

17 December 2020

Dear Prime Minister Costa,

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU will commence during a period of unprecedented political, economic, social, and environmental turbulence. The coronavirus pandemic continues to take its toll on public health, employment, and the economy; while the gravity of the climate emergency has not yet elicited the deep and urgent action required by the EU. Within the EU the rule of law is under threat in several countries and basic democratic values are being undermined. It is imperative that the Portuguese Presidency prioritises robust and progressive action on all three of these fronts.

Beyond this, we expect the Presidency to be based on the values of prioritising the public interest over corporate interests, alongside delivering transparency and accountability for parliamentarians and the public. We make the following demands:

- **The Portuguese Government must ensure that the EU Presidency is not used to champion big business interests over the public interest.** With numerous topics on the EU's upcoming agenda where corporate lobbying can be expected to be heavy and against the public interest (the coronavirus recovery, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, tax, defence spending, pharmaceuticals, and digital to name just a few) the Portuguese Government must ensure that corporate interests do not receive privileged access to its decision-making during the Presidency and beyond. Furthermore the Portuguese Presidency should initiate a debate in the Council about reducing the influence of big business interests on both EU and national policy-making.
- Crucially, during a time of climate crisis when the time available to take effective action is rapidly dwindling, there can be no public interest in lobby interactions with the fossil fuel industry, a sector whose interests are in direct contradiction with the public interest in phasing out fossil fuel use. Following the widely-accepted World Health Organisation guidelines on keeping tobacco industry lobbying to an absolute minimum, **the Presidency should commit to keeping all dealings with fossil fuel lobbyists to an absolute minimum.** It was shocking to learn that the Portuguese Government's coronavirus recovery plan was drafted by a representative of the fossil fuel industry. This kind of privileged access must end immediately; it is contrary to the public interest and deeply inappropriate.
- The publication of lobby meetings held by the Portuguese Permanent Representative and Deputy is to be welcomed. However, this practice should be extended to lobby meetings held by other Permanent Representation staff who are likely to be lobbied far more intensively. During its own presidency in 2018, Finnish ministers also published their lobby

meetings when they concerned EU matters. This precedent should also be adopted. **The public has a right to know who is lobbying and attempting to influence the Portuguese Government, including during the Presidency.** To this end we urge the Government to boost its domestic lobby transparency record by urgently implementing the proposed national lobby law.

- Recent Presidencies (with the notable exception of Germany in 2020) have besmirched their reputation by accepting corporate sponsorship for Presidency activities including events, websites, and services. This practice is totally unacceptable and, as the European Ombudsman has remarked, incurs “reputational risks”. **It is essential that the Portuguese Presidency rejects all forms of sponsorship for its Presidency and any of its activities, and that it urges fellow EU member states to do likewise in the future.**
- The Council remains the least transparent of the EU institutions, notwithstanding efforts at reform in recent times. It is still not possible for citizens to follow, let alone scrutinise, how their member state is negotiating on a particular file or dossier, creating not just a democratic deficit, but an advantage for corporate lobbies with the capacity and resources to be able to overcome the opaque and complex policy-making process. It is disappointing that the Portuguese Government has not joined the 10 other member states which have argued for greater legislative transparency. **We urge you lead by example by publishing minutes of trilogues and Council preparatory body meetings which include details of member state positions, and further developing the wider legislative transparency reform agenda.**
- Finally, MPs in Portugal do not have strong rights to be able to hold the Government to account for its EU decision-making, nor to scrutinise those positions before they are presented in Brussels. Once again this represents a democratic deficit. **It is time for the Portuguese Government to open up its EU decision-making by publishing its proposed positions on new EU laws and policies before they are discussed at Council meetings, to enable scrutiny by citizens and MPs.**

We look forward to hearing from you on each of these points. To reply to this letter, please contact Vicky Cann (vicky@corporateeurope.org) and João Oliveira (joao.oliveira@transparencia.pt).

