



Joint Press Release

14 September 2022

NGOs walk out of expert Taxonomy group over lack of independence

BEUC, Birdlife, ECOS, T&E and WWF leave the EU Platform on Sustainable Finance. NGOs claim the European Commission has interfered politically in the group, and acted against evidence despite its legal obligation to follow science-based advice.

Five environmental and consumer NGOs have left the Platform on Sustainable Finance, the European Commission's expert group mandated to develop technical recommendations for the EU Taxonomy.

Civil society groups argue that the Commission has interfered politically in the Platform's work. NGOs also denounce that the Commission has repeatedly ignored the expert group's recommendations, particularly on forestry, bioenergy, gas-fired power and nuclear power, without providing any sound scientific justification for these decisions.

The Commission is legally bound to justify the Taxonomy criteria based on 'conclusive scientific evidence'. However, Brussels has chosen to ignore science and listen to industry lobby groups for several critical sectors.

Despite the Platform's recommendations based on scientific data [1], the Commission included gas and nuclear as environmentally sustainable investments [2]. The decision was confirmed by EU governments and the European Parliament, and has now become EU law [3].

Civil society groups informed European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness of their resignation in a letter sent on Tuesday, 13 September [4].

The resigning organisations are the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), Birdlife Europe and Central Asia, Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS), Transport & Environment, and the WWF European Policy Office.

Quotes:

Mathilde Crêpy, Head of Environmental Transparency, Environmental Coalition on Standards (ECOS):

'We have done our best to build and improve the Taxonomy framework from within. Unfortunately, the EU has gradually turned its back on science, and made the Taxonomy a tool to promote greenwashing in energy generation and forestry. We cannot legitimise the Taxonomy with our presence in the Platform'.

Monique Goyens, Director-General, BEUC, said:

'The Taxonomy was supposed to help guide consumers and enable them to compare green investments. However, for political reasons, it's become a greenwashing tool for climate-harming investments. Consumers would be financially harmed if they rely on this Taxonomy. Since the die is cast on this, we must find alternative ways to promote consumers' best interests'.

Ariel Brunner, Deputy Director at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, said:

“As the ecological crisis precipitates and threatens our very existence, it is unacceptable that the EU would be willfully misleading investors into causing more harm. We as civil society organisations cannot legitimise crass greenwashing.”

Luca Bonaccorsi, Director of Sustainable Finance at T&E, said:

“The EU Taxonomy was supposed to be a tool to fight greenwashing. Instead it’s become a dangerous tool to greenwash, with incentives for fossil gas, biogas and the indiscriminate logging and burning of forests. After years spent trying to build it, now it’s the time to campaign and convince investors not to follow it”.

Sebastien Godinot, Senior Economist at WWF European Policy Office, said:

“European governments and lobbies have heavily undermined the EU Taxonomy’s credibility, and the Commission has folded in front of them. We no longer believe this Commission will allow the Platform to work independently and with integrity so we cannot be part of this process any longer.”

Background:

The EU Taxonomy is a classification system established to clarify which investments are sustainable. The aim is to prevent greenwashing and help investors assess whether investments are consistent with policy commitments like the EU Green Deal.

Notes to editors:

[1] [Platform’s report on the Complementary Delegated Act](#)

[2] European Commission, [Complementary Delegated Act](#)

[3] The Complementary Delegated Act has been published in the Official Journal on 15 July 2022; it will apply from 1 January 2023

[4] [Link to the letter.](#)

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