

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Noémi Bruzák

Girl receives a coronavirus jab

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Coronavirus updates

Stats office report on retail trade in Nov, first estimate on industry in Nov

## TOP STORY

# 2021 ONE OF HUNGARY'S DRIEST YEARS

Hungary experienced an especially dry year in 2021, and it was also cooler than typical years over the past decade.

Precipitation in Hungary was a little more than 500 mm in 2021, almost 20% below average, making it one of the driest years since the collection of data began in 1901, an annual report by the Hungarian Meteorological Service (OMSZ) shows. OMSZ said precipitation in the months of March, June, September and October were around half the average. Such dry conditions were last seen in Hungary in 2012, it added. The report also shows that the average temperature was 10.8 C. in 2021, not far from the average for 1991-2020, but still marking the coolest year in a decade. Temperatures in January and February were over 1 degree higher than the average, but temperatures in April and May were more than 2 degrees below average, making it the coolest spring since 1987. Hot spells lasted longer than usual during the summer, but the autumn was cooler than average. Temperatures in December were 1 C. warmer than average, according to OMSZ.

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## **GOVT PLEDGES FURTHER HELP TO SPORTS PROJECTS IN TRANSYLVANIA**

The Hungarian government will continue to support sports infrastructure projects in Transylvania, including Szekler Land, Péter Szijjártó, Hungary's minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Thursday after talks with Károly Eduárd Novák, Romania's minister of sports. "Sports is a tool to preserve and consolidate national identity and pride," Szijjártó told a joint press conference in Budapest. So far the government has provided 30 billion forints (EUR 83m) of support for sports projects in the region inhabited by many ethnic Hungarians, including the construction of a soccer stadium for Seps OSK in Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy) and an ice hockey rink in Sângeorgiu de Mureș (Marossszentgyörgy), he noted. Similar large-scale plans are in place this year to support the construction of Partium Soccer Academy in Satu Mare (Szatmárnémeti) and a boarding school for the Szekler Land's Ice Hockey Academy in Cârța (Csíkkarcfalva), Szijjártó said. Stressing the need for reforms in Romanian sports, Novák said he hoped that Hungary would promote the process by sharing its best practices.

## **TOP COURT REJECTS MOTIONS AGAINST REFERENDUM ON CHILD PROTECTION LAW**

In a ruling posted on its website on Thursday, Hungary's Constitutional Court rejected all claims against a planned referendum on Hungary's child protection law, ruling that parliamentary approval of the referendum was in line with the constitution, according to Alapjogokért Központ, a think-tank. The ruling cleared all legal hurdles from holding the referendum, the think-tank said on Facebook. The popular vote concerns the rights of parents over their children's education.

President János Áder now has 15 days to set a date for the referendum, which must then be held within 70-90 days. "Hungarian citizens can make decisions on issues that have a direct impact on their or their children's lives such as the sex education of children, the promotion of gender reassignment surgery, and media content showing such interventions," Alapjogokért said. "Western political elites have basically adopted as official policy the madness called gender ideology without asking the people first," the think-tank said. Alapjogokért accused leftist parties of working "hand in hand with the network of Open Society", a foundation set up by financier George Soros, to attack the referendum. It added that opposition prime ministerial

candidate Péter Márki-Zay had branded the referendum questions as "stupid". Hungary's parliament passed amendments to its child protection law last June, aiming to protect children from "LGBTQ propaganda". The measure was condemned by the Venice Commission as incompatible with international human rights norms.

## **SOCIALIST MEP DEMANDS INFORMATION ON EU FUNDS FOR COVID TESTING**

The Hungarian government has been allocated nearly 900 million forints (EUR 2.3m) in European Union funding to provide "cheap or even free" Covid tests, an MEP of the Socialist-Párbeszéd parties said, adding that "we do not know how the government has spent the money". István Ujhelyi said he would send a letter to the prime minister asking for detailed information. Ujhelyi said that the total was part of a 100 million euro package aimed at helping EU members provide the required tests to residents in the wake of Covid-related travel restrictions. The EU has also prescribed the purchase price of rapid tests at 13 euros and PCR tests at 40 euros, he added. The MEP said he wanted to know how much of the 900 million forint total the government has used, and what was its methodology of distributing the tests.

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## **HUNGARY RECORDS 6,454 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 80 DEATHS**

Altogether 80 patients died of a Covid-related illness during the past 24 hours, while 6,454 new coronavirus infections were registered, [koronavirus.gov.hu](http://koronavirus.gov.hu) said on Thursday. So far 6,272,718 people have received a first jab, while 5,996,472 have been fully vaccinated. Fully 3,198,951 Hungarians have received a booster jab. The number of active infections has risen to 103,409, while hospitals are treating 3,101 Covid-19 patients, 307 of whom are intubated on a ventilator. Since the first outbreak, 1,276,433 have been registered with the virus, while 39,679 deaths have been recorded. Fully 1,133,345 people have made a recovery.

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## **PPI QUICKENS TO 21.6% IN NOV**

Factory gate prices in Hungary rose by an annual 21.6% in November, accelerating from an 18.5% increase in the previous month, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said, adding that prices went up mainly because of dearer raw materials, feedstock and vehicle fuel. Prices for domestic sale climbed by 31.2%. Export prices rose by 16.8%. KSH noted that prices for domestic sale of the manufacturing sector, which accounts for a 63% weight in the PPI, increased by 22.3%, while prices in the energy sector, which has a 31% weight, jumped 53.0%. In a

month-on-month comparison, factory gate prices were up by 2.7% as prices for domestic sale increased by 4.0% and export prices rose by 2.0%.

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## **DOGS CAN DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN LANGUAGES, ELTE STUDY FINDS**

Dogs are able to distinguish between different languages, according to a fresh brain imaging study conducted by ethologists at Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). The study by ELTE's Department of Ethology, published in scientific journal *NeuroImage*, is the first of its kind to demonstrate that a nonhuman brain can differentiate between two different languages. "We know that people, even pre-verbal human infants, notice the difference [between different languages]," a statement on the department's website quoted Laura V. Cuaya, first author of the study, as saying. The brain imaging study was carried out on Cuaya's own dog, Kun-kun, and 17 others. The dogs had to be trained to lie motionless in a brain scanner where they were played speech excerpts of *The Little Prince* in Spanish and Hungarian. All of the dogs had only heard one of the two languages from their owners, allowing the authors of the study to compare the dogs' reactions to a highly familiar language and a completely unfamiliar one.

The study found that the dogs were able to distinguish between Spanish and Hungarian. These

language-specific activity patterns were found in the secondary auditory cortex. The older the dog was, the better their brain distinguished between the familiar and the unfamiliar language. "Each language is characterised by a variety of auditory regularities," Raul Hernandez-Perez, co-author of the study, said. "Our findings suggest that during their lives with humans, dogs pick up on the auditory regularities of the language they are exposed to."

The dogs were also played scrambled versions of the excerpts, which sounded completely unnatural, to test whether they could detect the difference between speech and non-speech. When comparing the brain responses to speech and non-speech, the study found distinct activity patterns in the dogs' primary auditory cortex. This activity was independent of whether the stimuli originated from the familiar or the unfamiliar language. Yet, when it came to complex sounds processed in their secondary auditory cortex, a familiar language and an unfamiliar language produced different activity patterns. The study was supported by ELTE, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Eötvös Research Network, the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, the European Research Council and the Mexican National Council of Science and Technology.