

Grave concern regarding Hungarian civil society bill

The European Youth Forum and the National Youth Council of Hungary express their grave concern about the draft law on civil society organisations submitted to the Hungarian Parliament on April 7th, 2017.

According to the bill, civil society organizations and foundations must register with authorities if they reach an annual foreign funding threshold of HUF 7,2 million (EUR 23.000), with the risk of being legally derecognised after a series of notification.

The proposed legislation would have the effect of stigmatising and labeling certain civil society organisations, especially those focused on European policies and values. It would also severely hamper their capacity to protect human rights and provide valuable services to Hungarian people.

Civil society organisations have come to play a big part in society, not only in Hungary but all across Europe and the globe. They work towards a peaceful, just and thriving coexistence, each of them focusing on their own field of expertise. These organisations provide inevitable services and guidance in domains where other social structures lack action or fail to succeed. For a sustainable existence, foreign funds have come to play an important role in financing the functions of civil society organisations in Hungary since the support coming from governmental sources has not proved to be sufficient. We, as representatives of youth organisations recognise the vital role these organisations play and we are appalled at such measures being taken towards civil society as a whole.

We share the concerns of the European Commission who are monitoring the proposed law and have already raised doubts as to whether it is in line with European Union law and common values as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

The European Youth Forum and the National Youth Council of Hungary believe that progressing with this proposal without consulting stakeholders of the civil society is not beneficial for anyone in the long run and would lead to harmful consequences for the future of Hungarian society. In our opinion a legislation prepared together with the relevant stakeholders would have a stronger legitimacy.

We respectfully urge the Members of the Parliament to enter into consultation with the relevant stakeholders, bearing in mind the harm such legislation might do to Hungary's whole civil society sphere and international reputation.

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