

**Open letter on social consultation
to Dr. Szabolcs Ágostházy,
State Secretary for EU Development Projects**

9 February 2021

Dear Mr. State Secretary,

We are writing this open letter to you, as we are concerned that the social consultation on the allocation of EU Funds, both in the next budgetary cycle of the European Union as well as in the framework of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, does not provide real consultation opportunity for the members of society in its present form. We ask you to allow the widest and most meaningful participation possible for NGOs and other professional communities, given that proposals born from social consultations can significantly increase the professional quality of future materials, creating a beneficial situation for all parties.

At present, we do not have the opportunity for real participation, the relevant ministries only formally fulfil their obligations, the materials are often difficult to access and sent to the stakeholders only at the last minute with impossible deadlines, while the work of the conciliation forums have become vacant, the proposals received are usually not incorporated into the forthcoming drafts, and the reasons for refusal are not provided.

In particular, we resent the following procedures:

1. On the palyazatok.gov.hu page under social consultation, only brief summaries of the Partnership Agreement, operational programmes, and the framework of Hungary's Recovery and Resilience Plan can be accessed, and these documents mainly contain generalisations without any details or figures. There is also a lack of information on how activities supported by domestic budgetary resources will be linked to activities supported by EU funds. Without knowledge of the in-depth materials, NGOs and other professional communities cannot review them substantially and the extracts make it difficult to make specific proposals.
2. While consultation of the Operative Programmes, the key framework documents guiding the allocations of funds, are still open, some drafts of calls for proposals are already out, moreover, over the end-of-year holidays with impossible deadlines of a few days to comment.
3. To review the framework of National Strategy for Roma Integration, NGOs had just two weeks. The letter of formal notice was sent by the Home Office in mid-December, immediately before the holidays, while the deadline for commenting on the more than 150-page document was the 5th of January.
4. Standing committees of dialogue between state officials and civil society are dysfunctional, summoning meetings no more than once a year or even less frequently and, while members are often not notified of the forthcoming legislation and professional materials, individual requests from NGOs pass unnoticed.
5. The provisions of Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds are not fulfilled, in particular Articles 5 and 7 and Articles 17(1) to (2).

There is still time to solve these problems. We ask you to make the full documentation of the Partnership Agreement and the operational programmes, as well as the Hungary Recovery and Resilience Plan, available as soon as possible, leaving enough time for stakeholders to submit their proposals. The Prime Minister's Office should provide a wide range of information on the reconciliation process and its precise course among the NGOs and send all the professional materials directly to the relevant professional bodies, thus helping them to prepare for participation. Depending on the size and importance of the documents, guarantee fair deadlines for reviewing, considering that the experts of most NGOs carry out their reviews in their spare time, voluntarily (in contrast to the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 240/2014). The propositions received should be evaluated based on a single set of criteria and feedback should be provided in this way regarding the approval or rejection of comments.

In addition, we would like to note that in recent years multiple civil professional materials have been published summarising the shortcomings of the current social consultations and recommending alternatives for developing a genuine social dialogue. A strategy at government level relating to this could greatly improve the cooperation between the State and the NGOs, if it specifies the principles, methods, and procedures for social participation in sufficient detail. In particular, the following:

1. Structured dialogue is a key element of social negotiations: the participation of the relevant professional organisations should be ensured based on a predefined reconciliation plan, through publicly known points and format.
2. Based on the principle of openness and inclusiveness, the widest possible participation should be guaranteed and communicated to civilians and stakeholders through appropriate channels (that are also used by them).
3. The principle of partnership should guarantee that stakeholders will not only be able to comment on the finished materials, but also will have a substantive role in their creation and in setting targets and priorities.
4. The continuity of social consultations and the communication with the organisations must be ensured so that their participation is not merely campaign-like or ad hoc.
5. The reconciliation process should become followable with transparency in mind: the schedules are realistic, the correspondence is documented and the propositions received are incorporated into the documents based on pre-established principles.
6. The relevant government bodies should evaluate the process regularly and publish its results, course, and participants.
7. The Government should ensure the capacity development of the relevant NGOs, so these organisations can participate substantially in the social negotiations relating to the use of EU funds.

We believe that consultation with a wide range of stakeholders is essential to democratic societies. Proper dialogue ensures that decision-makers take people's interests into account and that the outcome serves them. The Hungarian state must commit to the fair allocation of

these resources and contribute to a healthy, sustainable, inclusive, and just Hungary for the benefit of its people.

Sincerely,

Civilisation Coalition

<https://civilizacio.net/>

The letter is supported also by the following organisations:

1. 21. Század Műhely
2. aHang
3. Amnesty International Magyarország
4. Artemisszió Alapítvány
5. Autonómia Alapítvány
6. CEEweb a Biológiai Sokféleségért
7. Civil Kollégium Alapítvány
8. Civil Közoktatási Platform
9. Civil Közösségi Házak Magyarországi Egyesülete
10. Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány
11. Egymásért - Közösen Mozgáskorlátozottak Egyesület
12. Együtt Debrecenért Egyesület
13. ÉLETFA Segítő Szolgálat Egyesület
14. Élettér Közösség- és Településfejlesztő Egyesület
15. Eleven Gyál
16. Eleven Vecsés
17. Európai Szabadúszó Művészek Egyesülete
18. Független Előadó-művészeti Szövetség
19. Független Magyar Művészek Országos Szövetsége
20. Gyerekesély Közhasznú Egyesület
21. Háttér Társaság
22. Haver Alapítvány
23. Hívatlanul Hálózat
24. Humán Platform
25. Idetartozunk Egyesület
26. Igazgyöngy Alapítvány
27. K-Monitor
28. Kép-Szín-Ház Alapítvány
29. Kiútprogram Közhasznú Nonprofit Zrt.
30. Közgyűjteményi és Közművelődési Dolgozók Szakszervezete
31. Levegő Munkacsoport
32. Magyar Helsinki Bizottság
33. Magyar Környezeti Nevelési Egyesület
34. Magyar LMBT Szövetség
35. Magyarország Természeti és Kulturális Örökségéért Alapítvány
36. Magyarországi Európa Társaság
37. MASZK Egyesület (Szeged)
38. MENŐK Magyar Európai Nők Fóruma Egyesület

39. MI-ÉRTÜNK Prevenció és Segítő Egyesület
40. Niok
41. Nyugdíjasok Országos Képviselete (NYOK)
42. Oltalom Karitativ Egyesület
43. Ökotárs Alapítvány
44. Pedagógusok Demokratikus Szakszervezete
45. Polgár Alapítvány az Esélyekért
46. Sádt Győző Alapítvány
47. SZETA Egri Alapítványa
48. Szimpozion Egyesület
49. Védegylet Egyesület
50. Zöld Kapcsolat Egyesület
51. Európai Föderalisták Uniója MO. egyesület (UEF Hungary)
52. Kárpátok Alapítvány
53. Romaversitas Alapítvány
54. Labrisz Lesbikus Egyesület
55. Gaja Környezetvédő Egyesület
56. InDaHouse Hungary Egyesület
57. EJHA – Emberi jogi nevelők hálózata
58. CivilKalász
59. Oktatói Hálózat