



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
REPRESENTATION IN HUNGARY

The Head of Representation

Budapest, **29 JUN. 2017**

Mr István Hegedűs
Chairman, Hungarian Europe Society

Subject: Open letter – Communicating the European Commission's position on the "Stop Brussels" campaign in Hungary

Dear Mr Hegedűs,

On behalf of President Juncker, let me thank you for your letter, addressed to him, concerning the Commission's response to the Hungarian Government's "Stop Brussels" campaign.

Please allow me also to draw your attention to the fact that after the publication of the first Commission response on 26 April 2017 and following the Hungarian Government's reaction to it, another list of observations referring to the Government's individual claims was published by the Commission on 18 May 2017 (Nemzeti konzultáció: Észrevételek a kormány tájékoztatójára).

I could not agree more with you on the necessity for the Commission to get involved in public debate in Hungary just like in all other Member States, as also pointed out by First Vice-President Timmermans in the interview you kindly referred to.

To this end, the Commission has been active in informing citizens about its activities in the social and traditional media, through its central bodies, Representations and Europe Direct Information Offices. The Commission has launched a debate on the White Paper on the Future of Europe, and Commissioners regularly take part in discussions in the format of Citizens' Dialogues. The officials of the Commission Representation in Budapest also frequently participate in debates at various fora, as well as in the media.

Moreover, overarching corporate communication campaigns and discussions have been launched on the Union's Investment Plan, on an "EU that delivers", on the future of European defence – just to mention a few recent communication actions. The above mentioned responses to the Hungarian Government's National Consultation have also been unprecedented communication actions, distinguishing false statements from facts, signalling determination to clarify the Commission position, even on the Member State level.

In this respect, it is more than unusual if a Member State government, especially when using its official channels, makes EU-related statements that are misleading or non-factual.

Nevertheless, the Commission does not intend to participate in domestic political campaigns, especially through entering a harmful and fruitless competition with individual Member States in pouring taxpayers' money into communication campaigns of purely political nature. The Commission's position on all issues is clear and available to everyone, also in Hungarian.

The Commission has been and will continue to be relying on the mutual respect between European Union institutions and Member States. This approach has been endorsed and reinforced by the Rome Declaration on 25 May 2017, signed by the leaders of 27 Member States and of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission. As the declaration underlines, "we will work together at the level that makes a real difference, be it the European Union, national, regional, or local, and in a spirit of trust and loyal cooperation, both among Members States and between them and the EU institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity."

In this spirit, the Commission expects all Member States to communicate about our Union factually and in a constructive and positive manner, in line with their clear commitments.

Let me assure you that the Commission will continue to inform citizens about its policy initiatives, and when necessary, will defend its position and react to false statements regarding its activities. Thereby the Commission will continue to count on the governments, the media, civil society and individual European citizens to promote European values and spread trustworthy information.

Yours sincerely,



Gábor Zupkó