

Assessment framework and procedure for collaborations with partners from the fossil fuel industry in research projects

Advice to the Executive Board WUR from the advisory group on collaborations

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1 Introduction

This document describes the advice of the advisory group on collaboration.

Early in July 2023, the Executive Board (EB) decided to work towards additional rules for partners who would like to cooperate with WUR. The EB decided to sharpen the collaboration principles by adding decision criteria that assess the contribution of the cooperation partner – and not only the project – to the necessary major global transitions as described in our Strategic Plan.

End of July 2023, the advisory group (see appendix 8.1) was asked by the Executive Board to come up with an assessment framework that should help WUR decide on cooperation with future partners, starting with companies within the fossil industry.

To come to this framework for assessing research collaborations with fossil fuel, the advisory group has had several committee meetings in which the development of the framework was discussed. The committee has used/looked into (amongst others):

- Input from the 'Let's explore sessions' on collaboration with fossil industry
- Examples from other institutes/universities
- Inventory of current projects with fossil industry
- Existing tools and methods, literature
- The current principles of collaboration

Based on the discussions and on the background information, the advisory group came to a draft framework and decision making procedure end of October. This draft framework and decision making procedure was discussed in the period November-December 2023 in several consultation-sessions with diverse stakeholders in the organisation (see appendix 8.2). Based on the input of the consultations, the assessment framework and decision making procedure has been sharpened and finalized, and presented to the executive board end December. We advise the executive board to adopt the proposed assessment framework as new WUR policy and to communicate to the scientific community and the public about the implementation of the framework, explain its core, and the rationale behind this new policy, for instance by referring to the importance to reconsider the collaboration with fossil fuel industry in the face of the sustainability transition, and to importance that the public and private sector are aligned with the Paris agreement.

2 Background

The climate and biodiversity crises represent existential threats to society. The science is very clear on the issue: Currently, planetary boundaries are crossed for 6 out of 9 indicators, one of them being climate¹. Cascades of tipping points in the climate system could be triggered at global temperature increase higher than 1.5°C, each tipping point having severe and irreversible consequences on the climate system and on our societies². The year 2023 will be the hottest year ever on record, likely to be the first year on average to be above 1.5°C warming, with the long-term trend reaching 1.5°C by 2034³. To avoid the most severe consequences of climate change and limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C with a 50% probability, global CO₂ emissions need to be cut in half by 2030 (compared to 2019) and reduced to net zero by 2050⁴. Already existing fossil fuel production would exceed the 1.5°C limit,⁵ "... which means that fossil fuel companies need to significantly scale down their CO₂ footprint.. However, many companies announced further expansions of their extractive operations. Over the past decades, many fossil fuel companies have been found actively investing in climate denial and lobbying against more ambitious climate policies⁶. By slowing down progress in climate action, the fossil fuel industry needs to be held accountable in the face of the sustainability transitions our society is undergoing. That is why Wageningen University and Research decided to critically assess its collaborations with the fossil fuel industry, striving to ensure a fair and sustainable transition.

The aim of Wageningen University and Research is to develop knowledge and innovations that will assist society in making the necessary transitions. Therefore, WUR collaborates with various partners to add value to their research and education results (see "WUR principles of collaboration"). However, there is also the risk that some partners will use us to defend their commercial interests and delay necessary transitions. Moreover, financial reliance may reduce our tendency to be critical of non-sustainable and destructive activities. Therefore, the Executive Board has decided to sharpen the existing collaboration principles by adding decision criteria that assess the contribution of the cooperation partner – and not only the project – to the necessary major global transitions as described in our Strategic Plan. This is done by assessing the extent to which the cooperation partners contribute to, or are an obstacle to, the necessary global transitions. The aim of this document is to propose an assessment procedure to assess the collaborations with partners from the fossil fuel industry in research projects.

3 The dilemma

Understanding the various opposing viewpoints is crucial for understanding the dilemma that arises when collaborating with the fossil fuel industry and other industries. There are two main perspectives that need to be considered.

Project perspective: The vast majority of our research aligns with the mission and goals of WUR. Funds are essential in order for us, as researchers, to pursue this mission and carry out our scientific duties. While our research is predominantly supported by government funding, the industry, including the fossil fuel industry, also contributes to or facilitates research through the provision of funds and in some cases essential infrastructure. These partnerships may result in scientific breakthroughs that contribute to the transition to a more sustainable society.

