

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meet in Budapest

UPCOMING EVENTS

Stats office releases prelim reports on April CPI

Plenary session of parliament

War in Ukraine

TOP STORY

SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY WON'T BACK NEW SANCTIONS

Hungary will not support the European Commission's sanctions against Russia, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó has said, arguing that they were "problematic for the country" and "do not offer a solution".

"Hungarians must not be made to pay the price of the war," Szijjártó said in parliament. The Hungarian government makes a "clear distinction between attacker and victim", it condemns Russia's military aggression and supports Ukraine's sovereignty, he said. The Hungarian government's position has been clear since the outbreak of the war, Szijjártó said. It wants peace in Ukraine as soon as possible and will support all diplomatic efforts to that end, he added. He also noted that the government had voted for the first five sanctions packages, but added that compromising Hungary's energy supplies would be a "red line". European leaders earlier agreed that they would only support measures that "take into consideration the different energy supply structure of each member", Szijjártó said, insisting that the current proposal would violate that consensus. The current proposal "is equivalent to a nuclear bomb", he insisted, which would compromise the security of Hungary's energy supplies and, if passed, would make it impossible for Hungary to purchase the oil crucial for its economy.

JUSTICE MIN: 'EUROPE HAS LONG BEEN IN DECLINE'

Marking Europe Day, Justice Minister Judit Varga on Monday said "Europe has long been in decline. And while it faces challenges such as migration, pandemics or war, some would deepen the Union along the lines of power and ideological interests." In a bilingual Facebook post, Varga said "We cannot allow this! We, Hungarians, will continue to fight against federalist ambitions for a Europe of mutually respectful nations!" Europe Day is also an opportunity to "take stock of our vision for the future of Europe", she said. Hungary was the most active participant of the conference marking Europe Day, organising over 800 events, she said. "At the EU level, however, the conference proved a failure: the EP used the event for its own petty political ends, making recommendations that ignore the interests of nation states - think of the introduction of transnational lists or the abolition of unanimous decision-making," she said.

THOUSANDS CELEBRATE EUROPE DAY IN BUDAPEST

Thousands of people turned out to celebrate Europe Day in Budapest's Szabadság Square, where free concerts, children's programmes and a running race were laid on to mark Hungary's 18th year as an EU member

state, the European Commission's representation in Budapest said in a statement on Sunday. Opening the event were Fidesz MEP Tamás Deutsch, Boglárka Bólya, deputy state secretary for EU relations at the Justice Ministry, and Gábor Zupkó, the European Commission representation's head.

"We central Europeans created the preconditions for a united Europe when we gained our freedom more than thirty years ago," Deutsch said. "With many problems facing Europe, from Budapest we can convey a message to our European friends that they can count on us to solve the problems." Bólya said Hungary had been an active and important member of the bloc across the board over the past 18 years. "We survived the global economic crisis together and fought together to put a break on the coronavirus, and we stand through our actions for peace," she added. Zupkó said: "We belong to a community of values and a community of interests, and these have many positive effects on Hungary." He noted EU investments throughout the country and the Erasmus programme among other opportunities available to citizens.

Meanwhile, the officials expressed solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. Various aid organisations presented their work and Ukrainian artists gave performances. One theme emphasised at the event was the European Union's European Year of Youth this year. Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi was on hand at the Europa Point tent to hand over Interrail passes.

SZÁZADVÉG: MAJORITY OF HUNGARIANS AGAINST RUSSIA SANCTIONS - SURVEY

Some 89% of Hungarians interviewed in a recent survey said that sanctions on Russia also hurt the European Union and its economy, and 71% said that they did not support expanding sanctions to energy resources, including natural gas and crude oil, economic researcher Századvég said on Monday. The survey based on phone interviews with 1,000 people in May showed that 72% had a negative opinion on Russian President Vladimir Putin as against 68% in February. At the same time, 62% had a negative opinion on US President Joe Biden, up from 58% in February. A total of 65% had a negative opinion on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in May as against 52% in February.

Századvég said this was likely the result of criticism voiced by Zelensky and several members of his government about Hungary because the Hungarian government continues to buy crude oil and natural gas from Russia and refuses to send weapons to Ukraine. Some 79% of respondents said they were against Hungary sending weapons to Ukraine.

Some 28% said that Putin's Russia had the greater responsibility for the escalation of the confrontation, and 21% said that Ukraine was to blame. Some 50% of respondents said that Russia and Ukraine were

both responsible for the situation. In March 2022, 32% of respondents said that Russia was to blame and only 13% said that Ukraine was responsible for the escalation of the conflict.

