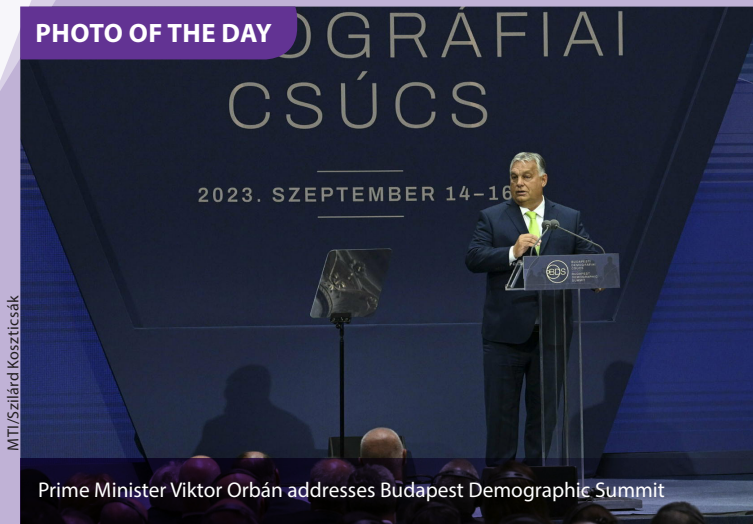


PHOTO OF THE DAY



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán addresses Budapest Demographic Summit

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the war in Ukraine

Stats office preliminary report on construction in July 2023

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARY 'STEADFAST PROPONENT' OF FAMILIES, DEMOGRAPHICS

Hungary is the most steadfast and vocal proponent of the cause of families and demographics in European politics, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told the 5th Budapest Demographic Summit on Thursday.

Orbán said the Hungarian government was preparing to draft the country's "family policy 2.0", and called on participants to "turn European family policy around together." Liberals' attacks against Hungary for its pro-family, conservative and patriotic policies are in vain, "that only make us tougher - there will be no change," Orbán said. He welcomed the participants, saying that the large number of visitors showed "how the matter of families and children moves people everywhere in the world." Since the last summit two years ago, "the world has changed, and we now live in the shadow of war," he said. At the same time, he welcomed that right-wing parties and Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni won the elections in Italy. "We thought Italy would never have a patriotic, family-loving, Christian government again." Orbán agreed with Meloni that Europe's future was in families, and that "it is important for children to have a father and a mother." He said Italy and Hungary were both the "homeland of freedom fighters".

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ORBÁN GREETES INTL POLITICIANS AT SUMMIT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán greeted the Chairman of the Azeri parliament, the Serbian president of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bulgarian president at the Budapest Demographic Summit on Thursday. Bulgarian President Rumen Radev is the “guarantee for stability in Bulgaria”, an important ally of Hungary in the fight against illegal migration and in protecting energy security, he said. Orbán said Europe was led by a progressive liberal elite “busy with all kinds of nonsense” instead of important European issues, such as the future of the continent’s demography. He cited a survey of the Matthias Corvinus Collegium, which said that European surveys were biased towards “the fears of the progressive political elite” and did nothing to probe the real concerns of Europeans. “This is the most worrying development in the West in the past 70 years,” he said. Leaders may have “no idea of the real problems of real life” in a dictatorship, but that is unimaginable in a western democracy, he added. European citizens want to be able to start families in safe homes, to raise their children in peace and security. These are “demographic issues, which continue to be far down on the agenda in European politics.” Orbán said the root of that phenomenon

was that liberals had “hacked” the political life in the West. Western political life, “the discourse, the outlook, the way of thinking, the interpretation framework of how the world works,” has been hacked by the liberals in two steps, he said. The first step was spreading the view that the individual was the most important thing in the world. “They see dictators in everyone who sets boundaries to their individual wishes,” he said. Those boundaries, however, are also rail guides, he said. The boundaries of family life “are essential for freedom; freedom requires at least two people, one person alone is not free but lonely.” Liberals also tried to “hack” European life by „spreading strategic fears of the future”, the prime minister said. “Liberals strive to keep irrational fears from the future on the agenda, and to magnify them,” he said. Liberals expect people to live submitting all their actions to an impending apocalypse,” he said.

