




# ACTIVITY REPORT

2021



Corporate  
Europe  
Observatory



Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) is a research and campaign group working to expose and challenge the privileged access and influence enjoyed by corporations and their lobby groups in EU policy making.

## OUR MISSION

The corporate capture of EU decision-making leads to policies that exacerbate social injustice, economic inequality, climate change and environmental destruction. From the negotiation of new free trade agreements, to false solutions to global warming, and attacks on the regulation of toxic chemicals, EU decisions and policies frequently reflect the interests of big business.

## WHAT WE DO

Corporate lobbies like to act in secrecy, so we expose what they do, increase public awareness, and build momentum to curb corporate influence over EU policy-making by:

-  Revealing the tactics, financial firepower, privileged access and connections of corporate lobby actors – and their negative impact on public-interest policy-making.
-  Exposing revolving door scandals, which see (former) EU politicians joining the private sector as lobbyists – and vice versa.
-  Promoting lobbying transparency at the EU level and empowering citizens to partake in EU politics through petitions, public consultations, citizens' initiatives.
-  Working in close cooperation with investigative journalists from all over Europe to make crucial information accessible to the general public.
-  Campaigning for stricter EU lobby regulation.
-  Highlighting the common dominance of corporate interests in European Commission advisory groups, which set the direction for many EU policies
-  Campaigning with allied NGOs and civil society coalitions against (proposed/ draft) EU policies skewed in favour of corporate interests





# HIGHLIGHTS AND FLAGSHIP REPORTS 2021

While CEO extended the scope of our work as much as possible to include new issues of high relevance for the public interest (the link between corporate lobbying abusing the corona-pandemic, the close ties between Frontex and security and defence companies, digital rights and Big Tech lobbying and Big Pharma), CEO has particular expertise in several EU policy areas.

# AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SAFETY

CEO exposes the biotech, food, chemicals, agro-fuels and pesticide producers and their lobby groups which target decision makers to weaken regulation of their activities. We campaign to fight back corporate capture of food systems, and make EU decision making independent from the agribusiness-, and food industry, with a special focus on pesticides and GMO's. In 2021 CEO exposed the industry's attacks on the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.



**JAN 2021**

**COPA-COGECA:  
DEFENDING FARMERS  
IN PUBLIC AND THE  
AGRIBUSINESS  
INDUSTRY IN PRIVATE?**

**LINK**



## MARCH 2021

**DERAILING EU RULES  
ON NEW GMOS -  
CRISPR-FILES EXPOSE  
LOBBYING TACTICS  
TO DEREGULATE NEW  
GMOS**

[LINK](#)



## OCT 2021

**LEAK: INDUSTRIAL  
FARM LOBBIES'  
COORDINATED ATTACK  
ON FARM TO FORK  
TARGETS**

[LINK](#)

# ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

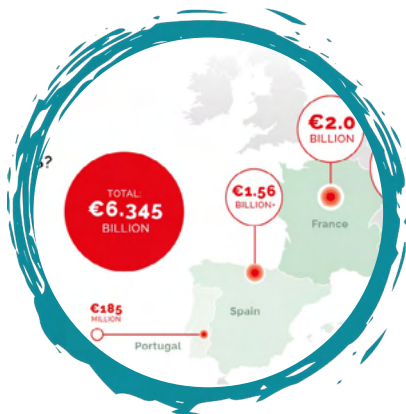
The European Green Deal (EGD) is a major new plan for the EU that seeks to make its economy 'climate-neutral'. It seems a positive step, but is the deal really "Climate proof"? The fingerprints of the fossil fuel industry, can be seen all over the EGD. Carbon trading will continue, emissions reductions targets are too modest and too slow, fossil gas is kept as a transitional fuel, and public money will finance 'false solutions'. CEO revealed how net zero climate plans are the latest attempt by polluting industries, and the neoliberal governments doing their bidding, to escape responsibility to act to address climate change or to repair the damage they've imposed on ecosystems and frontline communities. Corporate lobbying has resulted in weak greenhouse gas reduction measures, the dominance of carbon markets and other false solutions such as hydrogen linked to "low-carbon" fossil fuels like gas and carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology.



