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Conservatives renew attack on civil society

The EPP group has reintroduced its anti-NGO amendments from the ‘Pieper report’

In April, the Green/EFA group in the European Parliament [sounded the alarm](#) in response to a controversial report, penned by consultants for the EPP group in the European Parliament and tabled by MEP Markus Pieper, which attacked NGOs and civil society organisations in a biased and unconvincing manner. It even proposed that NGOs that do not comply with the EU’s “strategic commercial and security-policy objectives” should not receive EU funding, like those organisations campaigning against the EU’s free trade policies.

In May, as a result of the mobilisation by NGOs, the negative feedback by the European Commission to the draft report, and the resistance from various groups in the European Parliament to continue working on a report of this kind, [the EPP retracted the Pieper report](#). They agreed in the budgetary control committee (CONT) to stall the report until the European Court of Auditors had the opportunity to conduct its own investigation into the financing and transparency of NGOs. This will take a year to complete.

Depending on the outcome of the Court of Auditors report, which should at least be based on more objective and complete data than the Pieper report, the Parliament’s budgetary control committee will decide what should be the appropriate follow-up and what should eventually be done with Pieper’s draft.

But now, it seems the EPP wants to re-animate the Pieper-report via a series of amendments to an initiative-report by Green MEP Sven Giegold on improving "transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions", to be voted this Thursday.

As Greens we are not against accountability for civil society, but it should be based on fact and figures, not allegations and negative framing that serves a political agenda. We have to ask ourselves why the EPP is insisting so hard on discrediting civil society that, as a high representative of the European Commission wrote as response to the Pieper report, is crucial in helping to keep the EU policies on the right track:

“Working daily with international and local civil society organisations, I am a privileged witness of the added value that they bring to our efforts to promote democracy and defend the rule of law, social justice, human rights and wider development. While EU policy is to promote and preserve civil society space worldwide, I trust that you will find our comments useful to preserve the coherence of our action.”

We will push to make sure that the toxic amendments are defeated

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