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## **Polluting sponsors pose existential threat to winter sports: new report calculates massive snow loss and climate damage link**

- The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of seven polluting winter sports sponsors (Audi, Ford, SAS, Equinor, Aker, Volvo, Preem) would melt an area of 1,968 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) of spring snow each year. This is equal to a land surface area 437 times bigger than the skiing area of Åre; Sweden's largest ski resort, and potential bidder for the 2030 Olympics; and 195 times bigger than the skiing area of Skicircus Saalbach, one of the world's largest skiing areas where the FIS Alpine World Cup Finals 2024 are being held.
- In a groundbreaking first, the report finds that a fossil fuel sponsorship deal can easily generate up to 100 kg of CO<sub>2</sub>e per sponsored euro.
- Sporting bodies who claim to care about climate need to be transparent on the size of sponsorship deals – especially with major polluters – so the public can understand the extra emissions they generate.

New Weather Sweden and the Badvertising campaign launch a new report, titled 'Dirty Snow', which calculates climate impacts and snow loss resulting from major sponsorship deals with high-carbon industries for the first time.

The report launches at the start of the FIS Ski World Cup 16–24 of March, of which Audi is a main sponsor. The car company's sponsor deal with the International Ski & Snowboard Federation (FIS) is estimated to generate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the equivalent of burning between 238,000 and 333,000 barrels of oil.

The future of winter sports is directly threatened by the emissions from many of its largest commercial partners and sponsors, the new report argues. *Dirty Snow* warns that polluting sponsors are compounding the existential threats posed to winter sports due to rising global temperatures and shifting snowfall patterns, with Europe's ski resorts suffering at the hands of record-breaking temperatures.

The report contains a first-of-its-kind formula for calculating the emissions created for every euro spent on a high-carbon sponsorship deal. Using this formula, the report finds that:

- The multi-million euro sponsorship deal between the International Ski & Snowboard Federation (FIS) with car maker Audi will generate between 103,000–144,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e (equivalent to burning between 238,000 and 333,000 barrels of oil).
- Each euro from Equinor's sponsorship of the Norwegian Ski Federation will generate increased emissions of 26.4 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e and the company's total emissions is estimated to be responsible for the loss of 635 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) of snow cover each year. Equinor is the subject of heated protests in the UK and Norway over their attempts to open the Rosebank oilfield.
- Aker's sponsorship of GB Snowsport will generate increased emissions of 95.8 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e for each sponsorship euro.

**Anna Turney, former British alpine skier and Paralympian, said:**

"Snow sports have given me a huge amount of freedom - and now that freedom is under threat from climate change. Winter athletes want to solely focus on their performance but the spectre of climate change looms large over every single snow sport. Not as a distant risk, but as an immediate peril. Snow sports organisations need to show courage and be brave if they are to secure a flourish future for snow sport. They need to do things differently and that must start with which companies they promote and associate with. It could not be simpler: if we do not change, then there will be no more snow sports."

**Anna Jonsson, co-director New Weather Sweden, said:**

"The great joys provided by snow and ice are worth protecting. It is a big irony that polluting sponsors within winter sports are melting the ice and snow that the sports are dependent upon. We all want to save the snow - but to secure a future for winter sports, all organisers and athletes must drop polluting sponsors."

**Andrew Simms, director New Weather Institute and coordinator of the Badvertising campaign said:**

"Every dollar or euro of sponsorship from major polluters is like a blowtorch turned on the future of winter sports. These sponsors are not charitable donors but self-interested corporations whose heavily polluting business models are in conflict with the climate that snow sports depend on. They're using sport as a billboard to sell more high carbon products that are killing our winters and now, for the first time, we can put a figure on the damage their money does."

**Professor Richard Murphy of Sheffield University Management School said:**

"It's really common for major polluters to polish their reputations by sponsoring events that look as if they're good for well-being. What this work shows is that those companies' pollution can be reliably linked to the activities that they

sponsor in a way that could be replicated by anyone thinking of accepting sponsorship from big carbon producers. Money from those companies comes laden with carbon emissions. This methodology shows how to estimate just how much on a reliable and comparable basis. Every sponsorship deal should be appraised in this way."

