“No-greenwashing resolution of CRC1601”

The Collaborative Research Center 1601 (CRC 1601) adopts the following directive:

Preface:

A limited number of companies is responsible for 95% of all fossil fuel production. Only 160 of the 2,979 companies listed on Global Coal Exit List (GCEL, https://www.coalexit.org/) have announced a phase-out plan and out of these 160 companies, only 76 have announced a phase-out date that is in line with the 1.5°C goal. The vast majority of the companies still builds their business model to a large degree on fossil fuel production while simultaneously spending significant budgets on green-washing to convince the public of their positive role in the transition to a sustainable economy. Collaborations with universities and other science institutes and sponsoring of green projects are a common strategy to achieve this goal[1]. The CRC1601 must not serve as a means for any of those green-washing activities.

Resolution:

CRC 1601 will not engage in activities that enhance the public reputation of companies whose business is to a large degree the exploration, extraction, production, transportation, storage or exploitation of fossil fuels. This covers all entities listed on the Global Coal Exit List (GCEL, https://www.coalexit.org/) with a coal-based revenue of more than 10% of their total revenue and all entities on the Global Oil and Gas Exit List (GOGEL, https://gogel.org/) that build new fossil fuel facilities. The prohibited activities include research and development partnerships, participation in joint projects, sponsorship, donations, or in-kind contributions to CRC activities, consultancy arrangements, hosting their representatives at CRC events, common events, workshops, panels, or educational activities. In case of questions or exemption requests the CRC sustainability board is to be consulted prior to the final decision by the executive board whether a particular activity is affected.

Explanations and examples:

Procurement of commodities (e.g., helium, industrial gases, coolants, fuels) necessary for research operations is not covered, provided such transactions do not involve promotional association, or usage rights beyond standard commercial terms.

The listed fossil fuel companies are not allowed to fund positions, research activities, research visits, etc. Any flow of money from the company towards the CRC1601 could be used by the company to market the legitimacy of its operations including the fossil fuel extraction and to contribute to greenwashing.

The resolution forbids common public events, like job fairs or conferences that publically advertise the CRC and the fossil fuel companies in parallel. If the CRC is invited to such an event, it will not participate if knowledge about the participation of a fossil fuel company is obtained. This does not exclude the participation of individual CRC members in any such event as long as they do not speak as CRC representative there.

The CRC1601 will not authorize, refund the cost of, travel to and from the premises of a fossil fuel extraction company or institution.

In contrast to practices implemented at the VU Amsterdam, the prototype for the implementation of this type of anti-greenwashing policy, the resolution does not forbid common articles published by the members of the CRC and authors with the affiliation of a fossil fuel extraction company or an institution that is a wholly owned subsidiary or a part of the company.

Decisions by the CRC SB have to conform to the DFG code of conduct for researchers. DFG and the universities routinely establish rules that exclude certain countries or companies from collaborations. The exclusion policy must not undermine good research practice i.e., it must not force researchers into violating contract/usage-rights duties, documentation and transparency duties, or create hidden conflicts of interest [2].

The GOGEL-2025 list contains 19 German companies for their expansion of fossil fuel activities. IKAV Capital Partners GmbH and RWE AG are listed because of their expansion of direct activities in fossil gas and oil extraction. Hamburger Energiewerke GmbH, Hanseatic Energy Hub GmbH, Kraftwerke Mainz-Wiesbaden AG, Mainova AG, Mainzer Stadtwerke AG, Siemens AG, Siemens Energy AG, Trianel Gaskraftwerk Hamm GmbH & Co KG, Uniper SE, Wintershall Dea GmbH, STEAG GmbH, Iqony GmbH, LEAG Clean Power GmbH, Kraftwerk Mehrum GmbH, Deutsche Grüngas- und Energieversorgung GmbH, Open Grid Europe GmbH, Vier Gas Transport GmbH are listed because they build new natural-gas-based power plants and the corresponding infrastructure like new LNG terminals and pipelines.

The GCEL-2025 list contains 17 German companies with a coal-based revenue of more than 10%. Lausitz Energie Bergbau AG, Lausitz Energie Kraftwerke AG, Lausitz Energie Verwaltungs GmbH, RWE AG, RWE Power AG are listed because of their continued direct coal extraction. Berliner Energie und Wärme, Coal Orbis Trading GmbH, Mitteldeutsche Braunkohlengesellschaft mbH (MIBRAG), Hansen Sicherheitstechnik AG, Grosskraftwerk Mannheim AG, Hamburger Energiewerke GmbH, Hanseatic Commodity Trading GmbH, Onyx Power Group, STEAG GmbH, STEAG Power GmbH, Trianel Kohlekraftwerk Lünen Gmbh & Co. Kg, are listed because of their significant coal burning in power plants.

[1] *Fossil fuel industry influence in higher education: A review and a research agenda*. Hiltner, S. et al. 2024, *WIREs Climate Change, e*904. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.904

[2] DFG code of conduct (2024): https://www.dfg.de/en/basics-topics/basics-and-principles-of-funding/good-research-practice/code-of-conduct

Background:

The United Nations' IPCC Sixth Assessment Report 2021 [3] highlights that the impacts of the climate crisis are escalating rapidly, and every fraction of a degree of warming worsens risks for people and ecosystems. The Paris Agreement sets the overarching goal to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels". To limit global warming to 1.5°C, nearly 60% of oil and gas reserves and 90% of coal reserves must remain unextracted by 2050 [4]. Meeting climate goals requires not just building clean energy infrastructure but actively stopping the expansion of fossil fuel extraction.

Universities indirectly aid the fossil fuel extraction industry through investments in research collaborations, service contracts, sponsorships, consultancy arrangements, and procurement activities. Fossil-fuel companies' ties to universities are widespread and opaque, and these relationships can function as a vehicle to appear as partners in the energy transition while they continue to extract fossil fuels [1]. The embedded nature of these relationships has prompted some European universities to take action. The VU Amsterdam implemented a policy refusing new research collaborations with fossil fuel companies that do not demonstrably commit to the Paris Climate Agreement's objectives. CRC1601 should follow this example.

Instead of building our own quantitative criteria we build on the numbers compiled by Urgewald, a German NGO. The Urgewald database covers 96% of upstream companies that are still exploring or developing new coal, oil and gas assets despite climate warnings. Urgewald annually updates two lists that can be automatically searched :

- The **Global Oil & Gas Exit List 2025 (GOGEL)** covers 1,799 companies active in the upstream, midstream, and power sectors of the oil and gas industry. These companies account for approximately 95% of global oil and gas production.
- The **Global Coal Exit List 2025 (GCEL)** provides detailed information on over 2979 companies operating along the thermal coal value chain.

[3] *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Masson-Delmotte, V., *et al.,* Cambridge University Press, doi:10.1017/9781009157896.
[4] *Unextractable fossil fuels in a 1.5 °C world*, Welsby, D., *et al.,* 2021, *Nature* **597**, 230–234 doi:10.1038/s41586-021-03821-8