
BRUSSELS' 'FOREIGN AGENTS' FIGHT

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An upcoming EU law could force every member state to set up a foreign influence register to track lobbying and funding from third countries – including cash flowing to NGOs, think tanks, and lobbyists. Its proving the latest flashpoint in a Parliament still grappling with multiple corruption scandals linked to dodgy lobbying, and deeply split over how to treat NGOs.

Leading the file in Parliaments internal market committee, which will discuss the bill today, is Adina Vălean, the former transport commissioner. Her centre-right EPP group is ready to push it through with backing from some of Renew, and the far right. The Greens and the Left want it pulled entirely but are willing to support the Socialists, who want to expand the laws scope to cover all forms of lobbying. The EPP says no to an expanded scope, arguing this is about third-country interference, not sweeping reforms.

The proposed directive was put forward by the European Commission in the aftermath of the Qatargate scandal, in which Qatar, Morocco and Mauritania stand accused of corrupting officials and members of the European Parliament.

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