



Activity report 2021

About NIOK Foundation

With its close to three-decade history, NIOK Foundation is one of the most well-known and acknowledged development organizations that supports Hungarian CSOs and the development of the civil sector with services and opportunities. **We work to strengthen civil society in Hungary through supporting organizations to make them stronger, more efficient and impactful, visible and acknowledged, and able to reach out to and mobilize various groups of society.**

The core of our work is a complex ecosystem of services and programs that offer steadily reliable support to innumerable organizations throughout their life cycle. We share relevant news, professional knowledge, learning opportunities, events and job offers on our Nonprofit.hu portal, a leading source of information for the sector. Our donation platform, Adjukossze.hu has allowed Hungarian CSOs to raise 1.5 billion HUF to date through its various services and the related consultancy support. The CivilTech program has provided free and affordable tech solutions to organizations in the value of 4.1 billion HUF to date. Additionally, our various courses and longer-term capacity building programs provide learning opportunities in the areas of online communication and fundraising, tech solutions as well as social base building.

Besides operating as a constant support system, we have always been quick on our feet to respond and adapt to current challenges and unexpected changes. **This agility has allowed NIOK to create innovative solutions, and shape or change our programs tailored to CSOs' specific needs throughout the years.**

Since our foundation we have started and incubated a number of initiatives with the intention to thematize and strengthen further crucial aspects of civil society, and eventually let them on their own ways as separate organizations. These include the Volunteer Centre Foundation and the Self-Regulation Body of Fundraising Organizations. We are a founding member of various coalitions and working groups aiming to popularize the valuable work of CSOs, giving culture and create forums for dialogue with governmental bodies. NIOK is also a founding member of the Civilization coalition that was formed to counter attacks on civil society and strengthen trust in CSOs in Hungary.

Our dedicated team, both the long-serving senior management and our younger members, share the belief that a strong, independent and transparent civil society contributes to stronger, more diverse, democratic, fair and overall happier communities and eventually society. Our team of 11 is supported by an advisory board, a supervisory board, a financial committee and a prestigious pool of experts in these endeavours.

Supporting CSOs in micro-donor fundraising

Local donors are key to sustaining an independent, strong and diverse civic sector. Apart from funding they are some of the most inner constituents of an organization: the most engaged, the most connected and the ones who feel ownership for the cause and want to make a difference. To support giving culture and local fundraising efforts of CSOs NIOK Foundation has developed and operates a fundraising portal in Hungary that is the first of its type and the most popular one. This multifunction donation platform, Adjukossze.hu provides services that allow bank card donations, crowdfunding campaigns, match funding campaigns, and text or call based donations. **To date Hungarian CSOs have raised more than 1.5 billion HUF through our fundraising services.**

For the partners of Adjukössze and the CSOs interested, we organize trainings, and we provide consultation and professional support for the campaigns started on the platform. In 2021 the platform underwent a development process, automatizing the process of starting a campaign, thus making fundraising easier for CSOs.

This year the crowdfunding, bank card and telephone donations in total brought 313 million HUF in donations for civil organizations. To understand the results, it's important to keep in mind that 2020 has been a unique year for the platform: it has been an outlier in the growth trends due to COVID and an increasing willingness to donate. SO even though 2021's results are 20 million lower compared to 2020, it's still 35 million above 2019, showing a growing trend. For text and call based donations we have had the second best year since its launch in 2012, and both the crowdfunding and bank card donations show that the platform managed to keep some of the extra growth from last year. **The services of the platform were typically used by smaller or mid-sized organizations. In 2021 all together 250 CSOs raised funds through the platform.**

In 2021 every hour 3 donations were transferred to CSOs through Adjukössz and 842 calls or texts a day were sent through our service. We were happy to see that 30 million HUF were raised in matchfunding campaigns, still a relatively new concept in Hungary. The average amount of donations has also grown, up to 9184 HUF.

Capacity building, information and knowledge transfer services

In the mid '90s NIOK Foundation was one of the first to systematically gather news, information and knowledge relevant to Hungarian CSOs, and to make them publicly available on one central portal. **To date, Nonprofit.hu and the related weekly nonprofit newsletter play an essential role as a leading infrastructure and a source of up-to-date information and knowledge for CSOs in Hungary,** including a knowledge center, an event calendar, grant calls and job offers.

The main areas we cover in our knowledge transfer content and activities are: legal information, finances and accounting, human resources, transparency, fundraising, online communications, leadership and management, and tech solutions. In 2021 we reached over 1.3 M page visits on Nonprofit.hu, and had 11 362 subscribers to our weekly newsletter. Every day, at least one new news item, article or grant opportunity has been published on nonprofit.hu, and those looking for jobs in the civic sector still find most calls on our site: we have published 650 ads in 2021.

Besides content creation, understanding our readers and their information consumption habits was put into focus, by an in depth research. You may read some of the feedback from the research:

“All topics are easy to understand. I can find all deadlines, current news for civil society. The Knowledge base is very useful: even though as an accountant I know many things, I always find something new here or things that strengthen my knowledge.”

