



## Civic Space Report 2024

# HUNGARY



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## About the author

Ökotárs-Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation is an independent foundation committed to strengthening and supporting civil society and community initiatives in Hungary. It provides grants, training and technical assistance with the aim of contributing to the development of a democratic, sustainable and equitable society and an institutional system based on citizen participation.

## About this report

This analysis was published as part of the European Civic Forum's Civic Space Report 2024. The full report contains chapters written by its secretariat, by member organisations, or by partner organisations and individuals. Much of the content originally appeared as part of ECF's submission to the European Commission's Rule of Law consultation. Each chapter reflects the views and analysis of its respective author. For more information about the European Civic Forum, please visit [www.civic-forum.eu](http://www.civic-forum.eu)

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# Key trends

- 🔍 **New foreign influence legislation poses a major threat to civic space.**
- 🔍 **Civil society engaged in advocacy or critical of certain government policies subjected to smear campaigns and continuously vilified.**
- 🔍 **Limited opportunity for CSOs to engage in civic participation with public institutions and in decision-making.**

# Summary

The space for civil society continues to decline and civic space is rated as 'Obstructed' in Hungary.<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian government made no steps to implement the European Commission's 2022 recommendation "to foster a safe and enabling civic space and remove obstacles affecting civil society organisations (CSOs), including by repealing legislation that hampers their capacity of working, in particular the immigration tax."<sup>2</sup> Rather, smear campaigns and vilification of CSOs and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) remained a routine practice. The government continued to sustain and extend the state of danger which has contributed to the creation of an insecure legal and political environment for civil society since 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restrictive legislation, including the anti-LGBTIQ+ propaganda law, remained in effect and new laws were adopted, in particular the Sovereignty Defence Act. The act will give the authorities broad powers to investigate any organisation or individual suspected of serving foreign interests or threatening national sovereignty and therefore can be used to arbitrarily target CSOs, journalists, opposition politicians and HRDs. The government-created narrative of labelling civic actors as foreign

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<sup>1</sup> <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/hungary/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/40\\_1\\_52623\\_coun\\_chap\\_hungary\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/40_1_52623_coun_chap_hungary_en.pdf)



agents remained strong and led to increased polarisation, as well as de-politicisation and self-censorship of civil society.

The right to peaceful assembly was occasionally violated as police used excessive force and imposed indiscriminate bans on protests. Some protests were specifically targeted, including Palestinian solidarity protests and the teachers', students' and parents' movement calling for better public education. The blocking of and lack of coherent and accessible state funding remained an issue and led to an increased dependency on unsustainable crowdsourcing and foreign funding for independent civil society.

# Institutional, political and socio-economic landscape

2023 in Hungary was characterised by the economic and cost-of-living crisis. The economy went into recession until the third quarter, and the state deficit exceeded official forecasts, amended several times during the year, reaching 5.9 per cent of the GDP. The country also suffered a record high inflation, more than 25 per cent at the beginning of the year, which declined to below 10 per cent just by the end of 2023. This hit poorer segments of society the most, especially as food prices increased steeply, with food costing 50 per cent more compared to two years ago. This was coupled with a serious rise in energy prices as well.

Economic difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that until the end of the year, EU funds (both Cohesion and Recovery and Resilience Fund support) remained suspended due to partial fulfilment of the rule of law conditionalities, mainly in the areas of judicial independence and anti-corruption. In December, eventually, a 10 billion € tranche was approved by the Commission, but the fate of the remaining, larger amount remains undecided. The conditionality process, together with the country's friendly relations with Russia led to increasing tensions and a gradual isolation of the Hungarian government vis-a-vis its allies in the EU and NATO. Domestically, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán

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routinely blames “Brussels” for all ills, while internationally he has undermined the unity towards Ukraine in several decisions, most recently in December by vetoing the EU’s €50 billion aid package.

