

PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Péter Komka

Fog in northern Hungary hills

UPCOMING EVENTS

LMP presser on Ukraine, GMO

Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Israel

Events marking Christmas, Advent

TOP STORY

ORBÁN: HUNGARIANS SHOULD NOT BEAR COSTS OF 'BAD DECISION'; DECISION-MAKERS SHOULD

Hungary did not take part in the decision at the EU summit on starting Ukraine's EU accession process and vetoed 50 billion euros in financial aid for the country, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán told public radio on Friday.

In the interview recorded in Brussels, Orbán said that starting accession talks with Ukraine had been a "bad decision" and its potential drawbacks should not be paid by Hungarians. He said he had tried to convince the other EU leaders not to put the issue of Ukraine's accession negotiations on the agenda. Orbán said the decision was not taken at the right time and he had tried to persuade EU leaders to return to the issue "when Ukraine is ready to negotiate". "I struggled for eight hours to explain to them that helping badly is worse than not helping at all," he said. "It was impossible to convince them," he said. The EU leaders had "two serious arguments" that he had to take into account. "One is that there are 26 of them, and I'm alone, and they wanted to give Ukraine ... encouragement to continue the war, and they asked me not to block them from doing so," he said, adding that their decisive argument was that Hungary would not lose anything, given that the final word on Ukraine's membership was up to national parliaments, including Hungary's.

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ORBÁN: HUNGARIAN PARLT COULD VOTE AGAINST UKRAINE'S EU MEMBERSHIP

"If we don't want Ukraine to become a member of the EU, then the Hungarian parliament will vote against it," the prime minister said. Viktor Orbán told public radio that a long process lay ahead before the issue would reach the parliaments and there were around 75 occasions when the Hungarian government could halt the process. "If anything harms Hungary's interests during the talks, I will stop it," he said. Noting that the other EU leaders were determined to allow accession negotiations to begin, he said: "Hungary does not want to take part in this bad decision." He said they could go it alone, "and that's why I left the room". Meanwhile, Orbán said he had to veto 50 billion euros in aid for Ukraine, and an extraordinary summit was likely to be held at some point in February, when they would return to the issue. The prime minister said that the EU wanted to give the money of member states, including the money of the Hungarians, to Ukraine, but he vetoed this. He noted that a unanimous decision was needed, which Hungary withheld. "I had to veto the 50 billion ... they had no choice other than to take note that Hungary vetoed it, so there is no money," he said. The decision to start Ukraine's EU accession talks was a "bad" one with possible drawbacks, he said,

adding that Hungary would "not pay the financial and economic costs". Orbán said the EU decision-makers "must bear the costs of this decision". EU member states, he said, wanted to "go in this direction quarrelling" and Hungary had the chance to warn that "this is a bad decision". Orbán said Hungary could "stop this process later", adding that the final decision on Ukraine's membership would be made by the Hungarian parliament. "If the interests of Hungarian farmers must be protected, then Hungary will apply the handbrake; let there be no doubt about that," he said. The prime minister said the EU was used to making bad decisions, and he listed the 2008 financial crisis, migration, and its decision over the war in Ukraine to go "towards war and sanctions" rather than in the direction of peace. Orbán said Hungary had no interest in the EU managing itself by taking out loans to finance aid to Ukraine, adding that the bloc's money was structured in a way that what was paid in to the budget was then spent. "We made an exception once and came out of it badly," he said, referring to joint borrowing for financing pandemic recovery. "Not everyone was allowed to access this money in the same way." "This shouldn't happen again," Orbán said. The prime minister called the situation in Ukraine "bad", adding that the war should not be fed more money but stopped. "A ceasefire and peace negotiations are needed," he said. The start of Ukraine's accession talks "in itself won't harm Hungary's interests

for now", but financing Ukraine with loans "is already an immediate harm to interests". Orbán said that change was needed in Brussels. "The fact that they were messing with Hungary this way showed that Brussels had the inclination to abuse its powers," he said. Also, EU money would have to be "handed over sooner or later no matter what", he said. "Once all the money arrives, the Hungarian parliament will decide how much of it should go towards raising teachers' wages, how much for supporting SMEs and how much for energy modernisation, and so on," he added. Orbán said that efforts to amend the EU's seven-year budget offered an excellent opportunity for Hungary to receive the remainder of EU funds so far held back. "Not only a half, not only a quarter, but we must get all of it," he said. "We expect fair treatment and now chances are good to enforce that," he added. Commenting on the sovereignty protection law approved on Tuesday, he said it closed loopholes "to prevent dollars from rolling in to the left-wing's cash register".

Orbán said that a country's "greatest treasure is its independence; its sovereignty". "The constitutional system serves this," he said. The prime minister said the Hungarian system was "robust", but the 2022 election campaign had revealed that there was still some room "for the dollars to roll in". Hungary's constitutional system prohibits the influencing of the election with foreign money he said, adding that the left wing had

nevertheless found a way to do it, partly with the help of left-leaning media and the support of NGOs working for them. "The sovereignty protection law has been introduced so as to prevent this," he added. Recipients of foreign funding, "those that live from dollars rolling in", are now protesting because the foreign political financing loopholes have been closed, he said. Orbán said that those who "live off foreign money" were the ones protesting against the law. "This is a protest by mercenaries," he added. The prime minister said the law would "protect Hungary's interests well". "Sovereignty does not mean that the country will isolate itself from the rest of the world, because being connected to world trade provides Hungary great opportunities," he said. "The reason we can live better than our size would otherwise allow is that we make products not only for a market of ten million people but to the whole world," he added.

