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TI EU policy position: Defence of Democracy Package

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Wednesday, April 10th, 2024

In December 2023, the European Commission unveiled a ‘Defence of Democracy’ Package, ostensibly to defend the EU against threats to its democracy. Yet, as part of this package, the EU is proposing a Directive that risks undermining this very policy objective, because it looks very much like the likes of so-called ‘foreign agent’ laws we see in autocracies trying to stifle opposition. We’ve complained about this on numerous occasions: when it was unveiled, we immediately sounded the alarm of the risks it posed to civil society in member states that have sought to silence them. We then held a press briefing demanding a revamped Defence of Democracy package that would address our concerns by not unfairly targeting civil society organisations. Our accompanying handout provides an in-depth analysis of the Commission’s proposal. Finally, we published an assessment of the state of play of lobby transparency across the EU, pointing out how the myriad different frameworks were incompatible with the EU’s proposed register for NGOs.

We’re now publishing our policy position on the package, containing key recommendations to improve the Commission’s proposal. In particular, we’re recommending:

- Ensuring full harmonisation and limiting the fragmentation of transparency rules
- Expanding the scope of the Directive to create an Interest Representatives Register
- Ensuring the independence of the national authorities responsible for management and supervision

If the Directive is not amended, it risks doing more harm than good. Access our full policy position here.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, April 10th, 2024 at 10:00 am