

# GLOBAL SIGN-ON LETTER

## Stop the Crackdown – Save Lives: Defend Civil Society and the Rule of Law in Hungary

Evidence-based prevention and harm reduction is not a crime. It is care. It is science. And it saves lives.

In March 2025, the Hungarian government launched a [war on drugs](#). It amended the constitution with a prohibition of the use and “promotion” of drugs. The penalties for drug-related offenses were already among the harshest in Europe, but now they are being made even stricter. In parallel, there is political pressure on the police to aggressively enforce drug laws, mostly targeting people who use drugs. Civil society was not consulted as the law was being reviewed – and professional networks in the drug field have strongly criticised the changes. They [pointed out](#)<sup>1</sup> that the government should create a comprehensive drug strategy and invest in prevention, treatment and harm reduction instead.

→ You don't build public health by breaking those who protect it.  
→ You don't defend democracy by dismantling civil society.  
→ You don't save lives by silencing those who do.

However, any criticism of the war on drugs is being condemned by government officials. Critical civil society organisations [are accused of being foreign agents](#)<sup>2</sup> and “accomplices of drug traffickers”. The pro-government press regularly carries out vicious attacks against professionals and activists who provide pragmatic, compassionate prevention and harm reduction programs. **Those who provide reality-based education, dare to speak up for harm reduction or drug policy reform have been increasingly scapegoated and threatened in smear campaigns by the Hungarian government for several years. They now risk being censored based on the constitutional ban on “drug promotion”.**

**Instead of a war on drugs, Hungary needs comprehensive and evidence-based drug policies, elaborated and implemented with the meaningful involvement of civil society.** Harm reduction is one of the most effective, humane, and evidence-based approaches in [public health](#). From providing realistic education, sterile equipment and preventing overdoses, to offering support, dignity, and safety to people who use drugs — harm reduction saves lives! But prevention, treatment and harm reduction services simply cannot be provided in the current climate of fear and repression.

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<sup>1</sup> A Magyar Addiktológiai Társaság álláspontja a kormány drogellenes kampányáról [The Position of the Hungarian Society on Addictions about the anti-drug campaign of the government] (accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2025) <http://www.mat.org.hu/index.php?id=34&hirid=170>

<sup>2</sup> “Sorosék állnak Karácsony Gergely drogliberalizációs programja mögött” [Soros stands behind the drug liberalization program of Gergely Karácsony]. Ripost, 09.04.2025 <https://ripost.hu/politik/2025/04/sorosek-allnak-karacsony-gergely-drogprogramja-mogott>

**How can this be?** Pro-harm reduction organizations and individuals are not enemies of the state — they are providing life-saving public health services. Their only "crime" is challenging ideology and stigma with evidence, and providing support to people in need.

**Let us be crystal clear:** it is not civil society that threatens Hungary — it is the erosion of the rule of law, the silencing of independent voices, and the criminalization of compassion.

A democratic society governed by the rule of law must protect and support — not punish — those who defend human dignity, health, and rights. Targeting NGOs that operate legally, transparently, and in service of the public is not only unjust; **it is a warning sign** — for Hungary but also for Europe and the European Union as a whole.

**When EU governments suppress civil society and replace science with ideology, lives are lost, trust is broken, and democracy begins to decay. In such an environment, facts become enemies and critical thinking a subversive act.**

- **We call on the Hungarian government to immediately cease its attacks on prevention and harm reduction organisations and activists who promote drug policy reform.**
- **The government must stop its war on drugs and uphold the rule of law and the obligations under international human rights and health frameworks.**
- **A new, comprehensive, evidence-based national drug strategy should be prepared with the meaningful involvement of civil society.**
- **Furthermore, all criminalisation and harassment of professionals and volunteers working in the field of harm reduction must be brought to an end.**
- **We call on the European Union and the international community to stand in solidarity with Hungarian civil society and to defend the fundamental principles of science, compassion, and the rule of law.**
- **We call on the European Union to respect the common framework ruling common agreements and to respect fundamental human rights**

#### **SIGNATORY ORGANISATIONS:**

1. «PUD.UA VOLN - YOUR HOME», Ukraine
2. Addiction Research Center Alternative Georgia
3. Africa Network of People Who Use Drugs (AfricaNPUD)
4. AIDES, France
5. AMOC Zuid - De Regenboog Groep, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
6. Ares do Pinhal (ADP), Portugal
7. Asociación Stop Sida, Spain
8. Associação Reabilitação Toxicodependentes de Macau (ARTM), Macau SAR China
9. Association for harm reduction Stigma, Slovenia
10. Association for Humane Drug Policy, Norway
11. Association Proyecto Hombre, Spain
12. Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL), Australia
13. BerLUN / Berliner Gemeinschaft der drogenkonsumierenden, Germany
14. CASO, Portugal

