

TIMELINE OF GOVERNMENTAL ATTACKS AGAINST HUNGARIAN NGO SPHERE

<p>14-15 August 2013</p>	<p>NGOs “serving foreign interests” are listed by government-friendly newspapers; it is alleged that the “crew” of György Soros has an “outstanding role” in distributing the money in the framework of the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund. Allegations are declined both by the Ökotárs Foundation (which leads the Hungarian consortium of fund operators) and the Norwegian government.</p>
<p>17 August 2013</p>	<p>The spokesperson of the governing party Fidesz echoes the newspapers’ above allegations. Later on, in a civil procedure launched against the spokesperson and the Fidesz by an NGO, they do not even try to substantiate the spokesperson’s statements.</p>
<p>8 April 2014</p>	<p>The head of the Prime Minister’s Office claims in a letter to the Norwegian government that the Ökotárs is in his view closely linked to an opposition party. Allegations of political influence are again rejected by the Ökotárs and Norway.</p>
<p>11 April 2014</p>	<p>It turns out that Századvég Foundation, an important background institution of the government, also participated in the tender for the position of fund operator with regard to the NGO Fund, but was not considered impartial and was not selected.</p>
<p>30 April 2014</p>	<p>Senior representative of the Prime Minister’s Office calls the operators of the Hungarian NGO Fund “party-dependent, cheating nobodies”.</p>
<p>6 May 2014</p>	<p>The head of the Prime Minister’s Office requests from Norway in vain that the NGO Fund in Hungary is “suspended”, and indicates that the government wishes to enter into negotiations as to the new fund operator.</p>
<p>21 May 2014</p>	<p>The government requests the Government Control Office (GCO), a state agency vested with the right to audit state money, to launch an audit into how the NGO Fund is managed. The secretariat of the donor countries states that the audit is in breach of the respective agreements.</p>
<p>28 May – 1 June 2014</p>	<p>It comes to light that a governmental list has been prepared about potentially “problematic” NGO projects under the EEA/Norway Grants, corresponding with the list of NGOs cited by newspapers in August 2013. A governmental list of “left wing” and “incompatible” evaluators also emerges.</p>
<p>2 June 2014</p>	<p>The GCO pays a visit to three members of the consortium of fund operators and demands that certain documents are handed over. The Norwegian authorities express their strong concern about Hungary’s actions.</p>
<p>12 June 2014</p>	<p>After a high-level state meeting, Norway expresses that halting the GCO’s audit is one of the preconditions for lifting the earlier suspension of the EEA and Norway Grants. (Payments to Hungary under the EEA and Norway Grants scheme were suspended in May 2014 because Hungary has breached the respective agreements.)</p>

<i>25-27 June 2014</i>	A government-friendly newspaper falsely states that an audit report prepared by Ernst & Young supports the state's accusations. The government refers for the first time to the possibility that the Ökotárs may have committed a criminal offence .
<i>June 2014</i>	The GCO requests , with a very short deadline, project documentation and organizational materials from 58 NGOs supported by the NGO Fund . Some of the NGOs question the legal basis of the audit , but comply with the request (taking also into account that the GCO may suspend their tax numbers in case of non-cooperation). Four NGOs decide to make project documentation available on their websites instead of submitting it to the GCO.
<i>21 July 2014</i>	The GCO sends another request for documents to Ökotárs , now threatening to impose fines and/or to suspend the organization's tax number in case of non-cooperation. The new documents concern also the NGOs supported . The Ökotárs questions why these documents are necessary to achieve the stated goal of the investigation.
<i>26 July 2014</i>	In the speech declaring that he and his government build an "illiberal state", the Prime Minister says that their efforts in that regard are obstructed by civil society organizations, and refers to NGOs as "paid political activists who are trying to help foreign interests" .
<i>August 2014</i>	A criminal procedure is launched against the Ökotárs on the suspicion of fraud by an individual; the underlying criminal offence is altered to fraudulent misuse of funds later on.
<i>3 September 2014</i>	It is announced that the GCO initiated a criminal procedure on the suspicion of "unauthorized financial activities" , supposedly against the Ökotárs, which states that it has indeed given loans to NGOs from its own capital to help with the financing of their EU-projects, but did not derive any benefit from it, this activity was included in its public reports, and is not related to the EEA/Norway Grants NGO Fund.
<i>4 September 2014</i>	The Hungarian DPA obliges the Ökotárs to disclose the list of non-supported applicants and the justification for not supporting them to a government-friendly television channel.
<i>8 September 2014</i>	Offices of fund operators Ökotárs and DemNet are raided by the police , who show up in disproportionately high numbers; homes of certain staff members are searched. The police especially seize documents concerning the 13 "blacklisted" NGOs , giving rise to suspicions that the criminal procedure was used to access documents the GCO could not. The Norwegian Minister of EEA and EU Affairs states that the police raid was "completely unacceptable".
<i>11 September 2014</i>	The scope of the GCO's audit is extended to funds received by the Ökotárs in the framework of the Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme and from other state budget sources.
<i>15 September 2014</i>	In his speech delivered at the opening of the autumn session of the Parliament Prime Minister Viktor Orbán suggests that NGOs apply double standards .
<i>18 September 2014</i>	It is announced that the fund operators' tax numbers will be suspended .

For FAQ in English regarding the EEA/Norway Grants and the NGO Fund in Hungary, see the information issued by the Royal Norwegian Embassy:

<https://norwayportal.mfa.no/Norvegia--hivatalos-honlapja-Magyarorszag/Norsk/EEA-and-Norway-Grants1/EEA-and-Norway-Grants/Frequently-Asked-Question-about-the-EEA-and-Norway-Grants-/#.VBnOpVekPgF>