

NGOs for sale: how the US super-rich influence EU climate and energy policy

Brussels (9 October 2015) – Today, the European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL) released a report on the funding of anti-coal campaigns by NGOs. It finds that a wave of money is flooding into the EU policy space from a small number of super-rich donors, many from the US, who hope to influence EU climate and energy policy in favour of their own preferred solutions, whatever the cost to European consumers. This is a story about money and power; a story in which Europe is viewed as a “laboratory for the world”.

Public campaigns against coal are portrayed as grass-roots, climate-action movements, but are in fact well-orchestrated by a handful of organisations with enormous budgets. For example, the European Climate Foundation spends €26 million each year on lobbying against coal in Brussels. It sits at the centre of a complex web of compliant NGOs, paying each of them to echo its own call for climate action. Together, they command significant influence with European governments and the European Commission, using well-paid professional agents. The same message appears to come from many mouths. In a properly functioning democracy, the changes that are demanded by the European Climate Foundation and its wealthy donors would come about through the ballot box. Instead, the Foundation uses less-than-transparent methods on behalf of its few wealthy donors, some of whom stand to profit from the policies it promotes.

EURACOAL does not question climate change and the need to act. The association stands for progress through the deployment of cleaner, more efficient technologies. These can cut CO₂ emissions by 30% or more with certainty and at a lower cost to consumers than any alternative. Conventional electricity generation from coal is flexible and reliable, meeting 28% of EU electricity demand. It will have an important role over the coming years to back up the growing output from wind turbines and solar PV, which produce nothing at all on dark windless nights. With carbon capture and storage, coal-fired power plants will be a competitive alternative to other low-carbon technologies, all of which will be needed to meet growing electricity demand.

The Secretary-General of EURACOAL, Brian Ricketts, warns, “Of a project to dismantle our way of life and to replace it with an experiment promoted by an elite class which seeks influence over EU policy makers, power over EU citizens and a new concentration of wealth taken from us all.”

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Note for editors:

- The European Association for Coal and Lignite (EURACOAL) represents the interests of coal producers, coal importers and coal users in Brussels. The Association has 33 members from 20 countries (www.euracoal.eu).

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