

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Gingerbread replica of the town of Szepetnek (W Hungary)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Second day of NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels**

**Stats office releases 2nd reading of Q3 GDP, Oct retail data**

**Croatian, Hungarian parl't speakers address conference marking Croatian-Hungarian settlement**

**Ecumenical Aid organisation presents awards on intl volunteer day**

## TOP STORY

# FIDESZ'S POPULARITY RISES, JOBBIK WEAKENS

The ruling Fidesz-led alliance's base has strengthened while the fortunes of its main right-wing political foe, the Jobbik party, have waned in the latest poll conducted by the Nézőpont Institute.

Fully 53% of decided voters expressed support for Fidesz, the survey conducted from November 10 to 27 showed. This is up 2% since the October survey and up 6% since the spring election, the think tank said, adding that it appeared extra Fidesz support was at the expense of Jobbik.

Jobbik's base was 15% of the sample, down from 17% in the previous survey and a 4% decline since the election.

The core support of the opposition Socialist Party's alliance with Párbeszéd stayed level at 10% while its support among all respondents nudged up a point to 6%, or around half a million potential voters, according to Nézőpont's personal interviews of 2,000 voting-age adults.

Altogether 38% of the entire sample backed the Fidesz-led alliance, amounting to around three million voters. Jobbik's support in this category fell from 10% to 9%, or around 800,000 sympathisers.

The Democratic Coalition's core support dropped by a point to 7% while overall it stayed level at 4%, while the satirical Two-Tailed Dog Party increased its core support from 1% to 3%. LMP and Momentum were each on 2% among all voters.

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## **VARGA: HUNGARY OPPOSES SEPARATE EURO ZONE BUDGET**

Hungary does not support the proposal to create a separate euro zone budget, as such a concept would be against the country's interests, Finance Minister Mihály Varga was quoted as saying at a meeting of EU finance ministers in Brussels. Varga told his EU colleagues that having a separate budget for the countries that share the common currency could present serious risks. A euro zone budget would unnecessarily deepen the existing divide between euro zone and non-euro zone members, he said. Varga said all EU member states had a duty to develop their economies, help the less advanced countries catch up with the more prosperous ones and promote innovation and R&D. But the passage of a joint euro zone budget would restrict non-euro zone countries from financing the bloc's common goals.

The idea for a euro zone budget was proposed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron in June after their meeting at Merkel's Meseberg retreat outside Berlin. The creation of such a budget requires the backing of the other 17 euro zone countries. Several other countries, including the Netherlands and Finland have also expressed their opposition to the plan.

## **GULYÁS: MIGRATION DECISIVE CAMPAIGN THEME IN EP ELECTIONS**

Never before has a single European issue defined a European parliamentary election campaign almost everywhere in the bloc, Gergely Gulyás, the head of the prime minister's office, said in a briefing to MPs. At a meeting of parliament's foreign affairs committee, Gulyás said Hungary accepted the principle of solidarity but rejected migrant quotas, "as there is no legal basis for this".

Referring to the EP election, he said similar political developments to those seen in Germany would be repeated elsewhere in Europe. In Germany, he said, grand coalitions had become the norm in recent times, but this situation has changed. "The issue of migration has shifted the balance of power," he added.

It had once seemed inconceivable that coalitions of the big parties would not amass a large majority. And yet it seems that will be the case when it comes to the EP, he said, adding that the left wing was likely to weaken, since it had never been quite so weak in large European states as it is now.

Germany, he said, is Hungary's most stable and important political and economic ally, and despite disagreement on many issues, there is a mutual interest in pursuing good cooperation.

"Our interests are bound together, and yet Europe is more divided than

ever," he said. "For the EU to succeed, we need to make clear those areas where we need to work together and those areas where, due to the differences between societies, we disagree," he said, adding that differences must be accepted on certain issues, and migration was one of them.

Commenting on the EU budget, Gulyás said agreement is needed between net contributor countries and cohesion fund recipients, as well as countries benefiting from farm subsidies. "Hungary's standpoint is clear," he said. If the global figure is reduced due to Brexit, then everyone else should pay proportionally more into the budget. Hungary is ready to do so, but there is great resistance elsewhere, so it is likely that everyone will have less, he said.

Gulyás noted that the aim of the cohesion fund is to reduce disparities in the standard of living between EU member states. But the European Commission wants to divert funding to countries experiencing slower growth, seeing the issue of living standard disparities as secondary, he said. Yet those countries with a high rate of economic growth that have complied with the Maastricht criteria would be penalised for obeying the rules, he said.

Responding to opposition criticism regarding Hungary's geopolitical orientation, Gulyás said Hungary's EU membership was a national interest and NATO guaranteed its security to the highest level, so it was the right decision to join these integrations.

## **VÖLNER: ARTICLE 7 PROCEDURE AGAINST HUNGARY TO BE PROTRACTED**

The Article 7 procedure, which was launched against Hungary earlier this year, will be a long drawn-out affair, a justice ministry official said in an interview published in Magyar Hírlap. "It is unlikely that anything will happen" before the EP elections in May next year, and "it's going to be a different EP and European Commission afterwards", state secretary Pál Völner said, adding that the procedure was "part of a political show trial". "This whole business shows the endeavours of the old EU pacesetters, Germany and France, to preside over decision-making in the bloc. When there are breaking points on certain issues, they tend to punish certain member states on other matters too," Völner said. "One such focal point is the issue of migration."

Regarding the United Nations global compact for migration, which Hungary refuses to sign, Völner said that according to "certain interpretations", such compacts are non-binding. However, "looking at previous compacts, it seems that such recommendations are later used as points of reference in international courts." The government believes the compact "would activate world-wide migration processes, and Europe remains one of the main destinations," he said.

Regarding the so-called debit cards for migrants, the state secretary said

that global regulations against money laundering require that "everyone, including debit card holders, should be identifiable". The debit cards for migrants do not contain such data, he said. Meanwhile, the introduction of "migrant visas" would lead to a renewal of the idea of distributing migrants among the member states, Völner said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY TO KEEP MONITORING UKRAINE MINORITY POLICIES**

Hungary takes a stand for Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence but will keep monitoring its policies affecting minorities, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said. Hungary will continue blocking NATO-Ukraine Committee meetings as long as Ukraine systematically curbs the rights of ethnic Hungarians living there, Szijjártó told reporters in a break during a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels. "We are under great pressure to give up our position. But if we give it up, we will have no other tool for protecting the interests of ethnic Hungarian communities," he added.

Guaranteeing minority rights is part and parcel of security and stability, and it is no accident that Ukraine committed itself in its annual national programme to maintaining, expanding and respecting minority rights, he added. Hungary will surrender its veto only if Ukraine takes steps to restore the rights of ethnic Hungarians as enshrined in bilateral agreements and international

legal regulations, Szijjártó said. The ball is in Ukraine's court, he added.

Commenting on talks with his Macedonian counterpart, Szijjártó said that in line with Hungary's position, the asylum request of former Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski was a legal matter and the authorities acted independently from the government. At the same time, he confirmed Hungary's endeavour for maintaining and further strengthening political cooperation between the two countries.

Szijjártó expressed hope that once the debate about Macedonia's name has been finished, the process of that country's NATO accession can be completed early next year. He said Hungary would grant approval for a new Macedonian ambassador in Budapest in an accelerated procedure. The minister added that political cooperation between the two countries is seen as a priority, especially considering Macedonia's role in halting the waves of migrants.

Commenting on Georgia, which was also represented in the talks, Szijjártó said "it is time for NATO to launch the membership action plan". There is no legal or security obstacle to inviting Georgia for the membership action plan, he added. It is regrettable that the gaps between positions on this issue have not narrowed, he said.

Commenting on the target for NATO member states to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2024, he said Hungary had started an ambitious military development programme so it had no reason to be ashamed. It has

ordered two airbus helicopters, bought reconnaissance and training aircraft from the Czech Republic. Further, it will start manufacturing small arms in line with a Czech licence from January and develop closer military cooperation with Turkey. Hungary will fulfil the defence spending target, as well as the target that development should make up at least 20% of defence spending, before 2024, he said.

Szijjártó said NATO's involvement in the fight against terrorism must be beefed up. One of the consequences of terrorism is that large masses of illegal migrants are moving around globally and in the territories concerned the number of crimes and aggressive acts have radically increased. As a consequence, the fight against terrorism and illegal migration must be kept on the agenda, he said.

### **POLT: WORK OF PROSECUTORS 'FREE OF POLITICAL BIAS, OBJECTIVE, IN LINE WITH LAW'**

Chief Public Prosecutor Péter Polt told parliament's justice committee that the prosecutor's office had done its job "free of political bias, objectively and in line with the law" last year. Fielding questions concerning the office's annual report, Polt said the prosecutor's office continued to cooperate closely with the EU's anti-fraud office, OLAF. OLAF has made six recommendations for investigations to be opened, and the prosecutor's office complied in three cases, he said, adding that in the other three

cases investigations were already under way. Although the overall number of criminal cases declined last year, corruption cases showed a slight increase, to 1,123 from 984 a year before. The office brought charges in 58.1% of the graft cases, with the ratio growing further, Polt said.

The overall number of registered crimes has kept falling for six years, to 226,000 in 2017, he said. The number of robberies plummeted to 853 from 1,141 in 2016, while the number of traffic offences and substance abuse cases grew last year, he said. Cases of budgetary fraud fell to 1,880 in 2017.

Fully 97.8% of charges brought by the office ended in a sentence, he said.

Regarding an arrest warrant against MOL head Zsolt Hernádi, Polt said the prosecutor's office reviewed the case in September and, based on legal evaluation, rejected the warrant.

Leftist Democratic Coalition's Gergely Arató said that the "political independence of the prosecutor's office appears to be controversial". He asked the chief public prosecutor about the Elios case, which OLAF has said involved suspicion of fraud in public procurement procedures. Polt said that Elios, a former business interest of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's son-in-law István Tiborcz, had been under investigation prior to the OLAF report. Upon the report, the investigation was reopened, he said. Párbeszéd group leader Tímea Szabó asked Polt of allegations that the defence ministry sold weapons worth several hundreds of millions for a few

million forints. Green opposition LMP's co-leader Márta Demeter slammed the prosecutor's office for not pressing charges on the matter of residency bonds.

### **JOBBIK LAUNCHES EP ELECTION MANIFESTO**

Finding the right balance between European Union and national competencies will be the number one goal for conservative opposition Jobbik after next May's European parliamentary elections, according to the party's election manifesto published on Tuesday. Jobbik wants its election platform to ensure that both EU and national competencies serve Hungarian interests, Márton Gyöngyösi, the party's deputy and group leader, said.

The basis of Jobbik's approach to the EU is that the bloc cannot be organised into a federal entity without the existence of a shared European identity, Gyöngyösi said. However, "we can hardly talk about stable nation-statehood in the midst of vulnerability to globalisation," he added. Therefore the EU and its member states must determine what sort of competencies are best carried out at a national level and what should be regulated at the EU level, he said.

Gyöngyösi named physical security, security of livelihood and security enabling minorities to make a living in their homeland as the manifesto's three main topics. As regards physical security, he reiterated Jobbik's opposition to illegal and unchecked

immigration as well as the introduction of migrant quotas. On the topic of security of livelihood, Gyöngyösi said his party has still not given up its goals of equalising wages throughout the EU, curbing emigration, improving living standards and creating a knowledge-based society. Concerning the third topic, he said national minorities should be granted autonomy.

## **SOCIALISTS: GOVT LACKS POLICY FOR WOMEN**

The government still lacks a comprehensive policy for women, the leader of the opposition Socialist Party said. "Its family policy is questionable and women still don't have equal opportunities," Bertalan Tóth said. Hungary's current leadership is destroying the common values of society, he told a conference focusing on women in politics. "Those who are in power today see a role for women in the kitchen -- and very often in the maternity ward too -- and not in public life", he said. The Socialists are fighting against this, he said, adding that women should have a full role in society. "We must fight not only for equal rights and wages for women, but for the rule of law in Hungary, as well as for the rights of employees and the poor," Tóth said.

## **SÜLI: HUNGARY HAS 'NO ALTERNATIVE' TO BUILDING NUCLEAR PLANT**

Given the security of Hungary's energy supply as well as economic and climate

protection considerations, Hungary has "no alternative" to building a nuclear plant, the minister without portfolio in charge of the upgrade of the Paks nuclear power plant told an international energy conference in Budapest.

Climate policy goals cannot be fulfilled without nuclear energy and nuclear plants are capable of providing nonstop power for the industrial sector and consumers, János Süli told the Budapest Energy Summit. He added, however, that the Hungarian government supports increasing the share of renewable energy in the country's energy mix and wants to include such resources in Hungary's electricity production.

Citing a recent analysis by power transmission system operator Mavir, Süli said Hungary's electricity demand could grow by 3,500-5,000 megawatts by 2030, which was why he said the construction of the Paks plant's two new reactors was necessary. Süli said Hungary's economic progress brought with it a growing electricity demand, but most of the country's power plants are old. Without the Paks upgrade project, Hungary would face serious power supply problems within 5-10 years, he said.

## **BANKING ASSOC HEAD: CURRENT GROWTH CYCLE 'HUGE SUCCESS STORY'**

Hungary's current growth cycle "will be seen as a huge success story", and the country is now better positioned than at any time in the past 100 years

to weather the next crisis, Mihály Patai, the head of the Hungarian Banking Association, said in an interview. "The current situation is unique, as this is the first time that we are having a sustained minimum 7-10 year growth period, while the most important macroeconomic indicators are in fine shape," Patai told financial affairs website [novekedes.hu](http://novekedes.hu) in the interview. The national budget is being managed with discipline and the balance of payments and trade balance are positive, Patai said. "These three balances have never been handled so well in the past hundred years," he said. Hungary will enter the "next downhill slope" without balance issues, Patai said. "The next crisis will cause us far smaller problems than ever before," he said.

## **BOSCH INVESTING HUF 14 BN IN MISKOLC BASE**

Robert Bosch Power Tool, a Hungarian unit of German engineering giant Bosch, is investing 14 billion forints (EUR 43m) to set up a European battery competence centre and expand its power tool assembly capacity in Miskolc, in north-eastern Hungary, the minister of foreign affairs and trade said. The government is supporting the investment with a 3.4 billion forint grant, Péter Szijjártó told a press conference in Budapest.

Ties between Hungary and Germany's machine industry have an excellent tradition, and 29% of FDI in Hungary is made by German investors, he added.

"Hungary's economy has essentially reached the point of full employment, and the focus of investment incentives is no longer geared towards job creation but to creating the highest possible value-added for jobs already on the market that represent a high level of technology," Szijjártó said.

### **NEW ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM DESIGN RECEIVES GONG AT INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY AWARDS**

The design for Hungary's new Ethnographic Museum, part of the Liget Project in Budapest, has been awarded the prize for the best public service architecture in Europe at the International Property Awards held in London.

The award was presented to Benedek Gyorgyevics, Managing Director of Városliget Zrt, which is responsible for implementing Liget

Budapest. Judged by the world's top eighty international experts, the award was an important recognition not only of Hungarian architecture but of Hungarian innovation and culture, too, he said. The new Ethnographic Museum, designed by architecture firm NAPUR, will be located in Budapest's Liget, one of the oldest public parks in Europe.

### **BUDAPEST TO HOST 2023 WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Budapest will host the World Athletics Championships in 2023, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) announced in Monaco.

Hungary will host the prestigious event for the first time, 25 years after holding a successful European championship. IAAF's board chair, Sebastian Coe, said in July that Budapest would be the "preferred"

host in 2023. The biennial event will be held in Doha, Qatar, in 2019 and in Eugene, Oregon, US, in 2021.

### **2018 SET TO BE HOTTEST YEAR EVER IN HUNGARY**

2018 may end up being Hungary's hottest year ever, the national meteorological office said, noting the country had witnessed its second hottest autumn since 1901. Median autumn daytime temperatures averaged 12.3°C, 2 degrees higher than during autumns between 1981 and 2010, the analysis said.

In the month of September alone, there were 17 summery days, with daily highs of 25°C or above, and two unseasonably hot days, with daily highs of at least 30°C. September was 1.5°C balmer than average for this time of the year, while October was 2.4°C sultrier. November was 2°C warmer, according to the meteorological office's analysis.