

Open Society Foundations react to 'Stop Soros' package

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Following the release by the Hungarian government of the latest “Stop Soros” draft package of laws, the Open Society Foundations - founded by business magnate and philanthropist George Soros - responded today that they are “shocked and outraged by the proposed new legislation,” arguing that the new draft laws “criminalize civil society.”



Last week the Hungarian government [introduced a package of three draft laws](#) targeting civil society organizations or NGOs it claims support “illegal migration,” under the title “Stop Soros,” as below:

1. Draft law on the social responsibility of organizations supporting illegal migration;
2. Draft Law on immigration financing duty;
3. Draft law on immigration restraint.

Following the release of the draft, Antal Rogán, Head of Cabinet of the Prime Minister, gave details about the draft in an interview with public Kossuth Radio, which can be summarized as below:

- The government has a list of organizations that it claims promote migration and - if they fail to register themselves - the government will provide this list to the Prosecutor's Office;

- “Nobody will be surprised” if, after the legislation passes through Parliament, George Soros will be among the first individuals subject to a restraint order (if he does not stop his alleged financing of migration);
- The goal of the legislation is to “have a debate about those (who support migration), and if they do not confess, the authorities should force this confession”;
- The government is open to all comments made in good faith, but only a stricter form of the regulation is acceptable.

The new draft laws are the government’s latest salvo in the wake of the recent “national consultation” on what the Fidesz-led government has repeatedly described as an alleged “Soros Plan” to forcibly resettle migrants in Europe.

The Open Society Foundations released a statement in response to the latest anti-Soros, anti-immigration package.

“The proposed laws are not about George Soros and the Open Society Foundations,” reads the statement. “Their aim is to criminalize civil society and to impose a stigma on the last remaining independent voices in Hungary that are not controlled by the ruling party, three months before the parliamentary election.”

“The Open Society Foundations have a 30-year legacy supporting NGOs and helping Hungarians. Today, we are standing against attacks that are undermining the very existence of democracy in Hungary. We are standing by our grantees and remain committed to defending freedom of expression and independent thinking in Hungary,” the statement added.

Reduced services

According to an analysis of the draft legislation by the [European Center for Not-for-Profit Law](#) (ECNL), if adopted, the laws will lead to public benefit organizations - especially those predominantly relying on foreign funding - facing difficulties in meeting the criteria. Public benefit status grants organizations tax and other benefits; losing this status would deprive them of such benefits and make their operations difficult to sustain. Importantly, this will mean reduced services to people living in Hungary, the ECNL noted.

Public benefit organizations are required by law to carry out tasks that fall under government competence. By obtaining the status and related benefits, such organizations have been able to provide significant services to different groups and fill in gaps where the government has lacked resources, or in areas it has decided not to prioritize (e.g., homelessness, education, social service delivery, development). Overall, the draft laws have very vague provisions and it is not clear how they will be implemented, the ECNL observed.