

87 European civil society organisations call on Hungary to withdraw the proposed laws targeting groups working with migrants and refugees

04 May 2018 - The new Hungarian parliament which will first assemble on 8th May is set to vote on draconian and regressive legislation[i] which could arbitrarily restrict fundamental rights and freedoms of civil society. The proposed laws would further undermine and stigmatise organisations working to defend the human rights of migrants and refugees.

The treatment of our Hungarian members and partners and the laws being introduced to stifle civil society are deeply concerning. These will significantly limit their ability to carry out work independently, could ultimately lead to their closure and be damaging to the human rights of migrants and refugees. Such measures that penalise solidarity and support to migrants including asylum seekers and refugees should not be tolerated.

EU civil society actors have long warned against the criminalisation of NGOs, civil society and solidarity work with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. These deliberate moves in Hungary to shrink civil society space have created an atmosphere where people working for NGOs are threatened and harassed and made afraid and insecure in their daily lives.

Hungary, as a member of the European Union, has a responsibility to protect fundamental rights and freedoms and to uphold the values of solidarity, human rights, democracy, equality, humanitarianism and the rule of law. The Hungarian government's actions threaten these values and principles.

NGOs and civil society actors are an essential part of functioning democracies. These hostile moves have created mistrust, closed dialogue and will have lasting impact on the Hungarian civil society and the people they serve.

Each Member State has a responsibility to act in defense of democracy and civil society. We, the undersigned organisations therefore strongly call for the withdrawal of the Hungarian legislation proposed.

[i] Existing legislation in Hungary already requires full transparency from NGOs and to publish detailed annual financial and activity reports. The first draft bill (T/19776) makes clear that the measures cover groups working on migration and asylum in almost any capacity and requires organizations to apply for authorization from the Interior Minister to continue. The second bill (T/19775) would require the organizations "supporting migration" to pay a 25 percent tax on any funding received from abroad or face large fines. The third bill (T/19774) gives the right to issue restraining orders on citizens working with migrants (suspected of "organising irregular migration") barring them from approaching any Hungarian Schengen borders closer than 8 km radius. These draft bills build on the 2017 Hungarian Law on Foreign-funded NGOs.

Undersigned organisations:

List of signatories:

International/regional

1. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
2. Access Info Europe
3. International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE)
4. European AIDS Treatment Group
5. Anti-Slavery International
6. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
7. SOLIDAR
8. Danish Refugee Council
9. Terre des Hommes (TDH)
10. AEDH - Association Européenne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme
11. Médecins du monde - Doctors of the World International Network (15 NGOs)
12. WAVE - Women Against Violence Europe (European wide in 46 countries)
13. SMES - Europa
14. Cordaid
15. Kopin
16. ILGA-Europe
17. Human Rights Watch
18. Minority Rights Group International
19. Amnesty International
20. Center for Reproductive Rights
21. European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
22. Mercy International Association
23. Front Line Defenders

National/Local

24. KISA - Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism
25. Dóchas - Irish Association of International Development NGOs
26. Safe Passage UK
27. European Network Against Racism- Ireland (ENAR Ireland)
28. Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
29. Association for Integration and Migration, Czech Republic
30. Organisation Démocratique des Travailleurs Immigrés au Maroc(ODT-I)
31. Maison du Peuple d'Europe - Belgium
32. OMANIAE - Belgium
33. FAIRWORK Belgium
34. Detention Action UK
35. Afrique Culture Maroc
36. Collectif des Travailleurs Migrants au Maroc.
37. Raiz Mirim - Belgium
38. BAG Asyl in der Kirche Berlin Germany
39. Le Monde des Possibles - Belgium
40. Civil Development Agency (CiDA) - Georgia
41. Bulgarian Women's Lobby
42. Andalucía Acoge
43. Migrants Rights Network, UK
44. Latin American Women's Rights Service - UK
45. Community Work Ireland
46. ORBITvzw - Belgium
47. Focus on Labour Exploitation - UK
48. ARSIS-Association for the Social Support of Youth-Greece

49. Flemish Refugee Action (Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen) - Belgium
50. Federación SOS Racismo. Estado español
51. Stichting LOS, Netherlands
52. Consortium of Migrant Assisting Organizations in the Czech Republic
53. Places of Sanctuary Ireland
54. Babaylan-Denmark
55. Association of HIV affected women and their families "Demetra", Lithuania
56. Medinetz Mainz e.V., Germany
57. Detention Forum - UK
58. Christian Aid Ireland
59. Hackney Migrant Centre
60. Comhlámh - Development Workers and Volunteers in Global Solidarity, Ireland
61. ActionAid Ireland
62. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Ireland
63. Doras Luimní - Ireland
64. Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland
65. Cultúr Migrant Centre Navan Ireland
66. Immigrant Council of Ireland
67. Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
68. Jugendliche ohne Grenzen (Youth without borders), Germany
69. Center for Legal Aid - Voice in Bulgaria, Bulgaria
70. Federation of Christian Organisations for the Service of International Volunteers, Italy
71. MiSaG, Working group on Migration of the United Protestant Church of Belgium
72. The Finnish Refugee Advice Centre
73. Austrian Red Cross
74. Legis Skopje, Macedonia
75. Agisra e.V.- Information and counseling center for female migrants and refugees, Köln, Germany
76. Free Movement network (Vapaa liikkuvuus -verkosto)
77. Ban Ying Coordination and Counselling Center against Trafficking in Persons, Germany
78. ASGI (Association for Legal Studies on Immigration), Italy
79. SB OverSeas, Belgium
80. Irish Refugee and Migration Coalition
81. Refugees Welcome Norway, Norway
82. All Our Children (Yhteiset Lapsemme ry), Finland
83. Slovene Philanthropy, Slovenia
84. Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, Dublin, Ireland
85. La Strada Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic
86. People in Need, Prague, Czech Republic
87. CNDN- 11.11.11, Belgium