

## STATEMENT

### **NGOs: We're here to stay and to continue our work**

On Tuesday, 13 June, after two postponed votes, the Hungarian Parliament adopted the Law on the Transparency of Foreign Funded Organisations. The community of civil society organisations united in the *Civilizáció* campaign continue to believe that the law is unnecessary, stigmatising and harmful.

**Unnecessary**, because Hungarian civil society organisations are already transparent in their operations, provide accurate information about their donors and finances in annual reports and carry out their activities before the public. **Stigmatising**, because the law implies that organisations which work for the benefit of Hungarian society by receiving foreign grants for their work pose a threat to the country. **Harmful**, because it undermines mutual trust in society and questions the right to freedom of expression.

**We, as civil society organisations, are diverse. However, we are united in our protest against being stigmatised and the efforts to stop us from carrying out our mission.** We help millions of people each year by serving homeless persons, giving free legal advice or welfare services, educating or supporting disadvantaged children or senior citizens, or by protecting our environment. We work on genuine and pressing social issues that receive less attention than needed and often do the job of state authorities.

**There is reason to fear that the newly adopted law will not stop the several years old governmental campaign to denounce Hungarian civil society organisations.** On the contrary, this is a new step in a longer process that aims at fully discrediting civil society organisations. However, there can be no real democracy and civil liberties without independent and critical thinking and a strong civil society.

We, civil society organisations, cherish our diversity but stand united in our goal to make Hungary a better, more liveable place. All organisations affected by the law will keep this in their mind when they make their respective decisions on implementing the law on “foreign funded organisations”. We are convinced that the new law is in breach of Hungary’s Basic Law and many other international treaties ratified by Hungary because it unjustifiably restricts the right to freedom of association and freedom of expression. **Hence, by using all opportunities afforded by law, we will continue to protest against the ‘foreign funded NGO’ law before all available domestic and international fora. We are here to stay and to continue our common work** as we must not abandon Hungarian society and the people who need and count on our support.