

atlatszo.hu – watchdog NGO and online newspaper for investigative journalism in Hungary

[Atlatszo.hu](http://atlatszo.hu) is a watchdog NGO and online newspaper for investigative journalism to promote transparency, accountability, and freedom of information in Hungary. Established in 2011, atlatszo.hu – “atlatszo” means transparent in Hungarian – produces investigative reports, accepts information from whistleblowers, files freedom of information requests, and commences freedom of information lawsuits in cases where its requests are refused. Atlatszo.hu operates a Tor-based anonymous whistleblowing platform ([Magyarleaks](#)), a freedom of information request generator for the general public ([Kimittud](#)), and a crowdsourced platform to report everyday corruption anonymously ([Fizettem](#)). Atlatszo.hu provides a blogging platform to other NGOs and independent media. Atlatszo.hu staff are journalists, lawyers and IT-specialists.

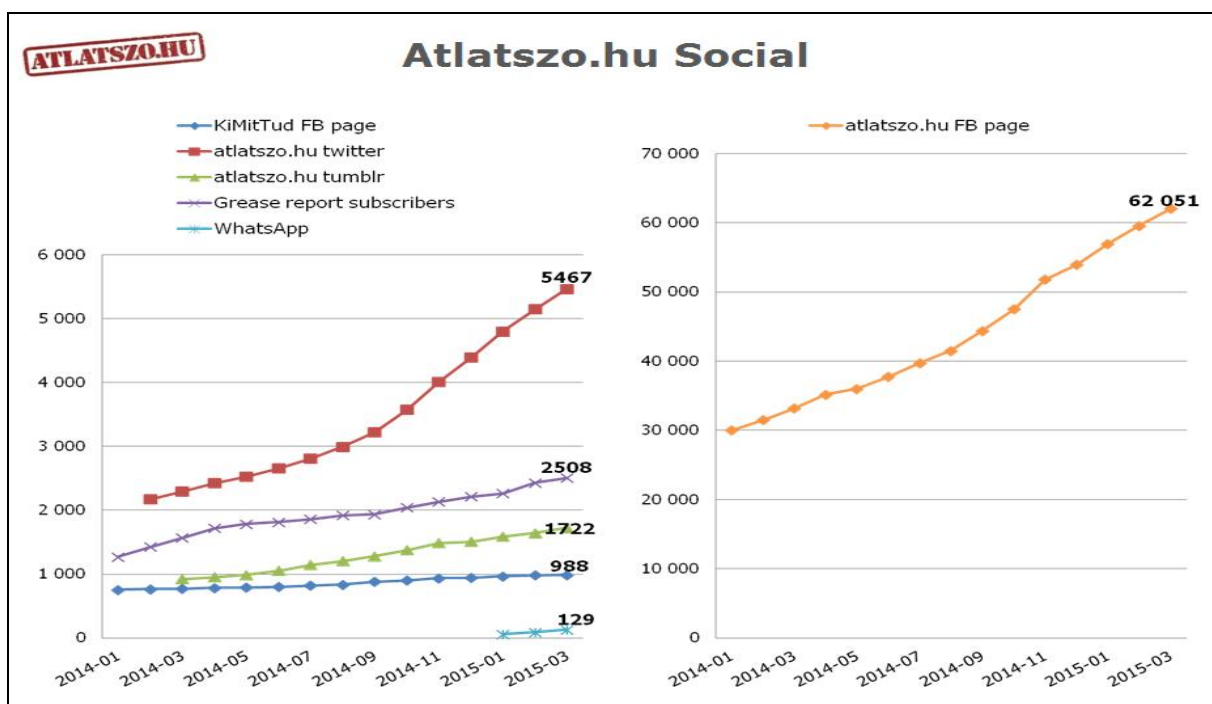
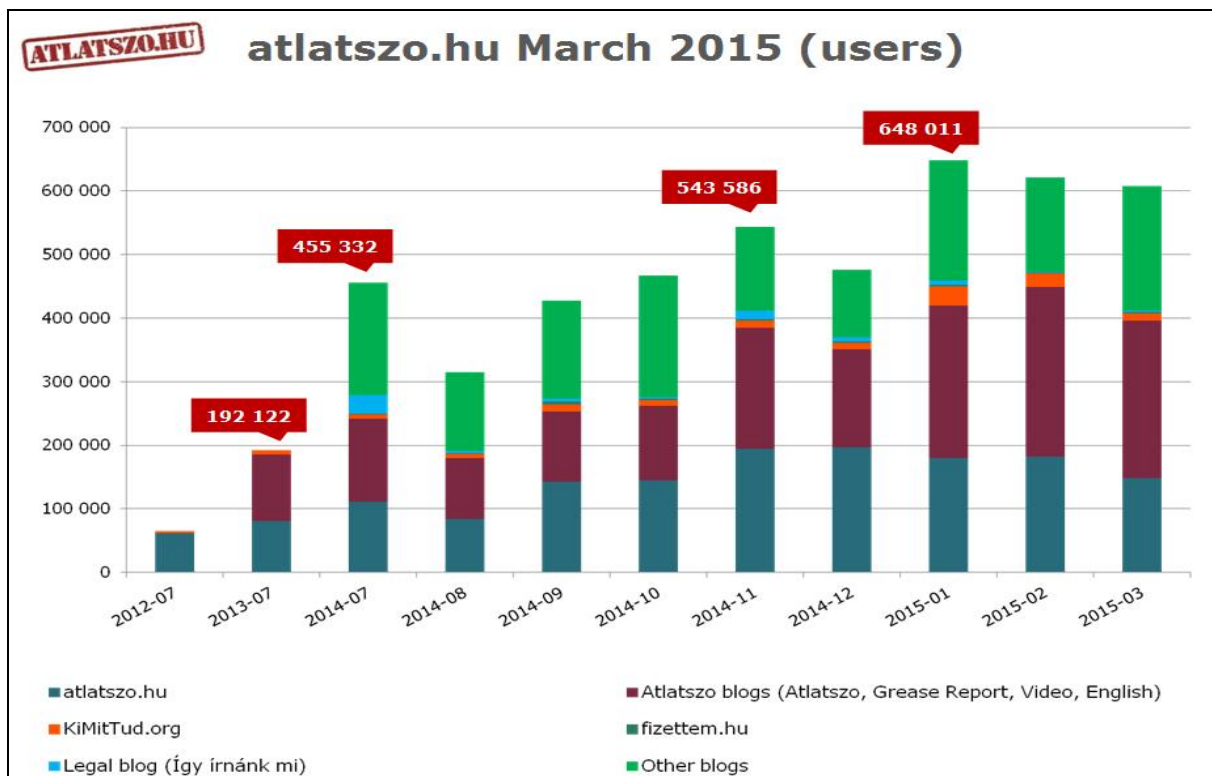
In the past decades mainstream media in Hungary has become a tool of political and economic interest groups, and it is often not the journalists, but the owners of the media and politicians who decide what can be published, and what can become an issue in a publication. The government handles mass media as a propaganda tool, public service media is controlled by the appointees of political parties. Commercial media companies become more and more cautious, including print and online publishers, journalists are forced to avoid sensitive topics. The result is a very limited freedom of the press in Hungary. There are many taboos, many important stories remain untold, and numerous corruption cases go undisclosed, even if there are whistleblowers and they have evidence.

The problem is not unique. Investigative journalism is facing similar problems worldwide, the role journalism plays in a functioning democracy – informing the public and holding the powerful accountable – is at serious risk. At the same time, innovative new nonprofit models have emerged, which rely on in-depth collaboration with other news organizations, journalists, public policy organizations and universities, and fully exploit new communication technologies, to provide citizens with critical information that impacts their lives. The aim of atlatszo.hu is to localise and implement this nonprofit model in Hungary.



Readership and impact

The site started in 2011 unfunded as a Wordpress blog, but after a few months we upgraded the design to a unique newspaper layout, and in 2014 to responsive, mobile-friendly design. All of the important Hungarian mainstream newspapers, news websites, radio stations and television channels have reported our stories and other activities, and we have received significant foreign coverage as well. Our websites have a regular readership of approximately 500,000 unique visitors monthly. Our [Facebook page](#) has more than 60,000 fans.



