is participating in the ENP, it has not signed the Action Plan (although negotiations for this are under way). It is one of the troubled neighboring countries (such as Libya, Syria, and Belarus). An important reason for this is that the energy relations with Algeria are significantly limited by the internal political situation. Long-term gas supplies to Europe allow a long-term profit for the regime's elites. The EU tolerates it, as it is necessary to safeguard geopolitical and energy interests, which weakens its potential as an actor in energy relations as well (for example, by means of conditionality).<sup>123</sup> This has a negative impact on policy consistency and the ability to achieve the stated goals.

Second, Algeria, namely under former President Bouteflika, has led a more assertive foreign policy, criticizing the Eurocentricity and unilaterality of EU initiatives. The real reason for this, however, may be the rather different natures of EU policy and Algeria's foreign policy aspirations.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, there has been no attempt by the EU to recognize the specifics of the relationship (including energy interdependency) in the form of a "strategic" partnership. Algeria, meanwhile, does not always see this partnership as a win-win situation. In particular, this was demonstrated at the time of the fall in oil prices in 2018.<sup>125</sup> Algeria's assertiveness has increased at a time when Russia's credibility as a gas supplier to Europe has been weakened in the context of the 2009 gas crisis<sup>126</sup> and, in particular, in 2014.<sup>127</sup> The 'strategic dimension' of the partnership has been confirmed, but the EU's ability to transform (switching domestic consumption to renewable energy) may be called into question in reality.

Finally, Algeria is a prominent supplier of gas via pipelines and in the form of LNG to the EU, namely to Italy, Spain, Portugal and France. These bilateral energy partnerships are essential and despite the partly recognized role of the EU as an actor in energy policy, a bilateral link with its MS also has an impact on the achievement of EU energy policy objectives. It seems that the bilateral energy relations in this case are then weakening the EU's ability to act. ■

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# رؤى تركية



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