

Transparency International EU

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Joint civil society letter calling for boycott of NGO scrutiny working group

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Tuesday, November 18th, 2025

The following letter was submitted to the leaders of the Socialists and Democrats, Renew, Greens/EFA and Left groups in the European Parliament. Access it as a PDF file [here](#).

17 November 2025

Dear Presidents,

dear Vice-Presidents,

As organisations dedicated to protecting the crucial role civil society plays in democratic policymaking, we are writing to express our grave concerns regarding the newly created Scrutiny Working Group on NGOs (SWG). As this body becomes operational within the Budgetary Control Committee (CONT), we urge you to maintain a political boycott of the SWG to ensure that the European Parliament maintains its commitment to established democratic procedures and support for civil society.

We fully support efforts to improve transparency and accountability for all beneficiaries of EU funds, whether they are directly managed by the European Commission or by Member States through shared management. We also believe the European Parliament holds – and must exercise – essential institutional democratic scrutiny powers, including through the treaty-based budgetary discharge procedure.

In the past year, the European People's Party and far-right political groups in the Parliament have

engaged in [unfounded attacks on NGOs](#), creating an atmosphere of unwarranted suspicion toward civil society actors. These institutional attacks have persisted to this day, despite a complete [lack of evidence of any wrongdoing](#). Through last year's discharge procedure, the CONT committee scrutinised dozens of NGO grant agreements, repeatedly questioned the Commissioner for budget as well as Commission services responsible. Despite this extensive endeavour, there were neither findings of misuse of EU funds, contravention of rules, nor of maladministration. The European Court of Auditors also extensively reviewed this topic in the context of their special report, "*Transparency of EU funding granted to NGOs*". The report did not find any wrongdoing, financial irregularities, nor did it find any misuse of EU funds by NGOs.

We commend your collective and principled decision to vote against the establishment of the SWG in the Conference of Presidents meeting last June. If the Parliament wants to further scrutinise NGOs, or any other final beneficiary of EU funds, they have existing instruments and procedures to do so. This dubious SWG risks infringing on the legitimate treaty-based discharge procedure, further institutionalising attacks on civil society, and fuelling far-right misinformation.

We therefore call upon you to politically boycott this Scrutiny Working Group on NGOs. We appreciate your attention to this matter and thank you in advance for your support.

Respectfully,

Transparency International EU

supported by Civil Society Europe

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Article 19

FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)

The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation

Social Platform

ILGA-Europe

European Civic Forum

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network

ECOLISE

Povod Institute, Slovenia

Transparency International Anticorruption Center, Armenia

Transparency International Bulgaria

Transparency International Czech Republic

Transparency International Estonia

Transparency International France

Transparency International Hungary

Transparency International Ireland

Transparency International – Macedonia

Transparency International Netherlands

Transparency International Romania

Transparency International – Russia (in exile)

Transparency International Slovakia

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