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By invitation only: new TI EU report reveals EU courted US and select business interests in sustainability law deregulation

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Wednesday, October 21st, 2026

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A new report by Transparency International EU (TI EU) released today has laid bare the European Commission's deference to US and select business interests when seeking to deregulate the EU's sustainability requirements, justified as relief for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In doing so, it bypassed its own guidelines on good policymaking, eschewing public consultations in favour of a closed-door roundtable, the participants at which TI EU was only able to obtain through an access-to-documents request.

The legislative package, known as Omnibus I, amended the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). The final Omnibus I Directive, adopted in February 2026, closely reflects the demands of a narrow set of industry voices, cutting the scope of both directives and deleting the obligation to adopt a climate transition plan.

The report shows:

- At a 6 February 2025 roundtable, which took the place of a public consultation on Omnibus I and which the Commission cites as part of its "intense outreach to stakeholders":
  - **Business interests represented at least two-thirds of the 110 organisations on the Commission's list of participants**. Only 13 were self-declared non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
  - Participating organisations represented only **12 of the 27 Member States**. Not counting EU-level associations, **organisations linked to the US outnumbered those from more than 22 EU Member States**
  - 12 participating organisations were not on the EU Transparency Register at the time the roundtable took place, meaning they did not disclose key information about their identity,

resources and interests represented.

- Far from widening the circle, **the roundtable favoured already well-connected organisations**. Its participants make up just 0.5% of the over 17,000 registered organisations, yet accounted for more than one in ten of all Commission lobby meetings published since the start of the second von der Leyen mandate in December 2024.

- The Commission **did not proactively publish the roundtable's agenda, participants or minutes**, using a loophole in the transparency rules on disclosing meetings with lobbyists. TI EU obtained the list of participants only through a confirmatory access-to-documents application, 17 months after the event took place.

- Between taking office on 1 December 2024 and presenting Omnibus I on 26 February 2025, Commissioner Dombrovskis, President von der Leyen's lead on simplification, disclosed 12 meetings with interest representatives. A third were with organisations based outside the EU or representing US business.

- Across the entire legislative mandate, civil society and small businesses were barely heard. NGOs account for fewer than one in ten of the meetings held by Commissioner Dombrovskis and his cabinet and by Parliament rapporteur Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Jörgen Warborn. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their representatives accounted for fewer than 4% of all their combined meetings over this mandate, despite SMEs being the main justification for the Omnibus I process and the overall simplification agenda.

Raphaël Kergueno, Senior Policy Officer at Transparency International EU, said

> "The Commission's flawed approach to fast-track legislation exposes EU policy to capture by certain industry interests. Instead of correcting this dubious practice, it is set to entrench it in new guidelines, which will result in less transparent, less inclusive and ultimately less accountable EU laws."

The Commission must now correct course. It cannot allow key voices to continue being sidelined, under the guise of urgency. These are critical times. It is precisely now that the EU should be consulting more voices, not fewer.

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