Partner perspective: The most valuable assets of the fossil fuel industry are gas and oil fields and the infrastructure that facilitates their extraction. The majority of fossil fuel companies refuse to comply with

¹ [Earth beyond six of nine planetary boundaries | Science Advances](#)

² [Exceeding 1.5°C global warming could trigger multiple climate tipping points | Science](#)

³ [Global temperature trend monitor \(copernicus.eu\)](#)

⁴ [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

⁵ [Existing fossil fuel extraction would warm the world beyond 1.5 °C - IOPscience](#)

⁶ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2023/09/16/people-of-the-state-of-california-v-big-oil/>

the Paris Agreement⁷ and are even backtracking on their ambitions⁸, simply because such actions would be a direct opposition to their core business model. Most companies are compelled to maximize short-term profits by the current financial incentives (shareholders). Such incentives and behavior pose a significant threat to humankind and other life on earth. To improve their reputation, fossil fuel companies implement a variety of strategies, including delay, distraction, deflection, and greenwashing. Outsourcing research expenditures can support these strategies. Furthermore, affiliation with universities can establish them as a credible and trustworthy corporation, which then empowers them to lobby against emission control policies, or in favor of tax cuts and subsidies. As a result, their products (fossil fuels and their derivatives) gain an economically competitive advantage over more sustainable alternatives, such as renewable energy. Hence, through our affiliation with and provision of our research for these fossil fuel companies, WUR may contribute to a delay of the essential transition. Furthermore, since the majority of fossil fuel companies do not share the WUR's core mission and goals, this affiliation might also jeopardize our reputation.

The objective of the collaborative framework is to weigh these perspectives and determine whether the opportunities that collaborations offer for the development of more sustainable options and technologies with positive societal and environmental implications weigh up to negative societal, environmental and ethical implications of ties with these companies. Two extreme decisions could be made. Either a full stop decision to collaborate with fossil industry, or a laissez-faire attitude that ignores the indicated potential negative impacts of such collaborations. In order to avoid both extremes, as we acknowledge that collaboration with industry in research can potentially contribute to a fair sustainability transition, we believe both extremes are undesirable. This means that one has to come up with good arguments for the exclusion or inclusion of partners that take the situatedness and context into account. That is why we propose a 3 steps approach (see figure 1). Steps 0 and 1 consist in the strict application of objective criteria for exclusion, and then step 2 takes the context and specific situation into account, as a way to consider and justify exceptions. This step 2 is the price one has to pay for a nuanced assessment of partners beyond the unconditional exclusion or laissez-faire options for a policy.

4 Scope

Regarding the scope of the proposed assessment procedure, three aspects have to be taken into account:

1. We define a collaborating partner as a party that contributes in cash or in kind to the proposed project and is closely involved in the realisation of the research and/or knowledge utilisation. Possible examples are companies, public and private organisations and other institutions.
2. Collaborating partnerships with the fossil fuel industry can take various forms, such as receiving funding, in-kind contributions (such as the use of fossil fuel industry infrastructure), special professors who are externally funded by the fossil fuel industry, awards, activities on campus, and participation in education (e.g., ACT or guest lectures). While several aspects related to the collaborations are evaluated within this framework, the attention here is directed towards explicit partnerships that involve direct funding (whether for projects or personal). There are two primary reasons for this. First, a trade-off must be established between the extensiveness of the framework and the duration required to complete the framework. Second, fossil fuel companies may employ the strategic use of direct funding of research projects to advance alternative agendas, including greenwashing. Following an evaluation of the framework after its inception, potential extensions of the evaluation of associations between the WUR and the fossil fuel industry may be considered.
3. Education has been out of the scope of the task of this Advisory Board, as the Terms of Reference (ToR) limited our scope to focus on research funded by fossil industry. However, we acknowledge that there is also involvement with fossil fuel companies in education, such as: ACT projects, Theses, Guest lecturers, Career Days, internships etc. The wish to extend the scope of the proposed framework to include education has been raised by a number of concerned students during the consultations, as well as by the student representative in the Board. We advise the Executive Board

⁷ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-022-31734-1>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jun/14/shell-drops-target-to-cut-oil-production-as-ceo-guns-for-higher-profits>

to take this into account in the establishment of new WUR policy regarding collaborations with partners from the fossil fuel industry in the area of education.

