

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Prime Minister's Press Office/Vivien Cher Benko

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán receives high Serbian state award

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to war in Ukraine

European Mobility Week ends

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN CALLS FOR 'REASONABLE' EU SANCTIONS POLICY

Hungary wants the European Union to make changes to its sanctions policy so that it is built on more "reasonable foundations", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in Belgrade on Friday.

Orbán spoke after meeting Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and accepting the Order of Merit of the Republic of Serbia in recognition of his services in developing cooperation and friendly relations between Serbia and Hungary. Sanctions generally are decided in places that are far away from the country that is being targeted, Orbán told a joint press conference with Vučić. "It's easy to formulate a sanctions policy from Paris, Brussels, Madrid, and perhaps even Berlin," he said. "We are closer to Russia, the country being sanctioned," he added. Orbán said that countries that are closer to the target of the sanctions "always suffer more", arguing that it was therefore unsurprising that Hungary's views on the sanctions differed from those of Brussels. Moreover, sanctions tend to be imposed by a stronger entity on a weaker one, "but we Europeans, who are dwarves when it comes to energy, are sanctioning an energy giant." "These sanctions are causing us very serious harm ... they cost a lot of money, and there is a threat that they will erode a large part our achievements of the last ten years," the prime minister said.

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## **ORBÁN: SANCTIONS 'MAJOR THREAT'**

The sanctions against Russia "that have been offered by the West" do not serve Hungary's interests, "in fact they are a major threat to us", Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said after meeting Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić in Belgrade on Friday. He said most worrying was that "as we head into an increasingly severe economic crisis" it was becoming clear that the situation would improve immediately if the sanctions were lifted. "So it's not just about us suffering from a long, painful series of measures, but that it could all be undone in a single move," the prime minister argued. Orbán said he would always argue against sanctions that hurt central Europe more than the country they are targeting. In response to a question regarding the report about Hungary approved by the European Parliament on Thursday, Orbán said: "We're not laughing about it anymore because we are bored with it; it is a boring joke they're making for the third or fourth time -- the EP approving a resolution condemning Hungary."

"At first we thought it had some significance but now we just consider it a joke," he added. "The European left-wing has occupied the EP" and "our former party alliance", the European People's Party, has been gradually shifting to the left, Orbán said. The proportion of votes has precisely reflected this process, with the right-wing parties voting in support of Hungary and the left-wing parties

voting against Hungary, he added. Orbán said that instead of objective opinions, the report contained party political attacks. "The standard of the approved document simply makes us consider it political propaganda or pamphleteering," he added. Hungary regularly holds elections involving the forming of a parliamentary majority, and whenever the majority is right wing, the left wing dislikes the situation and "they hold intifadas in the European Parliament", Orbán said. After receiving the award, Orbán said he considered the recognition an encouragement to continue boosting Hungary-Serbia friendship. The renowned 19th century statesman István Széchenyi already recognised that the interests of Serbia and Hungary were so closely intertwined that they must maintain a friendship, the prime minister said. When the current Hungarian government is working for Serbian-Hungarian friendship it is fulfilling a long-standing mission, he added. Hungary is a country that must maintain friendship with Serbia, Orbán said. "We have a shared goal: to jointly protect the southern gate to Europe, which is a mission and a responsibility for both countries," he added.

## **VUČIĆ: TRUE FRIENDS CAN RELY ON EACH OTHER EVEN IN HARD TIMES**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić said after meeting Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán that true friends could rely on each other even in hard times, and

Serbia and Hungary "are definitely true friends". He said it was "an honour" to decorate Orbán with Serbia's highest state award. Vučić thanked Orbán for his efforts to improve the two countries' relations, which he said were "at an all-time high". Serbia is grateful to Hungary, "and particularly the Hungarian prime minister", for its open and clear support of Serbia at all forums, whether the issue in question be European integration or regional or bilateral issues, the president said. True friends are revealed during difficult times, and Hungary had the strength to stand with Serbia "even when it would have been easier to turn its back to it", Vučić said. "So Hungary can be certain that Serbia will always remain its true friend and supporter," he added. Serbia and Hungary's friendship mandates that the two countries continue to develop their strategic relations and cooperation, Vučić said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: EU MAKING 'FATAL MISTAKE' BY SLOWING SERBIA'S INTEGRATION**

Serbia's accession to the European Union is longstanding, and the bloc is "making a fatal mistake" by slowing the country's European integration, Hungary's foreign minister said in Belgrade on Friday. "The European Union is in need of enlargement in the current circumstances," Péter Szijjártó said after talks with Jadranka Joksimović, Serbia's minister for European integration. The EU must take steps to improve European

security, Szijjártó said. "We are facing security challenges that have caused the most significant security crisis here in Europe in decades," he said. "If the European Union wants to improve its own security, it must expand; and the direction of that expansion is clearly towards the Western Balkans." Szijjártó said countries in the neighbourhood of the Western Balkans were aware that instability in that region could cause serious problems.

