



MEDIA BRIEFING, 25th October 2021

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## SHUT THE REVOLVING DOORS OF FOSSIL-FUEL-POLICY INFLUENCE

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**Key figures:** Between 2015 and 2021 6 fossil fuel giants (Shell, BP, Total, Equinor, ENI and Galp) and 5 of their lobby groups (Hydrogen Europe, Eurogas, FuelsEurope, IOGP, CEFIC):

- Had 70+ cases of revolving doors.
- Met with top level officials from the European Commission 568 times<sup>1</sup>.
- This is 1.5 meetings every week for 7 years.
- Together they have spent over €170 million lobbying in Europe.

We are already feeling the impacts of the **climate emergency**, with record storms, floods, droughts, and fires. Over two-thirds of man-made greenhouse gas emissions come from the fossil fuel industry, and its **capture of our political systems** is a **major obstacle** to tackling this crisis.

For decades **fossil fuel companies** have [lobbied against effective climate action](#) at national, EU, and international levels, blocking policies to cut emissions and leave fossil fuels in the ground. Their bag of [lobbying tricks](#) includes privileged access, huge lobby spending, and [revolving doors](#). This is the **corporate capture by the fossil fuel industry of the EU decision-making process**, and the **mainstreaming across all political institutions of its interests and priorities**.

New research by [Fossil Free Politics](#) members Corporate Europe Observatory, Friends of the Earth Europe and Food Water Action Europe, explores more than **70 revolving door cases** between the public sector (national governments and agencies, EU, and international institutions) and just **six Big Energy firms and five of their lobby groups between 2015 - 2021** (full data and methodology is [here](#)). **Below we highlight ten** of the many **cases** of public servants and elected representatives who have gone through the revolving door to corporate jobs with fossil fuel companies or those who represent them, and officials moving to the public sphere from roles in these companies.

Despite the Paris Agreement [commitments](#), as COP26 begins in Glasgow, there has still been **no real action**. To reach the Paris goal of keeping warming below 1.5°C **almost 60 per cent of oil and gas reserves and 90 per cent of coal must remain in the ground**. Yet big oil and gas majors have merely pledged ‘[net zero](#)’ climate plans, a **convenient cloak for [business-as-usual, and false solutions](#)** which involve a variety of risky technologies and deeply flawed schemes, from carbon markets, to carbon capture and storage (CCS), to hydrogen. At the heart of those pledges are projections to actually increase their production of gas. This smokescreen allows for continued emissions, and, deployed at scale, will have significant negative social and environmental impacts. It distracts from the rapid implementation of the urgently needed drop in fossil fuel consumption and replacement with [real alternatives](#); yet the majority of political institutions embrace the false solutions engineered by the fossil fuel industry.

<sup>1</sup> These meetings are only the tip of the iceberg and cover only the Commissioners, Cabinets, and Directors-Generals, the only ones who need to declare their meetings with lobbyists. There are many more unregistered meetings with officials. We asked for a list of those but got no response in most cases, and very little disclosure of those who did answer.



Revolving doors rules are inadequate and **regulators ignore possible conflicts of interest** whereby Big Energy benefits from the know-how and contact books of insiders. This is not a case of individual wrong-doing but a systemic problem across institutions. These **revolving door cases** demonstrate just how **normalised the fossil fuel industry**, its assumptions, power, and culture are.

**The question of oil and gas companies' influence in political life couldn't be more significant.**

Whether they are [opposing or delaying environmental action](#), pushing to defend dirty energy investments at the cost of [human rights](#), securing diplomatic deals with third [countries](#), fueling [conflict](#), or playing [powerful roles](#) in economics and energy ministries, we need a functioning firewall between public officials and those companies most responsible for fueling and perpetuating climate change.

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## Revolving Door Cases

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### **Amber Rudd, Equinor (Norway)<sup>2</sup>**

After serving as UK Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change among other Ministerial roles, and while still a British MP, Amber Rudd was nominated Chair of Equinor UK's international advisory group in 2020.

Equinor claims that members of the advisory board don't represent the company. However Rudd recently represented Equinor at an [event the company sponsored](#), organised by EU media *Euractiv*, where she noted: "what I would like from the politicians who are coming... is policy decisions that would allow businesses to develop the solutions".

Rudd [supports](#) the [development of carbon capture](#) and storage (CCS) technology (the UK Government has been a key proponent). Equinor is planning a [controversial fossil hydrogen plant](#) in the UK (which uses fossil gas in combination with CCS). CCS is a costly technology that has failed to deliver. But the oil and gas industry (and the EU's [Hydrogen Strategy](#)) bank on it to capture the emissions created by producing hydrogen from fossil fuels, claiming it is thus 'low carbon'.

### **Ahlem Gharbi, Total (France)<sup>3</sup>**

Ahlem Gharbi was Total's Deputy Vice-President of International Affairs (2015-2017), where she regularly participated in events on French foreign policy in the Arab world. From May 2017 she became Advisor on North Africa and Middle East to the French President. Between April 2019 and September 2021 she was a Director at the French Agency for Development, and was recently appointed General Director of the French Institute in Algeria.

Total is pushing for further expansion in Africa, to build the world's longest heated [crude oil pipeline](#) through Uganda and Tanzania. The company [faces a lawsuit](#) in France for failure to prevent human rights violations and environmental damage linked to these projects, and the climate justice movement has called for a global day of action to [Collapse Total](#).

### **Gerrit Zalm, Shell (the Netherlands)<sup>4</sup>**

Gerrit Zalm served as a Dutch Minister for 13 years until 2007. He was nominated a Non-Executive Independent Director at Shell in 2013. In 2017 Zalm chaired negotiations to form a new Dutch Government whilst still paid by Shell (€117.000 that year). According to an [investigation](#), under

2<https://renews.biz/61453/amber-rudd-to-chair-equinor-advisory-group/>

3 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ahlem-gharbi-1b868529/>

4<https://www.somo.nl/still-playing-the-shell-game/>



Zalm's supervision a policy Shell had demanded for years (eliminating dividend tax) was included in the coalition agreement of the Dutch Government in 2017.

