

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002494/25
to the Commission
Erik Kaliňák (NI)
(23 June 2025)

Subject: Lobbying by services of the European Commission

Recently, the media reported that the Commission had been providing annual support to environmental NGOs, allegedly amounting to six-figure sums, to lobby for and promote positions that often run counter to the official positions of the Commission itself. This was reportedly the case with the planned agreement with Mercosur, where the Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment allegedly lobbied against the conclusion of an agreement prepared by another Directorate-General of the same Commission — the Directorate-General for Trade ⁽¹⁾.

In light of this, I would like to ask:

1. Can the Commission confirm the accuracy of the information reported in the media?
2. If so, what legal action has the Commission taken against the officials who mishandled EU citizens' money in such a way?
3. What measures has the Commission taken to prevent a similar situation from recurring in the future?

Submitted: 23.6.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(27 August 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, ensuring that NGOs are an integral part of a well-functioning democratic system.

The Commission observes full impartiality and does not require NGO beneficiaries to undertake advocacy activities for specific political and policy purposes. The information reported in the media the Honourable Member indicates is therefore not accurate.

The Commission has repeatedly stated ⁽²⁾ that operating grants supporting NGOs comply with the LIFE Regulation ⁽³⁾ adopted by the co-legislators and their management is fully in line with the provisions of the EU Financial Regulation ⁽⁴⁾. There is no mishandling of the EU budget.

The Commission has issued guidance ⁽⁵⁾ for existing grant agreements and future calls for proposals, addressed to all Commission services and applicable to all spending programmes.

The guidance prescribes that advocacy activities for specific political and policy purposes should not be mandated as a requirement or condition for EU financing.

Moreover, the Commission's model call for proposals was updated and now also requires the applicants' proposals to comply with the guidance.

This provides greater clarity to the applicants and evaluators, as well as a stronger contractual framework allowing for action in case of non-compliance.

Furthermore, the selection and award of such grants is based on open calls for proposals publicly available on the Funding and Tenders portal ⁽⁶⁾. Funding is awarded through a transparent and competitive process.

¹ <https://table.media/en/europe/feature/secret-ngo-contracts-eu-funds-for-lobbying-against-mercotur/>

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

⁽²⁾ Reply to Written Question P-002320/2025.

⁽³⁾ 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, OJ L 172, 17.05.2021, p.53.

⁽⁴⁾ 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), OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024.

⁽⁵⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/guidance-funding-dev-impl-monit-enforce-of-eu-law_en.pdf.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>.