Yours sincerely,



[Access Info Europe](#)

The Right to Ask ... The Right to Know - We defend and promote the right of access to information in Europe



[Access Now](#)

We defend and extend the digital rights of users at risk around the world. Organizer of @RightsCon, the annual human rights + tech conference. #blacklivesmatter



[ActionAid International](#)

The #EU office of @ActionAid: making the voices of people living in #poverty heard by policymakers in #Brussels, from a feminist, Southern-led lens.



[AITEC](#)

Association Internationale de Techniciens Experts et Chercheurs. 30 years experience of analysing development models and policies.



[ALTER-EU](#)

ALTER-EU is a coalition of over 200 civil society groups and trade unions concerned with the influence of corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe



[APIT](#)

Associação Sindical dos Profissionais da Inspeção Tributária e Aduaneira (Portugal) Tax and Customs Inspectors Trade Union



[Aseed Europe](#)

ASEED Europe action and info, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, fair prices for farmers, no poison no GMO, TTIP, stop big ag lobby, stop Bayer, Yara & Co



[Attac Austria](#)

#Konzernmacht #Demokratie #Finanzmärkte #Europa #Handelspolitik
#Steurgerechtigkeit #Ernährungssouveränität #Klimagerechtigkeit #TTIP #CETA
#Mercosur



[ATTAC España](#)

ATTAC España - Justicia Económica Global



[Attac France](#)

Attac s'engage pour la justice sociale et environnementale et mène des actions contre le pouvoir de la finance et des multinationales.



[ATTAC Hungary Association](#)

Economist and Social Scientist



[Biodynamic Federation - Demeter International](#)

@bfdi_demeter is the only organic association that has built up a network of individual certification for biodynamic farmers worldwide.



[CBGnetwork](#)

Coordination gegen BAYER-Gefahren (CBG) | Informationen über die Kehrseiten der Geschäftspolitik von BAYER. Seit 1978.



[Center for International Environmental Law \(CIEL\)](#)

Center for International Environmental Law defends the right to a healthy planet.



[ClientEarth](#)

We use the power of the law to protect life on Earth. We're working to secure a lasting civilisation for people and nature.



[Climáximo](#)

Somos um grupo de ativistas movidos pela urgência do combate às alterações climáticas e os seus graves efeitos



[CNCD-11.11.11](#)

Le CNCD-11.11.11 est la coupole de près de 90 ONG, syndicats et associations engagées dans la solidarité internationale en Belgique francophone



[Compassion in World Farming EU](#)

We campaign for stronger EU laws on farm animal welfare + ethical & sustainable EU food policy. #EndTheCageAge #EUFarm2Fork #BanLiveExports #RethinkFish



[Corporate Europe Observatory](#)

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) challenges the influence of Big Business and corporate lobby groups in EU policy-making.



[D3 - Defesa dos Direitos Digitais](#)

Associação D3 - Defesa dos Direitos Digitais. Pela defesa dos direitos digitais em Portugal.



[Democracy International](#)

The global coalition for democracy: Democracy International aims at strengthening democracy in the nation states, in Europe & at the global level.



[Ecologistas en Acción](#)

Somos una confederación de grupos ecologistas. Con una estructura asamblearia, formamos parte del ecologismo social. #ÚneteAEcologistas



[EDRi](#)

European Digital Rights. We defend your rights and freedoms online.



[EFF](#)

We're the Electronic Frontier Foundation. We defend your civil liberties in a digital world.



[ENAAT](#)

Founded in 1984, the European Network Against Arms Trade involves groups & citizens who see the arms trade as a threat to peace, security and development



[EPHA](#)

The European Public Health Alliance is a change agent – Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. Retweets are not endorsements.



epicenter.works

epicenter.works setzt sich für Grund-, Menschen- und Freiheitsrechte sowie die Wahrung der informationellen Selbstbestimmung ein. (Alter Name: AKVorrat)



EPSU

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), organising 8 million public service workers across Europe.



