THE TRANSITION OF TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS TOWARDS CLEAN ENERGIES

Karla ZAMBRANO GONZÁLEZ*

1. Introduction

The transition towards clean energy is simultaneously an urgent environmental necessity and a geopolitical, economic, and social challenge of the first order. In this scenario, transnational corporations play a dual role, at once contradictory and decisive. On the one hand, they are key agents in the deployment of renewables and industrial decarbonisation; on the other, they have been accused of using the transition to protect their profits, resorting to greenwashing practices that undermine the credibility of the process. This analysis briefly examines how large corporations are shaping the path towards clean energy, managing the tensions between their public discourse on sustainability and their financial strategies, and how new regulatory frameworks such as the CSRD seek to impose greater transparency on their operations.

2. Between discourse and practice: questioned leadership

Large multinational energy companies actively promote their image as leaders of the ecological transition. However, an investigation by the Transnational Institute, which thoroughly analyses fifteen of these corporations, argues that financial profit, rather than decarbonisation, remains their primary priority. The central criticism points to the fact that these companies, many of which have a past as major fossil fuel emitters, have "hijacked" the green narrative to access public subsidies and improve their reputation.

The data supports this critical view: between 2016 and 2022, the fifteen companies analysed obtained a combined profit of $175,860 million, a figure that exceeds by more than seven times the actual climate aid that wealthy countries have provided to poor nations. During this same period, they allocated $130,770 million to dividends and $24,800 to share buybacks, evidencing a clear prioritisation of profitability for shareholders over investment in transformative climate solutions.

*Assistant Professor of Private International Law at the Universitat de València. E-mail: Karla.Zambrano@uv.es. ORCID: 0000-0002-0284-355X. This working paper forms part of the deliverables contemplated in the project "ESG from a Private International Law perspective: towards the creation of European companies with global awareness", according to the Call of the UNESCO Chair for actions in Education for Development, Global Citizenship and Awareness-raising for the 2025-2026 academic year. Series: "Business Sustainability and Private International Law".

The list of companies analysed includes emblematic names such as Iberdrola, Endesa, Engie, E.ON, and the Danish company Ørsted, all of which have a strong sustainability discourse. This report underlines the need to return the energy sector to public and democratic management, rather than leaving it in private hands.

3. Investment, alliances, and the PPA model

Despite the criticism, the activity of multinationals in the deployment of clean energy is undeniable and materialises in large investment operations and strategic alliances. A paradigmatic example is the agreement between the Spanish company Repsol and the Emirati company Masdar. In June 2026, Masdar agreed to acquire a 49.99% stake in a Repsol renewable portfolio in Spain, valued at €849 million. This portfolio includes 705 MW in operation, comprising 13 wind farms and six photovoltaic solar farms, and has a hybridisation potential of more than 565 MW. The operation, which is expected to close at the end of 2026, is Repsol's eighth renewable asset rotation and brings Masdar closer to its goal of reaching 100 GW of capacity by 2030.

Another key mechanism is long-term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). Iberdrola, through its subsidiary Iberdrola España, has signed several such agreements that consolidate its leadership in the European PPA market. Namely:

1. With the multinational automotive company Gestamp, Iberdrola signed a 10-year PPA to supply 660,000 MWh of 100% renewable energy to plants in Europe, covering 34 MW of capacity. The agreement seeks to decarbonise the automotive sector's supply chain and set a competitive long-term price for Gestamp.

2. With Gonvarri Industries, Iberdrola signed another 10-year PPA that will supply 26,000 MWh annually to eight production centres in Spain and three other European countries.

3. In a broader alliance, Iberdrola and Microsoft announced an agreement that includes two PPAs in Spain (150 MW) and the exploration of collaboration on AI. Microsoft, which aspires to be "carbon neutral" by 2030, seeks to secure clean energy supply for its data centres.

For its part, the French company Engie signed a 10-year PPA with the mineral specialist Imerys to supply 2 TWh of renewable electricity, covering 24% of Imerys' electricity needs in continental Europe and reducing its scope 2 emissions by 35% annually from 2028. Engie will develop three new solar plants in Spain for this purpose.

4. Transparency and regulation: the response to greenwashing

The growing concern over greenwashing has driven more demanding regulatory frameworks for large companies. In the European Union, the Corporate Sustainability

Reporting Directive (CSRD) is consolidating itself as the main instrument to guarantee transparency in the sustainability reporting of large companies.

The CSRD, which is being transposed into the Spanish legal system through the future Law on Corporate Sustainability Information, obliges large companies to report detailed and verified information on their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) impacts, risks, and opportunities. The reports must follow the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), which require, among other things, a major challenge: reporting not only scope 1 and 2 emissions but also scope 3 emissions (indirect value chain emissions), which in some cases can account for up to 98% of an organisation's carbon footprint.

The new framework is expected to increase transparency on companies' decarbonisation strategies and will be key to preventing greenwashing. Likewise, sustainability reports will become part of the annual accounts and will be subject to mandatory verification, which gives the process credibility similar to that of financial auditing. This regulation seeks to align corporate information with the demands of investors, consumers, and society, and represents a significant step towards subjecting multinationals to more rigorous public scrutiny.

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