

REPROTECTION: HALTING THE EU'S DEREGULATION DRIVE

REGULATIONS ARE THERE TO PROTECT US. WE NEED TO DEFEND THEM.

Over the last decade, European politicians have started to undermine the protections that many people depend on. And Brexit is set to make things worse.

Recently, in European politics, the interests of corporations have been prioritised over the needs of people and the environment. Rules designed to protect us and the places and habitats we hold dear have been painted as ‘burdens’ on business, and attempts are being made to destroy them. This hasn’t happened by mistake.

What is Europe for? Around the continent, people are beginning to ask themselves that question. When the European project began, at its centre was treating all Europeans equally and preserving their basic freedoms. But when we allowed the interests of businesses to come above the interests of people we moved away from the values that brought Europe together in the first place.

Regulation ensures that our basic freedoms are protected: to thrive we all need clean air, a safe environment, and decent working conditions. The pendulum of deregulation has swung too far. We need to go back to a Europe that put the rights of people first: where principled regulations are made, valued, and enforced.

We need to re-protect people and the planet.

SO-CALLED ‘BETTER REGULATION’...

Over the last decade, Europe has embarked on a dangerous programme of deregulation. They’ve called it ‘Better Regulation’. But there’s nothing ‘better’ about it.

Better Regulation started in the European Commission in the early 2000s with the modest goal of identifying genuinely unnecessary regulations. But over the years its scope and ambition has evolved, as has the story that it sets out to tell. ‘Better Regulation’ is now about reducing the costs of regulatory ‘burdens’ to business - and it treats regulation as a ‘load’ that needs to be lifted. It has become a narrow, outdated ideological crusade. Following in the footsteps of the UK, critical regulation to protect people and the planet has been subjected to a process of intensive scrutiny, through a series of dry-sounding but hugely important ‘Better Regulation’ mechanisms, unveiled in May 2015.

The Better Regulation process has so far tried and failed to water down vital directives that protect birds, habitats and clean air. Only a vast public outcry protected them. And time and again, even on its own terms, business lobbyists haven’t been able to make a good enough case for deregulation. But that doesn’t mean they’ve stopped trying. And now that regulations have been painted as ‘burdens’, it’s harder than ever before to get vital new rules that protect us even considered, never mind passed.

The UK has been at the forefront of driving this agenda. But sadly for the rest of Europe, Brexit doesn’t mean that deregulation is dead. The UK may try to pressure the EU to lower its

standards to secure a future trade deal. Most importantly, a significant number of policy processes have been created in Brussels to lock in the deregulation agenda for years to come.

2019: THE OPPORTUNITY

In 2019, Europe will elect a new set of parliamentarians (MEPs). We need them to promise that they will resist deregulation and instead deliver on a new vision for Europe: re-protecting people and the planet, not putting business interests first.

Ultimately there isn't enough pressure on the European Commission to deliver a better, more responsible and forward-looking vision. For too long, politicians have turned a blind eye as big business has redrawn the rule book behind the scenes. With hugely important European elections approaching, now is the time to change this.

OUR PROJECT: *REPROTECTION: HALTING THE EU'S DEREGULATION DRIVE*

The European Environment Bureau and the New Economics Foundation are partnering on a new project to build a united civil society and public response to set out a new positive vision for regulation.

We want to persuade incoming MEPs that Europe's path to the future should see the scrapping of its discredited deregulation drive.

It is society's democratic right to make, and see enforced, rules that guarantee our basic freedoms are protected on how our economies work. We need to redefine what genuinely better regulation looks like: principled, and made in the interests of people, the planet, the voiceless, responsible business, and future generations.

GET IN TOUCH

We want to build a broad coalition of civil society groups across Europe in support of our campaign.

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