**JULY 2021**

**THE BIG CON. HOW  
BIG POLLUTERS ARE  
ADVANCING A "NET  
ZERO" CLIMATE  
AGENDA TO DELAY,  
DECEIVE, AND DENY**

**LINK**



**JULY 2021**

**HIJACKING THE RECOVERY THROUGH HYDROGEN. HOW FOSSIL FUEL LOBBYING IS SIPHONING COVID RECOVERY FUNDS**

[LINK](#)



**JULY 2021**

**HUNDREDS OF FOSSIL FUEL LOBBYISTS FLOODING COP26 CLIMATE TALKS. MORE LOBBYISTS FOR BIG POLLUTERS THAN ANY NATIONAL DELEGATION**

[LINK](#)



## TRADE AND INVESTMENT

The past years CEO uncovered and challenge out the corporate bias of and secrecy around neoliberal EU trade deals like CETA and the investor-state dispute settlement system (ISDS), both of which threaten social and environmental justice and enshrine corporate power. In 2021 CEO focussed on the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) which gives investors and the private sector sweeping powers to sue states over government actions that have supposedly 'damaged' their investments. CEO revealed a EU proposal in the pipeline, which aims to protect cross-border investments in the EU which showed worrying signs that the new proposal could include vast new legal privileges for corporations – exactly what large banks, law firms and big business lobby groups have been pushing for.



**MARCH 2021**

**DITCHING GAS  
COULD SEE EU  
FACE HUNDREDS  
OF BILLIONS IN  
COMPENSATION  
CLAIMS. HOW THE  
ENERGY CHARTER  
TREATY COULD STOP  
THE EU MOVING  
BEYOND GAS**

[LINK](#)



**JUNE 2021**

**CONQUERING EU  
COURTS? BIG  
BUSINESS LOBBIES  
IN SECRET FOR NEW  
LEGAL PRIVILEGES IN  
THE EU**

[LINK](#)



**SEP 2021**

**TECH LOBBY EYES  
OPPORTUNITIES  
CREATED BY NEW EU-  
US TRADE AND TECH  
COUNCIL**

[LINK](#)

## ECONOMY AND FINANCE

We expose the great leverage of banking and other financial industry lobbies, the failure of the EU to better regulate the sector since the financial crisis, and the extent to which big banks and the financial industry continue to set the European agenda on for example sustainable finance. CEO revealed that some of the worst financiers of the worst polluters helped write the script of how to shift from financing climate policies and that the first real attempt to address the continued massive influx of money into new fossil fuel supply will end in inertia and symbolic statements; As well as how financial markets will implement the decisions taken at the COP26 Climate summit in Glasgow.



**OCT 2021**

**COP26: THE BIGGEST  
FINANCE GREENWASH  
EVENT IN HISTORY.  
SOME OF THE WORST  
FINANCIERS OF THE  
WORST POLLUTERS  
HELPED WRITE THE  
SCRIPT - AND MORE,  
THEY WILL IMPLEMENT  
THE DECISIONS AFTER  
THE SUMMIT IN  
GLASGOW**

[LINK](#)



**JUNE 2021**

**OFF THE HOOK? HOW  
BUSINESS LOBBIES  
AGAINST LIABILITY  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
ABUSES**

[LINK](#)



**DEC 2021**

**'CHAMPIONING'  
INDUSTRY: HOW THE  
FRENCH PRESIDENCY  
OF THE EU COUNCIL IS  
LOSING SIGHT OF THE  
PUBLIC INTEREST**

[LINK](#)

## BIG TECH

CEO invested in exposing the increasing 'digital lobbying'. Big Tech firms are spending more and more on lobbying in Europe – a clear sign of the industry's growing power. Its increased lobby spending also reflects the importance of key upcoming policy battles. Yet, lack of transparency remains a problem.



**FEB 2021**

**LOBBYING FORTRESS  
EUROPE. THE MAKING  
OF A BORDER-  
INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

[LINK](#)





**APRIL 2021**

**EXPANDING THE  
CORPORATE CAPTURE  
OF RESEARCH:  
THE NEW EU JOINT  
UNDERTAKINGS**

[LINK](#)



**AUGUST 2021**

**THE LOBBY NETWORK:  
BIG TECH'S WEB OF  
INFLUENCE IN THE EU**

[LINK](#)

# EU LOBBYING REGULATION

CEO continued to highlight the many gaps in and shortcomings of EU lobby transparency tools and underline how they must be addressed in order to curb corporate influence over policy-making and improve public scrutiny of EU decisions and the accountability of Members of the European Parliament, politicians and desk staff at the EU institutions and affiliated EU bodies.



**MARCH 2021**

**END EU COUNCIL  
SPONSORSHIP DEALS  
NOW!**

[LINK](#)



## MAY 2021

**EU DEFENCE AGENCY  
UNDER PRESSURE TO  
CHANGE RULES AFTER  
AIRBUS REVOLVING  
DOORS SCANDAL**

[LINK](#)



## JULY 2021

**BUSINESS LOBBIES  
DOMINATE SECRET  
CHANNEL TO  
INFLUENCE COUNCIL**

[LINK](#)

## HEALTH

From the unhealthy privatisation of health care to tobacco companies lobbying EU officials in the light of the upcoming revision of the Tobacco Products Directive, to chemical companies trying to influence a roadmap for how the EU is to regulate toxic chemicals: CEO exposed the fact that it is high time that the EU meets its obligations to ensure that lobbying by the tobacco and chemical industry to influence public officials faces tighter scrutiny and pro-active transparency.



