

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Tamás Vasvári

French-Swiss Erik Truffaz at Veszprém Jazz Fest

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Events marking Budapest's 150th birth anniversary**

**Events connected to the wars in Ukraine, Israel**

**Diplomatic Fair in Budapest**

## TOP STORY

# ORBÁN ADDRESSES HUNGARIAN PERMANENT CONFERENCE

The answer to the challenges of “a world slipping apart” lies in strengthening cooperation among Hungarians, the prime minister said on Friday.

„Our answer to that slipping apart is unity,” Viktor Orbán told a meeting of the Hungarian Permanent Conference in Budapest. In the coming years, the essence of Hungary’s strategy for Hungarian communities beyond the borders should be strengthening cooperation among Hungarians “as the world around us disintegrates and slips apart”, he said, adding that the European Union, too, was in the process of “falling apart” as “it is failing to implement its own decisions”. Orbán said Hungary this year had been able to maintain programmes and institutions created to support Hungarians outside the country but had no capacity to expand them. He said the country was expected to return to growth in 2024, and the resources for that expansion would again be at hand. The latest increase in the minimum wage shows that “life is returning into the Hungarian economy, and we’ve managed to drag it out of recession”. This, the prime minister added, would give the opportunity to revive development schemes for Hungarians beyond the borders, too, he said.

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## **ORBÁN: SOLELY UP TO HUNGARIANS TO DECIDE WHO STAYS IN HUNGARY**

Addressing the Hungarian Permanent Conference in Budapest, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said in connection with migration that it was solely up to Hungarians to decide who can and cannot reside in Hungary and on what terms. Orbán said whereas western European leaders thought that Muslim immigrants could be secularised in the same way that traditional European Christian communities had been, Muslims did not want to be secularised and felt at home with a different life philosophy, "which they see as superior to secularised European life". So chances of real integration were "extremely small", he said. Hungary, the prime minister said, must tighten its immigration rules as the relevant 2007 law had been introduced before the advent of "migration inflation". A transparent and enforceable system must be created, Orbán said, "otherwise Westerners will sweep us away". He said that while the EU's new migration package "contains sensible tendencies", it was nevertheless "unacceptable" as it still relied on the redistribution of migrants. Member states would have to pay if they refused to accept migrants, and Hungary would have to set up camps housing thousands of them, he said. Orbán said he expected to see "big conflicts" over migration in the next six months. Speaking of Hungary's

policy for Hungarians across the borders, Orbán said the elections in Slovakia in which the ethnic Hungarian party "failed to make it to parliament multiple times in a row" revived the question whether ethnically based politics had a future, especially considering declining demographics. The Hungarian government, he said, held to "our joint responsibility of preserving ethnic foundations". Politics based on ethnic groups, he said, had a future as long as that responsibility existed.

He expressed his best wishes to Hunor Kelemen of Romania's ethnic Hungarian RMDSZ, noting that 2024 would see four elections there. Hungary will help Hungarians there in any way it can within the framework of international law and interstate regulations, he said.

Meanwhile, Orbán said support for Transcarpathia must be considered especially carefully. The situation of Transcarpathia Hungarians "is the hardest, most painful aspect of Hungarian life in the Carpathian Basin", Orbán said.

Orbán said Hungary could not offer anything to Ukraine "because they are en route to an abyss and we do not want to give a helping hand in that." He said Hungary's Ukraine policy would therefore not change: it would provide humanitarian aid but refrain from steps that would take Hungary closer to a war. Orbán said it seemed clear to him that the EU's Ukraine "three-legged strategy" based on the assumptions that Ukraine would win the war and

Russia would lose -- prompting a political reshuffle in Moscow -- had failed.

Orbán noted he had proposed a "period of reflection" at the latest EU summit, and that the EU should admit that its "plan A" had failed. The aim was not that Ukraine "should be left to its own devices" but that the EU devise a "plan B", more to the advantage of the Ukrainians and the Hungarian community there. "It would have also been better for European security than continuing this hopeless fight." The prime minister said Hungary stood by Hungarians living in Ukraine and he lamented that "Ukraine still has time to harass Hungarians amid a bloody patriotic war." Regarding Hungarian-language education and use, the situation had been better even in the Soviet Union, he said.