5 Assessment framework

First, we propose a quick and easy to perform self-scan (step 0 and 1 (see fig. 1)) of risks and opportunities of collaborations with partners that can be executed by a PI/business developer involved in the acquisition.

The aim of this self-scan is to identify whether fossil fuel industry is involved in the project, how the partner contributes to sustainability goals, and whether there is a strategic interest of the partnership for WUR. Based on this scan, one should be able to quickly reject partners in the fossil industry with a questionable reputation, an insufficient sustainability agenda, and no strategic interest for WUR, and accept partners outside the fossil fuel industry that contribute to the sustainability mission of WUR. Only in case of mixed results, for instance a partner in the fossil fuel industry but with a strong sustainability focus and/or strategic interest for WUR, we apply the second step in the assessment procedure of collaboration, which is a more reflective and qualitative assessment of the partner based on the purpose, risks and benefits of the collaboration, written in a brief report. This reflection forms the basis for decision.

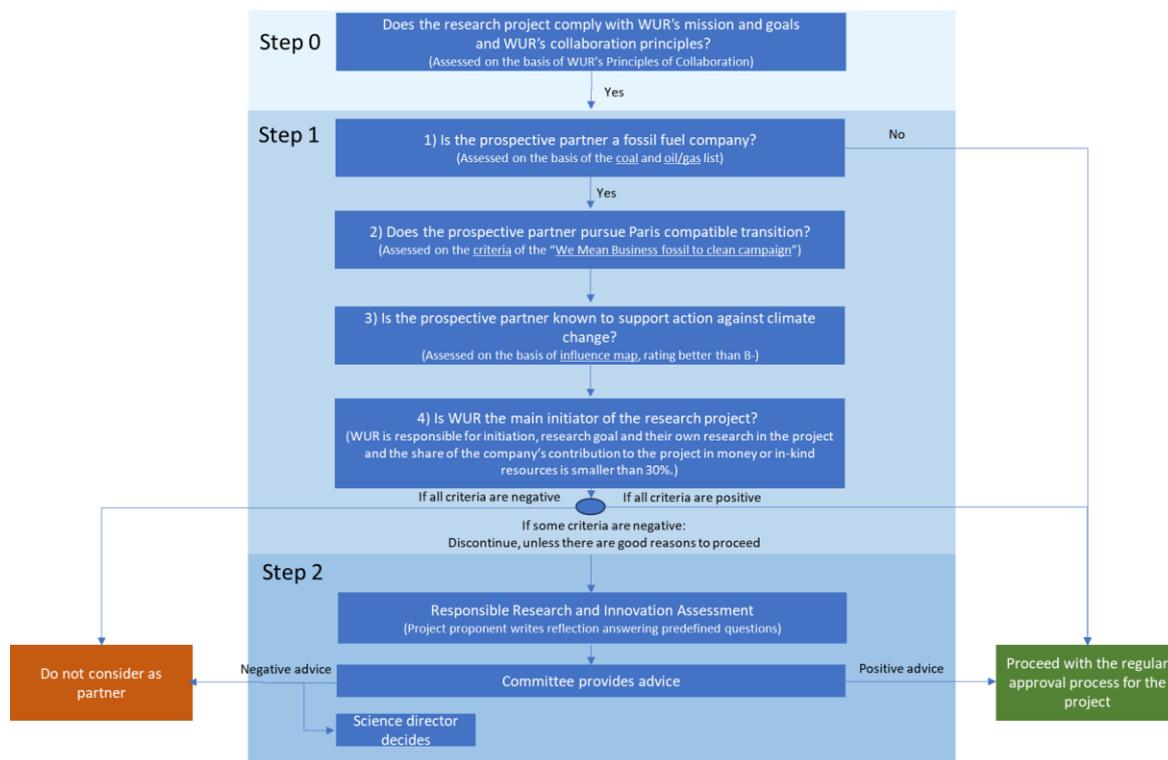


Figure 1. Two-step evaluation scheme

5.1 Step 0

As a starting point it is assumed that the research project will advance science and technology and that it is aligned with the mission and goals of WUR, and to the WUR principles of collaboration. More specifically, the research project relates to one of the topics defined in the WUR "principles of collaboration":

