

# Call for France to Defend Civic Freedoms by Joining the CJEU Case Against Hungary's Sovereignty Law

14 February 2025

Our organisations call on the French Republic to protect civic space in Hungary and the EU by joining the European Commission's case at the European Court of Justice against Hungary's 2023 Law on the Protection of National Sovereignty.

The Sovereignty Protection Office, the primary enforcer of the law, has already targeted leading watchdogs like Transparency International Hungary and Átlátszó, in what appears to be clear retaliation for their efforts to expose corruption and the misuse of EU funds in Hungary. In view of recent statements by the SPO, it is likely that more groups will be targeted. Alarming, Prime Minister Orbán recently escalated this crackdown, vowing to "eliminate" these and other pro-democracy, rule of law and independent media groups.

President Macron awarded the Executive Director of Transparency International Hungary the title of Knight of the National Order of Merit, thereby recognising the organisation's commitment to democratic values, which are at the heart of the French constitutional tradition and the European project. This constitutes a powerful and timely gesture that should now be supported by legal action. France should intervene in the case C-829/24 CJEU brought up by European Commission to protect EU's founding values, as well as the entire community of independent organisations, journalists and human rights defenders now under threat in Hungary.

The deadline to file the application to intervene is February 27, 2025.

France's intervention in the CJEU case would bring value beyond countering the immediate threats to Hungarian journalists and rights defenders. It would also push back against mounting civic space challenges in the EU and contribute to strengthening the resilience of EU's civil society<sup>1</sup>. In addition, it would prevent Member States' retaliation against NGOs cooperating with the EU's rule of law mechanisms from becoming normalised or tolerated.

We thank you for considering this urgent appeal and look forward to France's decisive action in court.

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<sup>1</sup> France has already pledged to protect civil society by endorsing the European Council Conclusions of 27 June 2024 on a Free and Democratic Europe and March 2023 Council Conclusions on the role of the civic space in protecting a promoting fundamental rights in the EU.

Signatories :



**Background:**

In response to a significant threat to Article 2 TEU values, the European Commission has referred Hungary to the EU's Court of Justice, arguing that the law breaches several provisions of EU law, including the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Member States can join this pivotal case before February 27. This is the second significant case regarding the scope of Member States' civil rights obligations to reach the EU Court in recent years. The first was the 2023 anti-LGBTQI case, also against Orbán's Hungary, in which France intervened alongside 15 other Member States.

**Publications:**

- RECLAIM, '[Legal Opinion on the Compatibility of Act LXXXVIII of 2023 on the Protection of National Sovereignty with EU Primary and Secondary Law](#)' (July 2024)
- RECLAIM, '[Factsheet: Orbán's Sovereignty Protection Law](#)' (January 2025)
- Transparency International Hungary, '[Hungary's Sovereignty Protection Office Acts Unlawfully](#)' (November 2024)
- Amnesty International, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, '[Hungary's Act on the Protection of National Sovereignty in Breach of EU Law](#)' (February 2024)
- Joint NGO letter, '[We Stand With Transparency International Hungary and Átlátszó: EU Needs To Urgently Protect Civic Space in Hungary – European Institutions Office](#)' (June 2024)
- Human Rights Watch, '[Draft Security Law Targets Civil Society and Journalists in Hungary](#), (November 28, 2023)
- Human Rights Watch, '[World Report 2025, Hungary](#) (January 2025)