

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000405/25
to the Commission**

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(29 January 2025)

Subject: Lack of transparency, misuse of public funds and assurance of sound management in European institutions

Concerning information recently came to light regarding serious irregularities committed by the Commission, which allegedly distributed public funds to environmental lobbies to advocate for its own ‘green agenda’.

1. What measures has the Commission taken or does it intend to take to investigate and address the identified irregularities, including holding those responsible for improper or illegal practices accountable?
2. What specific tools does the Commission have or plan to implement to ensure that similar situations do not occur in the future, and how does it intend to guarantee that the existing control and audit mechanisms are effective in preventing the misuse of public funds?
3. What steps will be taken to promote greater transparency and ensure that European citizens have access to clear and detailed information about the use of public funds?

Submitted: 29.1.2025

**Answer given by Mr Serafin on behalf of the European Commission
(25 March 2025)**

The EU programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE) provides financial support for the functioning of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), supporting civil society’s participation to policy making. The Commission has no indication that ongoing LIFE operating grants breach the LIFE Regulation ⁽¹⁾ or the EU Financial Regulation ⁽²⁾.

Operating grants are awarded competitively, and applicants submit proposals that include the description of their work-programmes of activities in areas under the LIFE Regulation.

This description is annexed to the grant agreement. The work programme may mention, among other activities, advocacy activities. The Commission does not prescribe the specific activities.

The Commission agrees that funding agreements 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 ⁽³⁾ clarifying which activities should not be mandated as a requirement for EU financing.

The Commission adheres strictly to its transparency obligations ⁽⁴⁾ by publishing information about LIFE recipients and the amounts received in the Financial Transparency System ⁽⁵⁾ and on the LIFE website ⁽⁶⁾. In addition, the Commission proactively shares the objectives and outcomes of funded projects on the Funding and Tenders Portal ⁽⁷⁾.

Furthermore, interest representatives are required to report their lobbying activities and main funding sources as well as the amount of each contribution above EUR 10 000 exceeding 10% of their total budget in the Transparency Register ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ LIFE Regulation <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/783/oj/eng>

⁽²⁾ Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202402509

⁽³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/guidance-funding-dev-impl-monit-enforce-of-eu-law_en.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ Article 38 of the Financial Regulation requires publishing information about recipients and does not require the disclosure of advocacy activities funded through grant agreements.

⁽⁵⁾ Financial Transparency System <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/index.html>

⁽⁶⁾ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

⁽⁷⁾ EU Funding and Tenders Portal <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

⁽⁸⁾ Transparency Register https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en