1. Enhance sustainable, sufficient, and healthy food for everyone,
2. Enhance a sustainable economy that is bio-based, nature-inclusive and circular

3. Mitigation of and adaptation to further climate change
4. Conservation of biodiversity
5. Protection and sustainable use of terrestrial and marine ecosystems

5.2 Step 1: Self-scan

Assuming the proposed research will support the goals outlined in step 0, the PI/business developer performs a self-scan in order to assess which partners contribute to the mission of WUR and serve its strategic interests. Any new collaboration with a partner from the fossil fuel industry will undergo a check with a fixed list of criteria, that can be evaluated objectively to come to a yes/no decision. As we design a procedure that currently focusses on fossil fuel partners (but can be extended to other sectors in the future), we propose to assess the involvement of fossil fuel companies in the project, their contribution to sustainability and whether and how the strategic interests for WUR are served by the collaboration. We propose that the PI/business developer involved in the acquisition of the project executes the self-scan and that the appropriate level in WUR with signature authority checks it for completeness.

We propose the following indicators. The proposed lists and links will act as guidelines but might require updating in future assessments. The indicators in the self-scan rely on external organisations that have assessed the related questions. This is admittedly potentially a subjective judgement by the organisation that is maintaining the list. We suggest here to accept this uncertainty to allow a fast self-scan for the time being, while developing a list of assessed fossil fuel companies with their respective ratings over the years. If a company is not listed, one should assess the questions in the spirit of the framework.

Question	Indicator and data source	Benchmark
1) Is the prospective partner a fossil fuel company?	List of fossil fuel companies as evaluated and regularly updated by Urgewald: coal and oil/gas	Not to be on this list
2) Does the prospective partner pursue a Paris compatible transition?	Criteria for fossil fuel companies developed by the " We Mean Business fossil to clean campaign " ⁹	Company has signed up for campaign or fulfils all criteria
3) Is the prospective partner known to support action against climate change?	Lobby influence as measured by influence map	Rating equal or better than B-
4) Is WUR the main initiator of the research project?	WUR is responsible for initiation, research goal and their own research in the project and the share of the company's contribution to the project in money or in-kind resources is smaller than 30%.	Criteria to be met in the (draft) project proposal

The following rationale forms the basis for the above questions.

⁹ The criteria include:

- Commit to no new oil and gas exploration or development of new oil and gas fields
- Reach near-zero methane emissions by 2030 at the latest
- Publish a Climate Transition Action Plan (CTAP) showing:
 - % decline of existing production volume by 2030 and 2040, reaching zero by 2050 (2021 baseline)
 - % decline of oil and gas products for energy use by 2030 and 2040 (2021 baseline)
 - % decline of unabated operational emissions by 2030 and 2040 (2021 baseline)
 - % of CAPEX dedicated to clean solutions every five years
- Set a science-based target (once the SBTi standard is available)

- Q1. Fossil fuels account for more than 75 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and nearly 90 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions¹⁰, making them the single largest contributor to global climate change. Moreover, it is widely recognized that the fossil fuel industry exerts a substantial influence on the discourse and the perpetuation of our dependence on fossil fuels, thereby aggravating climate change. Therefore, the focus here is on fossil industry.
- Q2. Burning all known fossil fuel assets (excluding future finds or those made available by new extraction technologies) would lead to a global warming of 6.4 – 9.5°C¹¹. It is imperative that these resources remain dormant¹², especially considering the current infeasibility of large-scale implementation of carbon capture technologies. Question 2 examines whether the fossil fuel industry partner has any concrete plans to limit future exploration and execute an immediate reduction in production in line with Paris agreements.
- Q3. Any reduction in the extraction of fossil fuels would result in a capital loss for fossil fuel companies, and compliance with the Paris Agreement would be incompatible with their core business model. Fossil fuel companies are notorious for devoting substantial resources to denying climate science, lobbying against climate legislation, and advertising in an effort to reduce societal pressure and safeguard their business models¹³. This inquiry examines whether the partner is known to lobby against climate-related legislation.
- Q4. If questions 1-3 lead to red flags, there is a risk that our research conducted for the fossil fuel company could support their tactics of delay, distraction, and greenwashing. Therefore, it is essential to consider who initiated the research project, the influence of the fossil fuel industry on the research question and design, and any possible dependencies between the WUR and fossil fuel company. For example, if the research project is predominantly financially supported by the fossil fuel company and they solicit our assistance in conducting particular research, it is possible that WUR will serve as a partner contributing to the delay of the essential transition towards sustainability. Determining the genuine motivation for the research project in advance can be a difficult task; therefore, the aforementioned inquiries can serve as a risk assessment.