Legal strategy

Our legal strategy is based on the perception that public data is often withheld by state institutions in Hungary, therefore freedom of information requests are not sufficient alone, court procedures must be initiated to obtain documents of sensitive nature. Therefore in 4 years we filed more than 120 court applications of this nature. Other NGOs use freedom of information lawsuits mostly for strategic litigation purposes in principled cases, our aim is to impact discrete cases, to force authorities to react, to have maximum impact.

Atlatzso.hu has won more than 60 percent of FOI lawsuits initiated, and in some cases the fact of the court application was enough to obtain the public information in question and the case was dropped. In fact we have been so successful in the courtrooms that in 2013 the governing majority introduced a bill to curtail FOI legislation which was dubbed “Lex Átlátszó” by the Hungarian press.

Our first legal achievement was to get reporters privilege, the journalists right to withhold the identity of confidential sources recognized by the media law of Hungary. In 2011 the Hungarian Police attempted to force us to reveal a confidential source, we appealed to the Constitutional Court of Hungary, which decided that the protection of journalists’ sources is not sufficiently guaranteed by the 2010 media law.

Acknowledging that atlatzso.hu's claims were right, Constitutional Court dismissed the paragraph allowing the police to force journalists to reveal their sources, and a few months later Hungarian Parliament approved an amendment of the so called ‘media constitution’ which provides higher protection for journalist’s sources.

Further legal goals include decriminalization of libel and insult in Hungary, because we think that they have a chilling effect on investigative journalism, and nothing but tradition supports the existence of these crimes in Hungarian criminal law.



Online services

Online Newspaper for Investigative Journalism

Atlatzso.hu is evolving into a popular online only news outlet with growing readership and a significant impact on the Hungarian public sphere. The site covers corruption cases, political party financing, election fraud, financial abuses in public procurement, infrastructure projects and EU funding, environmental abuse, human rights violations etc. It profiles individuals in public life, politicians and businessmen. [English abstracts](#) of the most important stories are regularly published on our website.

Our aim is not just to bring to the public eye cases of scandalous misuse of political and economic power and influence; we want something to happen as a result. Follow-up is at the core of our strategy. We make public participation very easy by linking to online social networks and creating tools to help the public express their views to the authorities and to politicians, and to support anonymous whistleblowing. Cases will develop into official investigations and court cases. The typical reader is an educated middle class citizen who would like to see a higher standard of public life in Hungary.



Anonymous Leaking Platform

Anonymous sources and the protection of whistleblowers is very important to us; therefore we implemented a secure anonymous submission platform, [MagyarLeaks](#) for whistleblowers using software developed by GlobalLeaks, secured by the Tor network to protect the identity of anonymous sources.



FOI Request Generator

[Kimittud](#) is an easy to handle online tool for citizens to obtain information from government departments, agencies, and state owned companies. It is everyone's right under the freedom of information laws of Hungary to request information from any public body, and they have to respond. Therefore, we localised [alaveteli.org](#)'s freedom of information request generator. It's a simple concept: citizens use the website to request information, and the replies are recorded for all to see on the website. Historic requests, along with any resulting correspondence, are archived publicly online. Since it's launch in 2012, Kimittud enabled more than 4500 freedom of information requests, more and more citizens are discovering its power.

Crowdsourced Bribe Tracker

We localised and implemented an online tool for citizens to report their experiences – anonymously – on everyday corruption. Using this platform users can report on the nature, number, pattern, type, location, frequency and values of actual corrupt acts. Reports submitted to [Fizettem.hu](#) provide a snapshot of bribes occurring across the country, and generated significant media attention.