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## **ORBÁN: CURRENT BATTLES WITH EU NOT HELPING HUNGARY'S DEVELOPMENT**

Hungary today is having to fight battles with the European Union that do not help its development, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told a meeting of the Hungarian Permanent Conference in Budapest. He said he expected major disputes in the EU in the coming months, "the outcome of which will determine Hungary's room for manoeuvre in the coming decades". One is whether the EU will pivot from unanimous decision-making to majority decisions, as promoted by

larger countries, he said. That move would require an amendment of the EU treaties, which would be possible only with unanimous vote, he added. "That won't happen as long as there is a single country against [majority voting]." Hungary, Orbán said, saw unanimous voting as the "last guarantee for protecting national interests", and so such a decision was "out of the question".

"Hungary won't have a parliament in the next 120 years that would vote for that, regardless of party affiliation," he said. The EU's basic power structure, he said, had been balanced between federalists and supporters of sovereignty until Brexit. Concepts such as the rule of law procedure, conditionality and economic governance would not have emerged with the UK still on board, he said, adding that without the British, central European countries had no blocking ability.

Meanwhile, Orbán said Europe had been squeezed out of a new global power and economic structure, and has been devalued as a result. Europe's opinion was now considered a "sidebar" rather than an important factor influencing outcomes, he added. "There are two suns in the sky, neither of them European," he said. The prime minister said that agreements were now being shaped by the US and China, with the latter "producing economic growth that is slowly but surely leaving that of the western world behind". He said one "school of thought" promoted competition, trade and "trying to strengthen

ourselves" as a solution, while the other suggested protectionism and isolationism, he said. The latter "is of the opinion that preserving what we've got is already an achievement." Given Hungary's historical legacy and industrial structure, it must cooperate and trade with "the whole world", he said. Instead of shutting itself off, he said, "it's better to take our place among those countries that support connectivity". In 1990, six of the world's ten largest economies were Western, while forecasts for 2030 indicate that England and France "will drop out of the world's ten largest economies, and only one European country will remain: Germany -- in tenth place."

Referring to Hungarians living in Croatia, Orbán said that along with the country's accession to the Schengen zone, they had become part of "a success story", opening up "new opportunities and vistas". It was hopeful that joining the single currency would also fulfil the hopes of Croatia and its Hungarian community, he added. Regarding Serbia's northern most Vojvodina, Orbán hailed the achievements the late István Pásztor, the former leader of the Association of Vojvodina Hungarians, and he wished his son Bálint "good luck", noting elections to be held in December. He said the Alliance could rely on the Hungarian government for help in the campaign. Orbán said the Serbian government, too, could rely on Hungary's help, adding that the two governments were engaged in strategic cooperation which provided "hope for the future".

## **ORBÁN: EU ENLARGEMENT 'MUST HAPPEN'**

The enlargement of the European Union must happen, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told the 11th conference of the speakers of south-eastern European countries in Parliament on Friday. Newly integrated European Union member states have always been the ones to bring dynamics, growth, energy and strength to the bloc, he said. "Europe is contemplating the Western Balkans at a difficult time," Orbán said. "The EU itself cannot decide what it should think of the south-east of Europe; whether it's an unpleasant task, difficulty, a problem or an opportunity," he added. "We who joined later have always seen enlargement as an opportunity," he said. Although some think the EU's problems were rooted in the integration of post-Soviet states, recent additions to the bloc were the ones to bring dynamics, growth, energy and strength to the economy, he said.

The EU does not need an internal reform to integrate "at least the most prepared south-eastern European countries", Orbán said and voiced support for a proposal by the European Commission to provide the benefits EU members enjoy to candidates even before they receive full membership. Orbán also supported that the EU should provide aid to those countries between 2024-2027 to boost economic growth. He added that Hungary was ready to contribute extra to the EU budget to that end.

## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: HUNGARY, SERBIA, N MACEDONIA TAKE JOINT ACTION AGAINST BULGARIAN TRANSIT FEES**

Hungary, Serbia and North Macedonia are taking joint action against Bulgaria in connection with the hike in its fee to forward natural gas, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign affairs and trade minister said in Belgrade on Friday. At a joint press conference with Serbian energy minister Dubravka Đedović, Szijjártó said Serbia helped to undergird Hungary's energy security, while some EU countries did the opposite. He said no one had the right to threaten the security of another country's energy supply. Bulgaria's "hostile" measure was, he said, "unacceptable". "We're ready to give a sufficiently weighty response to this hostile Bulgarian step within the framework of the European Union," he said, noting their request for an infringement procedure. He said North Macedonia was also "on board", referring to "tight" cooperation and coordination with the country.

Bulgaria's move, he said, put European solidarity in doubt. "Allies don't do this to each other." Also, Bulgaria was going against EU rules by levying what amounted to a customs duty, he said, adding that it hindered the free movement of goods and undermined common EU trade rules.

"We expect Bulgaria to withdraw this hostile decision," he said. Also, the EU should enforce its own rules

should Bulgaria refuse, he added. Szijjártó called Serbia a "reliable ally" in helping Hungary to ensure the security of its energy supply. Fully 4.7 billion cubic meters of gas was piped to Hungary via Serbia this year, he said, while Serbia currently stored more than 200 million cubic meters of gas in Hungary. The minister said that work was progressing well on preparations for a new oil pipeline connecting the two countries, while electricity transmission capacity would be doubled by 2028. "This is hugely important for us as we'll need a large amount of new electricity to supply investments related to the electric car industry," Szijjártó said.

## **KÖVÉR: EU SHOULD INTEGRATE W BALKANS IF IT WANTS TO BE STRONGER**

The European Union should integrate the Western Balkans "if it wants to be stronger", László Kövér, the Speaker of Parliament, said on Friday at the 11th conference of the speakers of South-Eastern European Countries, but it will allow Ukraine to join "if it wants to be weaker". He likened the EU to a ship "hijacked and adrift" that could "still be saved". "Change can happen on the captain's bridge" and the current EU leadership replaced in 2024, he said, adding that new members from south-eastern European countries, not only "old" member states, would be needed "to carry out restoration work".

Kövér said Hungary welcomed south-east European countries into the EU and would continue to provide political and professional support. The country's EU presidency in the second half of 2024 would be an opportunity to actively contribute to the cause of integration, he said. Some countries in the region have been membership candidates since 2005, and most since the beginning of the 2010s, he said. "The EU must appreciate those efforts." The EU, he said, needed the Western Balkans as much as the other way round but there were signs that some Eastern Partnership countries sought a political pact to join the EU, and in line with "Brussels double standards", some would be integrated into the EU for political not professional reasons, Kövér said. Meanwhile, Western Balkans countries would be kept out of the EU for so-called professional reasons, he said.

It went against common sense, Kövér said, to pursue a "geopolitically highly risky" bid to integrate a war-torn region while holding back on a decision to integrate a geopolitically consolidated region where war is absent. If the EU wanted to be stronger, it would integrate Western Balkans states, he said. "If it wanted to be weaker, then [it would integrate] Ukraine." He said the EU's integration policy was more prone to destabilise rather than stabilise the bloc. The same went for its policies on illegal migration, sanctions in response to the Russia-Ukraine war, "the intention to systematically make the lives of EU

farmers impossible”, its climate policy and the “aggressive promotion of the LGBTQ obsession”, he said, “not to mention the increasingly open undermining of member states’ sovereignty”.

Olivér Várhelyi, EU commissioner for neighbourhood policy and enlargement, told the conference that he had been working to put the issue of enlargement back on the agenda at the highest political level. He said the issue was not the fact of the expansion but its speed. Noting that reforms under the accession process largely fell to national parliaments to carry out, he appealed for support for the plan to speed up the pace of enlargement and to help implement it as quickly as possible. The idea behind the plan was that the accession process itself should be real and actual integration speeded up, Várhelyi said. Further, there should be predictability in terms of integration. “Wherever progress has been made [by a candidate country] ... a decision on accession must be made,” he said. Now, once again, enlargement is seen by the European Council as a political priority, he added. Várhelyi said, however, that there was “still much work ahead of us”, arguing that the population of the region should be far more involved in the process, and answers must be given to legitimate criticisms concerning the speed of enlargement.

