

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Tibor Rosta

Children cooling themselves in Szeged at 'red code' heat wave

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Plenary session of European Parliament**

**Coronavirus updates**

**State secy inaugurates Hungary Helps chapel in Lesbos**

## TOP STORY

# GULYÁS: HUNGARY COMMITTED TO CHILD PROTECTION

Hungary is committed to child protection and will resist the push by Brussels to get the country to allow LGBTQ activists into Hungarian kindergartens and schools, the prime minister's chief of staff told a regular press briefing.

Commenting on Wednesday's European Parliament plenary debate on Hungary's new child protection law, Gergely Gulyás said Hungary remained committed to EU law, the Hungarian constitution and child protection. "We are not advising anyone above 18 on how to live their lives. The Hungarian Constitution guarantees human dignity to everyone ... regardless of how they live. Child protection is a wholly unconnected issue, where the Constitution imposes a duty on the state to protect its institutions, and clearly states that raising their children is primarily a right of the parents," he said. While children's sex education is the duty of the parents, teenagers will not be hindered in exercising their right to free speech and ask questions about homosexuality of their teachers, he said. Gulyás insisted "there was no need" for transgender people to talk in kindergartens and schools about changing their gender. He called child protection "the most important cause", adding that besides the Hungarian constitution, the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights also declares that raising children is the duty of the parents.

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**GULYÁS: TYING EU FUNDING TO HUNGARY LAW AMENDMENT ‘IMPOSSIBLE’**

The prime minister’s chief of staff on Wednesday commented on opposition politicians’ call on the European Parliament to withhold Hungary’s EU funding until its controversial law against paedophilia, which the EU says is discriminating against LGBTQ people, is amended. Gergely Gulyás told a press briefing such a step was “impossible if the rule of law still has any weight in the EU”. EU funding can be withheld only if they are used irregularly, he said. Last year, the Hungarian government had successfully achieved an agreement precisely to avoid such a step based on politically motivated accusations which are not connected to the EU budget, he said. “Blackmail is not a tool the European Commission would stoop to use,” Gulyás said, referring to proposals to tie Hungary’s recovery funding to an amendment of the contested law. Differences can be resolved “by the usual legal route”, and Hungary has always complied with EU rulings, he said.

Regarding the statements of Věra Jourová, the European Commission’s vice-president in charge of transparency and values, who had said the Hungarian law discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation and went against the EU’s fundamental values, Gulyás said the

Hungarian government considered the commissioner “persona non grata”, and “not the person the issue should be discussed with”. Gulyás noted that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had not taken part in the EP debate because “this was an inconsequential debate was about a law where the EP resolution has no weight whatsoever. The [Hungarian] government meeting was more meaningful and more important.”

“Orbán was the politician to do most against homophobia [in Europe] when he closed Hungary’s southern border against migrants,” he said. Hungary rejects the whole debate which is trying to address the law as one harming basic human rights rather than as a child protection measure, Gulyás said. The government is open to an objective debate in the matter but rejects the EP’s decision to put a politician “who has been sentenced in a binding ruling for gay revenge porn offences” in charge of the case, he said, referring to reports that Maltese MEP Cyrus Engerer, who has been tasked with drafting a resolution on the law, was found guilty in 2014 of circulating pornographic recordings of his former partner online without his consent. Putting the MEP in question in charge of the resolution on the law “highlights the civilisational gap between the EP’s left-wing majority and the Hungarian government”, Gulyás said. A registry of paedophile offenders is expected to be ready within a few weeks, Gulyás said.

**GULYÁS: HUNGARY IN TALKS WITH BRUSSELS ON RECOVERY FUNDS FOR MONTHS**

Speaking at a regular press briefing, the prime minister’s chief of staff said the government has been in talks with Brussels on the EU’s post-pandemic recovery fund for months, dismissing reports that said otherwise as “fake news”. Gergely Gulyás added, however, that the European Commission had recently formulated “absurd demands” concerning matters that were already settled. “But reports that Brussels has rejected Hungary’s plan or that talks have been halted are fake news,” he added. The talks are going well, he said, and expressed hope that Hungary’s recovery plan will be approved.

