

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002046/25
to the Commission**

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(21 May 2025)

Subject: European Court of Auditors' Special Report 11/2025: consequences of unduly paying grants to organisations wrongly categorised as NGOs

Between 2021 and 2023, according to Special Report 11/2025 of the European Court of Auditors (ECA), 90% (over 70 000) of the entities that received EU funding were not categorised as NGOs or as non-NGOs in spite of the fact that NGO status is required under European rules in order to claim the grants concerned. The Court takes the view that that increases the risk of organisations being wrongly categorised as NGOs.

In addition, there is as yet no guidance as to how to assess and penalise potential cases of failure to comply with the rules.

1. What will the Commission do if a thorough assessment of classification, in line with the ECA's recommendations, shows that European funds have been wrongly granted to organisations that do not qualify as NGOs?
2. Will the Commission recover those funds?
3. Will current agreements with organisations wrongly categorised as NGOs be terminated immediately?

Submitted: 21.5.2025

Answer given by Mr Serafin on behalf of the European Commission
(8 July 2025)

The Commission refers to its replies to the European Court of Auditor's (ECA) Special Report 11/2025, relating to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in internal policies ⁽¹⁾.

As acknowledged by the ECA ⁽²⁾, the co-legislators only agreed on the introduction of a definition of an NGO in the Financial Regulation in September 2024 ⁽³⁾, while the audit scope covered funding for EU internal policies for the 2021-2023 period.

In the light of the 2025 recommendations of the ECA, the Commission will explore whether this recent definition of an NGO should and could be further clarified.

Any clarification should be proportionate, given there is no indication that the NGO status poses a higher risk for the EU budget, compared to other types of entities.

When it comes to receiving EU funding, NGOs are no different from other applicants. They are subject to fulfilling the necessary eligibility requirements and having an NGO status does not entail any preferential treatment, nor is it an eligibility criterion in itself, aside from a few very specific cases.

Therefore, having or not the status of an NGO is in principle not relevant for receiving EU funding.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECARepplies/COM-Replies-SR-2025-11/COM-Replies-SR-2025-11_EN.pdf.

⁽²⁾ https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/annualreport-performance-2021/annualreport-performance-2021_en.pdf
https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2025-11/SR-2025-11_EN.pdf paragraph 5.

⁽³⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202402509.