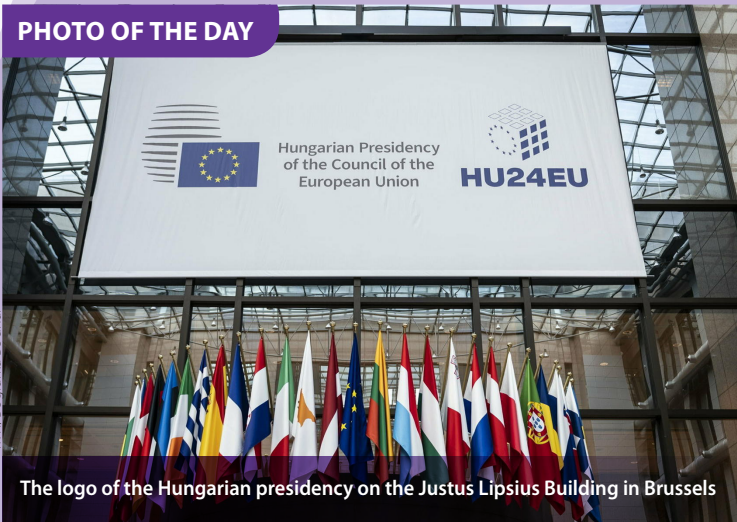


PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTI/Bodlálka Bodnár

The logo of the Hungarian presidency on the Justus Lipsius Building in Brussels

UPCOMING EVENTS

Events related to the Hungarian EU presidency

Events related to the wars in Middle East, Ukraine

TOP STORY

RESPONSIBILITY 'AT HEART OF EU PRESIDENCY'

Viktor Orbán and Volodymyr Zelensky agreed on a number of issues that require follow-up at the highest level, EU affairs minister has said.

The possibility of another top-level meeting could be considered if both the Hungarian and the Ukrainian governments made progress in their tasks on these issues, János Bóka told public television in an interview. "I believe that the Hungarian prime minister has done more for peace in the past 24 hours than European leaders have during the past twelve months," Bóka said. Hungary's EU presidency, he added, could make proposals and suggestions concerning the European stance on the war but decisions themselves had to be taken by the bloc's leaders, he said, adding that the prime minister had immediately reported on the discussions to the president of the European Council and to member states' heads of state and government. Political responsibility is what gives meaning to Hungary's EU presidency, as the key priorities of the bloc's next five years can be set during this period, Bóka said, insisting that the EU presidency had got off to a "flying start" and noting that Orbán has met the president of the European Council, held talks with Zelensky in Kyiv, and received the Secretary-General of the Council.

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BÓKA: HUNGARY POISED TO ‘DO A GREAT SERVICE TO THE EU AS A WHOLE’

If Hungary’s EU presidency lives up to its responsibility, it will “do a great service to the EU as a whole”, EU affairs minister János Bóka told current affairs channel M1, adding that this primarily lay in getting through the message expressed by voters in the European parliamentary elections. “Hungary’s EU presidency acts in a politically responsible manner if it tables topics and generates debates on issues such as the bloc’s drifting towards the war in Ukraine, its economic policy undermining competitiveness and its failed migration policies, on which voters called for change,” Bóka said.

Concerning the meeting between the prime minister and Volodymyr Zelensky, Bóka said noted that the task of the presidency was limited to aiding the flow of information and channelling the opinions of the parties concerned into decision-making. The minister said the EU saw this war as its own and, besides military and financial support, communication also formed part of the war strategy. “If we cannot talk about the war without that communication being part of warfare itself, then we are part of the problem and not the solution,” he said, adding that Viktor Orbán wanted to change this approach by

talking about working to resolve the war, and this could only be achieved by an immediate ceasefire and peace negotiations based on it.

Bóka also highlighted the informal European Council meeting in Budapest scheduled for November, where the goal will be to adopt a new European competitiveness pact marking the path by which the bloc can stop the decline of its economic competitiveness. The minister said the central priority of the Hungarian EU presidency is competitiveness and “if we succeed in adopting a declaration that puts economic policy at the service of growth and prosperity, then the EU may perhaps move under a more fortunate constellation in the next five years”.

SZIJJÁRTÓ: ICC MOVES AGAINST ISRAEL PM, DEFMIN ‘POLITICALLY MOTIVATED’

Hungary regards moves by the International Criminal Court against the Israeli prime minister and defence minister as “politically motivated nonsense”, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said on Facebook, noting that he had talked with Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz over the phone, and told him Hungary would take a stand against the international court system being used for political aims. Szijjártó also told Katz that Hungary’s stance on the crisis in the Middle East was

unequivocal: escalation must be avoided at all costs “to prevent the crisis from becoming a full-blown war”. At the same time, it must be constantly demanded that Hamas release all hostages unconditionally, he added.

SZIJJÁRTÓ IN PHONE TALKS WITH IRANIAN COUNTERPART

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó spoke with Iran’s new acting foreign minister, Ali Bagheri Kani, by phone on Thursday, following Hungary assuming the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Bagheri Kani was appointed after his predecessor, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, was killed in a helicopter crash in May, Szijjártó noted on Facebook.

He said he and Bagheri Kani were in agreement on the need to intensify dialogue between the EU and Iran, arguing that “diplomacy isn’t about limiting dialogue to those with whom you agree on everything”. The minister said they hoped discussions between the EU and Iran could help avoid an escalation in the situation in the Middle East. Szijjártó warned that if the Middle East crisis were to spread to other countries, it would threaten global security, “and we who have been living in the shadow of a war for two and a half years now don’t want another global security crisis”. Szijjártó added that he and Bagheri

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Kani had agreed to stay in constant contact and speak in person on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

ORBÁN TO ATTEND ORGANISATION OF TURKIC STATES SUMMIT IN AZERBAIJAN

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is attending the summit of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) in Shusha, Azerbaijan on July 5-6. The summit will focus on building a sustainable future in transport through connectivity and climate policy. The talks are aimed at advancing cooperation in this field among the organisation's members. The summit will also cover the OTS's relations with the European Union and other international organisations. Orbán is also scheduled to hold bilateral talks with the leaders of Hungary's Turkic partner countries on the sidelines of the summit.