Commenting on the National Consultation public survey, he said the government's task was not to shape public thinking but to understand what Hungarians were thinking. People expressing their opinion, he said, would help the government when using its veto in Brussels, for example, to block "the attempt by 26 countries to hand out money".

"Knowing the country's public opinion, what the Hungarian people want, is the greatest resource for me," he said. He also said that, in this matter, the left wing acted "a

lot like mercenaries; they do not follow national interests". He said they belonged to a minority of the Hungarian nation, as reflected by the outcome of successive elections. "We also know their opinion, but majority opinion greatly differs from theirs," he said. "Instead of shaping public opinion, the government engages in a discourse with the people, which will result in a Hungarian position that I can represent," he said. "What's most important is that the Hungarian parliament, the elected representatives of Hungarians, make the decisions on all important matters in Hungary," he said. "It will be the case also in the issue of Ukraine's EU accession," he added.

PM'S POLICY DIRECTOR: HUNGARY ACHIEVED STRATEGIC GOALS, MANAGED TO PROMOTE NATIONAL INTERESTS

Hungary has achieved its strategic goals at the European Union summit both in connection with Ukraine's accession talks and financial support, and has also managed to protect its national interests, the prime minister's policy director said in Brussels on Friday. Balázs Orbán told the Hungarian press that Hungary had made it clear in connection with Ukraine's EU accession that it did not agree with the decision and considered it a mistake. "Our theoretical position remains that Ukraine is not prepared for EU accession and therefore the relevant talks are not worth starting,"

he added. The approval of a 50 billion euro financial package for Ukraine would have seriously and immediately harmed Hungary's interests, he said. "The EU wants to finance a failed strategy which makes no sense," he added. Commenting on the post-pandemic Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) interest cost increase, he said that as long as Hungary does not receive any money, it cannot approve any further decision.

Hungary maintains its position under which the decision must be postponed, probably to early next year, he said. Additionally, the European Council has set a task for the European Commission "to deal with the problems of Hungarians", he added. "It will show whether the funds due to be paid to Hungary arrive in order or Brussels continues its political blackmail," he said. "Additionally, it will be possible to assess if the EC is open to discussions on important issues for Hungary in connection with the amendment of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)," Orbán said. "If it is, then the talks can be continued but if it isn't, then the budget will stay as it is," he added. Hungary does not see a need to amend the EU's 2021-2027 budget, he said.

SZÁZADVÉG: EU CITIZENS THINK SAME WAY AS HUNGARY'S GOVT

European citizens' views on key issues chime with the standpoints of the Hungarian government, according to a survey by the Századvég Foundation.

"Hungary is the voice of Europe," Áron Hidvégi, the think-tank's deputy chief told an event at which the results of the research were presented and discussed on Thursday. Fully 71% of Europeans agreed on the need for a rapid ceasefire in Ukraine and almost all rejected the idea of Europe sending soldiers to fight there, the survey found. With the exception of respondents in Norway, most believed that Europe was on the losing as regards sanctions against Russia is concerned, and two-thirds rejected tougher action against China. Bence Tuzson, the justice minister, said the results showed that "the European elite and society think fundamentally differently". He called it a "problem" that the poles of European power were changing, with the European Commission increasingly subsuming the powers of the European Council and starting to behave like a government. This was leading to the disintegration of the bloc, he added. He said the government was guided solely by the national interest, while in the majority of the member states ideological pressure was "so

strong that the national interest is suppressed". The survey was carried out in 27 EU member states, as well as in the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland, with thousands of people interviewed in each country.

DEFMIN: HUNGARY TO PARTICIPATE IN TANK DEVELOPMENT

Hungary will participate in tank development in cooperation with Rheinmetal, Defence Minister Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said on Friday. "Together with our large German partner, we will develop and bring to market a state-of-the-art, latest-generation tank under the name Panther," he said on Facebook after the signing of contracts with Rheinmetal. He added that the project would bring serious advantages to Hungary, enabling the country to join developments which "are the privilege of serious and strong countries". Seventy Hungarian engineers will work on the project for years, and "our Zalaegerszeg plant will offer the framework for this cooperation",

through which serious defence industry development will be carried out in Hungary, he said. "We ensure the security of Hungarian people through the most modern means," he added.

GERMAN AUTOS SUPPLIER ZF TO INVEST HUF 24 BN IN HUNGARY EV COMPONENTS PRODUCTION

German automotive industry supplier ZF will invest 24 billion forints (EUR 63m) at its bases in Kecskemét, in central Hungary, and Debrecen, in the country's east, Péter Szijjártó, the minister of foreign affairs and trade, said on Friday. ZF Chassis Modules Hungary will make shock absorbers as well as front and rear axles for electric vehicles to be manufactured from 2025 at the BMW plant in Debrecen and the Mercedes factory in Kecskemét, Szijjártó said. The state is providing 2.4 billion forints in support for the investment that will create 313 jobs, he said, adding that Hungary is "at the forefront" in the switch to electromobility.