

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.



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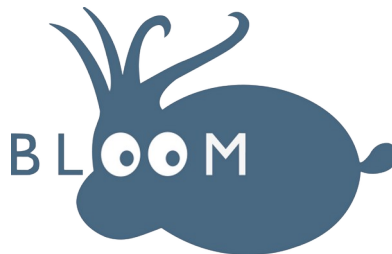


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