

23 June 2020

We, civil society organisations from Germany and across Europe, demand a German EU Council Presidency that sets new standards in transparency and accountability, and which tackles the challenges ahead in the public interest.

The EU Presidency must prioritise three urgent challenges: handling the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences, tackling inequality, and fighting the climate crisis. These need to be addressed together on a strong foundation of democracy, anti-racism, human rights, social rights, and international solidarity. Instead of bailing out climate polluters and tax-dodgers, and giving in to ‘coronawash’ lobbying for weaker regulations, we need a new vision based on progressive alternatives that will roll back inequality. **The German Presidency must use this moment to forgo corporate interests and to instead make serving the public interest the clear priority.**

Many voices – European civil society, Members of Parliaments of EU member states, and the European Ombudsman – have criticised the serious lack of transparency of decision-making and lobbying in the Council. The public is excluded from knowing how files progress in the Council, the positions of their governments, and which *quid pro quo* deals have been made. This is replicated at the national level, where there is rarely openness about how a government decides its position on an EU file. While corporate lobbyists with large resources and well-connected networks manage to have their voices heard in this process, civil society is much less visible. This results in a serious democratic deficit.

These issues need tackling urgently. We demand the following:

1. **Ensure the EU Presidency is not used to champion big business over the public interest.** The German Government must put an end to privileged access for corporate interests and business-only policy consultations, for its EU Presidency and beyond.
2. As President, Germany must **champion much needed legislative and lobby transparency reforms** within the Council so that citizens can follow the progress of files and the position of their member state.
3. Germany must also lead by example. It should **provide full lobby transparency** of meetings held with lobbyists by the Government, a legislative footprint, and a world class lobby register. It should also reject all corporate sponsorship of its Presidency.
4. Citizens should have new rights to both find out about, and have a say on, their **government’s decision-making on EU matters**. Citizens must no longer be excluded from this process.



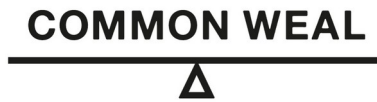
Stop Wapenhandel



Friends of the Earth Europe



CHEMTrust
Protecting humans and wildlife from harmful chemicals

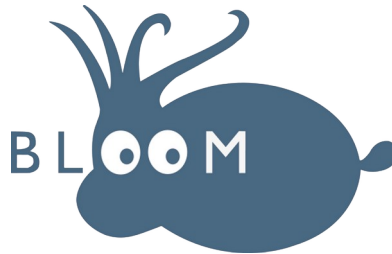


DNR
DEUTSCHER
NATURSCHUTZRING



INŠTITÚT ĽUDSKÝCH PRÁV
HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE





www.access-info.org





**European Alliance for
Responsible R&D and Affordable Medicines**