

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



Participants of the European Political Community summit in Moldova

MTI/Prime Minister's Office/Zoltán Fischer

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**President Novák in Albania**

**Events related to the war in Ukraine**

**Events marking  
National Cohesion Day**

## TOP STORY

# FIDESZ MEP SLAMS EP RESOLUTION ON CONCERNS OVER HUNGARY

Fidesz MEP Balázs Hidvéghi has said that the “pro-war, left-wing members of the EP cannot accept that Hungary stands by peace and rejects incitement to war”, in response to the adoption by MEPs of a resolution condemning Hungary.

Speaking to Hungarian journalists after the vote in Brussels on Thursday, Hidvéghi said that because its pro-peace position pressure on Hungary was continuing and intensifying in Brussels. Hidvéghi said Hungary’s left-wing MEPs had played an active role in the legislative body stepping up the pressure on Hungary, arguing that they had sponsored, supported and voted for the resolution. He noted that, according to the resolution adopted on Thursday, the European Parliament would strip Hungary of the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union the country is due to hold in the second half of 2024. This, Hidvéghi said, “is a gross violation of the effective EU treaties, which proves that if there is a rule of law and corruption problem, it is here in Brussels, and not in Budapest”.

He said it was an “interesting addendum to all this” that the resolution had also been supported by Socialist MEP Marc Tarabella, who was linked to the “Brussels corruption scandal” and had “only been released from prison a few days ago”.

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## **EP ADOPTS RESOLUTION EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER HUNGARY'S 2024 EU PRESIDENCY**

The European Parliament on Thursday passed a resolution condemning what it calls "deliberate and systematic efforts" to undermine EU values in Hungary, and expressing concern over Hungary taking over the bloc's rotating presidency in the second half of 2024. In the resolution adopted with 442 votes in favour, 144 against and 33 abstentions, EU lawmakers call into question how Hungary would be able to credibly fulfil its role as president of the Council of the European Union next year. The EP emphasised the importance of the role of the Council president in "driving forward the Council's work on EU legislation, ensuring the continuity of the EU agenda and representing the Council in relations with the other EU institutions". According to the resolution, the EP "questions how Hungary will be able to credibly fulfil this task in 2024, in view of its non-compliance with EU law and the values ... as well as the principle of sincere cooperation". The assembly therefore asks the Council "to find a proper solution as soon as possible", and noted that the EP "could take appropriate measures if such a solution is not found".

EU lawmakers also expressed their concern over the situation of EU values in Hungary, which they said had continued to deteriorate despite

the EP launching the Article 7 procedure against the country. The resolution condemns the government's "anti-EU communication campaigns" which the EP said was "part of the government's strategy to divert attention from its non-compliance with EU values and systemic corruption in the country". In view of the 2024 European parliamentary and local elections, MEPs called on the Hungarian government to bring its conduct of elections in line with international standards. The document calls attention to "reports about intimidation methods, such as visits by the secret police to some companies' offices, and other forms of pressure being used by certain individuals known to be linked to the Prime Minister's close circle or office", which it said were aimed at "bringing those parts of the Hungarian industry deemed to be 'strategic' under their control". The EP also expressed concern over frozen EU funds and the delay in the relevant reforms.

## **FIDESZ MEP: 67 CONSERVATIVE MEPS SIGN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF HUNGARY**

Sixty-seven right-wing MEPs have signed a letter in support of Hungary and calling on the European Commission "not to give in to blackmail and pressure by the European Parliament", MEP of Hungary's ruling Fidesz Kinga Gál told MTI on Wednesday. In reaction to a recent call by five group leaders of the European

Parliament aimed at further blocking community funding for Hungary, the letter pointed out that "the demands by group leaders of the EP can in no way be interpreted as part of the EU's conditionality mechanism," Gál said.

The letter, Gál said, reflected "solidarity with Hungary ... as well as the fact that Hungary is not alone with its position that such pressure and blackmail must not be considered by the European Commission". Gál insisted that the EP was exerting pressure "because the Hungarian government continues to support peace in Ukraine and will not change its anti-war and anti-migration position, just as well it will not drop its position on child protection".

