

Financial Times  
Number One Southwark Bridge  
London SE1 9HL

Brussels, 16 February 2006

Re: response to MEP allegations against NGO transparency

Sir,

Silvana Koch-Mehrin MEP has falsely characterised the role and functioning of European and national NGO networks active at EU level ('NGOs lack transparency and should face regulation', Letters, February 11).

Firstly Ms Koch-Mehrin states that NGOs are "usually lacking transparency". But those NGOs that have so far expressed views on Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas' transparency initiative have stated that they are strongly in favour of enhanced transparency through information disclosure and the adoption of enhanced ethical rules. These NGOs also state that, in their view, all types of lobbyists should be targeted, and not only business, as she seems to suggest.

Ms Koch-Mehrin also accuses NGOs of lack of financial transparency. The statistics do not back this up. Indeed since 2001, out of 3000 enquiries into bodies benefiting from European funding investigated by the European anti-fraud office (OLAF) and passed on to the competent legal authorities, only ten concerned NGOs.

As a Member of the European Parliament, Ms Koch-Mehrin should know that the vast majority of the funds allocated to NGOs are dedicated to the implementation of EU programmes and policies. A much smaller part of the EU budget supports NGO advocacy activities on Community programs and both the Commission and the European Parliament agree there is an added value for such dialogue with civil society organisations.

Ms. Koch-Mehrin suggests that organisations that are critical of globalisation should not get financial support from the EU. We are convinced that the EU is right in promoting engagement of citizens in the European debate. This cannot be done without critical voices, which is a basic principle of democracy plurality. If the EU funding is to be restricted to organisations promoting only one approach to the European integration, civil dialogue would soon be no more than pure propaganda.

The upcoming Green Paper on the European Transparency Initiative (to be published in March) will hopefully provide a framework for this debate to take place on a more open and inclusive basis, and we are looking forward to engaging in a constructive discussion on these points.

Yours faithfully,



Anne-Sophie Parent  
Chair, Civil Society Contact Group  
B-1050, Brussels

***Members of the Civil Society Contact Group are:***

Social Platform: [www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org)

CONCORD: [www.concordeurope.org](http://www.concordeurope.org)

Human Rights and Democracy Network:

[www.act4europe.org/code/en/sect.asp?Page=41&menuPage=41](http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/sect.asp?Page=41&menuPage=41)

Green 10: <http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/sect.asp?Page=39&menuPage=39>

European Women's Lobby: [www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org)

European Forum for the Arts and Heritage: [www.efah.org](http://www.efah.org)

European Public Health Alliance: [www.ephah.org](http://www.ephah.org)

---

**EU Civil Society Contact Group**, c/o Social Platform, Square de Meeûs 18, 1050-Brussels, Belgium  
T +32-2-511 17 11 • F +32-2-511 19 09 • [www.act4europe.org](http://www.act4europe.org) • [coordinator@act4europe.org](mailto:coordinator@act4europe.org)

The CSCG brings together seven large European NGO platforms in the following fields:  
social (Social Platform), development (CONCORD), human rights (HRDN),  
environment (Green 10), women (EWL), culture (EFAH), public health (EPAH).  
Its Act4europe campaign aims at engaging national NGO activists in the Future of Europe debate