Feedback

Feeding People, Backing the Planet. Home of @ThePigIdea, @AlchemicKitchen, @BigLivestock and the Gleaning Network



Fix the Status Quo

Online campaign widget for progressive coalitions.



Food & Water Action Europe

European programme of @fwaction & @foodandwater. We champion healthy food & clean water for all and stand up to corporations that put profits before people.



foodwatch International

foodwatch is a non-profit campaigning organization that fights for safe, healthy and affordable food for all people.



Friends of the Earth Europe

Friends of the Earth Europe folk in Brussels, representing people and planet, campaigning for sustainable and just societies and protection of the environment



Fundacja ePaństwo

Our aim is to develop democracy, open and transparent authorities and civic engagement.



Gong

Civil society organization, galvanizer for democracy: disrupting corruption, alerting on political threats and building active citizenship.



IT-Pol Denmark

IT-Political Association of Denmark



Iuridicum Remedium

Iuridicum Remedium. IuRe. Za svobody člověka v digitálním i skutečném životě.



LobbyControl

LobbyControl klärt auf über Lobbyismus, PR-Kampagnen und Denkfabriken.



Nature & Progrès Belgique

Nature & Progrès BE est une association de sensibilisation et de conscientisation du grand public aux problématiques environnementales #BIO #producteurs



Observatoire des Multinationales

Observatoire des multinationales : fournisseur d'informations indépendantes sur les grandes entreprises françaises, l'économie et la démocratie



ODG

Observatori del Deute en la Globalització. Anàlisi crítica per a la mobilització i transformació social. #LeyCastor #NextGenerationEU #RescatesCovid19



Oil Change International

Oil Change International campaigns to expose the true costs of fossil fuels and facilitate the ongoing transition towards clean energy.



Our.Fish

Working to #endoverfishing throughout European waters. Ending overfishing IS #ClimateAction



Palombar

A Palombar – Conservação da Natureza e do Património Rural é uma ONG de Ambiente sem fins lucrativos, criada em 2000.



politiscope

e-activism / e-aktivizam



Robin Hood

We campaign for the Robin Hood Taxes in the UK and beyond! Let's tax financial transactions and fossil fuel extraction, to fund communities hit by crisis.



Sciaena

Oceanos # Conservação # Sensibilização 🌊🌍🗣️ Oceans # Conservation # Awareness



Shadow World Investigations

We undertake path-breaking investigations into cases of grand corruption, corporate malfeasance and excessive militarism, predominantly in the global arms trade



Stop Wapenhandel

Stop Wapenhandel doet onderzoek en voert actie tegen wapenhandel en wapenindustrie.



Tecnologías para la Transición

En transitiontechnologies.org somos una comunidad dispar que quiere compartir sus experiencias. Lanzar sus ideas para hacer de la tecnología un bien común.



The Common Weal

Common Weal is a Scottish think-and-do tank that advocates ideas that put #AllOfUsFirst.



The Good Lobby

Committed to strengthen the advocacy capacity of the many, not the few - founded by @alemannoEU @ashoka



TNI

The Transnational Institute (TNI) is an international research and advocacy institute committed to building a just, democratic and sustainable world.



Transparency International EU

Fighting #corruption in Brussels and beyond. The EU office of @anticorruption



Transparência e Integridade

Transparência e Integridade - Transparency International Portugal



TROCA- Plataforma por um Comércio Internacional Justo

TROCA

Vredesactie vzw

VREDESACTIE

Vredesactie (Peace Action) is a movement that advocates a society in which conflicts are settled without violence or the threat to use violence.



Watchdog Polska

Wszystko o prawie do informacji i o granicach władzy



ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System

ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável



Center for Encounter and active Non-Violence

European Alliance for
Responsible R&D and Affordable Medicines

European Alliance for Responsible R&D and Affordable Medicines



GAIA - Grupo de Acção e Intervenção Ambiental



Plataforma Transgenicos Fora (Portuguese Stop GMO Platform)

CIDAC

CIDAC - Centro de Intervenção para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral