

Entrant company name: **Mediator**

Entry title: **Uncried Tears of Men**

Category: **Not-for-Profit Campaign**

### **BRIEF, OBJECTIVES AND BUDGET**

LESZ (Hungarian Association of Mental Health First Aid Telephone Services) manages 500 trained volunteers across 30 crisis helpline services in the Carpathian Basin, available 24/7 on the free number 116-123. Out of more than 200,000 calls handled each year, 5% involve suicidal thoughts in some form – amounting to roughly 10,000 cases annually. Although calls are evenly distributed between genders, male callers consistently show signs of prolonged emotional suppression before reaching out.

The brief was to challenge the deeply ingrained social taboo that men must remain stoic and emotionally inaccessible at all times, and to bring men's mental health into the public eye – aiming to ensure those in need know where to seek help.

The campaign was awareness-focused with no commercial objectives. The budget was very limited, covering only the creation of a 3D-printed sculpture and a small number of citylight poster placements (barter agreement). No paid editorial or advertising formats were utilised. The campaign's reach depended entirely on organic exposure, earned media, and the dedication of aligned influencers.

### **THE IDEA, RESEARCH AND PLANNING**

Research convincingly shows that men cry up to 92% less often than women, not because of biology but due to social conditioning. This suppression bears a heavy toll – depression, anxiety, and in Hungary, roughly 70% of suicides are carried out by men.

The insight inspired the campaign concept: what if the tears that men never allow themselves to cry were made visible and impossible to ignore in public spaces? The creative answer was The Statue of Uncried Tears – a life-sized figure of a solitary, seated man on the banks of the Danube, cast in blue to represent the burden of suppressed emotion, threatening to overflow.

The site was chosen intentionally. The Buda end of the Liberty Bridge is sadly known as a place linked to suicides. Placing the statue there transformed a site of tragedy into one of symbolic recognition and acceptance.

Strategically, the campaign was based on a staged disclosure approach. Instead of starting with a press release, the statue was placed without public explanation – allowing curiosity and informal discussion to grow first on Reddit and community Facebook groups before the story was officially shared with the media.

## **STRATEGY, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

The campaign was based on four interconnected pillars: the sculpture as its foundation, citylight posters in the nearby area (with QR codes linking to an educational microsite at [elfojtottkonnyek.hu](http://elfojtottkonnyek.hu)), targeted PR activation, and influencer collaborations with creators already trusted by men on mental health issues.

What set the approach apart was the decision not to start with a message. Allowing audiences to explore and discuss the statue's meaning first ensured that the eventual reveal fit into an already-engaged conversation. The user journey – from curiosity to understanding – was itself part of the strategy.

Creativity operated on multiple levels: a visually striking (let's say provocative) public artwork; the symbolism of the location; the evolving nature of the blue colour as a visual metaphor; and the post-vandalism decision not simply to restore the statue, but to intensify the blue, raising its "water level" as a response to the act of decapitation. That decision transformed an act of damage into an amplified statement: the problem may be even deeper than first imagined.

Additional elements included expert psychological content, in-person counselling, an AR application, a community sit-in event at the statue, and influencer activities.

## **DELIVERY / IMPLEMENTATION OF TACTICS**

The statue was installed in mid-April 2025. The lack of an official explanation was intentional — organic discovery was seeded through community platforms and allowed to unfold naturally. The subsequent press release appeared in a receptive media environment that was already primed with questions.

Coverage rapidly expanded from lifestyle media to national news outlets, regional radio, and a major commercial TV report (RTL Fókusz). Psychologist Bence Szelényi became the campaign's expert voice across YouTube and TikTok. Rapper T. Danny and hip-hop collective Slow Village posted campaign-aligned content; Csaba Boros of the legendary

band Republic joined in. TikTok creators lambalazshorvath and Madar Csabi generated over 133,000 video views.

On the night of 17 June, the statue was vandalised: its head was removed and taken away. The team responded immediately, informing the media and managing the narrative. Influencers, including Azahriah (undoubtedly the most popular Hungarian musician today) and Sisi (an authentic female voice in contemporary hip-hop), posted about the incident spontaneously, increasing attention further. The public response was swift, with hundreds of users posting content or creating memes about the event.

The restoration – with the expanded blue coverage – was presented as a thoughtful creative response, not just a repair. A solidarity event held at the statue brought together the public, experts, and media in person, generating additional earned coverage. The microsite acted as an educational hub for those wanting to learn more or seek help.

## **MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND IMPACT**

The campaign achieved over 100 organic media appearances, reaching 3.5 million contacts (opportunity-to-see). Social media efforts generated more than 3 million impressions, many of which were user-generated content. National television coverage and features in prominent editorial outlets – the story graced the front pages of all major domestic media outlets for days – surpassed initial expectations for a campaign with no paid media.

The most significant results came from LESZ itself:

- Incoming calls to the crisis line increased by 30% in the first month after launch, and by 36% in the second – on one single day, the line received 500 calls.
- The LESZ Facebook page saw a 400-fold increase in traffic on the day the statue was announced; follower numbers rose by 15%.
- E-mail contacts via the campaign address grew by 400% in the first month and 200% in the second, mainly conveying gratitude and emotional reactions.
- 26 new volunteers applied to join the organisation by the end of the first campaign phase.
- Two men's magazines contacted us to organise fundraising drives for the statue's restoration following the vandalism.

Beyond metrics, the campaign's long-term impact is notable. The statue's display was extended to May 2026, surpassing its original permit duration. The topic gained sustained coverage in mainstream media, prompting LESZ to continue awareness

efforts beyond specialist forums. The campaign was showcased at the annual World Suicide Prevention Day conference in September 2025 and has attracted interest from international partner organisations ahead of a planned global presentation.