



In Hungary, policy debates as well as the media frequently discuss government expenditures. But factual, politically unbiased and easy-to-understand information about actual numbers and proportions is in short supply. We suspect that the majority of the voters and taxpayers, if we asked them:

- *How much is spent on our behalf and what is it spent on?*
- *How have government expenditures changed in time?*
- *What does our budget look like compared to other countries?*

would have no clue.

Both electioneering and run-of-the-mill political communication is, to a large extent, about how much should be spent on schools and pensions, trains and healthcare. For the average citizen these statements are hard to interpret without points of reference. Are those sums too much or too little? Compared to what? What else could we spend the billions potentially saved on?

During our work we have often had to face up to the fact that there is no convenient public database that would represent the budget of the Hungarian state. True, we are informed about the general budget from the current year's budget law and, in the year after, the law on the final accounts. It is, however, quite a challenge to learn about the planned and actual costs and revenues broken down by the functions of government, not institutions, in a unified and transparent way. If a tax-conscious citizen wants to gather information on whether the government spends more on highway construction than on hospitals – or *vice-versa* –, he or she can only do so upon patiently waiting for years, accessing the Central Statistical Office's or the Eurostat's homepage.

The title of our project: Our money – What do they spend our taxes on?

Our aim is to present the budget spending of the Hungarian State simply so as to make it comprehensible to interested layperson.

We present the data broken down to provide information what exactly is our tax money spent on. With the visual presentation of the budgetary expenses and with the [database](#) that can be mined and freely downloaded from the website we would like to facilitate the work of journalists who regularly use this kind of information and inform young people (high school students) who are just now growing up to become tax paying citizens.

For journalists we have also put together a couple of [short essays](#) that are meant to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between different expense items, trends and international comparisons. For students we drew up "homework" exercises, and we also created visual aids, [posters](#) and other teaching material to help the work of interested high school teachers.

The project was carried out by the Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis. The Institute produces independent analyses and impact assessments to assist the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of policy interventions. It is part of our mission to support evidence-based policy-making and to try to make the national public policy discourse based more on facts rather than beliefs.

With this initiative we would like to contribute to the national tax consciousness and to the strengthening of civic responsibility. Our partners were the Open Knowledge Foundation (visualization software) and the Fiscal Responsibility Institute Budapest (converting and editing the database). We would also like to thank Ms Eszter Babarczy for her professional support and the original spark. The project could not have been accomplished without the generous financial support of the Open Society Foundation.