Despite the worsening living conditions, the popularity of the Fidesz government remained stable. According to the October poll by Medián, 30 per cent of the population supports the governing party, while 34 per cent are undecided or wouldn’t vote. The remaining 36 per cent is distributed among numerous opposition parties, with left-populist Democratic Coalition and right-extremist Our Homeland parties being the strongest, with 7 per cent each.<sup>3</sup> Pro-government propaganda outlets, and more recently social media “influencers” with almost unlimited public funding very efficiently convey the government’s messages that attribute all problems to external factors, mainly the war in Ukraine, the EU sanctions and the “misguided” decisions of Brussels, while the government valiantly fights for the “national interests”. At the same time, many people dissatisfied with the government (52 per cent in the above poll) are disillusioned by the opposition as well, which not only seems unable to cooperate but also to find the issues and messages that could make them relevant in the public discourse.

In addition to the economy and foreign relations, two main issues dominated the first half of the year: the state of public education and plans to build battery factories in several locations around the country. In the former case, broad public protests (including demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience) that began in 2022 demanding greater autonomy, better working conditions and higher wages in public education continued in spring 2023. The government responded by developing and adopting *Act LII. of 2023* on the legal status of teachers, which strips them of remaining autonomy and benefits. While protests died down after the summer holidays, many teachers refused to sign their new contracts under the new conditions, further increasing the existing understaffing in education.

The anti-LGBTQI+ campaign was stepped up in 2023. Based on the provisions of the 2021 “child protection” (up to then not quite enforced) legislation, in July, the publisher and bookstore chain ‘Lira’ was fined HUF 12 million (app. €31,500) for exhibiting a book in the young adult section with alleged homosexual content without a closed foil wrapping<sup>4</sup>. Following this, there were inspections in bookstores, wrapping of many titles, and some shops even banned underage people from entering the adult sections. Added to these developments, seeking asylum in Hungary remains virtually impossible.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/10/04/median-kozvelemeny-kutatas-partpreferencia-kormanyvaltas>

<sup>4</sup> <https://444.hu/2023/07/13/12-millio-forintos-birsagot-kapott-a-lira-mert-nem-csomagolta-be-homoszexualitast-megjelenito-konyvet>

# Civic freedoms: regulatory environment and implementation

The overall legal framework for CSOs - the Civil Code (Act V of 2013), the Nonprofit Act (CLXV of 2011 on the freedom of association, public benefit status and the operation and financing of civil society organisations) and other relevant regulations - including the provisions for registration, operation and dissolution of CSOs effectively did not change in 2023, and generally conform to European standards. CSOs - associations and foundations - pursuing any legal objectives may be registered freely, and with the use of electronic means relatively easily. According to the latest statistical data<sup>5</sup>, in 2022, approximately 53,000 CSOs operated in Hungary, with only slight fluctuations in numbers observed in the past five years, typically with a decrease in the number of foundations offset by an increase in associations. In 2023, there were no reports of forced dissolution of any organisation. Up until the end of the year, no new legislation affecting civil society (positively or negatively) was passed either, however, some problematic acts remained in effect and continue to pose threats to civil society, two in particular:

1. The government has still not fully implemented ruling *C-821/19. of the Court of Justice of the European Union* issued in November 2021, to repeal the provisions of the so-called Stop Soros legal package passed in 2018, criminalising persons providing aid and support to asylum-seekers and refugees. It may face new fines imposed by the European Commission for this delay. Likewise, the potential 25 per cent punitive “special immigration” tax remains in the books. Albeit no individual or organisation has been prosecuted under these provisions so far, however the threat to CSOs and activists working with migrants and refugees remains.<sup>6</sup>
2. Based on the provisions of *act XLIX of 2021* on the “Transparency of Organisations Capable of Influencing Public Life”, in 2022 the State Audit Office (SAO) requested hundreds of CSOs falling under this legislation (i.e. having annual income above 20 million HUF) to submit data and documents, primarily their internal financial regulations. To our knowledge, the SAO has not

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<sup>5</sup> Central Statistical Office, [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/gsz/hu/gsz0014.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/gsz/hu/gsz0014.html)

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. <https://civilizacio.net/hu/hirek-jegyzetek/ot-eves-a-stop-soros>



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followed up on its report published at the end of 2022, nevertheless, affected CSOs have been kept in uncertainty.