"The stability and the calm and balanced development of this region is a national interest for us, and it is also clear that Serbia is the real stabilising force in the Western Balkans," the minister said, insisting that Serbia's European integration and accession to the EU could help stabilise the entire region. Szijjártó urged the EU to speed up its accession talks with Serbia. He said eight new accession chapters should be opened with Serbia before the end of the Czech EU presidency, so that 30 of the 35 chapters could be open and "we can make real progress". If Serbia's accession talks continue at their current slow pace "because of Brussels", the accession procedure would be prolonged by several years, "and that isn't in anyone's interest", Szijjártó said.

### **DK ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF SHADOW CABINET**

Klára Dobrev, an MEP of the opposition Democratic Coalition (DK), is forming a shadow cabinet, the party's deputy

leader announced on Friday. Dobrev has been appointed by DK's board to form a shadow cabinet, which she has accepted, Csaba Molnár told a news conference.

Molnár said DK was convinced that "no one in Hungary today is more qualified" to head a shadow cabinet than Dobrev. He noted that Dobrev had worked at every level of state administration, speaks five languages, has degrees in law and economics and, as a vice president of the European Parliament, had established international relations that are crucial for Hungary.

Dobrev will reveal her plans as shadow prime minister at an event on Sunday before presenting the members of her shadow cabinet at a press conference on Monday, Molnár said.

He said DK had decided to form a shadow cabinet because it believes "Hungary is in serious trouble". The government "lied to the people" during the spring election campaign, and went on to "impose the most painful austerity package since the change of regime", Molnár insisted. He said the government's track record consisted of inflation, fuel shortage, a seven-fold increase in gas prices, tax hikes, "ruined small businesses", the cost-of-living crisis and the "panic over utility bills". Molnár said Hungary was being denied access to European Union funds due to "the theft that has been going on for 12 years". Molnár blamed Prime Minister Viktor Orbán for the cost-of-living crisis in Hungary,

saying that the crisis would persist as long as he remained in power.

Ruling Fidesz said in reaction that the Hungarian people wanted no part of a "Gyurcsány government". "Hungarians have had a chance to experience what it is like when [DK leader] Ferenc Gyurcsány is in government," Fidesz said in a statement. "It was the left that pushed Hungary to the brink of bankruptcy: they scrapped the 13th month pension, took a month's wage away from teachers and health-care workers, raised electricity and gas prices, scrapped family subsidies, made thousands homeless and when times got tough, they placed more burdens on Hungarian businesses and families instead of helping them," the party said. In the April election, an overwhelming majority of Hungarians rejected "the Gyurcsány era" for the fourth time, they added.

### **FIDESZ MEPS: HUNGARY, POLAND STIGMATISED DUE TO 'LEFT-WING IDEOLOGICAL CAMPAIGNS'**

Hungary and Poland have once again become EU member states stigmatised on the back of left-wing ideological campaigns, MEPs Balázs Hidvéghi and Kinga Gál of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party said late on Thursday.

The two European lawmakers commented on the European Parliament's resolution on Thursday that concluded that respect for human rights had diminished

during the coronavirus pandemic in the European Union, especially in Hungary and Poland. Gál, head of Fidesz's European parliamentary delegation, said it was regrettable that debates over human rights had become tinged by political ideology, and the interpretation of human rights in many cases had become a tool for the dissemination of left-wing ideas. As an example, she mentioned Hungary's child protection law, which she said had been subjected to unfair attacks based on ideological prejudice.

Hidvéghi said the report painted a "completely false picture", portraying the situation of fundamental rights in Europe as "blatantly negative" and continually bringing about an "emergency situation", which he said could weaken social cohesion. The Fidesz MEP also criticised the report for "compulsively naming more and more social groups and regurgitating their trumped-up grievances". He added that, on this basis, the report sought to interfere in the competences of the member states. Hidvéghi called it lamentable that "the report was drafted in line with the usual scenario: the left abuses an otherwise important issue and once again pushes its own ideology."

### **FIDESZ MEPS OPPOSE NEW RULES ON EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES, FOUNDATIONS**

Ruling Fidesz MEPs László Trócsányi and Ernő Schaller-Baross have said that the planned amendment of rules by the

European Commission on European political parties and foundations would harm the free functioning of national parties. They told a Thursday debate at the EP about the EC's proposals that the planned changes would introduce "tutelage" and ideological control over parties' free choice of values. Trócsányi expressed concern, stating that "those that raise a critical voice against the mainstream could easily be accused of disrespecting European values and face sanctions." "We can only support rules that exclusively apply to European political parties and do not extend to areas, even in a concealed way, such as national referendums, where they have no business at all," he added.

