

Dear Slovenian Prime Minister dr. Miro Cerar,

We are writing to express our high concern for our fellow Slovenian citizens. It has been brought to our attention that representatives of the government of Slovenia have orchestrated an assault on civil society organisations who have acted in the interest of the public in the field of environmental protection.

We are informed that according to the Constitution, everyone in Slovenia has the right to a healthy living environment, while the state has the duty to protect it. Furthermore, the Slovenian legislation enables civil society organisations to obtain the status of an organisation acting on behalf of the wider public interest in protecting the environment. However, we are informed that in the case of Magna Steyr the government has not only failed to enact its duty of protecting the environment, but has also built strong pressure on the civil society organisations that tried to do so.

It is one of the rights of Slovenian environmental NGOs with this specific status to take part in the administrative procedures leading to the issuing of an environmental permit. This status allows them to be a part of all administrative or court procedures related to environmental protection. Several Slovenian NGOs have decided to enter the permitting procedure in the case Magna Steyr in the municipality Hoče-Slivnica with the objectives of:

- pointing out non compliance in spatial planning procedures for embedment of strategic, industry structures;
- remedying the lack of public discussion and public integration on all levels - local, regional, national and sectoral;
- exposing the threats to the environment caused by the impacts of the industry on drinking water, air, public health and quality of life.

However, the Slovenian NGOs that took part in the procedure for environmental permit, have been under pressure by a variety of stakeholders, including the minister of economy, Zdravko Počivalšek, and local stakeholders to withdraw their participation in the process for environmental permit for Magna Steyr.

The direct actions of creating pressure, as well as the media campaign against civil society organisations raise high concerns about the democratic processes in Slovenia, as well as the fulfillment of the rights to a healthy environment and its protection. The media pressure was organized and synchronized in a manner that resembles the methods of some autocratic regimes, where NGOs are portrayed in the media as foreign agents and national enemies.

We condemn the actions of the Slovenian government representatives who tried to discredit civil society organisations as they were exercising their legitimate right to take part in legal procedures. We are extremely worried about the lack of understanding of the importance of legal means for environmental protection, as well as the lack of recognition of the highly relevant role that the participation of civil society is playing in such processes.

Several Slovenian consecutive governments have made the mistake of eroding democracy in the case of thermal power plant TEŠ6 and the country is now paying dearly for this mistake. We urge you to take the example of Magna Steyr and learn the lesson of how easily democratic rights and processes get eroded if such important national stakeholders as the members of the government try to pave the way for the interest of foreign capital investments instead of listening to their own civil society that is trying to protect the interest of environment and the wellbeing of people in Slovenia.

Signed:

ADP ZID

Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network, Poland

Analytica think tank, Skopje, Macedonia

ARA, Germany

Association for clean environment "Let's do it Macedonia- Ajde Makedonija"

BankTrack, Netherlands

BirdLife Europe

Both ENDS, Netherlands

Carbon Market Watch, Belgium

Centar za ekologiju i energiju, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Centar za životnu sredinu/ Friends of the Earth Bosnia and Herzegovina

Central and Eastern European Bankwatch Network  
Centre National de Coopération au Développement CNCD-11.11.11, Belgium  
Change Partnership, Belgium  
CIPRA France  
CIPRA International  
CIPRA South Tyrol  
Civil College Foundation, Hungary  
Civil Society Europe  
Clean Air Action Group, Hungary  
ClientEarth, UK  
Climate Action Network Europe  
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)  
Debt Observatory in Globalisation (ODG), Barcelona, Spain  
EcoStuff Romania, Romania  
Energiaklub, Hungary  
Estonian Green Movement  
European Environmental Bureau, Belgium (Jeremy Wates, Secretary General)  
Finnish Association for Nature Conservation, Finland  
Fractal, Serbia  
Friends of the Earth Europe  
Friends of Earth Latvia  
Friends of the Earth Finland  
Friends of the Earth Finland  
Friends of the Earth Malta  
Gesellschaft für Ökologische Forschung, Germany  
GLOBAL 2000 - Friends of the Earth Austria  
Greenpeace European Unit  
Hnutí DUHA - Friends of the Earth Czech Republic (Jiří Koželouh, campaigns director)  
Humusz Szövetség, Hungary  
Justice&Environment  
Les Amis de la Terre-Belgique  
Let's Do It Foundation  
Liechtensteinische Gesellschaft für Umweltschutz LGU  
Milieudéfense - Friends of the Earth Netherlands  
Mouvement Ecologique, Luxembourg  
National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary  
NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark  
Oikologiki Etaireia Anakyklosis, Greece  
Polish Ecological Club Mazovian Branch, Poland  
Polish Zero Waste Association  
Pro REGENWALD, Germany  
PUSH Sweden  
Re:Common, Italy  
ROBIN WOOD e. V., Germany  
Society for Sustainable Development Design, Croatia  
The Society for Earth, Poland  
Udruga Žmergo, Hrvatska  
Udruženje građana "Ruke" / NGO "Hands", Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ulu Foundation, USA  
United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (UKWIN), Great Britain  
Urgewald, Germany  
VCL Verkehrs-Club Liechtenstein  
Védegylet, Hungary  
Young Friends of the Earth Europe  
Zelena akcija / Friends of the Earth Croatia  
Zero Waste Europe  
Zero Waste Montenegro  
Žiedine ekonomika - Zero Waste Lithuania