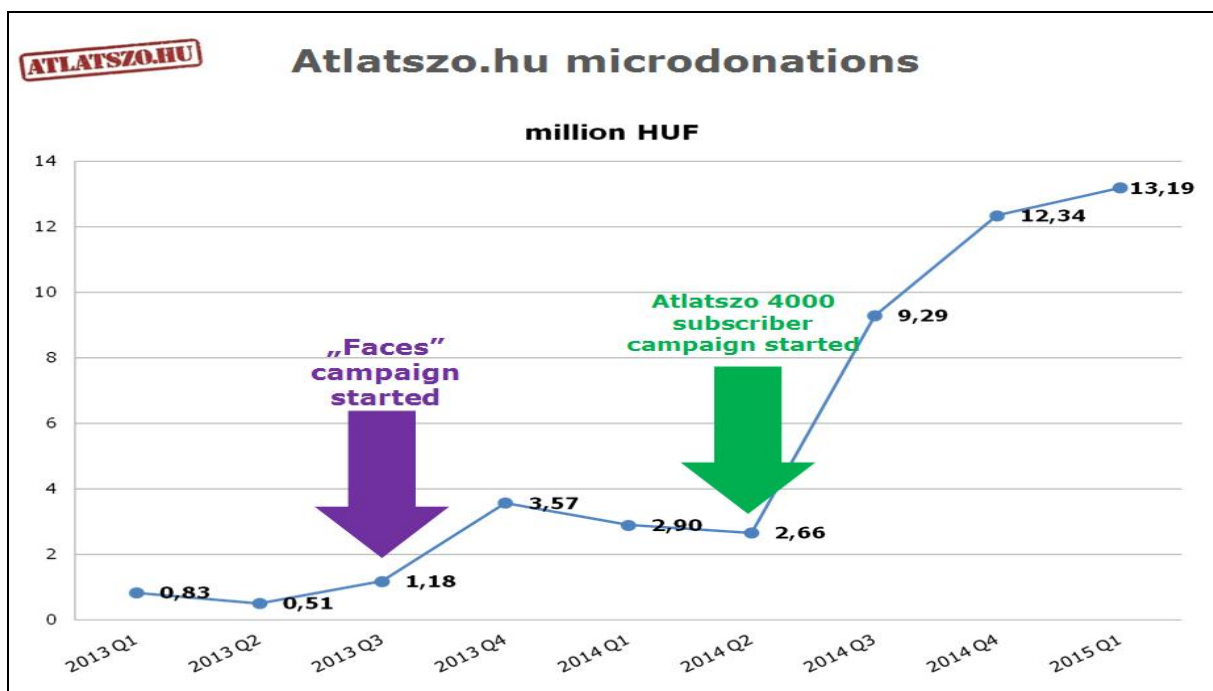
Independent blogging platform

In 2014 we started a multisite Wordpress blogging platform and started a handful of own blogs as well while inviting others to blog with us. Running a blog platform allows us to boost our visitor numbers and provide blogging opportunity to other independent media, experts and NGOs. Until now, atlatszo.hu has started 9 blogs of it's own and attracted another 12 quality guest blogs, among them [Átlátszó Oktatás](#) and [Átlátszó Erdély](#), the student and the transylvanian watchdog blogs inspired by the atlatszo.hu project. Our aim is to provide censorship-free blogging space to more and more quality independent blogs on the long run.