Schaller-Baross said it was alarming that EU institutions were using the rule of law as an excuse to interfere in member states' public life while the institutions tried to use their own political principles and ideologies to decide who can participate in member states' public life. "This proposal threatens the foundations of European democracy and violates the basic conditions of the rule of law," he added. National parties play a significant role in shaping and expressing public will, including the assessment of European affairs, and it is therefore impermissible to influence their functioning with EU-level rules, they said.

The European Parliament's report adopted on Thursday states its standpoint on the amendment of political party rules and foundations at European level. The EP supplement to a European Commission proposal

calls for more party transparency and efficiency and that EU subsidies for referendum campaigns should only be used in connection with "issues directly related to the EU". Also, it says non-EU members of parties should be aligned with EU values.

### **HUNGARIANS SEE RUSSIA SANCTIONS TRIGGERING EUROPEAN ECONOMIC DECLINE - SZÁZADVÉG**

Fully 83% of Hungarians agree with the view that EU sanctions against Russia would result in Europe's precipitous economic decline next year, according to a survey by the Századvég Foundation. The think-tank's interviews of 1,000 people released on Friday suggested that only 13% of Hungarians do not expect sanctions to mar Europe's economy. Some 68% of people expressed a poor opinion of the European Union's punitive measures against Russia, while 25% found them effective, Századvég said. Fully 79% agreed with the statement that Brussels' existing sanctions on energy and planned further sanctions could play a major role in the steep rise in fuel and energy prices and inflation, Századvég added.

### **MENCZER: HUNGARY EMERGES AS 'MAJOR BATTERY MANUFACTURING POWER'**

Hungary, the world's third biggest battery manufacturer in 2021,

has made its mark in the sector, a government official said at a cornerstone ceremony in Biatorbágy, near Budapest, where Chinese manufacturer NIO will turn out battery swap stations.

Constant investments in the car industry vindicate the government's policy of opening up to the East, Tamás Menczer, state secretary for the development of bilateral relations at the ministry of foreign affairs and trade, said on Friday.

More than a decade ago, nearly 80% of global investments were financed by Western capital, whereas now the tables have turned and 70% of investments are financed by Eastern capital.

Menczer said Hungary had always based its foreign policy on mutual respect, and this applied in the case of China, too.

## **MONKEYPOX - NUMBER OF CONFIRMED CASES REACHES 75**

Hungary has so far confirmed 75 cases of monkeypox, with four new infections recorded in the past week, the national public health authority (NNK) said on Friday. The new patients are males aged between 36 and 42, NNK said, adding that none of them required hospitalisation.

Local authorities are investigating each recorded case, including contact tracing, NNK said.

## **MINISTRY: SOME 200 LOCALITIES JOIN EUROPE-WIDE MOBILITY WEEK CAMPAIGN**

Some 200 Hungarian localities have joined the European Mobility Week environmental campaign aimed at encouraging the public to use green means of transport, the Ministry of Technology and Industry (TIM) said on Friday.

The ministry told MTI that it is supporting this year's Mobility Week and Car-free Day programmes with 180 million forints (EUR 442,000). With more than 180 localities taking part in the programmes starting on Friday, Hungary has the fourth highest number of Mobility Week participants in Europe, it added.

Localities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants will receive a maximum of 500,000 forints in support, those with a population between 5,000 and 15,000 will get 1 million, with 1.5 million forints going to localities with 15,000-50,000 inhabitants. Localities with a population of over 50,000 will receive 2 million forints in support, the ministry said. The Hungarian government aims to make the country fully climate neutral by 2050, a key aspect of which is the greening of transport, TIM cited Attila Steiner, the state secretary for energy policy, as saying. Road traffic accounts for 98% of harmful emissions in Hungary, he said.

## **AMSTERDAM IN FOCUS AT MÜPA BRIDGING EUROPE FESTIVAL**

Amsterdam is in the focus of the 2022 edition of the Bridging Europe festival series organised by the MÜPA Palace of Arts and the Budapest Festival Orchestra and hosted by MÜPA from Sept. 16 to 28. The festival's opening event on Friday will feature Metropole Orkest, renowned for its cooperation with some of the world's leading musicians in the genres of jazz, pop, electronica and world music, MÜPA said. The concert will feature a 60-member incarnation of the orchestra performing brand new pieces under the baton of its permanent guest conductor Miho Hazama. The Budapest Festival Orchestra will play pieces by Louis Andriessen, Beethoven and Mozart on Sept. 23, with the concert conducted by Iván Fischer featuring Dutch piano duo, brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen. Then Fischer reprises his baton on Sept. 24 for a concert featuring the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam playing a programme that includes Beethoven and Bartok and featuring violin soloist Barnabás Kelemen. The closing concert on Sept. 2 features an "organ duel" by Sietze de Vries from Holland and László Fassang from Hungary playing pieces by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. The festival programme also includes screenings of films with a Dutch theme, such as *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *Nightwatch*.