

HUNGARIAN LAWYERS' ROLE IN ADVANCING THE PUBLIC GOOD (PRO BONO PUBLICO)

In making this Declaration, we recall the long and proud heritage of the Hungarian legal profession in advancing the public good.

We acknowledge that in recent decades the change of our political system and the growing need for legal services generated by our economic transformation placed severe burdens on practicing lawyers, resulting in increasingly heavy workloads and insufficient attention to the public good.

Because of this, we Hungarian lawyers signing this document feel the need to reaffirm our ethical and professional commitment to the longstanding principles of pro bono legal service by obliging ourselves to contribute in some way to providing free or reduced cost legal services to individuals who cannot otherwise afford them and to organizations which dedicate themselves to worthy causes in the service of our country.

We firmly believe that all of our colleagues can find an appropriate balance between working for their clients who can afford to pay and for those who cannot, since it is our ethical responsibility to ensure that all members of the Hungarian society are provided with legal services.

We note, with agreement, the Council of Europe's recommendation that "[l]awyers should be encouraged to provide legal services to persons in an economically weak position"¹ as well as its explanation that "equal access to the law for rich and poor alike is essential to the maintenance of the rule of law. It is therefore important to provide effective legal services to all those whose rights and interests are threatened, including persons who are not able to pay for them. The primary obligation to provide these services and to guarantee their quality is the responsibility of the legal profession and arises from its independence. However, the state (and the community as a whole) has an obligation to assist the legal profession in carrying out this responsibility."²

By joining in this Declaration, we acknowledge and embrace the spirit of the Code of Conduct for lawyers in the European Union³, which asserts that "[i]n a society founded on respect for the rule of law the lawyer fulfils a special role."

While we are aware that not every lawyer in Hungary has the capacity to commit to the same level of pro bono work, we nonetheless encourage all lawyers to look for ways to share the responsibility to help.

1 Council of Europe Recommendation No. R(2000)21 on Freedom of Exercise of the Profession of Lawyer.

2 Council of Europe Recommendation No. R(2000)21, Explanatory Memorandum ([http://cm.coe.int/ta/rec/2000/ExpRec\(00\)21.htm](http://cm.coe.int/ta/rec/2000/ExpRec(00)21.htm)).

3 Adopted by the Council of the Bars and Law Societies of the European Union (CCBE) in 1988, amended in 1998 and 2002. (http://www.ccbe.org/doc/En/code2002_en.pdf).