MEP Tamás Deutsch said signatories of the letter "insist that the European Commission should consistently enforce the EU's regulations and say no to pressure, and pass its decisions based on facts." Deutsch said the Hungarian government had made an agreement with the commission and fulfilled its obligations. The legal changes Hungary has introduced will take effect on Thursday, "removing all obstacles for Hungary to access EU development funds ... but the European Left seeks to prevent that and blackmail the European Commission to come up with further political preconditions for Hungary," Deutsch said. "They want to force us into the war in Ukraine, but we have made a commitment for peace. We won't change that, nor will we change our position against migration or the gender ideology madness," Deutsch said.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: NATO CAN'T DISCUSS ACCESSION OF A COUNTRY AT WAR**

The NATO membership of a country at war cannot be on the agenda at the defence alliance's next summit in Vilnius, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said in Oslo on Thursday, adding that NATO must not become party to the war in Ukraine, lest it risk a third world war. Szijjártó told a press conference after an informal meeting with his NATO counterparts that the negative effects of the war in neighbouring Ukraine affected Hungary more strongly. The Hungarian government therefore wants peace as soon as possible, however, this stance remains in the minority in the transatlantic region, Szijjártó said, according to a ministry statement. The minister noted NATO's declaration last year that it was not party to the conflict in Ukraine and that it would do everything possible to avoid a direct confrontation with Russia. "Adherence to this decision is critical for us ... this has to remain the basis," Szijjártó said. Concerning Ukraine's potential NATO membership, Szijjártó said: "We have to be clear, the accession of a country at war cannot be on the agenda." The minister said he believed there was an agreement on this in NATO circles, "but clearly, certain countries don't dare or want to express it this firmly and directly in public". He said that while it would be possible to give Ukraine the impression that it would be given a timetable

for its accession at the summit, this would not be fair. "We shouldn't foster illusions that obviously won't come true," he said.

Szijjártó also spoke out against the Ukrainian army receiving any combat training from NATO, warning that this risked expanding the conflict and contradicting the alliance's earlier decisions. Meanwhile, Szijjártó said that the annual 500 million euros of development aid NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg proposed member states should allocate to Ukraine could only be done on a voluntary basis. He also said it was important that the NATO-Ukraine committee be convened in a way that allows for requiring the country to respect the rights of national minorities. Szijjártó said that though Hungary was under strong pressure to ratify Sweden's NATO accession, the government had made it clear that the decision on when this happens would be determined by parliament. "We refuse to accept any pressure," the minister said. "Hungary's parliament will make a sovereign decision on the ratification, which the government will of course support."

Meanwhile, Szijjártó said several of his NATO counterparts had spoken highly of how Hungarian peacekeeping troops had stood their ground in Kosovo, which he said Hungary could be proud of. He said that in addition to threats from the east, NATO should also devote attention to challenges from the south, such as the increased threat

of terrorism from the Middle East and Africa, which he warned could lead to more mass migration waves making their way to Europe. "We therefore consider it very important to help develop the defence capacities of the African, Western Balkan and Caucasian countries," he said. Szijjártó said because NATO members had not been repaid the money that financed the Afghan army even despite the alliance's withdrawal from the country, the Hungarian government has reallocated 320 million forints (EUR 863,000) of it towards the development of the defence capabilities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with 120 million forints each to Georgia and Moldova and 40 million each to boosting the capabilities of Jordan, Mauritania and Tunisia. He also said that Hungary continued to oppose arms deliveries to Ukraine, adding that several African countries were concerned that those weapons could end up in the continent's unstable regions.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: NEW GOVT PROGRAMME TO ENCOURAGE HUNGARIAN FIRMS INVEST FOREIGN PROFITS AT HOME**

The government is drafting a programme to encourage Hungarian businesses to invest profits generated abroad on capacity expansion at home, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó said on Thursday. The ministry cited Szijjártó telling an event in Oslo organised by the Scandinavian

subsidiary of Vajda Papir that the Hungarian company producing hygienic paper products had been present in Norway for ten years. He added that the company was a good example of how Hungarian companies were successfully expanding in foreign markets.

In global comparison, Hungary ranks 95th in terms of the size of its population but it is 34th in terms of the global ranking of exports with 142 billion euros reported last year, he said. Companies that hit a glass ceiling in terms of exports must bring their production closer to their target markets, and the government supports projects to achieve this goal, the minister added. Szijjártó said that in addition to increasing export performance, the difference between multinationals' profits taken out of Hungary and Hungarian companies' foreign-generated profits brought back home should be reduced. The two figures will certainly not be equal in the near future but it is important to improve the situation, he added. To help improve the situation, the government is preparing a programme offering various incentives to encourage Hungarian companies to invest their foreign-generated profits on capacity expansion at home, he said. In the past decade, Hungary has been able to emerge stronger from every crisis and it has good foundations to face a new era of global economy, he said.