Winter sports are already vulnerable to climate change and rising global temperatures. Several alpine and cross-country ski races have been cancelled halfway into the 2023-24 season: as of February 21st, nine of the planned Alpine Ski World Cup races of the season have been cancelled. On current trends, in mid-latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere winters are expected to continue to shrink by 4.7 days per decade. In a high-emission scenario, by the end of the century, winter could shrink to a single month.

A growing majority of ski slopes in the European Alps are also reliant on artificial snow, an energy-intensive endeavour that can further increase emissions. Approximately, 25 percent of skiing areas in Germany, 39 percent in France; 54 percent in Switzerland; 70 percent in Austria; and a whopping 90 percent of ski areas in Italy are served by artificial snow. The situation will only worsen without deep and immediate emissions cuts.

**Mark Ooijevaar, former Dutch elite skater, said:**

"High-carbon sponsorship in sports needs to be replaced by sponsorship from companies that are building a fossil-free future. This is especially true of winter sports, where the threats of climate change could not be more apparent. There is a clear role here for elite athletes to speak up and sound the alarm, as important influencers in society."

**Björn Sandström, Swedish elite cross country skier, environmental scientist and consultant in climate calculations, said:**

"Many sports federations and professional athletes are marketing an idealised, elite lifestyle with high consumption of products and travel. This sends a message to younger generations leading to more people striving towards this 'glamorous life'. But the research is clear - we have to leave these unsustainable behaviours that are leading us deeper into the climate crisis. I see this report as another tool that can shed light on what sponsorship spending can generate in emissions. I hope that more research is inspired by this report and we can then develop the methodology further."

**Emil Johansson Kringstad, former Swedish elite cross country skier, said:**

"The report makes it crystal clear - sponsorship from high carbon footprint companies destroys winter-sports. As a former member of the Swedish national ski team, I wish that ski associations and races would stop promoting companies

that melt our sport away. I hope this report will help athletes, clubs and organisations to take their responsibility and end sponsorship with sectors heavily dependent on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.”

Sporting events, teams and individual athletes are coming under increasing pressure for partnering with polluting companies amid a climate crisis. Recently, fossil fuel giant TotalEnergies was targeted by African campaigners for its sponsorship of the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) football tournament. Last year many sports events, from the US Open to the World Snooker Championship, were disrupted by climate activists calling for greater action.

At times, these demands have been heard. Several sports organisations have ended commercial partnerships with polluting companies. The Australian Open ended its sponsorship deal with oil and gas giant Santos after a grassroots campaign, while the English Rugby Football Union (RFU) turned down a commercial sponsorship deal with US fossil fuel major ExxonMobil.

The reputational and financial risks of partnerships with high-carbon companies will only grow as the impacts of climate change become more frequent and severe. The report recommends that sport organisers disclose the value of polluting sponsorships, so climate impacts can be transparently assessed and understood, and to end sponsorship deals with companies that are major drivers of climate change, such as oil and gas companies, car manufacturers, and airlines.

**Mats Abrahamsson, lead author of the report, said:**

“Despite the well-intentioned initiatives and lofty promises of snowsport organisations, there is a total lack of awareness over the role their high-carbon sponsors are having on the snow the sports depend upon. The threat snowsports faces is truly existential and its future is looking increasingly bleak as emissions climb ever-higher. This report is a call to action for these organisations to partner with businesses that want to save our snow, not those that are melting it”

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to Editors:**

**For more information and interviews,**

**contact** [anna.jonsson@newweather.se](mailto:anna.jonsson@newweather.se) +46 737105486

or [andrew@newweather.org](mailto:andrew@newweather.org), +44 (0) 7957 656370

1. The New Weather Institute is a co-op and a think-tank with bases in London and Stockholm created to accelerate the rapid transition to a fair economy that thrives within planetary boundaries. [www.newweather.org](http://www.newweather.org)
2. Badvertising ([badverts.org](http://badverts.org)) is a campaign set up by the New Weather Institute in association with climate campaign Possible and Adfree Cities. The Badvertising campaign aims to stop advertising fueling the climate emergency by implementing a tobacco-style ban on ads for cars, airlines and fossil fuel companies. [www.badverts.org](http://www.badverts.org)