Orbán said “the mindset” of a community was something that defined the future. He added, however, that the western way of thinking prevented the Europeans from being able to identify the most important challenge facing them which he said was demography. He said that instead of addressing the issue of demography, politicians were focusing their attention on how to enforce carbon quotas in the economy and gender quotas in society. “Europe is acting out of fear

and fear turns us into defeatists. We say there is no future which thus will become a self-fulfilling prophecy,” Orbán said.

The prime minister called Hungary “an incubator house” of conservative policies which he said covered such areas as a labour-based economy, a modern cooperation of state and church and a patriotic education policy.

Speaking about Hungary’s demographic policy, the prime minister listed five goals. Those include promoting the advantages of raising children, government incentives supporting home-building, giving mothers priority “as the pillars of family policy”, turning the entire country’s operation into a family-friendly direction and protecting families with laws.

Speaking about the achievements of his government that took power in 2010, Orbán noted that the per capita income of families raising a child had doubled and that of families raising more children had tripled. He said that a government subsidy scheme had helped every fifth family to buy a new home. Among the family support measures, he noted the personal income exemption for mothers under 30 and the personal income tax exemption for mothers with four children. The personal income tax exemption will be extended to families with three children, he said. “We would normally not admit it, but in Hungary women

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keep the families together,” Orbán said and praised women for their achievements. He said the most important teaching of Hungarian family policy is that “if you want a future for your country, you must support mothers”. Orbán said that Hungary’s constitution protected the institution of marriage as a union based on a voluntary decision between a man and a woman, as well as the family which forms the basis for the survival of the nation. The present first phase of Hungary’s family policy is concluded, now the next phase can begin, Orbán said. “We have earned a lot of appreciation for what we have done so far, but we consider this to be insufficient, so we must move on,” he said. Orbán said that “we have no chance to convince the present progressive, liberal elites ... we must push them aside”. The post-liberal era replacing progressive liberalism “is not going to introduce itself, somebody will have to do it,” he added. “And who is going to do that if not us?” Such a change would require conservative pro-family forces to take power in as many European countries as possible, the prime minister said. Orbán said that “we have everything to turn the balance of power to our advantage” at the European Parliament elections next year. “In the meantime, we, Hungarians have to do our homework and draft ‘programme 2.0’ of Hungarian family policy,” the prime minister said.

PRESIDENT NOVÁK: BEING PRO-FAMILY SHOULD BE ‘NATIONAL MINIMUM’

Being pro-family should be a “national minimum”, President Katalin Novák said in her address to the 5th Demographic Summit in Budapest on Thursday. “We are here today as allies of each other and families,” she said, adding: “Today we are fighting the freedom fight of families.” The “demographic winter” faced by the developed world is currently turning into “an ice age”, but without children there is no future, Novák said. “We are increasingly defenceless against the demographic ice age,” she said. “The pillars of our lives, the foundations of are Christian culture are beginning to crack, and if we don’t protect the values we believe to be impermeable, we will voluntarily sacrifice ourselves before we become victims of the coming ice age.” As the heirs to their freedom-fighting ancestors, Hungarians have learned that freedom does not come for free, and it is something they have to fight for again and again, she said. Modelled on the 1848 revolution, Novák listed twelve demands of Hungarian families. The first demand concerns the freedom to raise children, meaning it should be the exclusive right, responsibility and obligation of parents without the interference of any ideology, she said. “We won’t allow our children

to be deprived of the sense of safety stemming from their identity,” Novák said. “Someone who is born a girl should be allowed to grow up as one, and a boy should grow up as a boy.”

Hungarian families demand “pro-family” decision makers who do not agitate against families, Novák said. Being pro-family should be a “national minimum”, she added. Also, families do not want Hungary to approve decisions that go against the family, she said. Kindergartens, schools, the country and its borders should be safe for children and aging parents, she said. Parenthood should not be a poverty risk factor, she said, stressing that those who have children should not be worse off than those who do not. Novák also noted the need to respect the elderly and that women should not have to sacrifice motherhood for their work and vice-versa. The president underscored the need to help young people to buy their own homes. She also called for competitive public, vocational and higher education, modern health care, supporting those who live in more difficult conditions and devoting greater attention to Hungarian families beyond the border. She said that after years of “anti-family” measures in the 2000s, Hungarian families stood up for a more secure future, putting together civil movements and family organisations along with the Demography Roundtable. The “freedom fight” waged by families was not in vain, Novák said, noting

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that Hungary had seen a “pro-family turnaround”. The number of marriages doubled and the number of abortions halved over a ten-year period. The number of divorces has gone down, and more couples want children than anywhere else in Europe, she said, adding that the number of large families and living standards had both gone up. But the freedom fight is not over, Novák said. Families will not back down, they will not give up the churches or the schools and will take back everything that is theirs, she added.