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## **ORBÁN SPEAKS WITH TÜRKIYE PRESIDENT**

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán spoke with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, recently re-elected president of Türkiye, by phone on Wednesday evening. Orbán congratulated Erdogan on his re-election, and said "the decision of Turkish voters and Türkiye's stability is good news for the whole of Europe". He added that the community was facing a number of security challenges and "it needs a strong and reliable Türkiye". Erdoğan voiced his readiness to further develop bilateral relations and invited Orbán to attend his inauguration ceremony scheduled for Saturday. The Hungarian prime minister accepted the invitation, his press chief said.

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## **PRESIDENT NOVÁK MEETS ALBANIAN COUNTERPART IN TIRANA**

The stability of the Western Balkans is of key importance to the stability of Europe, President Katalin Novák said at a joint press conference with her Albanian counterpart Bajram Begaj in Tirana on Thursday. Therefore, it is very important that the countries of the region join the European Union as soon as possible, Novák said. In this, Hungary plays a mediating role, she added. Other topics discussed during the meeting included the war in Ukraine,

action against illegal migration, demographic issues and bilateral economic relations, Novák said. Concerning economic relations, Novák noted that the number of Hungarian investments was substantially increasing in Albania and Hungary was now the 10th biggest foreign investor in the country. Novák invited Bajram Begaj to join the Network of Family-friendly Presidents and to attend the Demographic Summit Budapest will host in September.

Begaj thanked Hungary for its support to Albania's European integration and expressed his appreciation for Hungary's commitment to the stability of the Western Balkans, including its participation in the KFOR mission in Kosovo.

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## **PRESIDENT NOVÁK: STABILITY OF W BALKANS KEY TO PEACE IN EUROPE**

The stability of the Western Balkans is key to peace and security in Europe which can be achieved with the European Union integration of the region, President Katalin Novák told a plenary session of the Albanian parliament in Tirana on Thursday. Europe is going through a critical period, coping with difficulties, such as the war in Ukraine, the fragility of the Western Balkans' stability, the pressure posed by illegal migration on Europe, demographic challenges, and

questions about the role of Europe in world politics, she said.

If Europe can preserve its economic, political and demographic powers depends on whether it is able to give wise responses and find and stay on the road to peace, security and growth, she added. Novák said Albania's place is in the European Union and the country can count on Hungary's support in the process of obtaining a membership.

### **ECON DEVELOPMENT MINISTER: MANDATORY PRICE REDUCTIONS START IN RETAIL**

Retail stores will sell certain products at reduced prices from June 1, following a government decree aimed to break down rising food prices, the economic development minister said on Thursday. The measure, aimed to protect families and pensioners and to offset the fallout from the war and the consequences of sanctions on Russia, comes with an online price monitoring system to be introduced in July. The measures are expected to push down prices, increase competition and contribute to the fall of inflation, Márton Nagy said. Under the measure, retailers with revenues above 1 billion forints (EUR 2.7m) will have to offer 20 products of various categories at least 10% cheaper than the lowest price in the past 30 days. The categories include milk, poultry, bread, pasta and fresh fruits, among others.

### **FINANCE MINISTER MEETS NEW SOUTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR**

Finance Minister Mihály Varga met Kyu Dok Hong, South Korea's new ambassador to Hungary, on Thursday, his ministry said. Hungary offers South Korean companies a competitive environment in terms of taxes, skilled labour and infrastructure, Varga said at the meeting. He added that South Korea has become a major foreign investor in Hungary with 300 companies operating in the country. The minister noted two recent large-scale investment projects by SK Innovation and W-SCOPE. Last year, Hungary's exports to South Korea rose by more than 12% to 672 million dollars, he said. Varga is the co-chair of the Hungarian-Korean Joint Economic Committee which held its fourth meeting in March, in an online format. The committee is set to hold its next meeting in Budapest in 2024, the ministry said.

### **BUDAPEST MAYOR: 2024 DRAFT BUDGET WOULD 'BLEED BUDAPEST OUT' FURTHER**

Next year's draft budget would "bleed Budapest out" even further, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony said in a Facebook post on Thursday. Government support for the city would come to 34.5 billion forints (EUR 9.4bn), up from 33 billion this year, meaning that the real value of the funding would decrease, he said. At the same time, the solidarity tax imposed on the city would increase from 58 billion to 75 billion forints, he said. "This year, the city

funded the government with 25 billion forints; next year, that funding would be over 40 billion," he said. That money could ensure the city's operation for 82 days, he noted. Meanwhile, the draft budget would also cut funding for "activities and services in localities and communities" by one-fifth, "exposing the lie" that the solidarity tax levelled at cities would help support smaller localities, he said. Environmental protection, social services and railways would also suffer, making the budget "not just anti-Budapest but an anti-municipality one", he said. Karácsony called on Budapest residents to give their opinions in an ongoing online survey on the city's affairs. "The extraordinary situation warrants extraordinary measures: we will take the government to court. We will prove not only that the anti-Budapest policy is harmful for the country but also that it is unlawful," he said.

