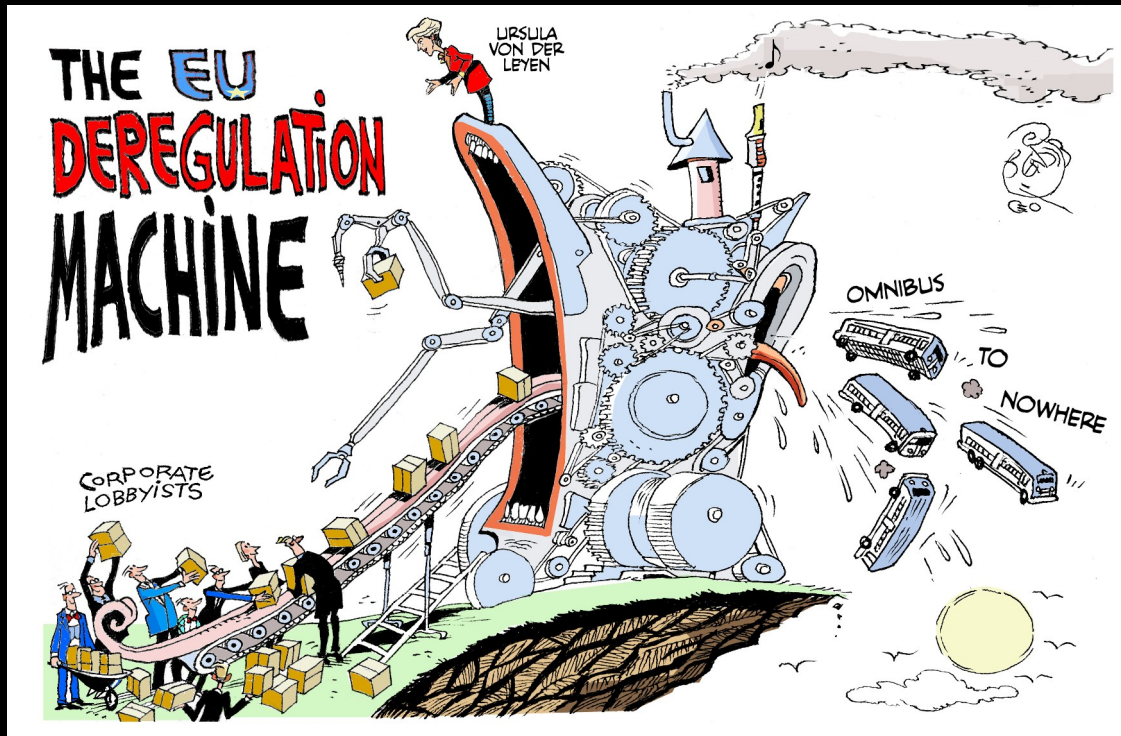


# The role of industry lobbies against social & environmental regulations in the EU



Corporate  
Europe  
Observatory

Cartoon: Khalil Bendib

Vicky Cann  
10 September 2026

# In next 15 minutes ...

- Scale of corporate lobbying in Brussels
- Corporate lobbying against regulation is not new ...
- ... But corporate lobbies have built massive momentum in recent years
- Existing rules are being weakened; proposed rules are being delayed, weakened, or cancelled
- Decision-making processes are being changed to give industry lobbyists an even bigger say