The commissioner said the EU had already taken steps to speed

up processes that respond to the region’s most important economic and social challenges. It did so with the aim of definitively linking the Western Balkans to the EU, creating a joint economic and investment plan to mobilise 30 billion euros to overcome the most important challenges facing the region, he said. He said it was “unacceptable” that there are no road or rail connections between the region’s capitals, and energy sources were few and polluting. He also lamented deficient basic services such as broadband internet. The region, however, was implementing the plan “very conscientiously and energetically”, he said. Fully 44% of all resources have been tapped, “making them leaders in the implementation of the EU budget”, he added. In possession of a political and economic offer, the region not only not only wanted to take it up but knew how to, too, he said.

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### **PRESIDENT NOVÁK: HUNGARIANS MUST TAKE FUTURE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS**

Hungarians must take the future into their own hands and mould it for themselves, President Katalin Novák told members of the Hungarian Permanent Conference and the Hungarian Diaspora Council on Thursday, at an event held in Parliament. Referring to the Hungarian population, Novák said it was not only possible to halt the tendency of the

population to shrink but to reverse it. The Carpathian Basin, she added, would become “the cradle that cradles children. Let the Carpathian Basin be the wellspring of life,” the president said.

László Kövér, the Speaker of Parliament, told the same event that crises harboured positive outcomes, and “Hungarians have a chance to win the 21st century” rather than being saddled with losing 20th. For Hungarian communities abroad, ethnic politics have not lost their *raison d’être*, he said, and national minorities and national majorities alike needed to assert their national interests. Such communities, he added, sought to preserve themselves and their homeland in the coming century did not want to “disappear into the abyss of history”.

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### **LATEST NATIONAL CONSULTATION GETS UNDER WAY**

Hungary’s latest National Consultation public survey containing 11 questions, entitled Protecting our Sovereignty, has got under way, the government said on Facebook on Friday. The survey seeks opinions on whether household energy subsidies, the cap on interest paid on commercial loans, and the tax on excessive corporate profits should be scrapped in Hungary “as Brussels wants”. Opinions are sought on the statements that Brussels intended to create “migrant ghettos” in Hungary and that EU subsidies for Palestinian

organisations also reached Hamas, while Brussels would also send more and more weapons and “even more money” to Ukraine. Further, views are also sought on the statements Brussels would allow genetically modified Ukrainian grain into the bloc, that Brussels wanted to abolish the Child Protection Act, and that Hungarian politics was influenced by money sent “from Brussels and abroad”.

## **BUDAPEST CELEBRATING 150TH ANNIVERSARY**

Budapest is marking its 150 anniversary with a series of performances, concerts and an open-air exhibition, among other events, at the weekend. Budapest was formed on November 17, 1873, with the unification of the towns of Pest, Buda and Óbuda. City Hall is opening its passageway to the public, connecting downtown Károly körút and Városház Street, and it will be the venue of a lightshow after dark on Friday. City Hall’s courtyard and the Merlin Theatre will also be opened up to the public.

Gergely Karácsony, the mayor of Budapest, and one of his deputies, Kata Tüttő, awarded honorary citizenships at a festive assembly on Friday morning. Among the recipients were author and scientist Vilmos Csányi, actor János Gálvölgyi, actor Tamás Jordán, photographer Éva Keleti. The late 1956 revolutionary Imre Mécs was honoured posthumously. The city will hold a gala evening at Vígyszínház on Friday evening.

## **MORE THAN 10,000 UKRAINIAN CITIZENS ENTER HUNGARY ON THURSDAY**

Fully 5,023 Ukrainian citizens entered Hungary at the Ukraine-Hungary border on Thursday, while 5,220 came to the country via Romania, according to the national police headquarters (ORFK). Police issued temporary residence permits valid for 30 days to 74 people, ORFK said on Friday.

