

Transparency International EU

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Open letter to EU Parliament Conference of Presidents opposing establishment of Committee of Inquiry on NGO funding

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Monday, April 28th, 2025

The following letter was sent to the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents by Transparency International EU and the undersigned organisations. Access it as a PDF file [here](#).

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Dear Presidents,

On 30 April, the Conference of Presidents will likely discuss a proposal to establish a committee of inquiry on the Commission's funding of NGOs. We, the undersigned, call for this proposal to be categorically rejected.

Committees of inquiry are extraordinarily rare, as they are reserved for investigating alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of Union law. Only seven have ever been established, reserved for investigating such sweeping scandals as Dieselgate, the Panama Papers or the use of Pegasus spyware.

There is no evidence of any corruption, misconduct, wrongdoing or maladministration related to NGO funding by the Commission to warrant the establishment of a committee of inquiry. In the last year, the Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee has already exercised their parliamentary scrutiny powers on this topic. They have demanded the Commission hand over dozens of NGO contracts, reviewed hundreds of pages of these contracts, held hearings on the topic, and repeatedly questioned the Commissioner in charge and Commission services. Despite the vast amounts of parliamentary resources used by the Budgetary Control committee, there have been no findings of

misuse of EU funds, contravention of rules, nor 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. The Auditors’ report affirmed that European Union funding may legitimately support public interest advocacy as part of transparent and ongoing dialogue with civil society organisations. The report did not find the Commission pays NGOs to lobby the European Parliament on its behalf. The European Commission has also clearly confirmed this, in response to a parliamentary question, with Commissioner Serafin stating: “The Commission did not instruct nor require non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to lobby Members of the European Parliament.”

Using a parliamentary inquiry committee against civil society organisations, where there is no evidence of corruption, wrongdoing or maladministration would amount to a misuse of a treaty-based parliamentary instrument and would affect the credibility of the European Parliament towards both other institutions and public opinion for future relevant endeavours. Committees of inquiry should be reserved for the most egregious cases, warranting the European Parliament to act. The Conference of Presidents should therefore reject the proposal to establish a Committee of Inquiry on the topic.

Respectfully,

Civil Society Europe

Transparency International EU

European Environmental Bureau

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