In case question 1 is negatively answered and all partners involved are not on the list, the PI/BD (the person who acquires the funding) gets a green light and can stop the further assessment and continue with the project.

If the partner is in the fossil fuel industry, questions 2-4 assess their commitment to sustainability goals, leading to a red light or a green light.

- In case questions 2 - 4 are negatively answered, we have sufficient ground to reject that partner.
- In case questions 2 - 4 are positively answered, we have sufficient ground to accept the partner.
- In case of mixed results, the PI/BD should discontinue the project acquisition. This is particularly the case if the mixed results include a negative assessment of questions 2 and 3. If there are good reasons not to discontinue the project acquisition in case of mixed results, and the PI/BD wants to proceed with a deeper reflection on the pros and cons of the collaboration, step 2 is taken. The PI/BD decides to drop the project or to continue to step 2 in consultation with the next level in the line management or the science group director

5.3 Step 2: Responsible Research and Innovation Assessment

Most often, the WUR can conduct valuable research, advancing our own strategic goals, and using funds provided by companies. Assuming that companies attempt to make strategic economic decisions, these research funds are made available because the companies' perceived current or future profit will increase as a result of the research we offer in return. Often, the research performed by universities and TO2 Institutes may involve the creation of new knowledge, but sometimes other motivations (see glossary) drive these strategic decisions. The assessment below aims to stimulate a deeper reflection on

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change>

¹¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/nclimate3036>

¹² <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ac6228>

¹³ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-018-2241-z>

the collaboration and evaluate whether the research for fossil fuel companies is consistent with the mission of Wageningen University and Research.

In this second step, the PI/BD executes a deeper and qualitative reflection on the partner and the project in order to evaluate whether to engage in the collaboration or not. A responsible research and innovation approach is followed to write a reflection report with arguments and examples on various dimensions that have to be taken into account in the assessment. This reflection report is assessed by an external WUR committee that assesses the scientific, societal and ethical dimensions of the project.

Dimension	Questions?
<p>1) Partners involvement in societal transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business model: Is the company’s business model contradictory to the goals of the Paris Agreement, e.g. are the majority of the company’s investments in fossil fuels exploration or other climate change enhancing activities? Does the company plan on maintaining their “unsustainable” activities (e.g., oil exploration)? - Impact on society: Has the company got an exploitative history, like being involved in social and environmental misconduct? Does the company have or has had major negative impacts on environment, society or human rights, and is it in line with the core values/strategy of WUR? Has the company selectively funded those researchers or institutions that question the existence or severity of the climate crisis. - Plan to change: Does the company make a credible effort to change in line with Paris Agreement (To limit global warming to 1.5° with no or limited overshoot declines in global CO2 emissions relative to 2019 should be 48% by 2030, 80% by 2040 and 99% by 2050)¹⁴. Is the company’s commitment in line with the “We Mean Business fossil to clean campaign” criteria for fossil fuel companies? Does the company actually reduce its fossil fuel production (by at least 3% per year) and capital expenditure in fossil fuel infrastructure? - Lobbying: Did the company in the past actively invested in denying climate change, or has it acted against environmental efforts (e.g., by active lobbying)? (A project that measures the lobbying efforts is influence map.)
<p>2) Anticipation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the research we provide for the company? - What are the desired scientific and societal impacts and outcomes of the project? - Is the project advancing the transition we focus on, or may delay the decision-making process, for example because ‘research is ongoing’? - What are possible negative impacts of the research outcomes for society – ethical acceptable, societal desirable, sustainable - and how can they be mitigated? - Is there any reputational risk on the short- or long-term for WUR to be involved?
<p>3) Reflection and Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why are partners interested in the collaboration? Also refer to and reflect on the strategies as mentioned in the Glossary of strategies companies may use to follow own interests disguised as scientific advancement (appendix 8.3) - What are the guiding societal values and motivations? For instance, can the project be used to persuade the public that the company and its products are environmentally friendly (greenwashing)? - Are these values/motivations in line with societal expectations and ethically acceptable? For instance, does the collaboration lead to information superiority (which can be used for lobbying)?