A major legal development affecting (among others) civil society arrived at the end of 2023, in the form of the so-called Sovereignty Defence Act passed on 12 December, consisting of two main elements:

- 🔍 It forbids persons and organisations, including associations running or supporting candidates in elections (European, national and local) to receive support from foreign sources, and forbids funds from domestic legal entities and anonymous donations with regard to nominating organisations.
- 🔍 It establishes a new Sovereignty Defence Office with broad and ill-defined competencies to collect (even via using the intelligence services) and publishes information on any person or organisation it suspects of serving foreign interests and/or receiving funding, with no legal remedies available.

The intentionally vague wording of the law may potentially threaten any critical person or organisation - including CSOs, journalists, philanthropic donors, trade unions or churches - with smear campaigns, intimidation and harassment (ab)using the data published by the authority, and it may also form the basis of further procedures carried out by other state agencies (e.g. the tax authority). The new authority is to be established in early 2024. The Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović has already warned Hungary not to adopt the law.<sup>7</sup> The CoE Parliamentary Assembly requested Hungary to submit the draft to the Venice Commission for review.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> **Hungary: The proposal for a “defence of national sovereignty” package should be abandoned - Commissioner for Human Rights (coe.int)**

<sup>8</sup> **Hungary should submit the bill on the ‘defence of national sovereignty’ to the Venice Commission, PACE monitors say (coe.int)**

# Safe space

Smear campaigns and public vilification against human rights defenders and civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in advocacy or critical of certain government policies remained a routine practice in government-controlled media and in the communication of associated social media influencers. While serious forms of intimidation or harassment were generally not reported during the year, there are no institutional systems of monitoring or support for those potentially affected available either. The frequent and recurring narrative which remained unchanged, accused certain CSOs of being members of the “Soros-network” and/or part of the (foreign-funded) political opposition and thus allegedly undermining Hungarian national interest. This has led to a generally chilling atmosphere and a marked polarisation within civil society whereby many organisations do not dare speak out on public issues and/or refuse to be associated with organisations perceived as “problematic” or political. While many organisations are regularly labelled as such, in 2023 several cases of extended attacks stood out:

1. The *Association of Alternative Communities in Debrecen* (East-Hungary) which provided a community space for the peoples protesting against a planned car factory battery (see below) to organise and coordinate their activities, was labelled in both local and national media as the ‘instigator’ of the protests and dubbed a politically biased and controlled organisation.<sup>9</sup> A journalist even camped outside their office for days with a video camera, taking pictures of those who entered the premises.
2. *From Streets to Homes Association*, a Budapest-based CSO that provides (among other activities) low-rent housing to people emerging from homelessness was attacked for their cooperation with the municipality of the 19<sup>th</sup> district and accused of bringing “filth and deviance” to the neighbourhood. It was also implied that they are closely connected to the opposition leadership of the city, and thus, act on their behalf.<sup>10</sup>
3. The *EU Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV)* and USAID’s Central Europe fund were also targeted with allegations that they support “Soros-organisations” and the “LGBTQI-lobby” and that thereby Brussels continues the work and act under the guidance of the philanthropist in Europe. Most major human rights groups were named in a series of articles, in particular those awarded the new re-granting program managed by a consortium led by Ökotárs Foundation, with

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<sup>9</sup> E.g. <https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2023/02/az-akkumulatorgyar-elleni-hergelessel-gyanusított-egyesület-valoban-kapott-penzt-sorostól-video>

<sup>10</sup> <https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2023/02/kudarcba-fulladt-kispesti-program>

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pre-suppositions about which organisations would receive support from this source.<sup>11</sup> After the actual grant decision, many of the grantees were again exposed to a similar negative context.