BUDAPEST HOSTS EUROPE-CHINA TOURISM MEETING

The Europe-China Tourism Dialogue Ministerial Meeting and Conference, organised in the framework of Hungary's EU presidency, has opened in Budapest. Addressing the event in the evening, Márton Nagy, the national economy minister, said

that Hungary played a "special role" in ties between China and the EU thanks to efforts to advance its own relations with the Far East. He noted that improving EU competitiveness was a focus of Hungary's EU presidency and that the tourism sector, of particular importance for the EU economy, generating 9% of GDP, was part of that endeavour. Nagy said projections pointed to a marked rise in the number of Chinese tourists arriving in Europe in the coming years. Thanks to the strengthening of Hungarian-Chinese ties, the number of guest nights spent by Chinese tourists in Hungary climbed over 300,000 last year, he added. He said that the return of Liszt Ferenc International Airport, the "country's gateway", to state ownership a few weeks earlier, would benefit Hungary's tourism sector.

BIOEAST MEMBER STATES HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF R+I ON SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

The Hungarian EU presidency and a group of central and eastern European countries cooperating on circular bioeconomies focused on rural areas in seeking to maintain and even strengthen environmental sustainability have organised a high-level political forum in Brussels with a view to promoting research and innovation in CEE, the agriculture ministry said on Thursday.

The ten BIOEAST member states have presented a declaration emphasising the importance of a joint, Europe-wide R&I partnership focusing on the priorities of central and eastern Europe. The aim is the sustainable production of agricultural, forestry and sweet-water products, and producing high value-added products from them, the declaration said. Preserving food security and a biomass-based economy is key to a sustainable social and economic development, the statement said.

The forum, Partnering for the Future, was held at Hungary's permanent representation in Brussels with representatives from 27 EU member states and EU institutions attending. At the forum, they presented a declaration signed by the agriculture and research ministers of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The meeting also touched on matters regarding the EU's enlargement. Participants agreed that EU frameworks and funds play an important in EU cohesion and in the accession of Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. A European R&I partnership focusing on eastern Europe could further boost the process, they said. The Central-Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy (BIOEAST) has asked

the European Commission, Council and Parliament to consider the declaration when planning the financial framework for the next cycle, they said.

NAGY CALLS FOR BOOSTING HUNGARY-MONTENEGRO ECONOMIC, TOURISM TIES

Márton Nagy, the national economy minister, has held talks with Vladimir Martinović, Montenegro's minister for tourism. They discussed international trends impacting the region's economy and tourism potential as well as the possible areas for deepening bilateral cooperation. Nagy said Montenegro was an important partner for Hungary, noting that bilateral trade turnover came close to 100 million euros in 2023. Hungarian investments in Montenegro reached 314 million euros in 2022, making the Western Balkan country the 21st destination for Hungarian capital that year, he added. Meanwhile, he welcomed that more than 4,300 Montenegrin tourists spent over 11,000 guest nights in Hungary in the first half of this year, a 39% increase in the number of tourists and a 42% rise in the number of guest nights compared with last year. The two weekly flights between Budapest and Podgorica, he said, provided a solid basis for developing tourism relations. Nagy also underscored Hungary's support for Montenegro's European Union integration, saying the country was ready for EU membership.

GOVT OFFICIAL BRIEFS SHANGHAI CONFERENCE ON HUNGARY POLICY AIMS

Gergely Fábián, the state secretary for industry policy and technology, has presented the Hungarian government's policy aims regarding artificial intelligence at the 2024 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai. At the conference organised between July 4 and 6 by the Chinese science and technology ministry, Fábián said Hungary and China were both committed to maintaining dialogue and cooperation in technology, especially in telecommunications and electromobility. He presented Hungarian policy aims concerning AI and attended the AI global governance cooperation panel discussion where he talked about Hungary's stance on an international cooperation agreement in the works on the harmonised coordination of human-centered AI, the statement said. Fábián highlighted the importance of international responsibility and cooperation in facilitating the sector's development.

JUSTICE MINISTER ORDERS MORE PROBES INTO FLIGHT DELAYS

Justice Minister Bence Tuzson has ordered eight more consumer protection probes against airlines

over recent significant flight delays and cancellations, the justice ministry said on Thursday. The latest investigations concern flights operated by Ryanair and Wizz Air. "The practices applied by the airlines are unacceptable," the ministry quoted Tuzson as saying. "Passengers cannot be at the mercy of airlines; the laws must be respected," he said, adding that airlines could expect "severe consumer protection fines" if they did not meet their obligations.

Last week, the Budapest Government Office said it has launched a probe against Ryanair, Wizz Air, SunExpress and Eurowings over flight delays.

HUNGARY'S KURTÁG, ROSKA AMONG WOLF PRIZE RECIPIENTS

World-renowned composer György Kurtág and renowned neurobiologist Botond Roska are among the recipients of the prestigious Wolf Prize this year. The award going with a 100,000 dollar cash prize is given annually by Israel's Wolf Foundation since 1978 in the six fields of agriculture, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, physics, and the arts. The nine awardees were announced with a five-month delay on Wednesday evening because of the Israeli war. Kurtág has been recognised with the award for his life-time achievement. Roska received the honour shared with José-Alain Sahel for achievements in medicine.