Funding

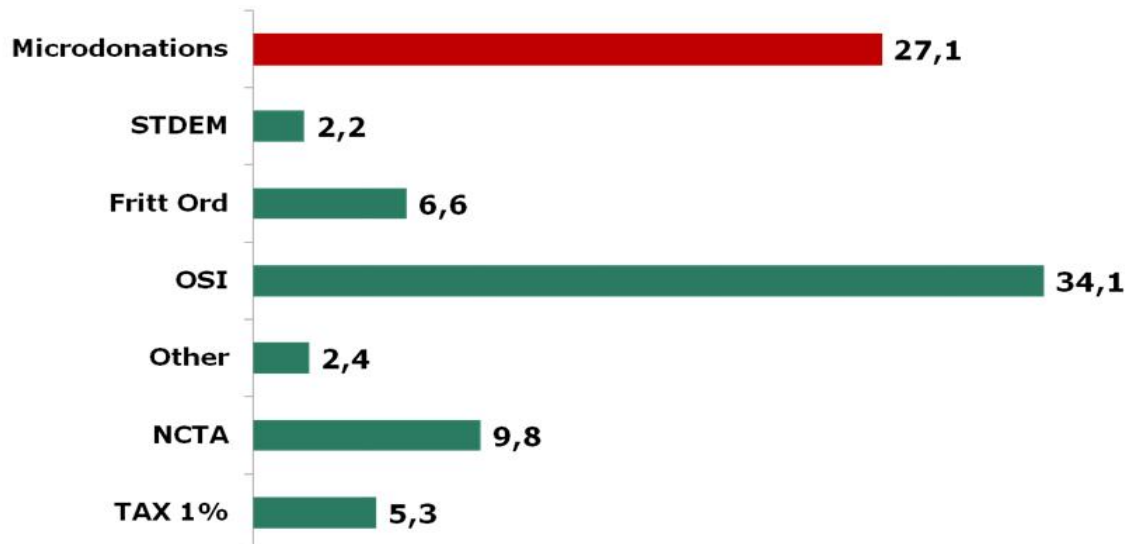
Atlatszo.hu was launched unfunded in 2011 and in the beginning the founders worked on a voluntary basis. Since 2012 we are able to pay a handful of employees and subcontracted freelancers of the project. The NGO is financed by nonpartisan and non-governmental sources; we do not accept money from Hungarian state institutions, political parties and affiliates. Individual donors – more than 3000 private citizens – have contributed significantly. Crowdfunding is very important to us, we regularly campaign our readership to donate, microdonations accounted more than 50% in the 2014 budget.



Institutional donors include various programs of the *Open Society Foundations*, and a grant from *Fritt Ord*. We are collecting income tax 1 percents and run a training project funded by the *Norway NGO Fund* through a partnership with *Asimov Foundation*.

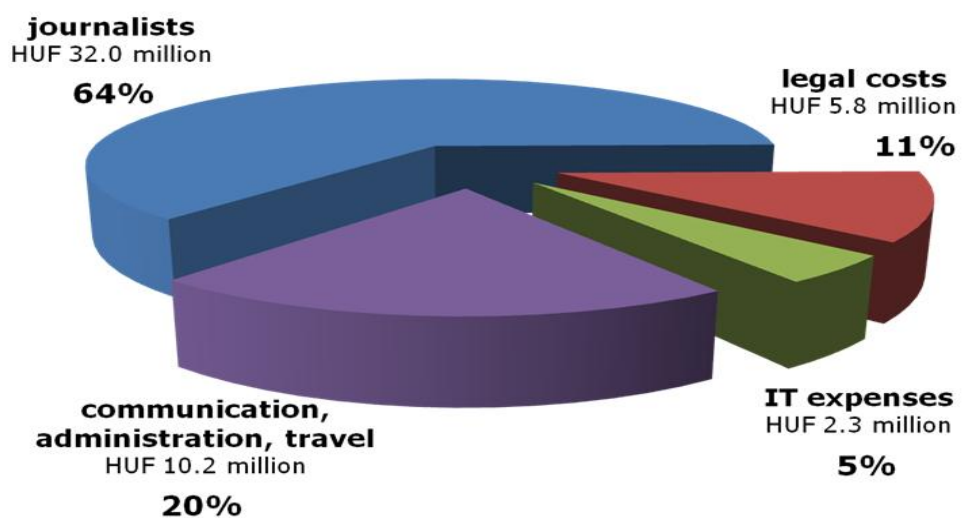
Income received in 2014*

million HUF



* *Atlatzso.hu & Asimov Foundation's Atlatzso projects jointly. Some institutional donations cover projects in 2015.*

What did we spend HUF 50.3 million on – in 2014?



* *Atlatzso.hu & Asimov Foundation jointly*

Partnerships

Atlatszo.hu is cooperating with other NGOs and independent media in Hungary and internationally. Atlatszo.hu is member of the [Global Investigative Journalism Network](#) of similar investigative nonprofit news outlets all around the world.