15. Center for Humane Policy, Bulgaria
16. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), Argentina
17. Charitable organization "Foundation "Spodivannya", Ukraine
18. Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign, Ireland
19. Civic initiative Legalize Belarus, Belarus
20. Club Eney, Ukraine
21. CNCA Rete, Italy
22. CO "Eastern Resource Center of the Ukrainian Network of People who Use Drugs (VOLNA) "Meridian". Poltava, Ukraine
23. CO "LEGALIFE-UKRAINE", Ukraine
24. Contact Nord Jugend an Drogenh  lf, Luxembourg
25. Corporaci  n Acci  n T  cnica Social, Colombia
26. Corporaci  n Viso Mutop, Colombia
27. Corporacion Viviendo, Colombia
28. Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network, Netherlands
29. DALAN Fund, regional
30. Deutscher Hanfverband (DHV), Germany
31. DOM SVETLA SLOVENSKO, civic association, Bratislava, Slovakia
32. Drop-In Krakowska 19, MONAR Krakow, Poland
33. Drug Policy Australia
34. Drug Policy Network South East Europe (DPNSEE), regional
35. Dru  tvo AREAL, Slovenia
36. EHPV Estonian Network PLWHIV, Estonia
37. Estonian Association of People Who Use Psychotropic Substances "LUNEST", Estonia
38. Estonian Medical Cannabis Association (MT   Ravikanep), Estonia
39. Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), regional
40. Eurasian Movement for the Right to Health in Prisons, regional
41. Euro -TC, Austria
42. European AIDS Treatment Group, Belgium
43. European Network of People Who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD), Ireland
44. European Network of People who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD), regional
45. European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR), regional
46. F  d  ration Addiction, France
47. F  d  ration bruxelloise des institutions sp  cialis  es en mati  re de drogues et addictions, Belgium
48. Federation of Austrian Professionals Working in the Field of Drugs (  VDF), Austria
49. Finnish Association for Humane Drug Policy (HPP ry), Finland
50. Fondazione Villa Maraini, Italy
51. Forum Droghe, Italy
52. Fund woman living with HIV
53. Groupement Romand d'  tudes des Addictions (GREa), Switzerland
54. Grupo de Ativistas em tratamentos (GAT), Portugal
55. Harm Reduction International, UK
56. Health and Opportunity Network(HON), Thailand

57. Health and social development Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria
58. Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS), North Macedonia
59. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
60. HIV Legal Network, Canada
61. HPLGBT, Ukraine
62. Infodrog, Bern, Switzerland
63. Instituto RIA, AC, Mexico
64. Intercambios Asociación Civil, Argentina
65. International Center for Ethnobotanical Education, Research and Service (ICEERS), Spain
66. International Drug Policy Consortium, global
67. International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), global
68. International Women's Fund, Azerbaijan
69. Italian League for Fighting AIDS (LILA), Italy
70. ItaNPUD APS, Italy
71. Kosmicare Association, Portugal
72. Kykeon Foundation
73. L'isola di Arran ODV, Italy
74. La Società della Ragione, Italy
75. Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM), Indonesia
76. Life Quality Improvement Organisation FLIGHT, Zagreb, Croatia
77. Mainline, Netherlands
78. Médecins du Monde Belgique / Dokters Van De Wereld, Belgium
79. Menschen aus Osteuropa e.V. Berlin, Germany
80. Metzineres, Spain
81. Metzineres, Spain
82. Montenegrin Harm Reduction Network Link, Montenegro
83. My Brain My Choice Initiative, Germany
84. New Generation Humanitarian NGO (NGNGO), Armenia
85. NGO "ISHONCH VA HAYOT", Uzbekistan
86. NGO AFI, Republic of Moldova
87. NGO Juventas, Podgorica, Montenegro
88. NGO Night Fairies (MTÜ Ööhaldjad), Estonia
89. NGO Re Generation, Serbia
90. NGO Revensh, Kazakhstan
91. Odysseus civic association, Bratislava, Slovakia
92. OÜ ReCuro, Estonia
93. PeerNUPS, Greece
94. Penington Institute, Australia
95. PO "SPIN Plus", Tajikistan
96. Positive Voice - Greek Association of People Living with HIV, Greece
97. Prekursor, Poland
98. PRIMA civic association, Bratislava, Slovakia
99. PULS Comunitar, Moldova

100. Recovering Nepal (RN), Federation of PUD and Drug service organizations in Nepal
101. Rede Brasileira de Redução de Danos e Direitos Humanos, Brazil
102. Release, UK
103. ReShape, UK
104. Romanian Harm Reduction Network, Romania
105. SANANIM, Czechia
106. Schildower Kreis, expert network for drug policy reform, Germany
107. Skoun Lebanese Addictions Center, Lebanon
108. Slovenian NCD Alliance, Slovenia
109. Southeast Asia Harm Reduction Network (AHRA), regional
110. StoptheDrugWar.org, USA
111. Suar Perempuan Lingkar Napza Nusantara Foundation (SPINN), Indonesia
112. The National Organization for Relatives to Drug Users (NORD), Sweden
113. The Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN)
114. Transnational Institute, Netherlands
115. TRUST EST – Estonian NPO for Repealing of Reactionary and Repressive Drug Laws, Estonia
116. UISCE, Ireland
117. Unie LZZ, Czechia
118. Unión de Asociaciones y Entidades de Atención al Drogodependiente (UNAD), Spain
119. Union for Equity and Health, Moldova
120. Union Women Center, Georgia
121. Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN), global
122. Women and Modern World Social Charitable Center (CWMW), Azerbaijan
123. Women4GlobalFund, global
124. Youth RISE, global