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Transparency International EU demands bolder Defence of Democracy Package

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Tuesday, December 12th, 2023

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Transparency International EU (TI EU) warns that the Defence of Democracy Package announced by the European Commission today will not bring the level of transparency needed to counter malign influence in EU democracies. In focusing only on interest representatives who receive certain types of foreign funding, this directive will not capture internal threats of undue influence, allow for easier circumvention by malign actors, and yield very limited data. By proposing an equivalent of a foreign agent act, the EU risks its geopolitical credibility in criticising others, such as they did [recently in Georgia](#), for trying to introduce similar laws.

TI EU urges for the Package's current Directive to be a more ambitious 'EU Interest Representatives Act' that covers all organisations seeking to influence policymakers, independent of their funding or legal structure. Such an act would address the limitations of the existing Directive by capturing *all* malign interference, both internal and external.

Vitor Teixeira, Senior Policy Officer at TI EU, said, "Today's proposal will not only be ineffective, but it will also be dangerous. The Commission has rightly criticised these types of laws in the past, not least in Georgia and Hungary. Its new proposal now puts this international position at risk. If the Commission really wanted to protect democracy, it would cast the net wide and raise transparency standards for all interest representatives—foreign funded or not—rather than proposing a misguided foreign agent law that may well cause more problems than provide solutions."

It is incumbent upon the European Parliament and EU Member States to act now to revise the current proposal. We will work tirelessly with all co-legislators to ensure that greater transparency for all interest representatives is in the adopted text. Only an EU Interest Representatives Act will demonstrate the EU's ambition to take both external and internal threats to democracy seriously.

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