

# Highlights from the Observatory 2008

## A quick snapshot:

2008 has been a busy year for Corporate Europe Observatory, with our work increasingly throwing a spotlight on some of the crucial issues of the day. The issue of lobbying transparency shot up the Brussels' agenda, following the launch of the EU Commission's lobbying register in June 2008. Transparency by itself, does not of course solve the problem of corporate power. However, the long-awaited lobbying register that was supposed to shed some light in the darkness, suffers from deep flaws. As a result, it is creating more confusion than clarity about the role of lobbying in EU decision-making. CEO continues to beaver away to expose how corporate players are working behind-the-scenes to shape the political agenda - and how all too often the EU Commission openly allows them to shape decision-making. 2008 also saw new research on agrofuels, revealing how corporate lobbying and greenwash were being used to legitimise environmentally damaging monoculture crops for fuel such as Brazilian sugarcane and soy. In December, CEO attended the international climate talks in Poznań, Poland, highlighting the role being played by corporations which look for opportunities for profit while undermining real action to halt the climate crisis. CEO has also taken to the blog-o-sphere in 2008, and will continue to blog with the launch of our new website in 2009. With European Parliamentary elections scheduled in June, a new Commission, and further crucial climate talks in Copenhagen in December, 2009 looks set to be an even busier year.

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## ALTER-EU



CEO plays a leading role in the ALTER-EU coalition, which brings together some 160 civil society groups, trade unions, academics and public affairs firms concerned with the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on Europe's political agenda.

This year, ALTER-EU's activities have been focused on transparency and the ethics of lobbying, issues which have been highlighted by the launch of the Commission's lobbying register.

CEO has worked with ALTER-EU to expose the inconsistencies in the register, which currently lacks crucial information and is not compulsory.

In March, ALTER-EU launched [Secrecy and corporate dominance - a study on the composition and transparency of European Commission Expert Groups](#).

This new research highlighted the way in which big business dominates some of the Commission's own advisory bodies, gaining privileged access and influence over the Commission's priorities. The report was followed up with letters to the Commission, challenging them to improve the transparency and the process for selecting these so-called Expert Groups.



ALTER-EU also spoke out against Commission proposals to tackle conflicts of interest, where corporate lobbyists secure placements inside the European Commission as 'Seconded National Experts' or 'temporary administrators'. Following our criticisms, Commissioner Kallas announced he would act to prevent this from happening again.

### Lobbycracy

CEO has also been active in its own right, exposing just how business has become part of the system within the EU institutions. This included highlighting how the European Business and Parliament Scheme (EBPS), was acting as a lobbying vehicle for big business thanks to its privileged base inside the European Parliament. Following complaints from MEPs, EBPS was asked to move out.



CEO's lobby tours of Brussels (pictured) have become quite an attraction, with journalists, NGOs and students taking the opportunity to find out more about who lives where in the EU Brussels quarter.

### Blogging about Brussels

In 2008, CEO launched itself into the blog-o-sphere with the Brussels Sunshine Blog - an attempt to cast light into the murky shadows of the world of lobbying. Brussels Sunshine focuses on

the EU Commission's lobbying register, recording progress in the number of lobbyists registered and highlighting the limits in the information revealed. See <http://blog.brusselssunshine.eu/>

Our Inside the Brussels Bubble blog, also launched in 2008, keeps a virtual eye on the comings and goings in EU-land - recording what goes on around the EU institutions and who is involved. See <http://brusselsbubble.blogspot.com/>

## Agrofuelling Europe

The European Commission's draft Renewable Energy Directive, published in January 2008, included a target to replace 10% of transport fuel with "renewable" fuels by 2020 - despite the growing warnings about the damaging environmental and social impacts of agrofuels.

CEO's work on agrofuels has been at the heart of an EU-wide campaign to persuade MEPs to oppose this target.

Working alongside groups from agrofuel-growing countries, as well as with colleagues in Europe, CEO called for a moratorium on agrofuel promotion.



As part of this campaign, CEO sought to expose how lobbying by the Brazilian government and sugarcane producers were seeking to cover up the damaging impacts of the ethanol industry. In December the agrofuel lobby was voted Worst EU Lobby of 2008 because of their misleading and deceptive campaign.

As a result of campaigning by a wide range of organisations, the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted to bring down the proposed target, but this was rejected by the Parliament's Industry Committee. Ultimately the Council of Ministers insisted on maintaining the target at 10%, although with some conditions, with the final directive approved in

December 2008. Many issues related to biomass for energy, GM trees, and national implementation still remain unresolved.

CEO also published new research exposing the role of the biotech industry in PRRI, a supposed public interest research group; and contributed to a report on the dangers and flaws of the soy certification scheme being put forward by the Roundtable on Responsible Soy.

CEO organised an information tour on soy production in Paraguay, visiting the Convention on Biological Diversity in Germany and touring in Spain.

## Remunicipalisation on the rise

CEO continues to play an active role in promoting alternatives to the damaging water privatisation models being imposed in parts of the world.