“I can find answers to almost all my daily questions. From how to start your own organization through grants to news, I find useful information, advice, etc. It gives me a solution to most of the questions of the organizations operating in our town.”

Webinars and online events also proved to be successful and beneficial to our audience. What we started as a reaction to the pandemic in 2020, seems to stay for the long term: throughout 2021 we held 2 webinars/month on average. Our podcast channel is growing too: our first episode aired in connection to Civil award, with the leaders of the #familyisfamily campaign, discussing their success. Later we started two series of podcasts: the first, in cooperation with Roots and Wings Foundation, look at the most important trends and changes in the civil sector of the past 8 years, via conversations with experts, researchers and CSO leaders. With the support of TechSoup Europe, we engage organizations to share their success stories and best practices. So far, our guests included Greenpeace Hungary, UNICEF, or local organizations such as Political Capital or Amigos for the Children foundation.

NIOK also takes part in Hive Mind, launched by TechSoup Europe, aiming to build a platform to strengthen the digital resilience of civil society. As part of the program, e-learning courses have been developed in topics of digital safety, positive narratives, media literacy and desinformation. In 2021 NIOK worked on the localization of the courses and related content creation.

Technology for social good

Digital transformation allows CSOs to become more productive in their everyday operations, and work to their full potential to accomplish their mission. **As a partner of the TechSoup Global Network and a member of TechSoup Europe, NIOK Foundation's CivilTech program has provided software donations and digital tools for CSOs for more than 13 years now.** In 2021 we had 243 requests from 173 CSOs for 1964 software licences in total, at a value of 300 million HUF.

In the past few years we realized that most organizations also need practical support in digital transformation; and this need has even been accelerated by the effects of the pandemic. To answer this **we provide tech-related training courses through various partnerships.** We held a series of webinars in cooperation with Microsoft, in connection to the softwares available in the program. The 8 webinars had 420 participants overall. Besides Microsoft products (Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint, PowerPoint, etc.) we included topics such as digital safety, remote working and online events. With the support of Morgan Stanley's volunteers, we organized two complex webinar series on Excel: with 10 events and 820 participants altogether. We strengthened CivilTech's separate newsletter, which has 2600 subscribers (from webinar participants and registered users of CivilTech), who receive news related to the program and available softwares.

Building Social Base and Embeddedness

NIOK Foundation has been supporting CSOs in Hungary to improve their constituency building efforts since 2016, and has also transferred its methodology to partner organizations (OSF Prague, OSF Bratislava and FAOO in Poland) working with CSOs in the V4 region in the past years. The program runs in partnership with grant giving entities and is provided for organizations whose projects have been granted funding to build their social base. The regional partnerships in the OSIFE Social Base Building program as well as in the Stronger Roots program, funded by a Dutch family foundation, have been supporting altogether 68 CSOs in the region in 2021. The supported organizations work in the fields such as human rights, minorities, investigative journalism, anti-corruption, active citizenship, education, people living with disabilities, conscious consumption, public transportation or participatory theater.

Social base building is an approach, an active process and series of actions during which an organization gradually opens up and consciously reaches out to its beneficiaries, supporters and diverse groups of society, and builds an ongoing and mutual relationship with them. This relationship allows the organization to learn about and understand the community's needs, expectations, thinking or even actions, and build its activities, actions and communications based on them. Thus the organization becomes more reflective of social trends, able to react to situations and address people's needs, and

engage more individuals and various groups of society as active or passive supporters of its work.

In the support program NIOK and its partners offer intense support by internal and external experts through personal mentoring, consultancy, training courses and networking opportunities. It is a complex and flexible package specific to social base building and tailored to each organization's specific needs, and it gives meaningful additional value and benefits to their grants. Most importantly, the program creates a unique opportunity for CSOs to dedicate time to and focus on social base building.

In Hungary 22 organizations were supported by NIOK Foundation, and 8 news outlets for whom we provided support separately, in a program targeted and tailored for local media. The organizations work on a wide range of topics, they differ in size and scope, some of them operate in Budapest and some in the countryside. Among others, grantees work in the fields of advocacy, education, minority rights, investigative journalism or active citizenship. In total we provided 12 meetings and training and 263 hours of consultancy. We also organized two international conferences within the V4 region for all the grantees.

"Since we joined the social base building program, our organization has gone through enormous changes. We have defined that we need to make our organization more open, more accessible and more easily understood for others and to put emphasis on getting to know and include those around us. In order to reach it, we did not just get to know new activities but had to change our whole attitude and the way we operate. Being part of the program meant for us the opportunity to learn, to improve ourselves. Mentors and experts provided a huge support in this, who, besides their professional expertise, helped us in changing the organization's attitude, to become more conscious in development and to stay focused." Gábor Takács, Káva

At the final evaluation of the program, participating CSOs gave 4,9 out of 5 for the program itself, and 4,8 for their own participation.

As part of Stronger Roots, grantees had the opportunity to start a crowdfunding campaign with matchfunding support: Hungarian grantees, with the consultancy of NIOK raised more than 20 million HUF, which was topped up with 12,7 million HUF by Stronger Roots.