4. In a long-standing dispute, in the autumn, the tax authority deducted several hundred million from the bank accounts of the 'Oltalom' Charitable Association and the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (HEF) due to their outstanding public debts, which were incurred in the first place because HEF was illegally stripped of its church status and its related funding in 2011 in violation of its rights according to the judgement of the ECtHR).<sup>12</sup> Although Hungary has paid €3,000,000 in damages accordingly in 2017, due to lack of access to grants obtainable only for incorporated churches, HEF is still not being recognised and this has resulted in a continued lack of access to certain funds.
5. After the elections in 2022, the National Information Centre, a newly set up all-powerful intelligence agency investigated the financial management of opposition political actors that had received foreign funding from the US-based private donor organisation, Action for Democracy, during the 2022 general election campaign. In its declassified but redacted report, the National Information Centre dedicated a chapter to a number of independent CSOs, think-tanks and media outlets that have received grants from the German Marshall Fund (GMF) and the US National Endowment for Democracy, portraying them as threats to national security and sovereignty, thereby conveying a serious chilling effect to these organisations.<sup>13</sup>

In the autumn months, after Fidesz first introduced the idea of developing and adopting an act on "sovereignty defence", its relatively low-key anti-NGO campaign received new momentum, and more "news" on the alleged objectives and activities of human rights organisations in particular (e.g. Amnesty-International Hungary, Hungarian Helsinki Committee) were published along with accusations of them representing foreign interests and powers.

## Restrictions on the right to protest

Regarding freedom of peaceful assembly, both disproportionate excessive police responses, and indiscriminate bans on demonstrations were observed in 2023. As previously noted in our 2022 submission, teachers who staged protests have faced restrictions. Participants of the teachers' demonstrations, attempting to access the cordoned-off office of the Prime Minister were met with

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<sup>11</sup> <https://magyarnemzet.hu/kulfold/2023/09/itt-tartunk-brusszel-fizet-soros-helyett>  
<https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2023/09/vajon-mi-az-amire-brusszel-es-a-soros-halozat-is-sok-szazmilliot-hajlando-aldozni>

<sup>12</sup> *Magyarországi Evangéliumi Testvérközösség v. Hungary*, Application no. 54977/12, Judgment (Just satisfaction) of 25 April 2017

<sup>13</sup> The NIK's summary report of 21 June 2023 on foreign interference in the 2022 parliamentary elections in Hungary is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/yhkswd3e>.

tear gas at least twice<sup>14</sup>, and in September 2023 the police blocked them from marching to the Prime Minister's office altogether.<sup>15</sup> Several protesters, including high-school students (teenagers), also received heavy fines amounting to several hundred thousand HUF or faced criminal proceedings for participating in "illegal assemblies" or breaching assembly rules.<sup>16</sup> Soon after the new dramatic escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine in October, the Minister of Interior issued a blanket ban on any demonstrations in solidarity with Palestinian people, a step criticised by human rights organisations.<sup>17</sup>

## Funding for civil society

The financial situation of Hungarian civil society continues to be characterised by an abundance of funding on the one hand and "starving" organisations on the other. While the "architecture" of civil society is still there as key organisations continue to operate (with new EU and US funding sources playing an important role in 2023), the chilling effect on smaller, rural CSOs is visible and threatening to further widen the gap and alienate them from the larger, institutional organisations.