# About Corporate Europe Observatory

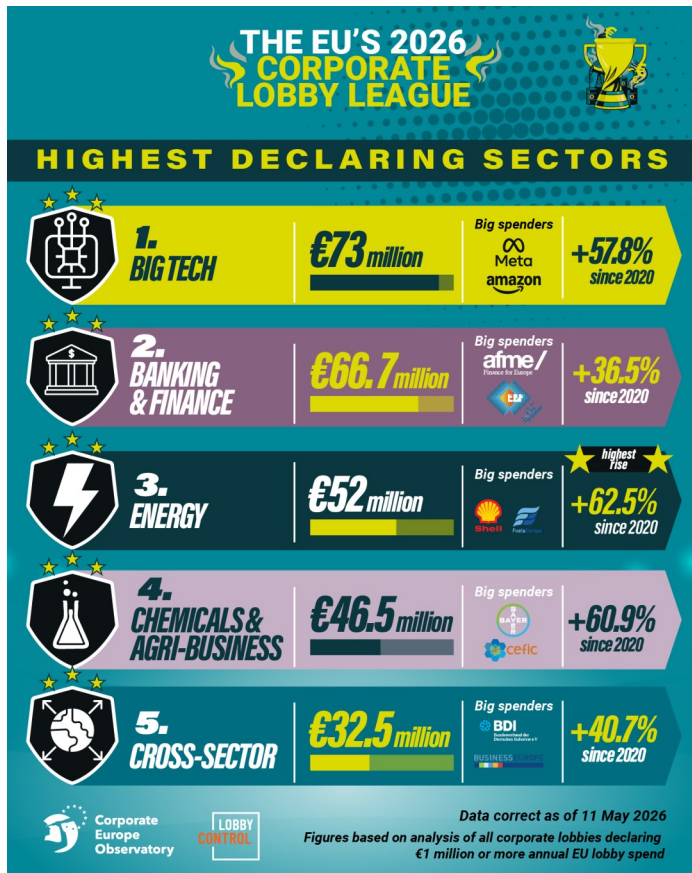


29 years of research and campaigning to expose and challenge corporate power in EU decision-making, including on:

- ▶ Chemicals
- ▶ Food and agriculture
- ▶ Climate justice
- ▶ Big Tech
- ▶ Economic justice
- ▶ Democracy, transparency & accountability



# Brussels: second biggest lobby capital in the world



# Corporate lobbying against regulation is not new...

- Ongoing industry-friendly **Better Regulation** has promoted deregulatory agenda, including unelected, publicly-unaccountable **Regulatory Scrutiny Board**
- **One-in, one-out** initiatives at EU and member state levels
- Industry-derived ‘**Innovation Principle**’ created to challenge the established **Precautionary Principle**



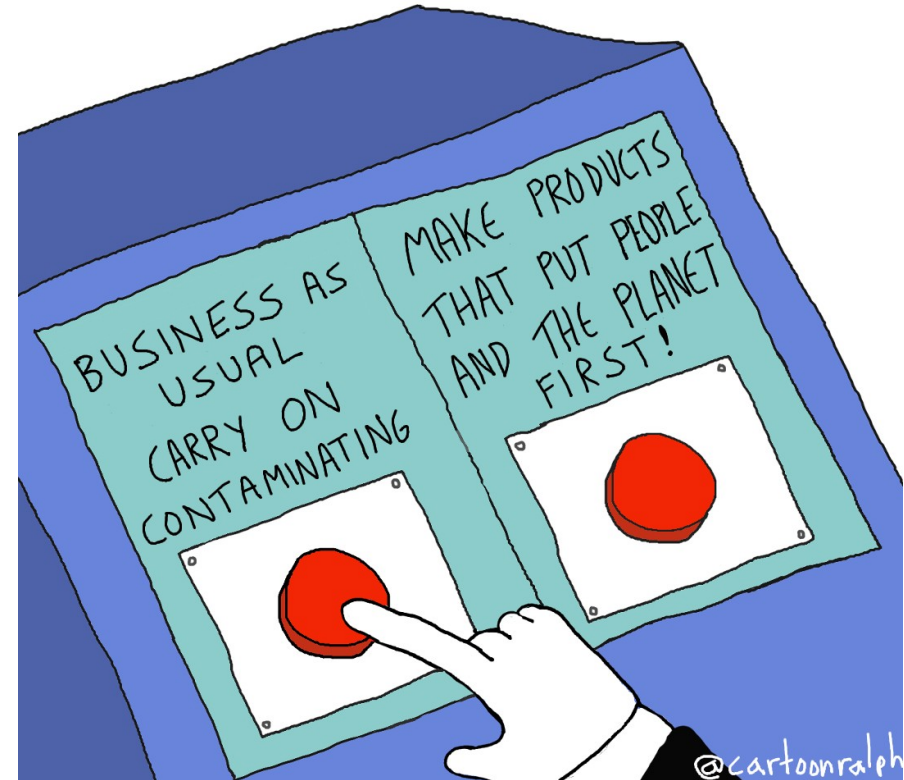
# ... But corporate lobbies now have massive momentum

