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Press release | 18.11.2026

EU fundamental values are not an ‘à la carte’ menu the NGO Scrutiny Working Group must not shape EU funding

Progressive Groups reject the SWG’s recommendations

This Scrutiny Working Group was set up by the EPP together with the far right and has operated as a farce, breaching Parliament’s internal rules on confidentiality and democratic participation. Its recommendations also go beyond the mandate it was given. A parliamentary scrutiny exercise should strengthen accountability and transparency, not become a political instrument to undermine organisations that play an essential role in holding public authorities to account.

The working group found no proof that the Commission directed NGOs to lobby on its behalf. NGOs set their own work programmes, and alignment with EU objectives is not political direction. Having found no wrongdoing, the Scrutiny Working Group has shown its real intent with its final document: attack civil society organisations and the democratic space they represent. If transparency was ever the real concern, the same scrutiny would apply to all beneficiaries, including diverse interests and not only to the organisations that hold them to account.

This Working Group is effectively seeking to penalise the defence of EU fundamental values: it would shut civil society out of the debate on EU and national legislation.

Civil society’s role in EU decision-making is grounded in Articles 2 and 11 of the Treaty on European Union. These values cannot be selectively promoted or discarded at the whim of diverse interests. Beyond the policy debate, this is an attempt by a handful of EPP members to silence the voices that demand accountability. By the time people realise what has been happening, it will be too late to act, because the democratic watchdogs will already have been defunded.

The European Union cannot credibly defend civic space and fundamental rights in its Member States while allowing measures at European level that risk financially weakening independent civil society. The same democratic principles must apply consistently, regardless of which political forces seek to restrict the work of NGOs. We therefore call on the Commission to disregard its recommendations in full and on President Metsola to ensure the Scrutiny Working group does not further damage Parliament’s reputation.

We stand firmly with Civil Society Organisations and are more committed than ever to protecting European democracy. Protecting NGOs' independence is not a privilege granted to civil society.

Carla Tavares, Marit Maij and Thomas Pellerin-Carlin for the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) | Olivier Chastel and Vlad Vasile-Voiculescu for Renew Europe | Daniel Freund and Erik Marquardt for Greens/EFA | Jonas Sjöstedt for The Left

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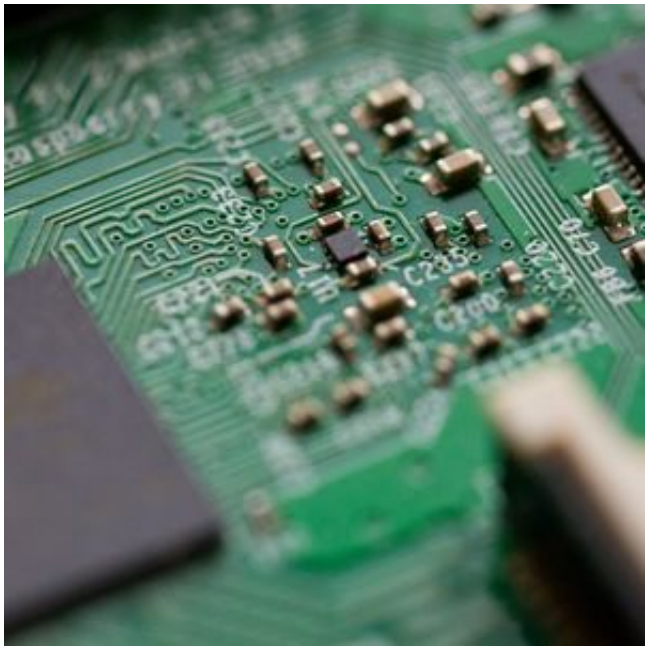


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Responsible MEPs



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