According to the latest official statistics, the sector's overall income in 2022 continued to grow (to HUF 1,270 billion, € 3.3 billion from 1,070 billion, 2.8 billion in 2021, probably also as a result of the record-high inflation), while the share of public funding decreased somewhat, to 40 per cent (with increasing private funding amounting to another 25 per cent).<sup>18</sup> Yet, 68.5 per cent of all CSOs operate

<sup>14</sup>[https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230606\\_Harag\\_nincs\\_de\\_fajdalom\\_van\\_\\_mondta\\_a\\_tuntetesen\\_fogdaba\\_zart\\_fiu\\_edesanyja](https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230606_Harag_nincs_de_fajdalom_van__mondta_a_tuntetesen_fogdaba_zart_fiu_edesanyja)

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. <https://444.hu/2023/06/23/tobb-mint-szazezer-eszrevetel-erkezhetett-a-statusztorvenyhez-de-a-belugyminiszterium-nem-hozza-nyilvanossagra-oket>  
<https://444.hu/2023/05/24/politikai-babszinhaz-vs-brusszelezes-a-szakszervezetek-szotsem-kaptak-a-statusztorvenyes-egyezetteten>

<sup>16</sup> [https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230614\\_Birsagot\\_kapott\\_Pankotai\\_Lili](https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230614_Birsagot_kapott_Pankotai_Lili)  
[https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230614\\_Sas\\_Biborka\\_EDF\\_hivatalos\\_szemely\\_elleni\\_eroszak](https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20230614_Sas_Biborka_EDF_hivatalos_szemely_elleni_eroszak)

<sup>17</sup> <https://tasz.hu/cikkek/tuntetesek-tiltasa-a-gazai-konfliktus-kapcsan>

<sup>18</sup> 9.1.1.12. A nonprofit szervezetek működési jellemzők szerinti száma és bevétele szerinti forma szerint (ksh.hu)



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with an annual budget under HUF 5 million (app. €3,000), and only 8 per cent have an income larger than 50 million, with the average income being approximately 25 million.

As reported in our 2022 submission to the Commission, independent organisations promoting human rights, advocacy and similar issues can rarely secure public funding. While in theory, they may apply to major state grant schemes, such as the National Cooperation Fund, the Village and the Town Civil Funds, they mostly remain unsuccessful (with no special justification) or cease to apply altogether. There are no dedicated sources available for the protection of human rights or democracy.

Most recently, another negative trend in state funding has affected a special subset of CSOs, i.e. independent, alternative theatres. Such groups could apply for operational funding at the Ministry of Culture and Innovation annually (albeit to a continuously shrinking budget), however, similar to 2022, in 2023 many long-standing, well-respected groups received zero support<sup>19</sup> in a non-transparent, unknown decision-making process. For most of them, this means that their mere survival is at grave risk, and more generally it risks the elimination of alternative or critical voices from cultural life.

CSOs cut off from public funding remain dependent on crowdsourcing tools, which many of them are using with increasing success, and on foreign philanthropies and donors. In this respect, in 2023, important new funding opportunities became available thanks to the EU Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) and USAID's Central Europe programs. The largest of these is the CERV re-granting program managed by Ökotárs Foundation and its partners which provided grants amounting to €1.5 million in 2023 (and will distribute a similar amount in 2024)<sup>20</sup>, Equally important is the "Stronger Roots" fund operated by NIOK Foundation and the grant programs of the German Marshall Fund/Transatlantic Foundation.<sup>21</sup>

The increasing lack of state funding is to some extent offset by the growing amount of individual donations. In 2023, both the amount collected from the assigned 1 per cent of income taxes (available since 1997) and the number of taxpayers using this option grew significantly, by approximately 26 per cent compared to 2022 (total amount HUF 15.3 billion, €40 million, number of taxpayers 1.8 million).<sup>22</sup> While mainly charitable organisations remain the top beneficiaries of this source, human rights and similar CSOs were also able to collect more funding (e.g. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union,

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<sup>19</sup> [https://emet.gov.hu/app/uploads/2023/06/EMT-TE-23\\_dontesi-lista.pdf](https://emet.gov.hu/app/uploads/2023/06/EMT-TE-23_dontesi-lista.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> <https://kozsertekeink.hu/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.niok.hu/tarsadalmibazis> <https://www.gmfus.org/democracy-work/engaging-central-europe>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.nonprofit.hu/hirek/Nagy-meglepetesek-a-2023-as-1-felajanlas-teren-novekvo-osszegek-novekvo-felajanlasok-uj-szereplok>

HUF 36.8 million, €97,000 compared to 35.5 million, €93,500, Hungarian Helsinki Committee 10 million, €26,500 versus 7.8million, €20,500). At the same time, tax incentives for donations remain meagre or absent: there are no tax benefits at all for private persons who donate, and companies may decrease their corporate tax base with 20 per cent of the donation, but only in case of CSOs with public benefit status (21 per cent of all organisations).