**JAN 2021**

**WHEN THE MARKET  
BECOMES DEADLY.  
HOW PRESSURES  
TOWARDS  
PRIVATISATION OF  
HEALTH AND LONG-  
TERM CARE PUT  
EUROPE ON A POOR  
FOOTING FOR A  
PANDEMIC**

**LINK**



**MARCH 2021**

**TARGETING  
THE EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION: THE 7  
LOBBYING TECHNIQUES  
OF BIG TOBACCO**

[LINK](#)



**NOV 2021**

**BITTER PILL. HOW  
THE EU'S DEFENCE  
OF PHARMA PROFITS  
COULD KEEP COVID  
TREATMENTS OUT OF  
REACH FOR MILLIONS**

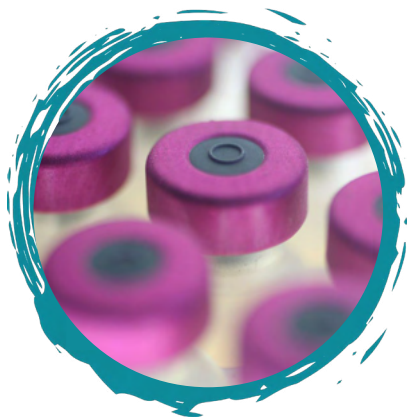
[LINK](#)



# BIG PHARMA

SPECIAL FOCUS

In 2020 CEO has started a lot of new research on how the EU has been dealing with the covid-19 pandemic and why it seems to have a deep love affair with Big Pharma. CEO exposed how the public-private partnerships of the European Commission are largely corporate driven. CEO also started pandemic-related research in 2020, which resulted in several breaking publications in 2021, which not only showed the EU has a very eurocentric way of dealing with the covid-19 pandemic, but also persists in complete secrecy on how it negotiates with powerful pharmaceutical companies.



**FEB 2021**

**VACCINE SCARCITY:  
HOW THE EU'S  
APPEASEMENT OF BIG  
PHARMA DAMAGES  
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

[LINK](#)



**MARCH 2021**

**EU RISKS PUBLIC HEALTH IN ITS PROTECTION OF BIG PHARMA MONOPOLIES**

[LINK](#)



**MAY 2021**

**BIG PHARMA'S LOBBYING FIREPOWER IN BRUSSELS: AT LEAST €36 MILLION A YEAR - AND LIKELY FAR MORE**

[LINK](#)



# **CAMPAIGNS, PUBLICATIONS AND OUTREACH**



**35**  
PUBLICATIONS  
(ARTICLES AND  
REPORTS) IN 2021



**11**  
EPISODES OF  
OUR PODCAST EU  
WATCHDOG RADIO



**20**  
VIDEOS

*Several cooperations with investigative journalists and investigative journalistic platforms like Investigate Europe, Bureau for Investigative Journalism, Arena, Apache, Follow the Money and Médiapart, etc.*

*Participating in campaigns, petitions, open letters and webinars*

## EXAMPLES OF CAMPAIGNS & OUTREACH

**END EU  
COUNCIL  
SPONSORSHIP  
DEALS NOW!**

[LINK](#)

**PARTICIPATION OF  
ADVOCATE GENERAL  
PITRUZZELLA IN  
EVENT CO-HOSTED  
BY PHARMACEUTICAL  
INDUSTRY LOBBY**

[LINK](#)

**NO  
SPONSORSHIP  
DEALS FOR THE  
FRENCH EU  
PRESIDENCY**



[LINK](#)

**STOP THE  
TOXIC TRADE!**

[LINK](#)



## MEDIA OUTREACH

-  Close cooperation with investigative journalists from newspapers, tv-documentaries, magazines, website, media-coöperatives.
-  20+ opinion Articles in various EU media platforms. 500+ publications in major news outlets from all over Europe and beyond: New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, TAZ, Der Spiegel, De Standaard, NRC Handelsblad, Wall Street Journal, De Tijd, Financieel Dagblad, El Diario, El Pais, El Domani... Some examples:

### THE NEW YORK TIMES FACEBOOK HEARING STRENGTHENS CALLS FOR REGULATION IN EUROPE

[LINK](#)

### EUOBSERVER FIRST COVID, NOW MCKINSEY - HOW AUSTERITY HIT EU HEALTHCARE

[LINK](#)

