

25 March 2021

Dear Prime Minister Costa,

Over the last three weeks you have been receiving an update on our campaign to end corporate sponsorship of EU Council Presidencies. This campaign has now attracted the support of over 60,000 citizens.

We are aware that the **Council Working Party on Information will discuss this issue on 30 March 2021**, therefore we are calling on you to show leadership at this meeting and **to ban completely and without any exemption the corporate sponsorship of all Council Presidencies.**

Ending corporate sponsorship of the EU Council Presidencies is one of the easiest measures that the Council can take to demonstrate a clear will to move in the right direction – that of the public interest and the protection of the reputation of the EU with its citizens. The opportunity to do it is now – please do not miss it.

To an EU citizen, the distinction that is often made between those activities inside and those outside the institutional framework is meaningless. This kind of justification is only relevant to those inside the Brussels Bubble who wish to preserve the status quo. To an EU citizen, seeing the EU flag and logo of the Presidency alongside the logos of private companies described as partners or sponsors signifies corporate influence and the risk of conflicts of interest.

Transparency of sponsorship deals is not enough to tackle the fundamental flaw in the sponsorship model. The Portuguese Presidency claimed to be transparent by recording Part I of the contracts with commercial sponsors on a public procurement portal. However, Part I indicates that all the confidential elements of the contracts are actually in Part II, which is not publicly available.

If goods and services are needed for a Presidency, there should be a small budget to allow for this and they should be procured in the usual manner, according to EU legislation.

Anything short of a complete ban of sponsorship will be a symbol that the Council is too close to corporate power within the EU.

We call on you as the current Presidency to show leadership next week and to ban completely and without any exemption the corporate sponsorship of all Council Presidencies.

Sincerely,

Manuel Araújo, Climáximo

Vicky Cann, Corporate Europe Observatory

Suzy Sumner, foodwatch