

17 June 2025

To:

Mr Manfred Weber, President of the EPP group
Ms Iratxe García Pérez, President of the S&D group
Ms Valérie Hayer, President of Renew group
Ms Terry Reintke and Mr Bas Eickhout, Co-presidents of the Greens/EFA group
Ms Manon Aubry and Mr Martin Schirdewan, Co-presidents of the GUE/NGL group

Cc:

Ms Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament; the Vice-Presidents of the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups.

Dear European Parliament Group Presidents,

On June 19th, the Conference of Presidents will decide on a proposal to establish a committee of inquiry into the European Commission's funding of NGOs. We, the undersigned, call on the pro-European democratic forces in the European Parliament to reject this proposal. We also urge you not to support the establishment of any Working Group that would mirror the inquiry committee's undue targeting of NGOs and civil society.

Committees of inquiry 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 and 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. On the contrary, it has been made clear, through investigating work of journalists, the screening of contracts between the Commission and NGOs by MEPs and by the European Commission itself in its written answer¹ that the "The Commission did not instruct nor require non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to lobby Members of the European Parliament." Furthermore, the European Parliament in its Plenary vote on May 7 acknowledged and 'Welcomed the reply of Commissioner Serafin to the written question, once again confirming EU funding was granted and used by NGOs in full respect of EU Treaties and LIFE Regulation; [...]'²

The European Court of Auditors also extensively reviewed this topic in the context of their special report "*Transparency of EU funding granted to NGOs*" (ECA Special Report 11/2025³). 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.

Using a parliamentary inquiry committee against civil society organisations, where there is no evidence of corruption, wrongdoing or maladministration, would therefore amount to a misuse of a treaty-based parliamentary instrument and serve a politically motivated agenda that is to undermine civil society, and by extension, democracy itself.

¹ Parliamentary Question - [P-000595/2025\(ASW\)](#), Answer given by Mr Serafin on behalf of the European Commission, 14 April 2025.

² §23, P10_TA(2025)0077 Discharge 2023: EU general budget - Commission, executive agencies and European Development Funds, [Texts adopted](#), 7 May 2025.

³ European Court of Auditors [Special Report 11/2025: Transparency of EU funding granted to NGOs](#), 7 April 2025.

We understand that the establishment of a working group has also been discussed as an alternative to the inquiry committee. As for the inquiry committee, there is no evidence of any corruption, misconduct, wrongdoing or maladministration related to NGO funding by the Commission to warrant the establishment of such a working group focusing on NGOs. Such a working group would undermine civil society, jeopardise the very fabric of European democracy at a time when all should work together to protect it and invest in its resilience. We therefore call for this alternative narrowly and unduly focused working group on NGOs to be rejected as well.

Transparency is at the core of our organisations' missions, and we strongly support the highest level of transparency within the EU. It is indeed essential for a well-functioning EU democracy and for the trust in EU Institutions. Accordingly, any work in the European Parliament should be guided by the same principle.

All beneficiaries of EU funds – NGOs and commercial entities alike should be included in any further discussions on the transparency of EU funding. The objective should be to help the EU to better protect public funds, enhance transparency, and safeguard its reputation from undue influence. This includes examining potential connections between EU lawmakers and private interests, ensuring that scrutiny is applied consistently and without bias.

Further debates should also be guided by the findings of the ECA Special Report 11/2025 and help establish clear guidelines on what constitutes 'NGOs', explicitly excluding entities representing for-profit interests.

Efforts in strengthening transparency in the EU should ultimately be a vehicle for ensuring democratic pluralism, strengthening integrity, transparency of EU funds and anti-corruption policies in the EU.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Ten Brink, Secretary General, **European Environmental Bureau**
Ariel Brunner, Regional Director, **BirdLife Europe & Central Asia**
Chiara Martinelli, Director, **Climate Action Network Europe**
Carlotta Besozzi, Director, **Civil Society Europe**
Nicholas Aiossa, Director, **Transparency International EU**
William Todts, Executive Director, **T&E**
Ester Asin, Director, **WWF European Policy Office**