

# FOSSIL FUEL CAPTURE OF EU DECISION-MAKING

## An explainer

### Background

Just 20 fossil fuel companies are responsible for [a third](#) of all greenhouse gas emissions in the modern era. The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has [triggered](#) global warming, increasing the risk of floods, extreme rainfall, wildfires and heatwaves with devastating consequences for people, animals and the environment.

Our world is now about [one degree Celsius](#) hotter than in the pre-industrial period. The [IPCC says](#) a 1.5°C average rise may put 20-30% of species at risk of extinction. If the planet warms by more than 2°C, most ecosystems will struggle.

Scientists have found that the effects of the climate crisis is [worse](#) than initially estimated and that the pace of global warming is accelerating. The last five years were the [hottest ever](#) and every year new records are broken.

Millions of people are protesting across the world demanding governments take radical action to tackle the climate emergency. Movements like the Climate Strike and Extinction Rebellion, led by young people, are demanding an end to our fossil fuel addiction.

To comply with Paris Agreement targets and to complete the transition to a climate neutral economy, the European Union [has been putting in place](#) climate action strategies and legislation. Yet, emissions have [continued to grow](#) year-on-year, and the Commission has warned that member states are lagging behind.

In spite of the bleak scenario, fossil fuel companies have continued to report massive profits. Their interests clash with those of citizens fighting to save the planet. The facts about climate change have been known for years so why has it taken so long for governments to act effectively?

**CHANGE  
THE SYSTEM  
NOT THE CLIMATE**

## BIG MONEY BLOCKING CLIMATE ACTION



**€251.3  
MILLION**

spent in EU lobbying  
2010-2018



**300 000  
HOMES INSULATED**

money that could have  
been spent differently



**327 MEETINGS**

between EU commission  
and 5 fossil fuel corporations  
since 2014

Source: CEO, Food and Water Watch, Friends of the Earth Europe and Greenpeace Europe. Icons by Freepik from flaticon.com

## What our MEPs say



**Mick Wallace**  
(Independents4Change, Ireland)

*"Industry lobbyists infest the European Parliament like the plague. I receive unsolicited emails every day from the tobacco, pharmaceutical, arms, aviation and plastics industries, as well as the fossil fuel industry. The ordinary people of Europe feel as alienated from the concentrated seats of power yet Big Business gets unfettered access to MEPs. And it certainly doesn't help when national governments, like the Irish Government, have such cosy relationships with industry representative groups. We need to end our dependency on fossil fuels as soon as possible, and that includes gas. No new gas infrastructure should be built and we should certainly not be importing fracked gas from outside the EU."*

## Fossil fuel lobbying

Fossil fuel companies have dedicated massive amounts of resources to influence EU decision-making. Their goal is to delay, control or block policies to tackle climate change. Among other things, they have pushed the EU to put in place wholly inadequate "solutions" to climate change that lack enforcement, and depend on the goodwill of businesses such as the market-[based Emissions Trading System](#) (ETS) and [carbon capture and storage](#).

The top five oil and gas companies (Shell, BP, Total, ExxonMobil and Chevron) and their lobbyists [have spent](#) at least €251 million lobbying the EU since 2010. Together they are responsible for 7.4% of all global greenhouse gas emissions between 1988 and 2015.

The EU affords oil and gas corporations unprecedented access and influence to its decision-making. The Juncker Commission held over 350 meetings with the 200 lobbyists working for the top five oil and gas companies.

## Lack of transparency

The EU [claims](#) to be a leader in the global fight against climate change but its actions are lagging. Fossil fuel corporations have undue influence over EU decision-making.

In her [agenda for Europe](#), new Commission President von der Leyen promised to present a European Green Deal during her first 100 days in office. This would make Europe the first climate-neutral continent with first European climate law.

However, von der Leyen has shown no signs of departing from previous Commission policy in the way it deals with - or privileges - big business over the rights of citizens. Several of the appointed Commissioners have questions of conflicts of interest and [two in particular](#), Josep Borrell (Spain) and Johannes Hahn (Austria), were found to own shares in fossil fuel companies at the time of their appointment.

A recent NGO briefing has found that lobby activity by fossil fuel companies [peaks at key times](#) when legislation on climate action is being debated. Given the significance of the legislation taking shape right now, we can expect lobbyists to be hard at work to undermine and weaken radical action to save the planet.

While the Commission's transparency register is voluntary, the Council has [continued to resist](#) even minimal oversight over its activities with lobbyists.

## The view of the Left

Scientists say we are living "[the most important years in history](#)" as policies decided now will determine the future of our planet for generations to come. This is the EU's last chance to get it right.

We support the call of almost 200 organisations, among them CEO, Food and Water Europe, Friends of the Earth Europe and Greenpeace EU, for [fossil free politics](#). We want the EU to end all lobby meetings with the fossil fuels industry and to revoke their access badges to EU institutions.

We have also called for an [independent ethics body](#) to oversee conflicts of interest of EU officials and an end to the practice of revolving doors between public office and the fossil fuels industry.

The 24th Conference of Parties (COP) for the Paris climate agreement in Poland, where governance and enforcement of the agreement is decided, [was sponsored by](#) fossil fuel corporations. This is just one example of the ludicrous state of affairs that we want to end.