We provide high quality and thoroughly researched content free of charge to the rest of the Hungarian media, including television and radio stations, daily and weekly journals, under Creative Commons licenses. The media is looking at atlatszo.hu not as a competitor, but as a partner and reliable source of content. Mainstream Hungarian TV channels like ATV or RTL-Klub are regularly picking up our stories. Utilizing atlatszo.hu's current cooperation with Tilos Rádió, Klub Rádió and Civil Rádió, we broadcast daily „grease reports”, critical news roundups and radio talk shows with atlatszo.hu's journalists and guests.

Hungarian Partners: [Asimov Alapítvány](#), [Krétakör Alapítvány](#), [Mandiner](#), [Tilos Rádió](#), [Klubrádió](#), [Védegylet](#), [Vastagbőr blog](#), [Transparency International Magyarország](#), [K-Monitor Közhazsnú Egyesület](#), [Political Capital](#), [Társaság a Szabadságjogokért](#), [Levegő Munkacsoport](#)

International Partners: [100Reporters.com](#), [Global Voices Advocacy](#), [Legal Leaks](#), [Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project](#), [International Consortium of Investigative Journalists](#), [Global Investigative Journalism Network](#), [Riseproject](#), [Dossier](#), [Front Line Defenders](#), [Human Rights First](#), [Restarting the Future](#), [Index on Censorship](#)

Staff

Executive Director: Tamás Bodoky

Project management: Krisztina Zala

Editors: Tamás Bodoky, Attila Mong, András Becker

Journalists: Antónia Rádi, Ildikó Kovács, Márton Sarkadi Nagy, Katalin Erdélyi, Marietta Le

Video journalists: Áron Halász, Ákos Baranya, Gergely Pápai

Lawyers: Csaba Tordai, Tibor Seps, Balázs Tóth

Contributing journalists: Botond Bötös, Botond Csepregi, Babett Oroszi, Gabriella Horn, Tamás László Papp, Viktória Dobsi, Zoltán Sipos, Viktória Dobsi, Aranka Szávuly

IT specialists: Ákos Maró, Zsolt Rozsnyai, Gábor Ferencz

Awards: **Breaking Borders Award** – 2012, Global Voices and Google; **European Citizen Prize** – 2014, European Parliament; **Freedom of Expression Award** – 2015, Index on Censorship (UK); **Theodor Heuss Medaille** – 2015, Theodor-Heuss-Stiftung (DE)



Key people



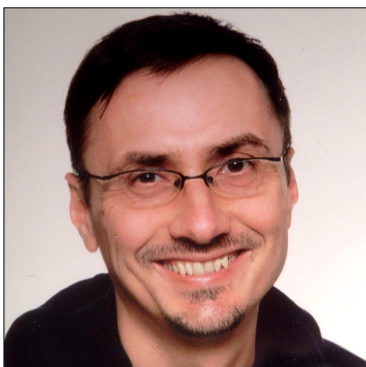
Tamás Bodoky (*Executive Director*) is an investigative journalist based in Budapest, Hungary. Bodoky has been a journalist since 1996, before founding atlatszo.hu he worked at Index.hu for 9 years in different journalistic and editorial positions. Bodoky won the Göbölös Soma Prize for investigative journalism in 2008, and the Szabadság Prize in 2009 for his articles on Hungary's 2006 unrest and police brutality. His first book (Tresspasses, 2009) covers the issue of riot police

brutality in 2006. Bodoky has won the Iustitia Regnorum Fundamentum and the Hungarian Pulitzer Memorial Prize for his investigative articles and FOI lawsuits on corruption cases. Bodoky holds an MSc degree in Agricultural Sciences and a PhD degree in Communication. Bodoky is a member of the international investigative journalism networks "Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project" and "The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists".



Krisztina Zala (*Project management*) has an MA in Psychology at the Eötvös Loránd University and more than 15 years experience in content development projects. She worked as strategic director at Geomédia Publishing and iMTM Media, Secretary General at the Association of Hungarian Content Providers, Editor in Chief at Mindentudás Egyeteme Kht., project manager at National Audiovisual Archive of Hungary, and as project manager at various other companies including Invitel and Elmű. She's been working with atlatszo as volunteer project manager since 2012, and she is

responsible for financial management since January 2013, and also for fundraising project management since January 2014.



