

Serious doubts raised about Cañete's potential conflicts of interest and involvement in corruption cases in Spain: A list of salient cases

Every week there's a new story in the media casting doubt upon the independence and integrity of EU Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete. The stories affect several years of his professional career, including when he was Minister of Agriculture in Spain, Member of the Spanish Congress, and now EU Commissioner for Climate Action & Energy.

The doubts cast upon his integrity and independence are growing to unsustainable levels, and for the Greens/EFA group, current plans to have him respond (on 12th July) to a few questions from MEPs in the legal affairs committee (JURI), behind closed doors, smells like an image-washing exercise. Here we summarise the cases for which we want answers, and below we outline the reasons why we reject the current format proposed for the exchange of views in JURI and our proposals for how to ensure proper accountability instead.

1. His wife, and a large part of her family, were named in the Panama Papers

Investigations by the International Consortium for Investigative Journalism (ICIJ) link Cañete's family to the Rinconada Investments Group, a Panama-based shell company that might have been used for tax avoidance.

The Greens/EFA group tabled a WQ to the EC, which you can read [here](#). The answer (which can be found [here](#)) was essentially that the company named in the Panama Papers had been inactive since 2010, which was before he became a Commissioner (though he was a member of the Spanish Congress at the time).

The Commission stated that *"The Code of Conduct requires the declaration of financial interests of a spouse where those might entail a conflict of interests with the Commissioner's official duties and no concrete risk of conflict is apparent in this case. For this reason, the Commission does not consider it necessary to investigate the matter further while following any possible further development."*

In Cañete's declaration of interest there is no mention of any link between Cañete's spouse and any company in Panama (nor any other tax haven). Just two companies, "Agrícola Micaela Domecq S.L" and "NOVA 19 S.L" are listed in his Declaration of Interest.

2. He has been named in the Acuamed corruption scandal, as he was Environment Minister at the time

3. Cañete authorises a Mining Company after they hire an ex-colleague of his as a lobbyist: Retortillo

The publicly owned company Acuamed, which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment, is under investigation by the Spanish High Court for alleged fraud worth several million euro.

The case concerns the irregular awarding of a contract for work on the Bajo Almanzora desalination plant, in Almería, to a group called Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas (FCC). A witness in the ongoing case before the Spanish courts has said that the director-general of Acuamed ordered preference to be given to FCC and indicated that these orders came directly from Miguel Arias Cañete.

Later on, it was also revealed that Acuamed was planning to throw hydrochloric acid into the water to lower the PH with the aim of circumventing environmental protection legislation (waste from the plant was contaminating the water and they wanted to cover their tracks: allegedly they already threw a couple of barrels of acid into the water to test if the scheme would work).

The Greens/EFA group has sent the Commission a question, which you can find [here](#). The Commission's response does not mention Cañete at all. You can find it [here](#).

According to a detailed press report, the mining company Berkeley hired Manuel Lamela to lobby the Commission so that it would authorise a uranium mine in Salamanca, Spain. Mr. Lamela had worked as undersecretary to Miguel Arias Cañete in the Ministry of Agriculture from April 2000 to December 2003. Commissioner Cañete authorised the uranium mine four months after Mr Lamela was recruited by Berkeley mining company, but his assessment of the project has never been made public.

The Greens/EFA group has asked different questions:

1. We asked whether or not the fact that Lamela had been an-ex colleague successfully lobbying the climate Commissioner in favour of a uranium mine could be a conflict of interest. The Commission's response was that it did not intend to do anything in respect of the matter.
2. We also asked why the documents underpinning the authorisation of the uranium mining were not public. In its response, the Commission simply defended the secrecy of these documents.

4. Potential conflict of interests due to close ties with energy companies Dúcar and Petrologis Canaris

In the case of the two oil companies, called Petrolífera Dúcar and Petrologis Canaris, Arias Cañete maintains very close family ties with the owners and management of these companies. His brother-in-law Miguel Domecq Solís replaced Arias Cañete as chairman of both companies when he sold his personal shares and stepped back to avoid further scandal. His family owns significant parts of both companies' shares.

In addition, the largest shareholder in Petrolífera Dúcar and Petrologis Canaris is a company called Havorad BV which is registered in the Netherlands, and has no employees. Spanish public prosecutors have referred to it as a 'shell company'. The multiple links between Havorad BV and Arias Cañete's family have led Spanish newspapers to conclude that Havorad is also controlled by Cañete's family.

See here for more information:

https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/press_releases/arias_canete_conflicts_of_interest_briefing_sep2014_1.pdf