

**Question for written answer E-003568/2026
to the Commission**
Rule 144
Auke Zijlstra (PfE)

Subject: New follow-up question to written question E-000437/2026 (Concerns about funding of the NGO ECPS)

On 17 July, Commissioner Zaharieva replied to my follow-up question E-001557/2026¹, which followed on from my original question E-000437/2026(ASW)². In her reply, she stated, amongst other things, the following: ‘Proposals received under Horizon Europe are evaluated solely by independent experts, and proposals submitted to the CERV programmes are evaluated by the Commission assisted by independent external experts. Only the highest ranked proposals that best align with the objectives of the programmes are selected for funding.’ In light of this reply, I have the following follow-up questions:

1. Can the Commission explain how these ‘independent experts’ are selected, what their background is (especially their political background), and what (legal) relationship they have with the Commission?
2. Can the Commission explain the precise criteria used to identify ‘the highest ranked proposals’? What criteria – political, in particular – underpin this, perhaps drawing an analogy with the current European public procurement criteria?
3. Can the Commission state, in detail and in concrete terms, whether it considers ‘confronting the rise of populism’ to be so important that it wishes to finance this effort through an NGO such as ECPS?

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¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2026-001557-ASW_EN.html.

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2026-000437-ASW_EN.html.