Meanwhile, Gulyás said that under a new government programme, general practitioners will visit Hungarians over 60 years of age in their homes to convince them to accept the coronavirus vaccine. Those registering for the vaccine now can receive the first jab within two days, he said.

The pandemic is not over yet, Gulyás warned. Experts expect a fourth wave, dangerous mostly to those who have not received the vaccine, he said.

The six vaccines in use today in Hungary all provide protection against all known mutations of the virus, he said.

Gulyás noted that the Delta variant of the virus could spread six or seven times as fast as the original virus. He



said Hungary was one of Europe's safest countries in terms of the status of the epidemic. So far, more than half a million people have applied for the EU's Digital Green Certificate, he said, urging travellers to look up their destination country's Covid regulations. Gulyás said most countries accepted the vaccines approved by the World Health Organization, including China's Sinopharm jab. As regards Hungary's coronavirus stats, he said those who have died from the infection in recent days had not been inoculated.

On another subject, he said the government is tying the exports of certain construction materials to registration to curb rising prices. Making such exports conditional on government permission is tied to EU procedures and so can only come into force on October 1, Gulyás said. Introducing a registry of exports, however, is under the government's purview and can be implemented immediately, he said. The measure will concern the exports of steel and iron products, insulation materials, sand, stone, pebbles and gravel, he said.

Hungary is introducing excess profits tax on mining, to be paid in case certain materials such as stone, plaster, chalk, pebbles, sand and clay are sold above a government-specified price. The same will apply to the production of cement, lime and plaster, Gulyás said. The tax will only be imposed on companies whose annual revenue exceeds 3 billion forints (EUR 8.5m), and will come to 90% of the difference

between the government-specified price and the asking price, he said.

**GULYÁS: ALL VACCINES AUTHORISED IN HUNGARY SAFE**

Speaking at a regular press briefing, the prime minister's chief of staff said in connection with the coronavirus epidemic and the Budapest municipality's purchase of 19,000 rapid antigen tests that the tests were not reliable enough to verify full immunity. All vaccines authorised in Hungary are safe, Gergely Gulyás said. Most Hungarians have been inoculated with the WHO-approved Sinopharm vaccine, he added. Asked to advise Hungarians who have not developed a sufficient level of antibodies, Gulyás said they should "not consider left-wing journalists virology experts". "Anyone who has received two jabs can be sure they are safe," he said. All vaccines are monitored constantly, he said. Whether recipients will need a booster shot will be decided by experts and manufacturers, and the government will comply with their opinion, he said.

As regards stocks of vaccines, Gulyás said Hungary had stocked most of the Pfizer vaccine, followed by Sinopharm, both with long expiry dates. In addition, Hungary has 50,000 doses of Sputnik V jabs, and several hundred thousand doses of the Moderna and Janssen vaccines, he said.

Asked about a potential Hungarian-Ukrainian summit, Gulyás said Hungary

was ready for talks. "Hungary has been one of the staunchest supporters of Ukraine's NATO integration," he said. However, Ukraine adopted a language law that disregards the rights of European minorities, Gulyás said. "This law is unacceptable, and the Hungarian government will uphold its veto against Ukraine's integration until it is amended," Gulyás said.

The current state of Hungary's economic growth raises hopes of growth unseen since the fall of communism in 1990, Gulyás said. If GDP growth reaches 5.5% this year, families raising children will have their personal income tax refunded, he noted. However, such a growth is still facing hurdles such as the rise of construction material prices or a fourth wave of the pandemic, he said.

On another topic, Gulyás called it a "sign of double standards" that "there were no articles" in Hungarian media on Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony's decision to postpone the next meeting of the city's General Assembly until September. Karácsony had also "decided on all matters that were before the assembly on the last day of his full authority," he said, referring to the mayor's power to make decisions without the assembly during the special legal order imposed due to the pandemic. "It would be a very different situation if this had been [previous mayor] István Tarlós," he insisted. Gulyás said the recent laws abolishing gratuity payments in Hungarian health care had yielded "good results". Five police reports



have been filed, and “another few investigations are under way”, he said. The new system ensures higher wages for doctors while the health-care system becomes “truly free of charge for patients, which was not the case when gratuity payments were pervasive in the case of major operations”, he said.

**VON DER LEYEN DEMANDS  
AMENDMENT  
TO HUNGARIAN  
LEGISLATION**

Ursula Von der Leyen has said Hungary must amend its paedophile law that “violates LGBTQI rights” or face legal action from the European Commission. Addressing a European Parliament plenary debate on Wednesday following a meeting of the European Council on 24-25 June, the EC president said the Hungarian law had been a top priority of the EU heads of state and government. Von der Leyen said the law “puts homosexuality on a par with pornography” and she called the law discriminatory and “disgraceful”. She added that the law was completely at odds with the EU’s core values. The EC president said that if an EU member state breached the rule of law in a way that impinged on European taxpayers’ money and the EU budget, the EC was obliged to take action against it.

Věra Jourová, the European Commission’s vice-president in charge of transparency and values, said the Hungarian law discriminated

on the basis of sexual orientation and went against the EU’s fundamental values. She said there could be no compromise on equality and respect for human rights. Though punishing paedophiles is a common goal, a legitimate public interest cannot be used as an excuse to introduce measures that violate basic rights and discriminate against a minority group on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, Jourová said. As regards the state of the rule of law in Hungary and Poland, Jourová said the situation was not improving in either country, adding that recent developments gave cause for concern. She highlighted the independence of the judiciary, media pluralism, the freedom of expression and the freedom of universities as areas of concern in Hungary. This, she said, warranted continuing the ongoing Article 7 procedure against Hungary as long as these concerns persisted.

Charles Michel, President of the European Council, called the law “a matter of deep concern” among EU leaders, noting the disputed legislation had been the chief topic of the last council meeting. He said the meeting had proved useful since Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had been provoked to consider whether Hungary belonged in Europe. Also, it was reaffirmed that fundamental rights should be placed at the heart of EU activities, he said, adding that the EU had the means to enforce the rule of law.

In a speech to the assembly, Fidesz MEP Kinga Gál noted the

EC had confirmed several times that protecting minorities against discrimination was the competence of member states rather than the EU. “Is the protection of minorities a national competence in some member states and not a national competence in others? Are some minorities to be protected by the EC while others not?” she asked. She said Hungary child protection law had come under a concerted attack in the EU, and yet the law was in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights that states parents have the right to educate their children based on their beliefs and that the child’s interests are supreme. “The analysis that the Hungarian law is problematic because it discriminates against children in accessing certain content is absurd,” she said. “More than anything, the law protects children, and if the EU does not see this, it is worrying,” Gál added. György Hölvényi of Hungary’s co-ruling Christian Democrats defended Hungary’s child protection law saying that parents had a right to raise their children according to their beliefs. Hungarian children cannot receive sex education without the full consent of their parents, he added. “We cannot assign the task of sex education to activists under any circumstances,” Hölvényi said.

Klára Dobrev of the leftist opposition Democratic Coalition said Hungary had been “taken hostage by a politician who is rotten to the core using cynical, racist and homophobic policies”. She called on the EU to “stop financing



Viktor Orbán's family members and oligarchs". The Momentum Movement's Katalin Cseh called Hungary's child protection law "a copy of Russian President Vladimir Putin's law", saying that it would make it illegal for teachers to talk to Hungarian secondary school students about acceptance and diversity.

After the plenary session, Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi said the "political and ideological attack of the European Parliament's leftist majority on Hungary has surpassed all imagination." The EP is ready to punish Hungary by launching procedures and withholding funding "for passing a law on a subject entirely under the state's jurisdiction", Hidvéghi said. "This is politically motivated blackmail, plain and simple. Those attacking us while citing European values are themselves breaching the rights and competencies laid down in EU treaties," Hidvéghi said. He said it was "sad to see MEPs of the Hungarian opposition attacking the law and Hungary full force". "It seems that to them, money, power and complying with Brussels's expectations are the most important objectives, and they do not shy away from attacking a decision of the Hungarian parliament with lies," he said.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY PREPARED TO AID UKRAINE BUT DEMANDS RESPECT FOR MINORITIES**

Hungary is prepared to keep helping Ukraine in the future, but it also

expects Kiev to respect the rights of the local Hungarian community, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Vilnius on Wednesday. A strong and prosperous Ukraine is in Hungary's interest, but it is also crucial that the Ukrainian government guarantees the acquired rights of the country's Hungarian minority, including their right to use their mother tongue, Szijjártó told a conference on Ukraine.

Hungary is not requesting anything "extra", only that the Ukrainian government restore the rights the Hungarian minority had enjoyed before law was changed, he said referring to minority groups' use of their native language in public administration, education, the press and culture.

Szjijártó also noted the existence of a Ukrainian website listing the country's "enemies", which also contains the names of several representatives of Ukraine's Hungarian minority and Hungarian state officials. The minister asked the conference's participants to do everything in their power to shut down the website. As regards the pandemic, Szijjártó said Budapest will carry on with its vaccination campaign in the Transcarpathian region irrespective of the nationalities of those registering for a job. Also, Hungary once more intends to organise summer camps for Ukrainian children from families affected by conflict in eastern Ukraine after the pandemic has passed, he added.

Szjijártó noted that Hungary has also donated ventilators to Ukraine

and said Hungary was also prepared to supply Ukraine with gas to help overcome its shortage. The minister also noted that Hungary had been the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Ukraine after it gained independence in 1991, adding that Hungary was Ukraine's fourth most important trading partner in the European Union. Hungary values Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Szijjártó said, adding that the Hungarian government had always urged closer cooperation between Kiev and the EU, including a visa waiver for Ukrainian citizens.

**SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY BACKS LITHUANIA'S FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION**

Hungary supports Lithuania in the protection of its borders against illegal immigrants, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Vilnius, pointing out that Lithuania was protecting the European Union's external borders. "Lithuania is now facing the same serious challenge that Hungary faced in 2015 when hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants violated our southern border and with it our sovereignty," Szijjártó said. He added that illegal migration now also carried the risk of the spread of the coronavirus.

Referring to the migrant caravan making its way from Belarus towards Lithuania, Szijjártó said that some 1,400 migrants had crossed into

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Lithuania illegally so far this year, compared with only 70 in the first half of 2020. He said that when Hungary faced similar migration pressure, the country had made it clear that it only allowed legal entry onto its territory despite an “onslaught of attacks” from Europe. “We reserve the right to be the sole authority on who can enter Hungary and whom we want to live together with,” Szijjarto said. Hungary overcame this challenge by building a fence on its border, the minister noted. “Long borders like the one on Hungary’s south and the Lithuanian-Belarusian border can’t be protected by human resources alone,” Szijjártó said. “Physical barriers are needed, and a fence is the best solution.” He said that if Hungary had not erected its fence in 2015, Europe would have seen an influx of hundreds of thousands or millions of more illegal immigrants. “So building the fence was the right decision because we were able to preserve Hungary as we want it to be,” he added.

**DEFENCE MIN: W BALKANS PEACE, STABILITY ‘EXTREMELY IMPORTANT’ FOR HUNGARY**

Hungary regards peace, stability and security in the Western Balkans as “extremely important”, Hungary’s defence minister said on Wednesday in Sarajevo, where he handed over a donation of 1,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to local civilians serving at the EUFOR camp.

Tibor Benkő said the Hungarian government’s assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to the country’s security.

EUFOR Commander Alexander Platzer noted that whereas most peacekeeping soldiers at the had already received jabs, civilians working in the camp hadn’t. Hungary quickly responded to their request for help, he added. Mijo Krešić , Bosnia and Herzegovina’s deputy minister for defence, said the donation was a sign of the deepening of “outstanding” relations between the two countries. Benkő noted that the vaccination rate within Hungary’s army was 85 percent and that around 7,000 soldiers and military personnel had been infected during the epidemic, while 14 soldiers and personnel died.

**PÁRBSZÉD, THREE POLISH PEERS ASK FOR EC SCRUTINY OF HUNGARY, POLAND RULE OF LAW SITUATION**

Hungary’s opposition Párbeszéd and three peers in Poland have sent a joint letter to Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, asking her to initiate an EC scrutiny of the rule of law situation in Hungary and Poland and manage any allocation of future EU funding accordingly, the party said on Tuesday. In their letter, Párbeszéd, Partia Zieloni, Nowoczesna and Inicjatywa Polska asked the EC to activate the EU’s rule-of-law conditionality mechanism with

a view to clarifying whether there have been any systemic violations of the rule of law either in Hungary or in Poland, Párbeszéd said in a statement.

The four parties have proposed that the EC should tie respect for the rule of law to the EU’s objective of the effective distribution of funds. They also asked the EC to take into account the interests of the final beneficiaries of EU funds in order to guarantee them unhindered access to funds in any instance. In addition, the parties have also asked the EC to allow the final beneficiaries, including local and regional governments, civil organisations and SMEs, direct access to funds affected by cuts or other financial corrections due to being reallocated to other financing programmes.

**HUNGARY RECORDS ONE COVID FATALITY, 44 NEW INFECTIONS**

One patient died over the past 24 hours, while 44 new infections were registered, koronavirus.gov.hu said on Wednesday. So far 5,519,495 people have received a first jab, while 5,102,847 have been fully vaccinated. The number of active infections has declined to 37,804, while hospitals are treating 80 Covid patients, 17 of whom need respiratory assistance. There are 1,778 people in official quarantine, while 6,173,422 tests have been officially carried out. Since the first outbreak, 808,338 infections have been registered, while fatalities have risen to 29,999. Fully 740,535 people have made a recovery. So far, most infections have

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been registered in Budapest and Pest County, followed by the counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Hajdú-Bihar.

### **INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT UP 39.1% IN MAY**

Industrial output in May increased by an annual 39.1% from a low base, the Central Statistical Office said (KSH) on Wednesday. Working day-adjusted output was up 40.2%, while compared with April output was up 3.4% based on seasonally and working day-adjusted data. In the first five months of the year, output grew by an annual 18.1%. All manufacturing sectors contributed to the growth, in particular vehicle production on the back of a low base due to factory shutdowns in May the previous year. Output of computer,

electronics, optical products and food, beverages and tobacco products went up below the industrial average.

### **HUNGARY INTRODUCES HEAT 'RED CODE' ON WEDS**

With average daily temperature exceeding 27°C, the Hungarian authorities have introduced a "red code" which requires special measures for looking after the homeless and others suffering from the heat.

All social institutions are obliged to accommodate the homeless and anyone else suffering because of the heat, an official of the Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI) told a press briefing on Wednesday. Members of the public are also asked to help by notifying the authorities if they spot a homeless person in distress on the street.

### **FINANCE MINISTER: GOVT SUPPORTING DOMESTIC FIRMS IN BID TO REPLACE DISPOSABLE PLASTICS**

The government is working to ensure that products that replace disposable plastics, which are now banned in Hungary, are produced domestically, the finance minister said on Facebook on Wednesday. "The goal is to have as many biodegradable products as possible made in Hungary," he said, announcing a 10 billion forint (EUR 2.8m) scheme to award grants of between 20 million and 400 million forints to firms expanding capacity or purchasing new technologies. The assessment of bids will be fast-tracked, he added.