

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002881/24
to the Commission
Moritz Körner (Renew), Jan-Christoph Oetjen (Renew)
(12 December 2024)**

Subject: Self-lobbying

During the last parliamentary term, the Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV) paid NGOs to campaign against the free-trade agreement with Mercosur. The annex to the contract concluded with the NGO European Environmental Bureau states for instance that this NGO may lobby the EU and the Member States on the matter, with a view to preventing the ratification of the agreement. This flies in the face of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's and the then Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis's intentions of concluding the trade agreement.

1. Can the Commission say how many NGOs, associations, interest groups, etc. have received EU funding since 2019 to lobby against EU initiatives, and if not, why not?
2. If so, which NGOs, associations, etc. have received EU funding since 2019 to lobby against EU initiatives, and please state their names, the funds granted and transferred and the initiatives?

Submitted: 12.12.2024

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(21 March 2025)**

The EU programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE ⁽¹⁾) provides amongst others financial support for the functioning of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), supporting civil society's participation in policy making, in line with the LIFE Regulation ⁽²⁾ and the EU Financial Regulation ⁽³⁾.

Each year, 30 to 35 operating grant agreements are awarded competitively under the LIFE Programme. Applying NGOs submit proposals outlining their work programme of activities in policy areas indicated in the LIFE Regulation. This work programme is annexed to their grant agreement.

The Commission does not prescribe the specific activities to be carried out by the NGOs in their work programme, nor does it instruct them to support specific positions. According to the grant agreements, any opinions expressed, and activities carried out remain the sole responsibility of NGOs.

The Commission agrees that work programmes involving specifically detailed activities directed at EU institutions and some of their representatives, even if they do not breach the legal framework, may entail a reputational risk for the EU.

To mitigate this risk, the Commission issued guidance ⁽⁴⁾ for both existing grant agreements and future calls, addressed to all Commission services and applicable to all spending programmes. The guidance clarifies which activities should not be mandated as a requirement or condition for EU financing.

The Commission adheres strictly to its transparency obligations ⁽⁵⁾. The information about the entities and organisations benefiting from LIFE operating grants and the amounts received is published annually in the Commission's Financial Transparency System ⁽⁶⁾, as well as on the LIFE website ⁽⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/783 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing a Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE), and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1293/2013.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast), ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj>

⁽⁴⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/guidance-funding-dev-impl-monit-enforce-of-eu-law_en.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ Article 38 of the Financial Regulation.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/index.html>, the annual publications are based on Article 38 of the Financial Regulation (OJ L 2024/2509, 26.9.2024, p. 1-239), and in accordance with the third paragraph of the article, data on recipients is not disclosed for very low value contracts below EUR 15 000 and where disclosure risks threatening the rights and freedoms of the persons or entities.

⁽⁷⁾ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/life-operating-grants_en