¹⁴ [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the research distract attention away from the core-activities, such that their most impactful activities (burning fossil fuels) are less likely to be questioned? - Does the company or the research deflect attention away from systematic solutions, e.g., by diverting the responsibility of the climate crisis to others, like the public? - Who will primarily benefit from the collaboration in the project? For instance, what happens with the Intellectual Property? Is there a risk that IPs will not be accessible preventing others from using the technological innovations for sustainable development? - Are also (non-economic) stakeholders involved in the project in order to reduce the risk of potential bias towards one particular value while neglecting others, including underrepresented viewpoints and interests, and are these viewpoints taken into consideration in the design of the project? - What is the structure / design / kind of collaboration? Is the company the core or minor funder or does the company provide in-kind resources? Does it contribute/work along, as one or multiple partners? Is the company the funder or is it part of the consortium?
<p>4) Responsiveness (towards the call for sustainability)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the project contribute to societal impact beyond profit maximization of the partners? - What is the impact of the project on the overall Sustainability Goals (SDG's, Paris agreement etc.)? - What is the impact of the partner contribution compared with overall sustainability impacts of the partner?
<p>5) Alternatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would there be alternative funding and resources available for the project? (why is the project not publicly funded)? - Why is the research group to conduct this research, or are there other institutions that might be more or equally-well qualified for that specific research? Are other researchers or institutions excluded because they are known to express critical voices? - Is this the type of research we would prioritize if we had unlimited access to public funds? - Is there another company whose focus and business model are sustainable and active in enhancing climate ambition that could instead partner with WUR on this topic?

The PI/BD writes a reflection report in which the 5 dimensions are covered. Not all questions have to be answered one by one, but primarily serve the purpose to guide the PI/BD in their reflection and the writing of the assessment report to assess whether the collaboration with a partner from the fossil fuel industry is contributing to the required transition and is aligned with WUR values or not. The PI/BD is asked to use well thought-through arguments and examples to validate their claims. Based on the reflection, the PI/BD proposes whether or not to engage in the collaboration, and if yes, which changes will be adopted in the project in order to serve the goals of WUR and mitigate risks and negative impacts.

6 Decision making procedure

In order to assess whether there are progressive and legitimate reasons to collaborate with partners in the fossil industry, it is important to describe the pros et cons of the collaboration and the reasoning behind the decision in transparent and legitimate terms. It is important that the PI/BD's intended decision regarding the collaboration is supported by the wider research community. For this reason, the PI/BD writes an assessment report and submits it to an external WUR assessment committee that is to be established. The committee should be diverse and sufficient broad to cover the ethical, social and sustainability transition aspects. The committee is a bit comparable with a research ethics committee, but it is not only focussed on the approval/rejection of the project, but also on giving advice on possible changes to the project to serve the goals of WUR and/or mitigate risks and negative impacts.

The committee has an *advisory* role to the PI/BD. Possible advice:

1.
 - a. a general approval,
 - b. an approval contingent upon modifications to the proposal or
 - c. rejection of the proposal to collaborate with this fossil fuel partner
2. In case of 1b, a particular advice is provided on possible changes in the project to align with the goals of WUR and/or mitigate risks and negative impacts. It might be that the commission provides a conditional advice, for instance approval in case particular issues are addressed or changes implemented. In all cases, the committee provides a clear motivation for its advice.

In case the commission provides a positive advice, the PI/BD can go ahead with the project. If the approved project proposal is successful and the project starts, a summary of the committee's advice will be made public. If the project proposal is not successful, the committee's advice will only be anonymously described in an annual report with a summary.

In case the commission provides a negative or conditional advice, the PI/BD either drops the project or passes the decision to the line management at the level of the science group director. Based on the proposal of the PI/BD and the advice of the committee, the director of the science group takes the final decision and informs the PI/BD and the commission about the decision. The science group director needs to take the advice of the committee seriously and in case the project is being pursued despite a 'no' from the committee, the conditions set by the committee should be implemented. If the project proposal is successful and the project starts, a summary of the science group director decision and the advice of the committee will be made public. If the project proposal is not successful, the science group director decision will only be anonymously described in the annual report of the committee with a summary.