The organizations went through substantial changes, became able to find their supporting communities and the communication channels through which they can reach and involve them to their work - as followers, donors, volunteers or as members of their target group. For many of them finding new communication channels or strengthening them were an important impact: the numbers of their

Instagram and Youtube followers grew by 160% and 130% respectively. They also have an increasing donor base: the number of their donors grew by 140%!

“Being part of the program for us was a safety net, while we performed as rope dancers. A fundamental condition for social base building is that the organization has to, even if for a short time, get into the spotlight, and allocate resources to the activities they couldn’t focus on before. To gain the ability to talk about the organization itself, to showcase results, to celebrate supporters and followers, and see them as a foundation to build on. The program and NIOK’s help within gave us the space and the opportunity to gain and improve these abilities with the help of consultants whose expertise wouldn’t necessarily be available to CSOs otherwise.” Zoltán Bognár, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union

- 30 organizations supported in Hungary
- Stronger Roots program rated 4.9 out of 5 by Hungarian participants
- 32.7 million HUF donation in the Strongerr Roots matchfunding campaigns in Hungary
- 60 CSOs and 8 media outlets supported in total in the V4 region

We also developed and launched the support program specifically for media outlets and were contracted by OSIFE to support 8 local news portals in 2021. Participating media strengthen the local public sphere, thus local communities and democracy. NIO offered them support in the topic of financial sustainability and social base building via consultancy, training, organizing meetings and providing online and fundraising audits.

In order to introduce the Social base building concept to a wide range of CSOs besides the program grantees we have started a series of webinars: *Supporting communities - social base building in practice*. In the series we invite speakers from the grantees who share their experiences, and results from the social base building program with the audience. The first webinar focused on finding potential supporters and reached 65 participants.

Validation and regranting

Beside the validation services we provide in the CivilTech program, **we also partner with various corporations to support their granting initiatives with grant management services.** Within Meet and Code, supported by SAP and run by the TechSoup Europe partnership, 55 organizations received grants for programs teaching coding and digital skills for young people. We were happy to

see that besides organizations applying for consecutive years many new applications were handed in, making it possible for more and more children to enter into the world of coding and programming.

“Youth and environmental protection”, funded by ALDI and coordinated by NIOK and Északi Támpont Association also continued in 2021, granting 3 organizations 1 million HUF each.

NIOK and Magyar Telekom Nyrt.'s have started a new cooperation in 2021, where NIOK became a partner of the Mobildonor program. **Mobildonor aims to collect used devices from the public and redistribute them to CSOs working with students with fewer opportunities. This year 15 organizations received 300 phones, and the program will continue in 2022.**

“My parents have long promised me that I will get a phone, but I knew I would have to wait a lot because we are in a difficult situation. When I heard that I would really get it, I almost started to cry. I was very happy when I could hold it in my hands. I had to be really careful not to drop it. Thank you, it's a huge gift!” Sztella, 4th grade student

Building recognition and visibility for CSOs

Besides our other activities, we aim to strengthen the positive appreciation of the work of Hungarian CSOs. **In 2016 NIOK Foundation relaunched its annual Civil Society Awards program to raise awareness to unique and innovative civil initiatives and programs** that have achieved exceptional impact, generated overarching partnerships in between sectors, or inspired others to make social change. NIOK, in partnership with Civil Compass Foundation, acknowledges CSOs in 8 professional categories +1 people's choice award selected on our media partner Nlc's site each year, awarding the most promising newly established organization, the best fundraising campaign or the best advocacy initiative among others. The program was funded by a new sponsor, Erste Bank, with whom we have built a good cooperation which will continue in 2022.

More than ever in the previous years, **128 CSOs applied for the Civil Society Awards in 2021, more than half of the applicants from outside of Budapest. 27 nominees, and finally 9 winners were selected.** Winners included a social enterprise offering yoga classes, fundraising for theater staff who remained without jobs during COVID, a campaign for families with LGBTQ parents reacting to government actions. The people's choice award was voted for publicly by more than 8 000 voters. Luckily as the pandemic situation improved, we could again hold an award ceremony in person. The gala held at a new location at Aranytíz was a huge success, and was also followed by the organizations' communities via Facebook live.

Even though we thought of the award as having mostly an indirect effect in the long term, as part of our research we asked previous shortlisted and awarded organizations for feedback in order to assess the award's impact. The focus group discussions showed that being nominated and/or awarded highly supports the organizations internally: by the feeling of success and appreciation it gives a sense of success and pride, thus increasing motivation. Focus group participants highlighted that NIOK's name guarantees integrity and professional credibility, and had really positive feedback about the gala itself.

In the past years, the position of Hungarian civil society has been continuously weakened by the attacks on their integrity by the government. Therefore **NIOK also stands up against attacks targeting CSOs and civil society**. As a significant part of this work we are a founding member of the Civilizáció coalition, whose main goal in the past years has been to stop the government's measures to list and stigmatize CSOs that receive foreign funding. With the European Committee's decision that condemns the law we have made a significant step towards our goal, but unfortunately similar legal and communications attacks appear from time to time from the government, so NIOK's constant reaction is needed.