Around the world, communities are fighting back against privatisation and opting for public - public partnerships (PuPs) as a means of keeping democratic control over water services. In June this year, the city of Paris announced that it would be moving to a public-owned model after more than 20 years of privatisation.



Working with our partners, CEO launched a new website [www.remunicipalisation.org](http://www.remunicipalisation.org) to highlight examples of this remunicipalisation process. With case studies from across the world, the new website highlights how communities can challenge corporate mis-management of this vital resource.

### Reaching out



CEO also took part in the launch of the European Network for Public Water during the European Social Forum in Malmö in September (pictured above) and joined a Reclaiming Public Water network speakers' tour in November, promoting the launch of the Arabic version of "Reclaiming Public Water" in Egypt and the Lebanon. In December CEO participated in the Seventh Asia Europe People's summit in Beijing, China (pictured left).

## Business gets intimate with the Global Europe strategy.

In October, CEO published new research exposing how DG Trade had opened up its doors to business lobby groups while consulting on the Global Europe strategy on trade. [Global Europe: An Open Door for Big Business Lobbyists at DG Trade](#) drew on access to document requests showing how the lobby group BusinessEurope had been given privileged access, including exclusive meetings with the then Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson.

CEO wrote to Commission President Barroso urging him to end this open door relationship between the Commission and big business, which has resulted in a damaging emphasis on corporate expansion in EU trade policy at the expense of social and environmental protection.





MEPs supported CEO's calls later in October when BusinessEurope hosted a conference on Global Europe inside the DG Trade building. CEO staged a mock wedding outside the event, urging the new Trade Commissioner, Baroness Ashton, to end the unholy alliance between DG Trade and the business lobbyists. A follow up report, and a joint advertisement with other NGOs in the European Voice, echoed the demand.

CEO was also forced to file a complaint with the European Ombudsman after DG Trade failed to grant full access to the minutes of meetings between Peter Mandelson and BusinessEurope representatives.

## Raising the heat on climate change

In December, CEO travelled to the international climate talks in Poznań, Poland, to highlight how corporate lobbyists are trying to set the agenda at the UN talks. The Climate Crashers blog provides a blow by blow account of events on the ground.

Within the EU, CEO research showed that industry lobbying had effectively undermined tough EU proposals to tackle climate change, with emissions targets for cars reduced and unproven and damaging technologies, including carbon capture and storage allowed.



Research on lobbying by the aviation industry over its inclusion within the EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) - intended to reduce emissions - found that the criteria were now so lax that emissions from aviation were still expected to increase by 78% by 2020.



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) was nominated for a Worst Lobby Award 2008 because of the misleading nature of their lobbying campaign.

## Companies in profile

In December, Corporate Europe Observatory published the first in a new series of corporate profiles, highlighting the lobbying activities of the giant water company Veolia. New profiles on oil company BP and cigarette manufacturer BAT follow soon.

## Worst Lobby Awards



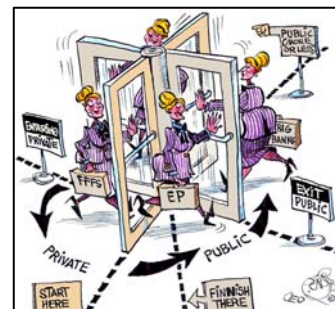
This year's Worst EU Lobbying Awards - organised together with Friends of the Earth Europe, LobbyControl and Spinwatch - attracted more than 8,500 votes from the public and went ahead, despite a last-minute attempt by one of the nominees to gag the organisers.



Fritz-Harald Wenig, a Commission employee who had been nominated for a Worst Conflict of Interest Award took legal action to have his name removed from the nominations but the Court of First Instance ruled that freedom of information was more important and the Brussels ceremony was able to go ahead as planned.

The Worst EU Lobbying Award 2008, awarded by UK comedian Mark Thomas at a ceremony in Brussels, went to the agrofuel lobbyists, the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, Brazilian sugar barons UNICA and energy company Abengoa Bioenergy for their use of misleading information and greenwash in their lobbying campaign.

The Award for the Worst Conflict of Interest 2008 went to Finnish MEP Pii-Noora Kauppi for promoting the interests of her future employer, a banking lobbying group, while still an active member of the European Parliament.



### A View to the Future

In early 2009 Corporate Europe Observatory moves into new offices in Brussels where it will be able to keep a closer eye on developments within the EU.

In June 2009 EU member states go to the polls to elect a new Parliament. The newly-elected MEPs will be working alongside a new team in the Commission so there will be lots of change.

2009 is also a crucial year for international action on climate change, with talks in Copenhagen in December to discuss future commitments on action to tackle climate change. CEO will be tracking the positions of industry in the run up to the talks, and working to strengthen the voices that call for a halt to false solutions, such as agrofuels and nuclear power.

### The CEO team

The CEO team in 2008 included Amaranta Herrero, Belen Balanya, David Leloup, Erik Wesselius, Helen Burley, Kim Bizzarri, Martin Pigeon, Nina Holland, Oliver Shykles, Olivier Hoedeman, Pia Eberhardt, Roel van den Bosch and Yiorgos Vassalos.