The EU and European governments hand out an estimated [€112 billion plus](#) each year to prop up fossil fuels.

#### **Maria van der Hoeven, Total (France)<sup>5</sup>**

Maria van der Hoeven served as a Minister in several departments in the Netherlands before being appointed Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (2011-2015). In 2016 she was appointed Total's Independent Member of the Board of Directors, and joined a European Commission Expert Group on decarbonisation (2016-2019).

At a recent [webinar](#) co-organised by oil and gas company Petronas, van der Hoeven claimed: "There is no doubt the world is heading towards net zero 2050, and fossils will be part of that."

#### **Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Hydrogen Europe (EU)<sup>6</sup>**

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis worked at the German Foreign Office before becoming an MEP (2004-2014); his work on the ITRE committee contributed to the Joint Undertaking on hydrogen and fuel cells (the origins of lobby group [Hydrogen Europe](#)). He served as Ambassador for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece in 2015. He was appointed Secretary General of Hydrogen Europe in 2016, and in 2021 became its Chief Executive.

Gas industry hype has ensured that Europe will be locked into the '[hydrogen economy](#)' for the next few decades; this hydrogen is made from fossil gas. Hydrogen Europe plays an active role in the current EU regulatory and financial frenzy to boost hydrogen.

#### **Nathalie Tocci, ENI (Italy)<sup>7</sup>**

Nathalie Tocci was Special Advisor to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission from 2015 to 2019. In 2020 she became a member of ENI's Board of Directors, as well as Special Advisor to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell.

FoEE, CEO and Re:Common filed a [complaint](#) with the European Commission for this conflict of interest. Perhaps as a consequence, the European External Action service has not yet given Tocci any mission in her [role](#) as special advisor.

#### **John Sawers, BP (UK)<sup>8</sup>**

John Sawers is the former Chief of British Secret Intelligence Service or MI6 (2009-2014), and was UK's Ambassador to the United Nations for two years after serving as Political Director of the British Foreign Office. BP recruited the former diplomat and military expert as its independent Non-Executive Director in 2015.

#### **Nick Houghton, BP (UK)<sup>9</sup>**

In 2016 Nick Houghton left his role as former Chief of the Defence Staff, Britain's most senior military officer. Since 2017 he has provided independent strategic advice to BP at the board level on operating

5 <https://totalenergies.com/fr/groupe/identite/gouvernance/biographies/membres-conseil-administration>

6 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/chatzimarkakis/>

7 [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/cv-tocci\\_en.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/cv-tocci_en.pdf)

8 <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/who-we-are/board-and-executive-management/the-board/sir-john-sawers.html>

9 <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-02-04-revealed-dozens-of-uk-former-senior-officials-profit-from-fossil-fuel-corporations-rubber-stamped-by-whitehall-committee/>



in Turkey, the Middle East, and North Africa; as well as on the related geopolitical risks of doing so, including crisis preparedness and response management.

#### **Adolfo Mesquita Nunes, Galp (Portugal)<sup>10</sup>**

Adolfo Mesquita Nunes was a Portuguese Member of the Parliament from 2011 to 2013, just before being nominated Secretary of State for Tourism (at the Ministry for Economy and Employment), a position that he held until 2015. From 2016 to 2019, Mesquita Nunes was the president of the Portuguese conservative, christian democrat CDS-PP. The same month that he left his political office he became a nonexecutive board member of Galp.

#### **Pasquale Salzano, ENI (Italy)<sup>11</sup>**

Pasquale Salzano was seconded in 2011 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at ENI to become Head of International Institutional Relations and Head of the ENI office in the US. Salzano was then appointed ENI's Senior Vice President, and then Executive Vice President and Director of Institutional Affairs. He became the Italian Ambassador to Qatar in 2017. Notably, the Italian state actually seconds officials to ENI and vice versa.

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## **Conclusion**

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The sheer number of revolving door cases illustrates how serious the problem of conflicts of interest is in climate policy-making. The EU's [revolving door rules](#) remain inadequate and poorly implemented. Meanwhile UN climate negotiations often allow fossil fuel sponsorship, and have members of the fossil fuel industry joining official delegations. [Attempts](#) to regulate conflict of interests at the UNFCCC – supported by governments representing 70% of the world's population – have been blocked by the EU and others.

The business model of the fossil fuel industry is threatened by the implementation of climate change policies that would limit global warming to 1.5°C. Their vested interests in rejecting or diluting any legislation that hits their profits should exclude them from climate decision-making.

**At the core of [Fossil Free Politics](#)' demands is the removal of the irreconcilable interests of the fossil fuel industry from the arena of climate policy.**

#### **We demand:**

- **No conflicts of interest**, no revolving door (a cooling off of 5 years for regular officials/staff; 10 years for high-level positions).
- No placements, secondments, internships, or sabbaticals from fossil fuel company staff in governments or vice versa.
- Institute a **firewall** to end fossil fuel industry access to decision-making. No more meetings with the fossil fuel industry and their representatives
- The EU should support the development of a **conflict of interest policy** at the UNFCCC.

*\*This content is the sole responsibility of Corporate Europe Observatory, Friends of the Earth Europe and Food Water Action Europe and should not be regarded as reflecting the position of any of the more than 200 organisations supporting the call for fossil-free politics, including the founders.*

10 <https://pt.linkedin.com/in/adolfomesquitununes>

11 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pasquale-salzano-870940b8/?originalSubdomain=it>