



New Lobby Group Tied to Brexit Climate Science Deniers and Koch Industries Pushes for Deregulation in Europe

Mat Hope

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A new lobby group has appeared in Europe claiming to represent ‘consumers’. But a closer look reveals it is actually backed by some familiar groups known for their efforts to weaken climate and environmental regulations.

The Consumer Choice Centre (CCC) was set up in March 2017 and was promoted as “a grassroots-led movement” that “empowers consumers across the globe”.

But an investigation by Brussels think tank Corporate Europe Observatory suggests the CCC is actually working as a lobby group for a network pushing deregulation, while working closely with high-profile organisations including London-based think tank the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) and US oil billionaire Charles Koch.

The IEA’s head of lifestyle economics, Christopher Snowden, helped launch the group at an event just around the corner from the European Parliament in April 2017, Corporate Europe Observatory said. At the event, the CCC said it collaborated with libertarian think tank EPICENTER, which the IEA was involved in creating.

EPICENTER promotes the work of six free-market think tanks, including reports that criticise renewable energy subsidies and praising fracking.

As DeSmog UK previously revealed, the IEA has close ties to a UK network of climate science denial organisations that pushed for Brexit. Former IEA chairman, Neil Record, now sits on the board of climate science denial campaign group, the Global Warming Policy Forum.

The think tank was awarded zero stars for transparency by watchdog Transparify as it refuses to disclose its funders.

A spokesperson for the IEA told DeSmog UK that it “has no formal relationship with the CCC.”

“Both organisations work on similar areas and staff have spoken at each other’s events, but there is no official affiliation.”

The CCC has four full time lobbyists and spent up to €199,999 on lobbying between May 2015 and April 2016, according to lobbyfacts.eu.

Its original funding came from US group Students for Liberty (SFL), its managing director told Corporate Europe Observatory.

According to SFL's annual accounts, the group is funded by Charles Koch, of the [Koch Industries](#) — a group famous for funding the spread of climate science denial.

SFL also receives money from the [Atlas Network](#) and the [Cato Institute](#), which are also funded by the Koch Brothers, and are at the centre of a [US network](#) that pushes for deregulation and helps spread climate science denial.

The CCC is part of a “network of corporate-funded organisations aggressively pushing for deregulation in the EU”, the Corporate Europe Observatory investigation said.

“In practice, CCC's [activities](#) [apparently](#) boil down to insisting that consumer choice always equates to less regulation, whenever any regulatory or lobbying-related discussion at EU level provides a hook.”

Corporate Europe Observatory campaigner Margarida Silva told DeSmog UK it expected this agenda to extend to environmental regulation and energy policy.

“Considering that their biggest donor, Students For Liberty, is backed by US hardliners Koch Industries, and CCC themselves say they receive further funding from an undisclosed energy company, it is not unreasonable to expect this partisan funding base to translate into a targeting of energy regulation as well.”

It is also notable that both the IEA and Koch groups are based outside of Europe.

The IEA was instrumental in arguing for Brexit, and could use the CCC to continue to push for [weaker regulations](#) before they are translated into UK law as part of the [repeal bill](#).

Likewise, the CCC gives the Koch brothers an avenue to influence European policy, potentially exporting their highly influential lobbying model across the Atlantic. DeSmog UK [previously revealed](#) that Koch Industries spent between €200,000 and €299,999 (\$223,634–\$335,449 or £142,464–£213,695) on its European lobby efforts in a single year.

“It is interesting to note that Brexit and Trump may have conjured a climate conducive to deregulation, which has emboldened groups that are pushing a strong pro-corporate agenda”, Silva said.

“IEA's activities have focused on the EU for a while now. They have, for example, published the Nanny State Index, and are a founding member of radical free-market think tank EPICENTER. And yet, IEA has still not joined the EU lobby register. The same is the case with Students For Liberty.”

Another US freemarket think tank, the Heritage Foundation, registered as an EU lobbyist for [just one month](#) earlier this year. The entry was removed due to “data inconsistencies”.