### EU PANDEMIC RECOVERY PLANS SET TO BAILOUT FOSSIL-FUEL COMPANIES

[LINK](#)

**BBC**

**COP 26: FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY HAS LARGEST DELEGATION AT CLIMATE SUMMIT**

[LINK](#)**SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG**

**GEFÄHRLICHE ÜBERMACHT**

[LINK](#)**EL PAÍS**

**LOBBIES', EL PODER EN LA SOMBRA**

[LINK](#)**SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST**

**HUAWEI EMPLOYS MORE LOBBYISTS IN THE EU THAN GOOGLE, FACEBOOK, MICROSOFT AND APPLE, BUT SPENDS LESS**

[LINK](#)**LE MONDE**

**LES GAFAM, ROIS DU LOBBYING À BRUXELLES**

[LINK](#)

## EL DIARIO

EL SECTOR FINANCIERO EN  
LOS COMBUSTIBLES FÓSILES:  
ORGANIZACIONES SOCIALES SEÑALAN  
LA COP26 COMO “LA GRAN CUMBRE  
DEL LAVADO DE CARA VERDE”

[LINK](#)

## DE STANDAARD

PORTRET GATES FOUNDATION - EEN  
GEPATENTEERDE LOBBYIST

[LINK](#)

## DOMANI

COSÌ L'ITALIA E L'EUROPA CAMUFFANO IL DIBATTITO  
SULL'ACCESSO AI VACCINI

[LINK](#)

## ZEMBLA (DUTCH NATIONAL TV)

'KWALIJKE' LOBBY TEGEN  
VERDUURZAMING VAN DE LANDBOUW

[LINK](#)

## **PUBLICO**

**LA ONU RECLAMA MEDIDAS PARA LIMITAR LAS EMISIONES DE METANO, EL GAS OLVIDADO QUE ACELERA LA CRISIS CLIMÁTICA**

[LINK](#)

## **SOCIAL EUROPE**

**HOW BIG TECH MONEY SKEWS THE EUROPEAN PLAYING-FIELD**

[LINK](#)

## **OPEN DEMOCRACY**

**EU STANDS FIRM WITH BIG PHARMA AGAINST COVID VACCINE PATENT WAIVERS**

[LINK](#)

## **NRC HANDELSBLAD**

**GRENSBEWAKER FRONTEX WANKELT TUSSEN EMPATHIE EN STRENGHEID**

[LINK](#)

## WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT US

“CEO is often the first to notice when shady lobby affairs take place. Therefore, their research and sources provide indispensable munition to Europe's investigative journalists.

✓ **LISE WITTEMAN**

*Journalist, co-founder and team member of the EU-desk 'Bureau Brussel' of Follow the Money*

“CEO has for years been my favorite NGO in Brussels. It's an indispensable organisation doing crucial work to improve transparency in EU decision making.

✓ **HARALD SCHUMANN**

*Journalist & co-founder, Investigate Europe*

“An internal exchange at Uber in 2015 clearly mentions “the risk that an NGO, such as Corporate Europe Observatory” would request access to documents in the Kroes file from Brussels with the aim of publishing them.

✓ **ADRIEN SÉNÉCAT**

*Journalist, Le Monde*



# 25 YEARS OF EXPOSING CORPORATE POWER

*2022 is a special year for us: Corporate Europe Observatory is a quarter of a century old and we will celebrate our anniversary*

*While we are living in volatile times, marked by uncertainty, derailing climate change, war and social unrest, it is nevertheless also a moment of celebration for CEO, an opportunity to reflect on next steps and look back at what we have achieved together.*

*We will be publishing some special pieces of content and will organise some activities to reach out to our supporters. From deep dives into some of our work areas, looking back on the history and where we are today to webinars and events where we can reach out and connect.*

*Keep an eye on our special dedicated page on our website, follow us on social media and don't miss a beat!*

**#CEO25**

# BRUSSELS: A LOBBY PLANET IN THE EUNIVERSE

Please also take a look at our guide on the corporate lobby scene in Brussels: The 'Brussels Lobby Planet' is available in **English**, **French** and **German**, and provides a thorough and thought-provoking introduction to corporate lobbying and its impact on the EU's ability to pass policies in the public interest.

## **FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Twitter Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Youtube**

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# OUR BOARD

CEO's board consists of three members:

-  Analía Penchaszadeh (The Netherlands/Argentina)
-  Brid Brennan (The Netherlands/Ireland)
-  Adam Ma'anit (UK/US)

Our advisory council includes the board members as well as:

-  Pratap Chatterjee (India/US)
-  Jakub Patočka (Czech Republic)
-  Saskia Ozinga (Belgium)
-  Thomas Wallgren (Finland)



