

Commissioner Nils Muiznieks

Commissioner for Human Rights

Council of Europe

Strasbourg, France

Budapest, 21st July, 2014

Dear Commissioner Muiznieks,

Thank You for Your letter in which You gave an account of Your visit in Hungary and the experiences thereof. Hungary especially values the ideas promoted by the Council of Europe, in addition to the community of sovereign nation states demonstrated by the organisation.

Allow me to convey the standpoint of the Hungarian Government in order to dispel the concerns raised – while supporting and maintaining those communicated to You by Mr Péter Szijjártó Deputy-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – in relation to the handling of the resources of the Norwegian NGO Fund by Ökotárs Alapítvány.

The Hungarian Government is committed to the lawful utilisation of public money. The supporting activity of Ökotárs Alapítvány has lately given grounds for concerns, which seem to have been underpinned by a disclosed report written by an internationally acknowledged audit firm. With respect to the fact that the financial resources of the Norwegian NGO Fund constitute public money, it is the moral obligation of the Hungarian Government to order every measure in its discretion which are necessary for the thorough investigation of the questions raised, irrespective of the possible political affiliations of the organisations to be examined, or the contents of the supported activities.

The Government Control Office has legal authority to conduct inspections over the utilisation of central budgetary funds – including the funds received on the basis of international agreements, as well – by economic entities and foundations. The Hungarian Government has ordered the body with due competence and legal authority to commence an investigation regarding the resource-allocation of the Norwegian NGO Fund owing to the suspected irregularities.

The Hungarian Government is firmly committed to protecting democratic values – with special regard to that of a living and active civil society – the ideal of the rule of law, and to respecting European norms. The grounds for the investigation mentioned in Your letter were provided by the same principles.

I hope my letter has given a comforting answer to the concerns raised by You. Should further questions arise as to this matter, I would certainly be happy to be at Your service in the context of a personal meeting, as well.

I would like to thank You again for Your letter.

Sincerely Yours,

János Lázár