



Press Release | 05 september 2023

45-8 ENERGY HAS BEEN GRANTED €2,88M FOR ITS AVANT-MONTS FRANC-COMTOIS EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION PROJECT, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIRST INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION OF HELIUM ON THE NATIONAL TERRITORY.

On 29 September 2022, 45-8 ENERGY was granted, by the Ministry of Ecological Transition, an Exclusive Research Permit for helium and associated resources, called “Avant-Monts franc-comtois”. Located west of the French Doubs region, the exploration license area covers 306 km² and is of significant prospective interest in helium, in association with non-fuel gases.

45-8 ENERGY has received €2,88M in funding as part of the France 2030 investment plan’s “Russian, Belarusian or Ukrainian dependence” call for expressions of interest, operated by Bpifrance. 45-8 ENERGY’s proposal to produce helium in France would contribute to national sovereignty, a highly topical issue given that helium’s position as a strategic resource has been reinforced in the European Union’s latest list of critical resources, published in early 2023.

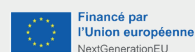
The aim of this financing is to accelerate the implementation of a responsible industrial helium production project in the French Doubs region by contributing to the financing of all development stages necessary for the project.

This project was funded by the French government as part of France 2030.

This project was funded by the European Union - Next Generation EU as part of the France Relance plan.



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HELIUM, A STRATEGIC RESOURCE AT THE HEART OF THE PROJECT

The area is of particular interest for its significant helium potential, which was initially detected fortuitously in the 1950s and 1960s. In a context of absolute necessity of national sovereignty and success of our ecological transition, the Metz-based company 45-8 ENERGY has taken up the challenge of producing this strategic resource in a responsible way and in a short circuit, as close as possible to European consumption centres.

Helium is a rare and strategic resource, necessary for many industries (medical, electronics, space, recycling of strategic metals, etc.). However, 100% of helium consumed in Western Europe is imported from abroad, mainly from the United States, Qatar and Algeria, at great energy and environmental cost. This dependence on imports is further exacerbated by geopolitical conflicts and current global transport difficulties. The local use of helium would thus contribute both to national sovereignty and to a drastic reduction in ecological impact of the sector.

The grant of this funding gives legitimacy to the Avant-Monts franc-comtois project in the Franche-Comté region and its future production of helium on French territory. Supported and accompanied by local scientific partners - such as BRGM (National Geological Service), Laboratoire Chrono Environnement (University of Franche-Comté-CNRS, Chrono Environnement) - the project also aims to better understand the geological system of this critical resource, the needs of which are increasingly pressing.

THE BEGINNING OF THE AVANT-MONTS PROJECT IN THE FRANCHE-COMTÉ REGION

In order to deepen the geological knowledge of the area and confirm the helium content, the project is entering an operational phase with the start of an ambitious work program. This will initially involve data acquisition using portable equipment to characterize and image the subsurface without impacting the environment and local residents.

All information gathered during these acquisitions will provide a more accurate knowledge of the geology of the area for a more targeted exploration.

During the summer of 2023, in collaboration with the French National Geological Service (BRGM), acquisitions such as gravimetry and airborne electromagnetism were carried out to refine our knowledge of the subsurface structure in the area. Further data acquisition will be carried out over the coming months in specific municipalities of the exploration license. These will include 2D seismic reflection, passive seismic, magnetotelluric and electrical resistivity tomography. These acquisitions, which are non-invasive and have no impact on man or the environment, will also enable to identify geological layers of the subsurface and deduce their organization.

With transparency on its activities, 45-8 ENERGY has initiated from mid-2021, even before the granting of the license in September 2022, exchanges with stakeholders including local communities and regional and national environmental associations. Following the same approach, each important stage of the project will be punctuated by specific communication to stakeholders concerned. In this respect, a communication will be made very soon to local communities in order to submit them the mentioned work program which is planned to be deployed in summer 2023. The 45-8 ENERGY team will also be on site during the summer period to monitor the acquisitions and answer any questions from elected officials and local residents.

ABOUT 45-8 ENERGY

As pioneer in Europe, 45-8 ENERGY is dedicated to the exploration and production of eco-responsible, strategic industrial gases that are used in a short circuit: helium and natural hydrogen, as well as their related resources.

The advent of this sector is made possible by the development of a pioneering geological approach and strong technological innovations that 45-8 ENERGY is implementing in collaboration with academic and industrial partners.

Its activities have been recognised on several occasions, including the Greentech Innovation label from the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and the EY “Scale-up of the Year 2022 in the Grand Est” award. Its activities in the field of natural hydrogen have also enabled it to be one of the first winners of the H40 Index, created by MEDEF International and France Hydrogène, which lists the most promising French start-ups and scale-ups in the field of low carbon hydrogen.

Several R&D projects have also been approved by MATERIALIA and AVENIA competitiveness clusters and some are supported by France 2030 Recovery Plan through development grants.

45-8 ENERGY is well established in the European helium and natural hydrogen market, having obtained several exploration and production permits, in particular in France, Germany and Kosovo. In France, the company operates two exploration licenses for helium and related resources, in the Nièvre and Doubs regions respectively, one of which will go into pilot production in 2024. Beyond this, the company is involved in the most responsible use of the resource, working in particular on the advent of a circular helium industry by developing, for example, specific recycling solutions, the RECYCL’He© project, and working on short circuits.

Some figures



Creation of
45-8 ENERGY



Employees



First helium production
in the French Nièvre
region with “Fonts-
Bouillants” project



Launch of RECYCL’He©,
the mobile helium
recycling solution



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