

I am giving my contribution as: civil society organisation / NGO

Organisation name: [REDACTED]

Main areas of work: other: minority rights

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Publication and privacy: anonymous

### Questions on horizontal developments

A very negative trend crystallised in the past months by the Commission's management of the so-called Minority SafePack citizen's initiative. This initiative called for incorporating the protection of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities into EU law and was supported by nearly 1.5 million European citizens, passing the required threshold in 11 Member States.

By not even taking the initiative seriously, the Commission has put its own credibility and the trust of the citizens at risk. By leaving minorities behind (again), the EC clearly cannot live up to its own rhetoric about rule of law and approachable European institutions. While certain commissioners are inclined to preach about the protection of EU citizens, when there is a concrete proposal on the table, sadly, the Commission backs out and it all remains empty talk.

More generally, the Commission's attitude towards the citizen's initiative instrument (i.e., the systematic refusal regardless of the question in case) is a telling sign of the shortcomings of its democratic accountability and transparency as well as of the seriousness of its commitment to listen to the citizen's voice.

### Questions on developments in Member States

*Other institutional issues related to checks and balances – Hungary*

*The process for preparing and enacting laws*

#### **COVID-19**

According to the Hungarian constitution, a state of emergency may be declared by the Government but the decrees it passes under such circumstances expire after 15 days unless the state of emergency is confirmed by Parliament's two-thirds majority. In the context of Covid-19, such emergency was declared three times: first on 30 March, terminated on 18 June, then on 4 November for 90 days, and then again on 8 February for another 90 days. Even though the governing parties themselves have the required majority for this, in one out of the three cases all the opposition parties represented in Parliament supported the declaration of the state of emergency.

Unlike in many Member States, the Hungarian parliament did not reduce the frequency of plenary sittings or the number of members who could participate, neither did it restrict the speaking times of the parliamentary groups, or limit the scope of its activities, thus retaining its full power of oversight and control during the state of emergency. As a matter of fact, the parliamentary question time of the Prime Minister actually took place more frequently than it would have otherwise.