In case the advisory committee experiences that their advice is not taken seriously and/or in case the committee is seriously concerned about potential violation of the strategic goals of WUR, reputation risks and/or negative impacts, the committee can inform and consult the RvB of WUR about the proposal and the concerns it raised for the committee. Responsibility for eventual interference in the decision making about the acceptance of the partner is up to the RvB, not the committee. The committee also evaluates its own effectiveness on a yearly basis, for instance how often their advice is rejected and how their advice is eventually taken up in successful proposals, and report to the RvB.

7 Reporting

On a yearly basis, the committee writes an annual report about the partnership proposals it received and advice it provided, as well as the final decisions made on that project (including the justifications of the directors of the scientific group in case they decided to pursue a project against an advice of the committee, or a conditional advice).

The committee also reflects internally whether the assessment criteria and indicators are still up to date and/or better measurements are available, whether the goals of the procedure are met and/or whether it requires adjustments in order to serve the goal of WUR that collaborations should actually advance science that contributes to societal transitions. Based on this evaluation of the outcomes, the framework can be improved. Also, a database can be developed with an overview of sustainability funds which can be used by the scientific community as alternative funds for their research proposals. The evaluation outcomes, report and future plans (in case of improvement) should be made public to engage the scientific community in this ongoing process of alignment of partnerships and WUR values and strategies. The collaborations with stakeholders from the fossil fuel industry that were approved are reported on in a feedback evaluation to assess whether they went as planned, the goals were fulfilled or whether there were any negative experiences.

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Members of the advisory group

The Advisory group consisted of the following people:

Carolien Kroeze, Professor Environmental Systems Analysis (chair)
Vincent Blok, Professor in Philosophy of Technology and Responsible Innovation
Harry Bitter, Professor Biobased Chemistry and Technology
Niklas Hoehne, Special Professor Mitigation of Greenhouse Gasses
Aarti Gupta, Professor of Global Environmental Governance
Harriette Bos, Senior Scientist Fossil free materials and Systems analysis
Geert Aarts, Researcher Marine Mammals
Kristina Smieskova, Master Student/Green Office
Hilde Bos, Corporate Strategy & Accounts

8.2 Appendix 2: Overview consultation meetings

The advisory group has had consultation sessions with:

Executive Board (EB)
Supervisory Board (SB)
WUR Management Board (WMB)
Business Unit Managers (BUM)
Graduate school directors (WGS)
Colleagues who work(ed) with fossil fuel industry
Corporate staff directors

And the advisory group organised two open consultation sessions, which were open to all staff and students.

Next to this, the advisory committee received input by email from staff and students.

8.3 Appendix 3: Glossary of alternative strategies

Glossary of alternative strategies companies may use to follow own interests disguised as scientific advancement

In most cases, the aim of the research performed by universities and TO2 institutes for governments, NGO's and industries is to generate new knowledge that may be relevant for the transition to a more sustainable society. However, sometimes other motivations may also underly the partners decisions to request for research. Some of these alternative strategic motivations are:

1. *Delay* = Funding new research projects to explicitly emphasize lack in knowledge, in order to delay immediate governmental regulations or enforcement
2. *Information superiority and exclusion* = Obtaining the latest and best information, while excluding other representatives (e.g., NGOs) to lobby for or against specific legislation
3. *Red herring fallacy* = Distracting attention away from the core-activities, e.g., emphasizing carbon capture & storage projects so the most impactful activities (burning fossil fuels) are less likely to be questioned
4. *Greenwashing* = Advertising green initiatives to deceptively persuade the public that a company or its products are environmentally friendly
5. *Climate science denial and "merchants of doubts"* = Selectively funding those researchers that question the existence or severity of the climate crisis.

6. *Building trust* = Investing in personal relationships or initiating charity activities to increase the perception of being a trustworthy partner.
7. *Deflection* = Deflect attention away from systematic solutions, e.g., by diverting the responsibility of the climate crisis to others, like the public (e.g., BP promoted and successfully popularized the term "carbon footprint")
8. *Eliciting lip service* = Providing (financial) support to those institutions, scientists, or research topics that (perhaps unconsciously) benefit the fossil fuel sector
9. *Creating dependencies (both with society and academics)* = Providing a continuous stream of funding, even topic independent, to make university or research groups financially dependent