Von der Leyen 1 Commission (2019-24) promised a **European Green Deal** which included some ambitious commitments, but:

- **Delivery was slow** or did not happen
- Covid + **Russian invasion of Ukraine**
- **Industry + growing political right-wing mobilised** against green regulation

= Political shift to “**competitiveness**” and “**simplification**”

CORPORATIONS RIGHT NOW...



@cartoonralph

# Antwerp Declaration 2024

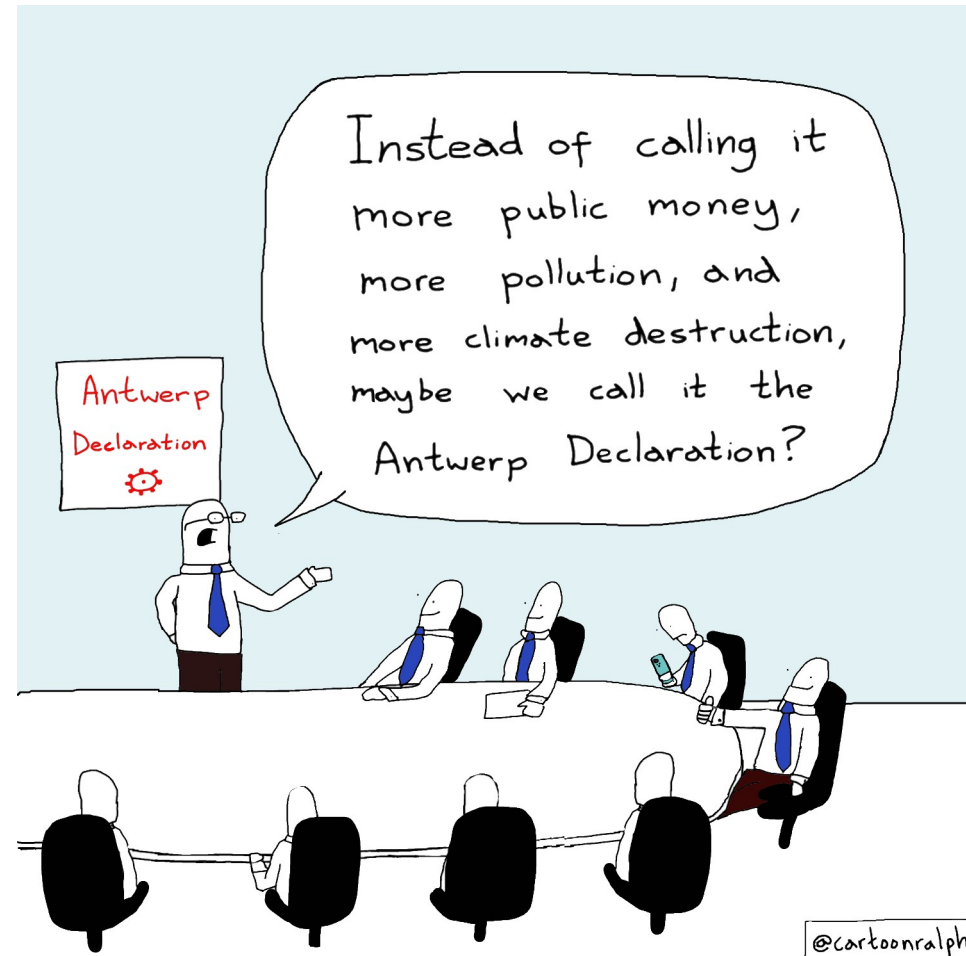


Photo: <https://antwerp-declaration.eu/>

# Antwerp Declaration

It includes 10 demands:

- **Deregulation** / rolling back current rules
- **Public funding** for industry, without reciprocal commitments
- **Unproven or fossil-dependent climate 'solutions'** (carbon capture, hydrogen)
- New business-friendly EU **decision-making processes**
- Theme: “**competitiveness**”



# One year later, Antwerp 2025

**“The Clean Industrial Deal, if you look at it, delivers on each and every one of the ten recommendations in the Antwerp Declaration. Your central demand was to make a clear business case for Europe ...**

**... And next year I would love to come back, to report on what we have done in between, to listen to how your reality was in between.”**

*Commission President Ursula von der Leyen*

*Photo: EC - Audiovisual Service*



# Existing rules are being weakened: Omnibuses



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS I

- MEDEF (French employers' organisation)
- BDI (German employers)
- CONFINDUSTRIA (Italian industry association)
- European Round Table for Industry
- AFG
- Exxon Mobil
- AmCham Europe.



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS IV

- European Family Businesses,
- Mouvement des Entreprises de taille intermédiaire (METI)
- Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI)



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS V

- ASD and the big players in the arms industry, including :
- Leonardo
  - Airbus
  - Saab
  - Safran.



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS VII

- Microsoft
- Google
- DIGITALEurope
- Dot Europe
- Insurance Europe
- Information Technology Industry Council (ITI).



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS VIII

- Orgalim
- the German Chamber of Commerce (DIHK)
- Eurochambres
- Eurometaux
- Hydrogen Europe
- COPA-COGECA.



## DRIVERS OF OMNIBUS X

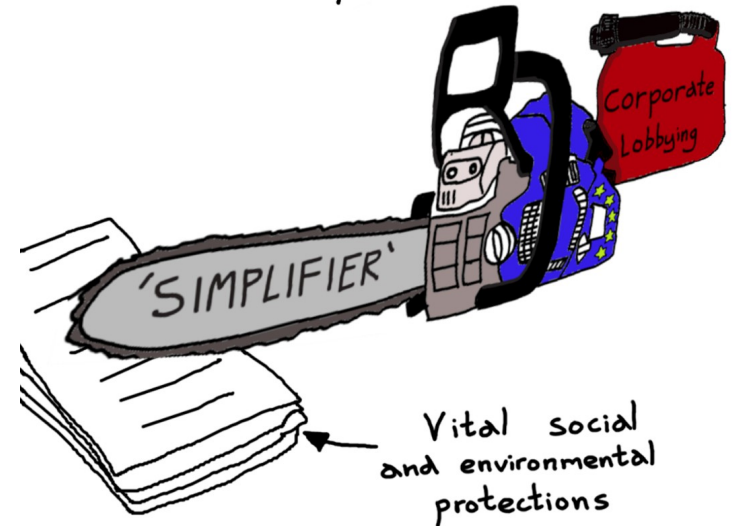
- Croplife Europe
- FEFANA
- FEFAC
- FEDIAF
- COPA-COGECA
- FEAP
- AnimalHealthEurope.

# Existing rules are being weakened: EU Inc / 28<sup>th</sup> regime proposal

European Trade Union Confederation:

“EU Inc represents a **serious risk to the standards** won by working people at national level over more than 100 years. Without proper safeguards, it would create **loopholes that make it easier for companies to circumvent basic rights**, including the right to a guaranteed wage or employment contract. That would put pressure on all other companies to lower wages and working conditions.”

