

CONCORD

European NGO confederation for relief and development

GREENPEACE



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GreenBudgetEurope

TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, 11 April 2017

Dear President Juncker, dear Vice-President Timmermans,

In view of the situation in Hungary, we request your active intervention in support of civil society and democracy in Europe.

We are highly concerned by the Hungarian government's recent moves to stigmatise civil society organisations and by the possible forced closure of the Central European University. These developments will have severe negative implications for Hungarian society, social and human rights and the environment. They are unprecedented in the EU and constitute a serious blow to European values, including freedom of academic exchange.

We consider the draft law on the transparency of organisations funded from abroad ([T/14967](#)), submitted by FIDESZ party MPs on 7 April 2017, and widely acknowledged as the proposal of the government, to be unnecessary and harmful. Current legislation regulating the operations of civil society organisations already provides adequate provisions to guarantee that these organisations conduct their work in a transparent, lawful and fully accountable manner.

The law would force NGOs receiving more than € 24,000 per year from outside Hungary to register as "civic organisations funded from abroad". This includes funding from EU sources not managed by a Hungarian institution. This would effectively stigmatise any organisation that receives such funding. It is likely to further constrain the space for action of organisations that represent an independent voice and that deliver valuable services to society, at a time when other checks and balances have already been significantly weakened.

Hungarian government statements regarding civil society – including in the context of the recently launched national consultation 'Let's stop Brussels' – clearly illustrate the intent to further stigmatise and intimidate independent civil society organisations. The consultation accuses international NGOs operating in Hungary of interfering "in internal affairs [...] in a non-transparent way" and of inciting

“illegal immigrants [...] to commit illegal acts”. Furthermore, the “justification” of the draft bill draws an unwarranted link between international money-laundering and civil society organisations that operate in Hungary with foreign funding.

In view of the College of Commissioners’ debate on Wednesday 12 April, we call for a sharp response to the Hungarian government attacks on independent education institutions and civil society organisations, as these attacks are in violation of European and international standards and best practice.

In keeping with the values of the European Union, we urge you to ensure that all Members States defend the role of civil society in promoting open and accountable societies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saskia Richartz', written in a cursive style.

Saskia Richartz
Deputy Director
Greenpeace EU Unit

also on behalf of:

Amnesty International

Civil Liberties Union for Europe

Concord

Green Budget Europe

Human Rights Watch

Transport & Environment