



Europêche demands transparency and accountability over allegations of NGO funding for Green lobbying

Brussels, 28 January 2025

Europêche, the leading representative body for the fishing industry in Europe, has expressed serious concerns over recent allegations that the European Commission financed environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to lobby Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and Member States in favor of the European Green Deal. These claims, highlighted in a recent journalistic investigation, raise critical questions about transparency, accountability and democratic integrity in the EU's policymaking processes.

The allegations are particularly troubling given their potential implications for industries like fishing, which are already facing immense regulatory and economic pressures. Policies tied to the Green Deal, including the Nature Restoration Law, have profound consequences for Europe's fishing communities. These will require drastic measures such as further closures of traditional fishing grounds. If public funds were indeed used to support campaigns aimed at influencing policies in this sector, such actions could have compromised the integrity and impartiality of decision-making within the EU.

As an example, Europêche points to the increasing number of NGO-led campaigns against bottom fishing, which is a legal, certified and well-regulated fishing method in Europe. Many of these campaigns appear to advocate for an outright ban on the practice rather than pursuing opportunities for improvement or collaboration with the fishing sector. Furthermore, similar lobbying initiatives appear to have received financial support from the Commission, such as the NGO "Blue Manifesto 2024" or campaigns criticising quota systems of selected Member States.

Europêche calls on the Commission to provide immediate clarification on whether public funds were used to finance NGOs tasked with influencing the adoption of the Green Deal. This includes identifying the organizations involved, their specific objectives and the amounts of funding they received. Clear information is essential to restoring confidence in the policymaking process.

In light of the gravity of the allegations, Europêche also calls on the Commission and the Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to launch an independent investigation. This inquiry should establish the facts, determine whether any breaches of democratic principles have occurred and propose corrective measures to prevent similar issues in the future.

Until these clarifications are provided and the situation is resolved, Europêche recommends pausing any decisions that might be influenced by these alleged practices. Continuing to implement policies adopted under a potentially compromised system, risks endorsing practices that EU institutions, particularly the Commission, regularly criticize when observed in other states or institutions. Javier Garat, President of Europêche, emphasized the seriousness of the situation, stating: *'These allegations, if substantiated, would constitute a major breach of democratic principles and a betrayal of the trust placed in the European environmental policies adopted during the previous legislative term. Our fishers, who already face immense challenges adapting to Green Deal policies, deserve decision-making processes that are transparent, impartial and accountable.'*

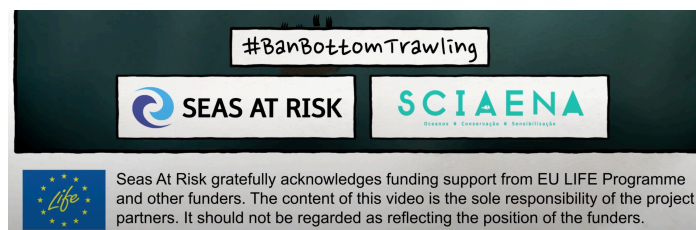
The fishing industry, which contributes significantly to Europe's food security and coastal economies, cannot bear the brunt of policies shaped by radical environmental proposals pushed by undisclosed lobbying efforts.

Europêche reiterates its support for environmental sustainability but emphasizes that policymaking must be balanced, evidence-based and respectful of the socio-economic realities faced by European communities. As the voice of Europe's fishing industry, Europêche demands that the Commission ensures full transparency and independence in its dealings with NGOs and other stakeholders.

END

Press Contact: Daniel Voces de Onáindi, Managing Director of Europêche
Email: daniel.voces@europeche.org Phone: +32 489 26 81

ANNEX





Briefing

Comment la France attribue-t-elle les possibilités de pêche à ses pêcheurs ?

La flotte de pêche de la France

La France est l'une des principales puissances de pêche en Europe, se classant en deuxième position en termes de capacité de flotte mesurée en tonnage brut. En 2022, la France contribue à 15% des captures de l'UE, pour un volume de 517 000 tonnes, et une valeur