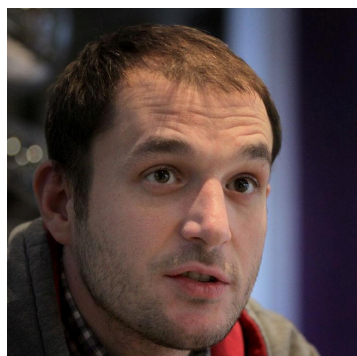
Attila Mong (*Editor*) is an investigative journalist, reporter currently based in Berlin, Germany. Until April 2012 he was editor at Origo.hu, the biggest Hungarian newssite. Before that he worked for the Hungarian Public Radio as host of the daily 3-hour morning show (180 minutes). Between 2000-2009 he was the host of a daily evening political talkshow at a private newsradio Inforadio. Previously he was editor-in-chief of Manager Magazin, a Spiegel-owned business monthly (2005-2007), and also worked for various broadcast and print outlets in Hungary. He was senior editor at Figyelo, business weekly

(1999-2004), co-founder of Figyelonet.hu, a business portal (2000-2001), editor-reporter at Hungarian Public Radio (1995-98) and Hungarian Public TV (1997-2000). Attila Mong is the author of a prize-winning book on one of Hungary's greatest banking scandals, and beholder of various investigative journalism prizes (Pulitzer Memorial Prize 2004, Göbölös Soma prize 2003).



Ákos Maróy (*Chief Technology Officer*) is a member and founder of several non-profit and commercial initiatives, spread between commercial-grade and open source software engineering, artificial life and emergent systems research, media- and bio-art projects and community radio stations. He is a founder and former member of Nextlab, an open lab for new media in Budapest, Hungary, Tilos Radio, a community radio station in Budapest, Hungary, and the Emergent Systems Research Institute in Budapest, Hungary. Maróy is a founder and CTO of EU Edge LLC, an outsourced software development company catering

mainly to US customers from Budapest, Hungary, and Scarab Research, a company working with Artificial Intelligence methods to provide smart, personalized product recommendations for e-commerce sites. He is a member of the doubleNegatives Architecture (dNA) group, Tokyo, Japan, working on the generative architecture project called Corpora. Maróy is a founder and former organizer of the Budapest New Technology Meetup, a monthly gathering of new-tech enthusiasts in Budapest, Hungary, and founder and vice president of the Open Standards Alliance, an organization that aims to promote interoperability in the IT industry.



Dr. Csaba Tordai (*Attorney at Law*) is a constitutional lawyer. After graduating from the ELTE Law School in 2003, he worked at the Ministry of Justice, becoming head of Department on Constitutional Law in 2005. He drafted the new Hungarian anti-discrimination law (2003), the act on electronic freedom of expression (2005), the amendment on establishing the Independent Police Complaints Board (2006) and the act establishing the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations (2007). Between 2007 and 2010, he was state secretary, and then senior state secretary, on legal and

administrative affairs at the Prime Minister's Office. Since October 2010, he has been a practising attorney-at-law.

Legal entities

Atlatszo.hu Nonprofit Ltd. (HU)

Atlatszo.hu Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

Cg. 01-09-963846

Owners: Tamás Bodoky (44%), Ákos Maróy (25,33%), Attila Mong (15,33%), Csaba Tordai + Tibor Sepsi + Csaba Gáli (15,33%)

Board of Supervisors: András Jóri, Gábor Polyák, Csaba Tordai

Executive Director: Tamás Bodoky

Átlátszónet Foundation (HU)

Átlátszónet Alapítvány

Fővárosi Törvényszék, 10715

President of the Board: Tamás Bodoky

Members of the Board: András Jóri, Gábor Polyák

Contact

Atlatzso.hu is to be found at atlatzso.hu on the web, www.facebook.com/atlatzso.hu on Facebook. Our email address is info@atlatzso.hu, and our postal address is **Atlatzso.hu Kh. Nonprofit Kft., Déri Miksa u. 10., Budapest 1084, Hungary, Europe.**