# Civil dialogue and the right to participation

Since the 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19-pandemic, the government has sustained and regularly extended the state of danger (most recently to May 2024) enabling it to rule by decree, which generally creates an insecure legal environment. Despite amending Act CXXXI of 2010 on Public Participation in the Preparation of Legislation in response to the milestones set by the European Commission, there remains little or no room for CSOs and citizens to engage with public institutions and in decision-making. While legislation is published on the government's website, time allocated for responses to consultations are short (usually not more than eight days), and most often there is no feedback on whether and how opinions from the public were taken into account. In cases generating strong public concern, participation is typically tokenistic, and instead the vilification of involved CSOs and activists could be observed (see above).

Some progress was made regarding CSO participation in official consultative bodies (Monitoring Committees, the Anti-corruption Task Force), but these are offset by the Defence of Sovereignty Act adopted at the end of the year, with potentially wide-ranging consequences and further silencing of any critical voices. The Act itself was prepared and adopted without any civil dialogue. The draft was submitted to Parliament by an individual MP, instead of the government, a usual practice in case of the most sensitive pieces of legislation, which circumvents legal provisions for participation. Rather, the government has continued with its practice of issuing a "national consultation on the defence of our sovereignty" i.e. questionnaire or rather a list of misleading and distorted statements posted to all households.

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Overall, the “usual” forms of protest or expression of opinion such as petitions, statements, etc. are completely ignored by the government, and this in some cases led both to stronger citizen action and further government backlash:

1. The single piece of legislation generating the broadest public interest and protest this year was undisputedly the law on the legal status of teachers. While the government claimed to have organised the “broadest public consultation ever” in fact, relevant trade unions and teachers’ associations were not allowed to speak up at meetings organised with relevant ministers and state secretaries, and most written submissions were neglected. This, together with the general crisis of the public education system generated demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience throughout the spring, to no avail.

2. Another issue that received significant public attention was the plans to build battery factories for electric cars in several locations around the country (Győr, Debrecen, etc.), which resulted in local protests for fear of the overuse of water supplies and pollution. These investments have mostly been prepared in secret, with the public only informed at the later stages of the process. This led to angry scenes at the compulsory public hearings organised by the local permitting authorities. In response, *government decree 146/2023* was passed in April (using the state of danger) changing the rules so that participation in local matters and permitting processes can be organised without personal presence, solely via electronic means, thereby saving officials from having to meet citizens face-to-face. In practice, this means that relevant documents are placed on the website of the authority and citizens can respond only through email, or by leaving (time-limited) messages on an answering machine.

Various consultative forums continue to exist and operate but their impact is usually limited. The new Monitoring Committees of the various Operative Programs of EU Cohesion and RRP funds have been set up in spring 2023. This time, CSOs working in relevant fields could apply to become members in an open process, and a number of independent organisations were selected to participate as well. As the Committees meet only a few times a year, it is too early to see whether they will have an impact on decision-making in any way. An Anti-corruption Task Force was created to assist the Integrity Authority (established in late 2022), with the participation of several CSOs, including Transparency International-Hungary and K-Monitor Association, but has already been criticised by the former for adopting its first report largely neglecting CSOs’ opinions and motions.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> <https://transparency.hu/hirek/korrupcioellenes-munkacsoport-jelentes-nemszavazat/>