Some 66% of Hungarians expect a protracted Russia-Ukraine war, as against 30% who said it would end in the near future. A total of 40% of respondents said the economic sanctions already introduced against Russia were sufficient and 31% said they were excessive. At the same time, 24% said the sanctions against Russia were not sufficient and they support extending them to natural gas and crude oil. Only 10% said that the sanctions against Russia did not have a significant effect on the EU economy.

TRÓCSÁNYI: CONFERENCE ON EU'S FUTURE 'TROJAN HORSE FOR EUROPEAN SUPERSTATE'

The conference on the future of the European Union, to be concluded on Monday, has been "in fact a Trojan horse" to disguise efforts for "centralisation and building a uniform European superstate to replace nation states", Fidesz MEP László Trócsányi said in an article published in daily Magyar Nemzet on Monday. Marking May 9, Europe Day, Trócsányi paid tribute to "such predecessors as Konrad Adenauer or Alcide De Gasperi, who sought to rebuild Europe on Christian foundations" but added that "passing judgement on plans for the future is not so simple".

Trócsányi insisted that "the performance of the EU in recent decades has questioned if the community is on the right track; its reactions to crises were not convincing and rule of law disputes have deepened, while the UK has quit the EU and nation states have warned several times that the EU should respect national powers". Hungary has participated in the year-long conference in the hopes that the community would "find again the right track", Trócsányi said, but added that the conclusions of the conference could pave the way for "deepening integration while ... not only uniting but replacing the member countries". "This is a basic denial of the principle that a European identity could not be built but on national identities".

Renewing the EU is unavoidable, Trócsányi said, but called for efforts "aimed at protecting European civilisation" which "serve the constitutional identities, cultures and traditions of European nations" and which "retains variety rather than building a federation". Strategies should be built on "a desire of member states for consensus" rather than the "technocratic approach of the European Commission disguised in jargon".

INCOMING PRESIDENT PRESENTS STAFF

Katalin Novák, who will enter her office as Hungary's next president on Tuesday, has presented her

staff referring to its members as "excellent experts". Gergely Ekler, former secretary of state, will head the presidential office, while Tamás Schanda will be the chief of staff; Kristóf Altusz, former ambassador to Denmark, will be in charge of the diplomatic corps, and István Manno, ambassador to Ireland will oversee presidential protocols, Novák told MTI on Monday. Novák will officially be inaugurated to her office in an ecumenical service in the Kálvin Square reformed church on May 14.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: GOVT READY TO PROTECT ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The coming decade is expected to bring further crises, as did the past twelve years, and the government is ready to protect Hungary's interests and economic achievements as it has done before, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Monday, at the announcement of an investment project by BioTech USA. The company, which manufactures dietary supplements, has announced a capacity expansion worth 11.5 billion million forints (EUR 30.1m), supported by a 2.7 billion government grant. The upgrade of BioTech's plants in Dunakeszi and Szada, on the outskirts of Budapest, will create 100 jobs, Szijjártó said. Szijjártó noted that the exports of protein products had jumped by 75% since last year.

POLICE: OVER 12,000 REFUGEES ARRIVE FROM UKRAINE ON SUNDAY

Fully 5,550 people crossed into Hungary directly from Ukraine on Sunday, while another 6,501 from Ukraine crossed via Romania, the national police headquarters said. Police issued temporary residence permits valid for thirty days to 789 people, the police website said on Monday. Holders of such permits must contact a local immigration office near their place of residence within thirty days to apply for permanent documents, it added.

BUDGET DEFICIT CLOSE TO HUF 2,636 BN AT END-APRIL

Hungary's cash flow-based budget deficit, excluding local councils, reached 2,635.6 billion forints (EUR 6.9bn) at the end of April, the finance ministry said in a preliminary release of data on Monday. The deficit widened from 2,309.4 billion forints at the end of March. The full-year cash flow-based budget deficit target is 3,152.7 billion forints.

The ministry reiterated the government's commitment to "improving balance indicators" in the release. "In the unpredictable global economic environment caused by the war, Hungary's stability must be preserved," it said. The ministry

affirmed it expects the accrual-based general government deficit, relative to GDP, to reach 4.9% this year, while the year-end state debt ratio declines to 76.1%. It calculates with GDP growth of 4.3%.

HUNGARY TRADE BALANCE SHOWS EUR 503 M DEFICIT

Hungary's trade balance showed a 503 million euro deficit in March, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a first reading of data released on Monday. Hungary, an export-driven economy where trade surpluses are the norm, had a deficit for the ninth month in a row. Exports rose by an annual 8.7% to 12.120 billion euros and imports climbed 22.6% to 12.623 billion euros. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 78% of exports and 72% of imports.

DEPARTMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE OPENS AT ELTE

The IT faculty of Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) inaugurated its Department of Artificial Intelligence, the first in the country, on Monday. László Palkovics, the minister of technology and innovation, said the government's reform of higher education has seen cooperation with industrial players and joint R&D projects as a priority. The department, a result of cooperation between the

university and the Bosch Group, enables ELTE to directly take part in international tendencies of industrial innovation, he said. Bosch may expect growing results in R&D, too, he said. Research at the department will contribute to developing systems for self-driving cars, industrial automation, artificial vision, among other fields.

THREE HUNGARIAN EXHIBITIONS AT ROMANIAN DESIGN WEEK

Three Hungarian exhibitions organised on the sidelines of the Romanian Design Week will await visitors in Bucharest between May 13 and May 22, the Liszt Cultural Institute said on Monday. On the first day of the Design Week, an international poster exhibition marking the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Visegrad Group (V4) will open in the Liszt Institute under Hungary's current V4 presidency, the institute said in a statement. The exhibition will showcase cultural posters created by three artists from each of the four Visegrad Group member states of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Also on May 13, the Smart Hungary exhibition presenting a collection of 24 Hungarian innovations will open at the Design Week's central venue. The innovations include a string bike, a string wheelchair, a bike dock, a heart rate monitoring T-shirt and a two-seat light sport aircraft for training and leisure purposes, among others.

The third show opening in the Liszt Institute on May 16 will feature metal jewellery designed by Hungarian artists graduated recently from the Budapest Moholy-Nagy Art and Design University (MOME).

**NATIONAL MUSEUM
OPENS MICRO-FOLIE
DIGITAL MOBILE MUSEUM
EXHIBITION IN CENTRAL
BUDAPEST**

The Hungarian National Museum (MNM) opened a temporary exhibition in partnership with Paris’ Micro-Folie digital mobile museum at the Akvárium Club in central Budapest’s Erzsébet Square on Monday. The exhibition offers visitors an opportunity to learn about 2,000 titles from the collections of leading French museums including the Louvre, the Musée d’Orsay and the Musée National Picasso using tablets and VR headsets.

The digital museum also presents digitally 23 artefacts from the MNM’s collection including the portrait of composer Franz Liszt, a segment of the one-time Budapest Stalin statue’s hand and an Iron Age Scythian golden stag figure, László L. Simon, MNM’s director, said at the opening. He expressed thanks to the French state and the French cultural ministry for the

initiative, which he said is instrumental in bringing the cultures of EU member states closer to one another. “It is important to take exhibitions outdoors so that they can better attract the younger generations into the world of museums,” L. Simon said.

Sophie Sellier, the French cultural attache, said the digital exhibition has been organised in partnership of French and Hungarian cultural institutions. Launched in 2017, Micro-Folie has been expanded with major cultural titles from the collections of EU member states as part of the current French EU presidency, she said.

The exhibition will run until September 19.

**GOVT OFFICIAL: HUNGARY
GRANDE PARTENZA
‘EXCEEDED
ALL EXPECTATIONS’**

Hosting the first three stages of this year’s Giro d’Italia cycling race “exceeded our wildest dreams”, government commissioner for an active Hungary Máriusz Révész said in a statement late on Sunday. Révész said “at least a quarter of a million people” encouraged riders along the route, contributing to “a sensational mood” and “exceeding all expectations of the Italian organisers”.

He thanked the Giro d’Italia organisers, the local governments of the capital and the other settlements through which the race passed and road maintenance company Magyar Közút Nonprofit, as well as volunteers, fans and local residents.

Race director Mauro Vegni said the welcome in Hungary for the Giro d’Italia’s Grande Partenza “could not have been warmer”. “We want to thank Hungary, the government, local residents, fans and naturally the local organising committee for the Grande Partenza. The last three days have been a real success,” he said. He added that Hungarians have “ensured their place in the international cycling community”. Hungary hosted the first three stages of the Giro d’Italia on May 6-8. Cyclists raced 195km from Budapest to Visegrád, via Székesfehérvár and Esztergom, in the first stage, on Friday. An individual time trial followed on Saturday, on a 9.2km stretch in the heart of Budapest. On Sunday, cyclists rode 201km from Kaposvár, in southern Hungary, along the northern shore of Lake Balaton to Balatonfüred. Hungary was to have hosted the Grande Partenza of the 2020 Giro d’Italia, but the race was postponed because of the pandemic.