**PRESIDENT NOVÁK:
FALLING BIRTH NUMBERS
A DANGER TO HUNGARY’S
FUTURE**

Hungary will have no future, and the nation cannot be preserved unless the birth rate can be raised, President Katalin Novák said in an interview published in the weekly *Mandiner* on Thursday. The number of children born in Hungary is falling each year, and the number of women in childbearing age has fallen by 20% in the past 20 years, she said. The state has a role in ensuring that raising children does not come with financial setbacks, and that families with children don’t live in worse conditions than those without children, she said. Hungary maintains its commitment to supporting families even amid the economic difficulties resulting from the war in Ukraine. Hungary is “spending

on the verge of its capacities” to fulfil that commitment, she said. “That is not an expense but the best investment,” she said. Commenting on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s statement that he is ready to provide all rights to Hungarians living in Ukraine that Ukrainians in Hungary enjoy, Novák said that step would be “an important step forward”. “Reliability is an important characteristic of countries aspiring to become European Union member states. I trust that the Ukrainian president is a serious man and meant what he said,” she added. Regarding Sweden’s NATO accession, Novák said: “I definitely think that we should support Sweden’s NATO integration.” The decision is with Hungary’s parliament, she added.

**MELONI: DEMOGRAPHY
THE ISSUE THAT DEFINES A
NATION’S FUTURE**

Demography is not simply one of the main issues, it is an issue on which the future of a nation depends, Giorgia Meloni, the Italian prime minister, said in her address to the 5th Demographic Summit in Budapest on Thursday. She said it was a top priority of her government to bring about a fundamental cultural change as regards the approach towards family affairs in Italy which, just as the rest of the western world, is hit by a serious demographic crisis. The number of births fell, and a strong anti-family atmosphere has developed; the

image of the family gradually faded in the media and has been taken over by individuals as consumers. “We live in an era when the most important elements of our identity are under attack, and yet without this identity we are just numbers, tools in the hands of others”, she said. Fewer and fewer children are being born in Europe, so resources must be mobilised to support families, as Hungary perfectly exemplifies, the Italian prime minister said. Thanks to the government’s efforts, Hungary has managed to reverse the deteriorating fertility rate, the number of marriages and the number of the employed has increased, and, very importantly, the number of the employed among women increased, Giorgia Meloni said. She said the Hungarian example shows that with a family-friendly policy, women do not have to choose between work and family. Real freedom is when women can choose to have children alongside work, and Hungary is a good example for this, Meloni said. Many people believe that migration can help ensure prosperity, she said, adding that she did not accept this view. Nations must assume responsibility for their own future, she argued. Meloni said she had been shocked by the recent controversies related to the 1956 uprising against the Soviets. “1956 was not only an uprising against a foreign power, but also an uprising against those who wanted to destroy the foundations of Hungarian identity: family, national identity, and religion,”

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she said. There are pages of history that cannot be rewritten, she said. “We see the same thing in Ukraine today, and this cannot be accepted,” Meloni said. Bulgarian president Rumen Radev said the rivalry between societies in the digital 21st century will no longer be about territory, but about human capital, as this is the most important value. He noted that over the past ten years his country lost 12% of its population, largely due to emigration. Expanding the family support system will help support this, but the most important thing is to strengthen the rule of law and fight corruption, he said.

ORBÁN HOLDS TALKS WITH ITALIAN COUNTERPART

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni met in Orbán’s office on Thursday to discuss the most important European and international issues, and the excellent bilateral relations between Rome and Budapest, Orbán’s press chief said. Commenting on the Budapest Demographic Summit, they reiterated the importance of pro-family policies, also in light of the demographic challenges facing Europe, he said. The two prime ministers condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine and called for peace. They noted the support granted to Kiev and stressed the importance of maintaining European unity in support for Ukraine.

Commenting on migration, they reiterated that fast and resolute action was needed. Migration is a common challenge for the European Union and requires a collective response, the prime ministers said. In order to prevent people from leaving their homes, it is necessary to focus on the external dimension, such as political and economic support to origin countries and the fight against human smuggling networks, they said. The prime ministers expressed their commitment to maintaining close cooperation between their respective governments, with special regards to the Hungarian presidency of the EU in the second half of 2024, the statement said.

ORBÁN DISCUSSES SITUATION IN EUROPE, ENERGY ISSUES WITH BULGARIAN PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán discussed with Rumen Radev, the president of Bulgaria, the political situation in Europe and energy issues at their meeting in Budapest on Thursday, Orbán’s press chief told MTI. At the talks, Orbán underlined Bulgaria’s increased role in contributing to Hungary’s energy security as a transit country. He praised Bulgaria for being an excellent partner in that area, he said. Orbán and Radev discussed the EU integration prospects of the Western Balkan countries and the importance of a ceasefire and peace talks concerning the war

in Ukraine. During Radev’s visit, a memorandum of understanding was signed on strengthening the cooperation between Bulgargaz and MVM CEEnergy’s subsidiaries in gas supplies and trade in central and eastern Europe.

SZIJJÁRTÓ SLAMS EU FOR ‘GLOBALISING WAR FALLOUT’

The European Union’s response to the war in Ukraine has globalised the fallout from the war rather than isolating its effects, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told a meeting of the Organisation of Turkic States’ economy and trade ministers in Istanbul on Thursday. The EU has botched its response to the war, “and we can only hope that the conflict itself doesn’t become global,” he said. Bad decisions have also hurt the cooperation between East and West, Szijjártó said. Meanwhile, the sanctions have proved to be a “total failure” which also weakened the EU’s competitiveness, he said. “This raises the value of our observer status in the OTS, and of our cooperation with its member states,” he said. Cooperation between the East and West is key to improving Europe’s competitiveness, and the chances for that are dwindling,” he said. The OTS is an important “bridge” between the East and West, and its member states will become key to ensuring transport routes now that some of the traditional supply

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lines have become impossible, he said. OTS member states together own the third largest depository of natural gas in the world, and will have an important role in improving energy security, he said. Hungary's energy security and diversification would be at peril without the Turkic states and the TurkStream pipeline, he said. He welcomed the OTS's new investment fund, and said that Hungary would contribute 100 million dollars. Szijjártó noted that trade between the Turkic states and Hungary surpassed 4 billion dollars last year, and jumped by 2.8% to 2.8 billion dollars in the first half of 2023.

Turkmenistan will soon open an embassy in Hungary and the Hungarian government has made a similar decision, Szijjártó said. The minister said Uzbekistan opened an embassy in Budapest this year and Hungary opened its embassy in Tashkent, fulfilling a commitment made in 2018 that our country should have diplomatic representation in all member states of the OTS, and vice versa.

BÓKA: EC HAS NO STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING ESCALATION OF WAR

The minister in charge of European Union affairs said on Thursday that the European Commission lacked a strategy on what the European Union could do in order to prevent the escalation of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war in Hungary's neighbourhood. Commenting on

EC President Ursula von der Leyen's State of the EU speech, János Bóka said on Facebook that what's important to Hungary's government is how her remarks relate to the major issues that the cabinet believes the EU should deal with. Bóka said it was also important for the government how the EC president's remarks related to the main tasks of the EU presidency Hungary is to hold in the second half of 2024. "We believe that the European Union has not really found an answer to the basic question, which is what could be done to find an end to the war," he added. Bóka told commercial radio InfóRádió on Wednesday that the EC's long-standing position on an unwavering support to Ukraine had not changed. "What is not clear is how military and financial support would take us closer to the end of the armed conflict, which is at the root of the EU's numerous problems," he added. In response to a question, he said the EU in itself was unable to force through a ceasefire.

NAVRACSICS: EU ENLARGEMENT MOST IMPORTANT TOPIC IN EC CHIEF'S SPEECH

The most important part of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's State of the European Union address was when she spoke about EU enlargement and European integration, Hungary's regional development minister said

late on Wednesday. Von der Leyen's assertion that the bloc could expand to more than 30 members in the future is "the clearest statement made in the recent period", Tibor Navracsics said at a discussion on the future of the EU organised by the European Parliament Liaison Office for Hungary.