The government information centre (KTK) said in reaction that Karácsony had "bankrupted the country's richest local council". In a statement, the KTK said Karácsony "forgot to post about where the 214 billion forints in reserves former mayor István Tarlós left the city with disappeared to". Thanks to Hungary's economic growth, Budapest is seeing an unprecedented increase in business tax revenue, the KTK said, arguing that revenues this year were expected to rise to 271.6 billion forints compared with 164 billion in 2019, and increase even further next year. They said "[Democratic Coalition leader] Ferenc Gyurcsány's people have captured every position in City Hall, insisting that Karácsony "is attacking the government at Gyurcsány's instruction".

## DEPT PM VISITS ARMENIA

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén has visited Armenia, and discussed economic and cultural cooperation with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan and infrastructure minister Gnel Sanosyan, the prime minister's office said late on Wednesday. Diplomatic relations were revived between Armenia and Hungary during Semjén's first visit in 2021, with ambassadorial-level contact starting in December 2022, the office said.

## EP SUPPORTS NOMINATION OF HUNGARY'S PELCZ TO CONTINUE AS COURT OF AUDITORS MEMBER

MEPs on Thursday supported the nomination of Hungary's Ildikó Gáll Pelcz to continue to serve as member of the Court of Auditors, the European Parliament said on Thursday. Pelcz's nomination was supported at a plenary session with 303 votes in favour, 278 against and 52 abstentions, the EP said. Pelcz was nominated by the Hungarian government. She had served before as an MEP and later as EP vice president until she joined the Court of Auditors in 2017. Her nomination is to be approved by the relevant council of EU ministers. The delegation of MEPs of ruling Fidesz in response issued a statement saying that "professionalism and skills required in such a position have triumphed, the majority of the EP supported the Hungarian candidate".

## HUNGARY GDP FALLS 0.9% IN Q1, KSH CONFIRMS

Hungary's annual GDP fell 0.9% in the first quarter of 2023, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) confirmed in a second reading of data on Thursday. Adjusted for seasonal and calendar year effects, GDP contracted by 1.1%. Quarter on quarter, adjusted GDP edged down 0.3%, falling for the third quarter in a row. For the full year, GDP growth reached 4.6%.

## HUNGARY TRADE SURPLUS EUR 886 M IN MARCH

Hungary posted a March trade surplus of 886 million euros, the Central Statistical Office (KSH) said in a second reading of data on Thursday. The surplus was revised downwards from 899 million euros in the first reading released on May 9. Exports rose by an annual 17.3% to 14.216 billion euros, while imports increased by 3.1% to 13.330 billion. Trade with other European Union member states accounted for 78% of Hungary's exports and 68% of its imports during the month.

## HUNGARY RECORDS 171 NEW CORONAVIRUS INFECTIONS, 5 DEATHS REGISTERED LAST WEEK

Fully 171 new Covid-19 infections were confirmed last week, while five fatalities were registered in connection with the virus, the Coronavirus Press Centre said on Thursday. The number of active infections stands at 2,189. Currently, 23 coronavirus patients are being treated in hospital, two are on ventilators. Altogether 6,422,413

people have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, with 6,210,980 having received a second jab, 3,905,405 a third, and 425,897 a fourth. The number of registered infections since the start of the pandemic has reached 2,202,887 in Hungary, while there have been 48,873 deaths. Fully 2,151,825 people have made a recovery.

## OVER 12,000 REFUGEES ENTER HUNGARY ON WEDNESDAY

Fully 5,835 refugees entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Wednesday, while 6,196 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 48 people, ORFK said on Thursday.

## BUDAPEST POLICE TAKE INTO CUSTODY 14 SOCCER FANS OVER UEFA FINAL

Police took into custody 13 foreign and one Hungarian soccer fans over rowdy behaviour at the UEFA European League final in Budapest, the Budapest police headquarters (BRFK) said on Thursday. Some 16,000 Italian and 13,000 Spanish fans arrived in Budapest to watch the Sevilla-AS Roma final on Wednesday evening and a large number of fans from several other countries followed the match live in the capital. Police carried out strict inspections at and in the vicinity of the stadium as well as in the fan-zones and along the routes fans were marching. On Wednesday, police apprehended two Polish, an Italian and a Hungarian fan over rowdyism, one German over misdemeanor, eight Poles over alleged possession of drugs and another Pole over the illegal use of firecrackers.