# Civil society resilience

In spite of the above developments, up until mid-November, Hungarian civil society enjoyed a relatively peaceful year, and organisations could pursue their core activities. The Civilisation coalition, presently with a membership of 40 major organisations, remained the key player in coordinating joint response to challenges and promoting a positive image of civil society. Its statement against Sovereignty Defence Act in December was signed by more than 120 organisations and 15,000 individuals.<sup>24</sup> Cooperation among CSOs working on specific issues was active (e.g. the Egalipe network of Roma and pro-Roma organisations) and new collaborations were initiated. Four organisations working in the major countryside cities of Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen and Miskolc formed the Aspect group, intending to support civic activism outside Budapest.<sup>25</sup> CSOs represented in the Monitoring Committees started coordinating among themselves. Human rights and anti-corruption organisations also increasingly cooperate with independent media outlets, which struggle with similar challenges in their operating environment. The movement around public education brought relevant trade unions, teachers' organisations and students' movement together in a more permanent cooperation.

In the autumn, a public opinion poll commissioned by the Civilisation coalition on the level of knowledge about and the perception of civil society showed positive results: compared to similar surveys in 2019 and 2021 both the share of respondents were able to name a CSO (49%), those who have been contacted and/or helped by a CSO (44%, up from 16%), and those who supported an organisation with donation, volunteering or other means (48%) increased. Positively, 70 per cent of respondents agreed that it is an important function of CSOs to voice concerns or formulate criticism.<sup>26</sup> While the underlying factors of these results would need further research, the series of crises experienced over the past years certainly raised the profile of civil society in the public eye.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://civilizacio.net/en/news-blog/over-100-ngos-protest-against-the-defense-of-sovereignty-law>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.aspektus.hu>

<sup>26</sup> <https://civilizacio.net/en/ouractivities/civic-poll-2023>



# Recommendations

## Targeted recommendation:

🔍 Urgently Repeal the Defence of Sovereignty Act

- 🔍 Refrain from abusing the special legal order and eliminate the situation where the temporary state of emergency becomes de facto permanent.
- 🔍 Urgently Repeal the Defence of Sovereignty Act.
- 🔍 Repeal the Act XLIX of 2021 on the Transparency of Organisations Carrying out Activities Capable of Influencing Public Life.
- 🔍 Repeal the discriminatory anti-LGBTQI+ or “child protection” legislation of 2021 Implement the judgement of the European Court of Justice in case C-821/19 and repeal the "Stop Soros" law criminalising the assistance of asylum seekers in lodging an asylum application.
- 🔍 Refrain from smearing, harassing and attacking civil society and creating additional administrative burdens to hamper their work.
- 🔍 Ensure that there is funding transparency and equal access for all CSOs to state funding, including the National Cooperation Fund and Village and Town Civil Funds.
- 🔍 Fully implement Act CXXXI. of 2010. on public participation in legislation.
- 🔍 Respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression in line with international standards.



### **About European Civic Forum**

European Civic Forum (ECF) is a pan-European network of more than 100 associations and NGOs across 30 European countries,

Founded in 2005 by our member organisations, we have spent nearly two decades working to protect civic space, enable civic participation and build civil dialogue for more equality, solidarity and democracy in Europe.

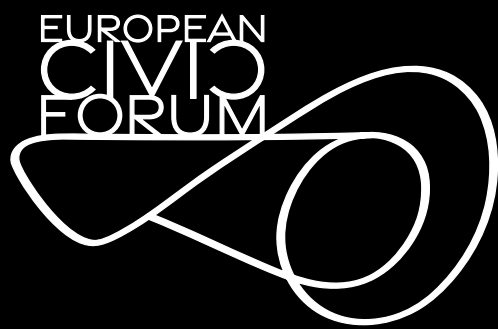


### **About Civic Space Watch**

Civic Space Watch collects findings and analyses from actors in Europe on the conditions for civil society to operate, capturing national and trans-European trends in civic space. Through ongoing monitoring of social media and regular contact and interviews with a strong network of members and partners on the ground, we strive to provide easy access to resources and improve information sharing within civil society across Europe.







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