



His Majesty the King

In copy:

Vincent Van Peteghem

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, responsible for the Coordination of the Fight against Fraud and the National Lottery

13 November , 2023

Subject: Open letter to His Majesty the King concerning the reappointment of the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium

Sire,

We, the undersigned ATTAC Liège, Reclaim Finance, Greenpeace Belgium, Oxfam en Belgique, Youth for Climate Belgium, FairFin, Les Amis de la Terre Belgique ASBL, ATTAC Bruxelles 2, POUR, Centre tricontinental-CETRI, Rise for Climate Belgium, Centre Liégeois du Beau-Mur, Positive Money Europe, Communa, Grootootouders voor het Klimaat, Debt for Climate,

At a time when the position of Governor of the National Bank of Belgium (NBB) is being renewed by your government and its Finance Minister, we ask you to reconsider the reappointment of current Governor Pierre Wunsch¹, given the consequences of this decision for the planet and the living conditions of Europeans.

For years, the Belgian governor has opposed the greening of the European Central Bank's (ECB) activities². As the ECB operates on the basis of consensus between the governors of the Eurosystem central banks, Pierre Wunsch's reluctance is blocking the adoption of ambitious measures. The governor of the NBB, for example, had made a name for himself by opposing the introduction of climate criteria into the ECB's asset purchases, even though these mainly benefited highly polluting companies, including European oil and gas giants and coal companies³. Yet this was a relatively consensual measure among the governors, and had even been endorsed by the Bundesbank⁴.

Despite this lack of ambition on climate issues, Pierre Wunsch recently stated in an interview that he was 'absolutely not in climate denial, on the contrary'⁵. However, his record on climate issues is meagre, despite calls from civil society. In June, activists and NGOs gathered in front of the NBB to ask it to push the ECB to make loans for energy-efficient building renovation more affordable⁶. This is essential to improve energy efficiency and protect the Belgian population from extreme weather conditions and rising energy prices. But to date, the ECB has not made it easy to lower interest rates on loans for renovation, a measure that is undoubtedly insufficiently supported by the national banks, including the NBB.

What possible reason could Pierre Wunsch have for opposing the greening of monetary policy at a time of growing climate crisis? The governor of the National Bank of Belgium advocates inaction on

¹ [Royal Decree appointing the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium](#), 2 July 2017. Pierre Wunsch [has held office](#) since 2 January, 2019, for a renewable five-year term.

² In May 2021, at the time of the ECB's strategic review, 21 Belgian civil society organisations published a [carte blanche](#) pointing the finger at Pierre Wunsch as a blocking element within the ECB Governing Council. In October 2021, Positive Money Europe, together with Fairfin, [placed a car wrecked](#) by the floods in front of the NBB, serving as a staunch reminder that the NBB is bankrolling some of the worst climate offenders. The Belgian governor's position is particularly visible in a [Reuters article from July 2020](#): interviewed by the media, Pierre Wunsch stressed that introducing such criteria would go against market logic

³ Positive Money Europe, [Why and how the ECB should go beyond 'market neutrality'](#), January 2021. Positive Money Europe, [The ECB needs a new approach to green its corporate portfolio](#), July 2023.

Reclaim Finance, [Quantitative easing and climate: The ECB's dirty secret](#), May 2020.

Reclaim Finance, [Quantitative easing and climate 2: fueling the fossil gas frenzy](#), September 2020.

Reclaim Finance, [Spreading the fossil fuel pandemic: ECB's Covid asset purchases are supporting oil and gas expansion](#), October 2021.

⁴ For a long time, the Bundesbank had been opposed to integrating climate considerations into asset purchases, preferring other measures such as transparency, which led to a [mobilisation](#) in front of the Bundesbank in May 2021. In June 2021, Bundesbank Governor Jens Weidmann finally [recognized the usefulness of such an instrument](#) at the Green Swan Conference.

⁵ La Libre, 19 June 2023.

⁶ RTBF, [Climate: actions to demand lower interest rates from central banks in Belgium, France and Portugal](#), 20 June, 2023.

climate change on the pretext of the ECB's neutrality. This is not an acceptable argument, since the ECB has intervened several times in the past, notably to support commercial banks during the subprime crisis or to limit the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. This argument has even been refuted by the ECB itself, which has acknowledged that some of its supposedly "neutral" actions, such as asset purchases, were in fact exacerbating market failures, leading to pollution and global warming⁷.

At a time when Christine Lagarde, President of the ECB, has acknowledged for several years that environmental protection is at the heart of her mission⁸, and natural disasters are on the increase⁹, the question arises: are you, through your government, going to hand over the reins of our central bank to someone who refuses to contribute to the collective effort?

In this case, Sire, you will have to face the Belgians, the Europeans and your children with the choice of inaction and conservative dogmatism, in full knowledge of its impact on life on earth, or have the courage to appoint a governor who is equal to the challenges of our time.

Confident in Your benevolence, please accept, Sire, the assurance of our respectful and honourable salutations.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES :

ATTAC Liège

Positive Money Europe

Reclaim Finance

Greenpeace Belgium

Youth for Climate Belgium

FairFin

Les Amis de la Terre Belgique ASBL

ATTAC Bruxelles 2

Grootouders voor het Klimaat

Centre tricontinental-CETRI

Communa

POUR

INDIVIDUALS SUPPORTING THIS LETTER:

⁷ Isabel Schnabel, Member of the ECB Executive Board, [From market neutrality to market efficiency](#), 14 June, 2021.

⁸ Christine Lagarde, [Climate change and central banks - analysing, advising and acting](#), 11 July 2021.
Christine Lagarde, [Painting the bigger picture: keeping climate change on the agenda](#), 7 November 2022.

⁹ World Meteorological Organization, [WMO of Mortality and Economic Losses from weather, climate and water extremes \(1970-2019\)](#), 2021.

Cédric Chevalier, essayist at the Anthropocene Observatory

Laurent Lievens, research professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain, Helha, Cesa

Paul Blume, Co-host of obstant.eu at the Anthropocene Observatory

Francis Panichelli, activist with Grands Parents pour le Climat

Cécile de Rykel, climate activist with Grands-Parents pour le Climat and the Ucluse Citizens' Climate Assembly

Romain Gelin, Research Manager at Gresea

Vincent Minon, Civil Engineer, Support and Project Manager, member of the BcEvolution group

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