Commission unveils  
new tools in  
so-called 'simplification'  
plans



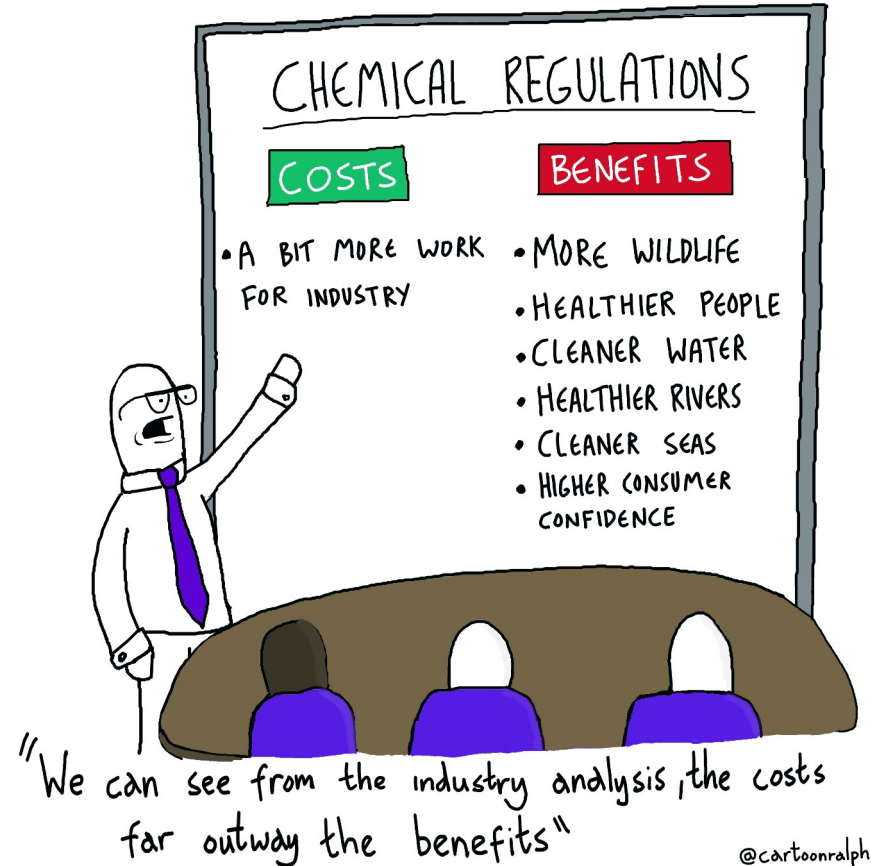
Cartoon: @cartoonRalph

# Proposed rules are being delayed, weakened, or cancelled: chemicals

## Revision of EU's chemicals rules (REACH):

**2020:** European Commission's Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability towards a toxic-free environment, published as part of the European Green Deal, **promises** that the REACH regulation would be revised to make it far quicker and more effective in tackling harmful chemicals

**2026:** European Commission **abandons** proposed REACH revision, after years of corporate and right-wing political pressure



# Decision-making processes are being changed to give industry lobbyists an even bigger say

## NEW! Implementation Dialogues

71% of participants represent business interests, with limited representation from civil society and trade unions (11%)

## NEW! Reality Checks

Of 22 Reality Checks, 7 were business-only, 3 had over 90% business participation, 8 had no civil society participation, and 11 had 5 or fewer civil society organisations. The average business participation was 79%

## NEW! Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolkit

New urgency procedures that could bypass impact assessments & consultation; targeted consultation formats that privilege selected business interests; measures against so-called Member State 'gold-plating'; time-limited rules that could automatically remove public safeguards



# Fighting back

- **Deregulation Watch** (by Corporate Europe Observatory)
- **Complaints** to European Ombudsman
- **Rules to Protect** - a strong community of Brussels-based NGOs & trade unions
- **National-level coalitions** to oppose this agenda (Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium)
- **Regular statements** with hundreds of sign-ons
- **Strategy meetings** online & in Brussels
- **Coalition-building** around specific fights (eg. digital rights, pesticides, #HandsoffNature)

**BUT civil society funding & capacity are being cut**



# Time for firewall politics



**Corporate Europe Observatory**

It's time to reclaim regulation and to prioritise sustainability and justice over corporate profits.

**KICK OUT TOXIC POLLUTERS!**

It's time to deliver urgently-needed REACH chemicals reform and to ban 'forever chemicals' PFAS.

It's time to kick climate and toxic polluters out of political decision-making.

[www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org)

Instagram Twitter Facebook

# Thank you



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Lobby transparency: Corporate Europe Observatory is registered in the EU lobby transparency register under identification number 5353162366-85.