## **FINMIN: HUNGARY ECONOMY’S FUNDAMENTALS ‘STABLE, STRONG’**

Hungary’s economic fundamentals are “stable and strong”, Finance Minister Mihály Varga said addressing the annual Figyelő Top 200 gala in Budapest late on Thursday. Hungary’s government has brought inflation down to the single digits and investor confidence in Hungarian government securities is steady, Varga told the event, noting that fresh data indicated the end of a four-quarter technical recession in Hungary. That recession was “far from a crisis” as it didn’t produce a wave of unemployment, he added.

As CPI has dropped into the single-digit range, real wage growth is set to return, giving impetus to consumption and boosting GDP growth, he said. Varga also pointed to improving trade and current-account balances. Steady

confidence in Hungary’s economy is evidenced by a 500 million US dollar FX bond issue by the Government Debt Management Agency (AKK) on Wednesday and a record 245 billion sale of forint bonds on Thursday, he said.

## **GOVT OFFICIAL OPENS HUNGARIAN PAVILION AT 25TH CHINA HI-TECH FAIR**

Gergely Fábián, the state secretary for industry policy and technology, attended the 25th China Hi-Tech Fair in Shenzhen, in south-east China, and opened the Hungarian pavilion there, the ministry said on Friday. In his speech at the Hungarian Forum held on the sidelines of the fair, Fábián said Hungary was the most important destination of Chinese investors in central Europe. In 2023, 34% of Hungary’s foreign direct investment (FDI) came from Eastern countries, he said.

Hungary is in the process of “creating an eco-system” for the manufacturing of electric cars where Eastern and Western companies can produce electric motors, batteries, solar panels and entire cars, he said. During the visit, Fábián met representatives of ZTE, Bopu Tech, BGI, Honor and Huawei. At the Huawei plant, he visited the Neumann exhibition room, named after Hungarian-born scientist John von Neumann, which showed a cross-section of the company’s solutions in various sectors, the ministry said. The China Hi-Tech Fair, the country’s largest

fair on innovation, opened on Nov 15, with exhibitors from over 40 countries from Belgium to Australia.

## **NEW YORK YOUNG REPUBLICAN CLUB HEARS ABOUT HUNGARY GOVT POLICIES, ORBÁN**

The New York Young Republican Club has hosted an event together with the Foundation for a Civic Hungary, presenting Hungarian government policies as well as the English edition of a book by Áron Hidvéghi about Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The foundation's head, Ádám Kavecsánszki, told a full house Wednesday local time that Orbán was known the world over, and the crowded event was also a testament to the Hungarian prime minister's pulling power.

He praised the government's conservative policies "based on civic-Christian values", saying it was possible to win an election with values-based

policies. Freedom, he added, must be "fought for every day", and the Hungarian government did this in accordance with the founding principles of the ruling Fidesz party. In his speech, Gavin Wax, president of the New York Young Republican Club, thanked Hungary for standing up for Israel and refusing to back a UN General Assembly resolution urging Israel to enact a ceasefire. He told MTI that what American conservatives drew inspiration from Orbán and his vision for the future of Hungary and Europe which was centered on families, stopping immigration and protecting sovereignty.

## **PM OFFICE: PORTAL LAUNCHED FOR HUNGARIANS SEEKING TO RETURN HOME**

The government has launched a website designed to facilitate the return of Hungarians living abroad

to their home country, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén announced at the Hungarian Diaspora Council's meeting in Budapest on Thursday. According to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office, the government pays special attention to the situation of ethnic Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin, in western Europe and in the diaspora on other continents. The trend of Hungarians returning home has accelerated since the mid-2010s, with their numbers steadily exceeding 20,000 each year, the statement said. The website [hazavaro.gov.hu](http://hazavaro.gov.hu) has been launched as part of package of services devised by the government to help Hungarians return home, and it provides comprehensive information on moving to Hungary and facilitates procedures online. The government has also designated 27 points in public administration offices where Hungarians returning home are offered assistance in English and Hungarian, the statement added.