

Is the EU Completely in the Pocket of the Biotech Industry? Say No to Glyphosate

By [Colin Todhunter](#)

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“In less than a fortnight, EU Member States will take a decision on the re-approval of glyphosate. Genius [lobby firm] is working to get this toxic herbicide re-approved by communicating the industry’s mantra that glyphosate is scientifically proven safe, sponsored by Monsanto, Dow and Syngenta. At the same time, they are being paid by German authorities and EU-funded projects to work on issues that are closely related to glyphosate, and that are key to the interests of the same corporations. Public authorities using the same lobby consultancies as the corporations they are supposed to regulate is highly problematic...” – Corporate European Observatory

This article contains edited key extracts taken from the text of the Corporate European Observatory.

On 9 May, Corporate Europe Observatory [posted an article](#) on its website that described how Genius, a lobby consultancy firm based in Germany, has been employed to distort the debate on glyphosate in favour the biotech industry.

Research linking the use of glyphosate to [various diseases is well documented](#), and the World Health Organisation has declared the substance as “probably causing cancer to humans.” Despite this, the European Commission is seeking to grant glyphosate re-approval for another ten years. The re-authorisation is being sought by the Glyphosate Task Force (GTF), an industry platform uniting producers of glyphosate-based herbicides, whose members include [Monsanto](#), [Dow Agrosciences](#), [Syngenta](#), and [Barclay Chemicals](#). Genius was used to run its website.

In addition to the Glyphosate Task Force (GTF), Genius has been hired by biotech lobby group EuropaBio, its German member organisation DIB and individual corporations including [Bayer](#), [BASF](#), and [Syngenta](#). It also works for the Brussels-based corporate food think tank EUFIC (European Food Information Council).

[Monsanto](#), [Syngenta](#), and [Dow](#) (all members of the GTF), as well as [BASF](#) and [Bayer](#) coordinate a lot of their lobbying efforts via lobby associations like EuropaBio. All of them share a deep commercial interest in the re-approval of glyphosate and in the continued production of glyphosate-tolerant GM crops, also via the sales of other brands of pesticides used for the same crops.

In the case of glyphosate, Genius ‘translates’ the science on its toxicity for its clients from the pesticide industry by writing on the Glyphosate Task Force website that it does not cause cancer, and [saying](#) that the IARC “should withdraw the decision” to classify

glyphosate as a Group 2A carcinogen.

However, Genius also lists public institutions as its clients, who are in charge of regulating the industry's products, including the European Commission, the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) and 10 German federal and regional authorities, including the German risk assessment agency Bfr. This is important because Germany is the Rapporteur Member State for the re-approval of glyphosate, and Bfr is the agency in charge of the renewal assessment report.

Genius takes part in several EU-funded research projects that generally aim to help shape EU risk assessment requirements or increase communication activities on the supposed benefits of the biotech industry's products.

An important example is GRACE (GMO Risk Assessment and Communication of Evidence). Kristina Sinemus, Genius' Managing Director, and its co-founder Klaus Minol take part in this project. In fact, about half of the experts participating in GRACE have close ties to industry lobby groups like ILSI (International Life Sciences Institute), PRRI (Public Research and Regulation Initiative) and/or to industry-funded organisation ISBR (International Society for Biosafety Research). Genius is not the only lobby consultancy participating in GRACE; Belgium-based Perseus also works with companies aiming to get deregulation for new techniques of genetic engineering.

The GRACE project is important, since it feeds directly into the process by which the European Commission in 2016 will decide on further standards of risk assessment for GM crops.

Testbiotech warns that "there is a substantial risk that the EU Commission will come to false conclusions, and could fail to set sufficiently robust standards to maintain the precautionary approach as required by EU regulations."

Between 2006 and 2009, Genius worked for EFSA, the European Food Safety Authority responsible for risk assessing the products of Genius' pesticides/biotech clients. Its role was to "support the European Food Safety Authority through editorial work and public relations tasks." Tasks included the 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 annual reports, background texts for the website, and a newsletter, as well as doing communication work for a conference on GMO risk assessment for human and animal health and the environment that was held in Brussels in 2009.

Genius has been involved in numerous other EU funded projects in the same field, as detailed in the article by CEO. That article (containing all relevant links) should be read in full all links because it highlights how a **failure and the complete lack of willingness by the EU to properly regulate lobbying in Brussels as well as conflicts of interest within public bodies have all but corrupted decision-making processes and have placed the health of 500 million Europeans at serious risk, while continuing to fuel an unsustainable model of corporate-controlled agriculture.**

If the decision-making and propaganda surrounding glyphosate were made into a Shakespearean play, it would be based on tragedy. In the absence of Shakespeare, here's a short but excellent video by Pesticide Action Network Europe:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9Yh560PoVI>

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Articles by: [Colin Todhunter](#)

About the author:

Colin Todhunter is an extensively published independent writer and former social policy researcher. Originally from the UK, he has spent many years in India. His website is www.colintodhunter.com
https://twitter.com/colin_todhunter

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