The minister, a former European commissioner, welcomed that the EC president had made it clear that enlargement was a "false dilemma", saying this "gives a very good perspective for integration, as integration is a real success story when it comes to peacemaking". Former foreign minister Péter Balázs agreed that counting the Western Balkan states and the members of the EU's Eastern Partnership programme, the bloc could admit up to nine new members by as soon as 2030. Concerning green transition, Balázs said that the process at times hurt the competitiveness of industry, and the room for manoeuvre in the transition had been restricted by the Russia-Ukraine war and the sudden need in some cases to cut off "uncertain Russian energy sources". Navracsics said that in terms of the EU's competition with the United States and China, a key question was whether the 27-member bloc would become a "protectionist market" or if unity would be fractured along national interests. Meanwhile, he welcomed von der Leyen's mention of demographic factors and work and family life balance when it comes to

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labour market challenges. As regards the upgrade of Hungary's energy network, Navracsics said it was "regrettable" that the EU was not prepared to provide the resources needed for this even though a switch to renewable energy would require an investment of up to thousands of billions of forints. On the topic of migration, Navracsics and Balázs agreed that because of the varying ideas and national interests among member states, it was unlikely that an agreement would be reached under the current EC.

GULYÁS: HUNGARY-GERMANY COOPERATION MUST BE STRENGTHENED

German-Hungarian cooperation "which existed in good times and also bad times over history" is greatly needed also in the 21st century, and it should be further strengthened, the head of the Prime Minister's Office said on Thursday. Gergely Gulyás told an event organised by the Nézőpont Institute and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) announcing the results of a poll dubbed Hungary-Germany 2023 barometer that there had been times in the past when Hungary-Germany relations were better. At the same time, the current results should be appreciated in the light of "how many people work for how long and how strong" on trying to deteriorate the two countries' ties, he said. Gulyás said the disputes resulting from different political views must not be allowed to

expand to the economy. "We do not belong to the European Union member states that want to live from the Germans' money but Hungary offers a good investment opportunity for Germans to make money and profits, while the know-how, added value and technology also benefit the Hungarian economy," he said. He said the greatest danger was if "cooperation gets lost in an area where the two countries basically think along the same lines". Germany and Hungary both have an interest in a strong European Union and reject the new EU common debt, Gulyás said, adding that both countries considered competitiveness important. Citing a survey by the German chamber of commerce in Hungary, Gulyás noted that bilateral trade accounted for more than 25% of Hungary's foreign trade, adding that 80% of German investors were considering further investments in Hungary. He however expressed concern over the low proportion of reports, only 23%, that show Hungary in a positive light in the German media.

CENTER FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS PARTNERS WITH AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE TO UNCOVER CAUSES OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION

Illegal mass migration is being organised by the same players in Europe and the United States using the same set of tools, Miklós Szánthó, head of the Center for Fundamental Rights, said in Washington, DC

on Wednesday after reaching an agreement with the America First Policy Institute. The Hungarian think-tank and AFPI have agreed to draw up a package of political proposals aimed at uncovering the causes of illegal migration, identifying those promoting it and presenting the political, ideological and cultural background of the means they use. The challenges posed by illegal migration serve as common ground, just as it has brought Hungarian and American conservatives together in thinking that the nation should come first, Szánthó told the "No Borders, No Nation" roundtable discussion held at the Hungarian embassy.

Szánthó outlined the ongoing legal debates on migration in Europe, emphasising that immigration laws are national competencies under European Union law. He said physical barriers on the border and "legal barriers" in the form of laws were both important elements of border protection.

AFPI executive director and former acting US secretary of homeland security Chad Wolf said that immigrants to the US were no longer coming from just Latin America, but migrants from 150 countries were now showing up at the Mexican border. The authorities register some 170,000-200,000 illegal entrants a month, but estimates say that another 70,000-80,000 people cross the border without any kind of registration, he said.

**NAVRACSICS: S HUNGARY
ELI-ALPS LASER CENTRE
'FUTURE OF EUROPE'**

The ELI-ALPS laser centre in Szeged, in southern Hungary, is the future of Europe, Regional Development Minister Tibor Navracsics said on Thursday. Addressing an event

marking the research centre's completion, Navracsics said it was the traditions, history and "heroes" of higher education, science and research in Szeged that had allowed the city to become one of Europe's and the world's research hubs. The laser centre was made possible by the financial contributions of EU taxpayers, the minister said.

EU Affairs Minister János Bóka said the research being carried out in the ELI-ALPS centre was "unparalleled in Europe and possible worldwide". Noting that preparations for the establishment of the centre began in 2008, he minister said he wanted to see similar projects realised in other Hungarian knowledge centres as well.