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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
(28.3.2025)

The EU programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE Programme¹) 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 Regulation² and the EU Financial Regulation³.

Operating grants awarded under the LIFE Programme do not mandate NGOs to influence the legislative process and decision-making towards a specific direction or targeting specific Members of the European Parliament. These grants are awarded following a competitive procedure. Applicants submit proposals that include their work programme of activities in areas indicated in the LIFE Regulation. This work programme is annexed to the grant agreement.

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 and contractual provisions, may entail a reputational risk for the Union. To mitigate this risk, the Commission issued guidance⁴ 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 Union financing.

The Commission adheres to its transparency obligations. The NGOs benefiting from LIFE support and the amount received are published annually in the Commission's Financial Transparency System⁵ and on the LIFE website⁶. The Commission proactively shares the objectives and outcomes of EU-funded projects on the Funding & Tenders Portal⁷.

The Commission has no indication that ongoing LIFE operating grant agreements breach the provisions of the LIFE Regulation or the Financial Regulation. It therefore has no legal grounds to terminate any ongoing operating grant agreements. Amendments could only be done if mutually agreed with beneficiaries. Nearly all LIFE operating grants containing detailed work programmes expired by end 2024, and the Commission is taking action to ensure the application of the guidance for future calls and agreements.

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 <https://ec.europa.eu/budget/financial-transparency-system/index.html>

⁶ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life/life-operating-grants_en

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>