

## PHOTO OF THE DAY



MTV/Péter Lakatos

Composer Péter Wolf with soprano Erika Miklósa and tenor Gergely Boncsér at the press conference for his opera Maddalena & Lorenzo

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Informal meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels**

**Stats office releases tourism figures for July**

**Events related to Hungary's EU presidency**

**Events related to the wars in Ukraine, Middle East**

## TOP STORY

# KOVÁCS: BRUSSELS SHOULD ALSO WELCOME MIGRANTS

If Brussels forces Hungary to let migrants in, then it must also welcome them, Zoltán Kovács, the state secretary for international relations and communications, said on the X platform on Wednesday.

For almost a decade, Hungary has protected the EU's external border, spending more than 2 billion euros of its own money to meet its Schengen obligations, the state secretary said, citing a letter by Tamás Iván Kovács, Hungary's ambassador to Belgium, to the Socialist mayor of Brussels, Phillippe Close. "[I]t is Hungary, not Brussels, that has suffered from a lack of solidarity," Kovács said, adding that all it got in return for rigorously protecting the EU border was a fine of 200 million euros. "Hungary will not compromise its national security or bear this burden alone, especially when Brussels seems to desire migrants only as long as they remain in other EU member states," he said, adding that the call for solidarity was not just rhetorical, but "a demand for fair treatment and genuine support from the EU".

In his letter to Close, Hungary's ambassador asked the mayor for his solidarity and support in ensuring that the EU did not penalise countries that comply with the Schengen Agreement and protect their external borders.

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## **SZIJJÁRTÓ: REPORTS ON EUROPEAN SECURITY 'INCREASINGLY OMINOUS'**

Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó on Wednesday flagged “increasingly ominous reports” on Europe’s present and future security situation. “The stabbing rampage in Solingen -- which unfortunately isn’t an isolated occurrence based on the developments in recent months -- shocked not only Germany, but the entire continent,” Szijjártó said on Facebook. Meanwhile, he said, the European Union’s outgoing foreign policy chief was “demanding more weapons for Ukraine and that the country be allowed to use the Western weapons it has received so far to strike in Russian territory”. Szijjártó said there were “important and critical days ahead”. He noted that EU foreign ministers will meet in Brussels on Thursday and that elections are being held in the German states of Thuringia and Saxony this weekend, which he said would be crucial in terms of the future of Europe’s migration policy.

## **KOVÁCS: NATIONAL CARD APPLICANTS REQUIRED TO UNDERGO 'SAME SCREENING AS IN CASE OF ANY OTHER RESIDENCE PERMIT'**

Applicants for Hungary’s National Card will go through “the same migration and security screenings

as applicants for any other residence permit,” the state secretary for government communications said on Facebook on Wednesday. Zoltán Kovács responded to European concerns suggesting that the Hungarian programme could offer “easy access for Russian and Belarusian spies”, and dismissed suggestions of Hungary hosting such spies as “fiction”. Kovács said the cards could be obtained for a stay between 90 days and two years, for employment purposes, adding that the applicant was required to have an employer and an actual position. Holders of the card need to reapply if they change their job, he added.

The state secretary also noted that the National Card programme had been in place “for quite some time”, yet, it had not received criticism from the EU. “If it was all right earlier, why are we getting attacked now, while the regulations and the practice have been unchanged?” he asked. Citing Eurostat figures, Kovács said over 718,000 Russian citizens had been staying in the EU in January 2023, with fewer than one percent of that group in Hungary, adding that “the same ratio” applied to Belarusian nationals. In view of those figures “Brussels’ worries about Russian spies in Hungary” seem “a bit unrealistic”. He also added that “huge masses of Russians” lived in the Baltic states, which he said were “most critical of Hungary’s National Card system and the alleged risks around it”.

## **ECONMIN: AUTHORITIES STEP IN TO PROTECT FAMILIES AGAINST PRICE GOUGING**

The authorities have launched an investigation into retail chains that have made parallel and big price increases for basic food produce, the national economy ministry said on Wednesday. The price increases fly in the face of government-mandated food price caps and promotions on certain products which have been subject to an online price monitoring system from June 1, 2023, the ministry said in a statement. Big retail chains upped retail prices for fine flour, 2.8% UHT milk and sugar, among others, the statement said, with instances of a doubling of the price of certain flours. Some milk brands increased by an average of about 45%, while the price of granulated sugar went up by more than 25% on average, it added. Whereas these measures have been largely effective in pushing down inflation, competition office (GVH) has so far scrutinised 3,000 retailers and imposed fines amounting to 650 million forints. The ministry said it is committed to protecting Hungarian families and has asked to competition office and the ministry’s own consumer protection department to take further joint action against unfair businesses.

## **MOST HUNGARIANS WANT SMARTPHONE BAN IN SCHOOLS**

Most Hungarians want smartphones banned from schools and regard phone addiction as a serious problem, according to a recent survey. A government decree introduced in August restricts the use of mobile phones in schools and comes on the heels of similar strict limits placed on smartphone use in schools in the UK, France, the Netherlands, Australia, Greece, Finland and Sweden. The survey commissioned by the St István Institute published on Wednesday examined the views of Hungarian adults concerning how they see problems caused by smartphone use by young people as well as their opinion of the new government decree.

According to the survey carried out by the Nézőpont Institute, 94% saw smartphone use by young people as problematic, while 85% backed the government's restrictions. More than 60% of Hungarian adults see children using smartphones mostly for entertainment while this rises to 73% in households raising children. Children can legally join social media platforms from the age of 13 under current laws, and in general most respondents saw this as too lenient. In Budapest, however, 47% considered the regulation

appropriate, with 44% seeing it as too light. The survey was carried out with a representative sample of 1,000 adults.

## **ECONOMIC CABINET DISCUSSES RECOVERY PLANS**

The government's economic cabinet has discussed a package of measures, including family tax breaks and support for home purchases, aimed at supporting economic recovery, the national economy ministry said on Wednesday. The measures also include a vocational training credit for Hungarian 17-22 year-olds, allowing household savings for buying homes tax free, and various subsidies for investments by small and medium-sized firms. They agreed that increasing support for families, small businesses and youth living in rural areas would underpin a fast rate of growth. The draft measures will be submitted at a full cabinet meeting in September.

## **US DETAINS HUNGARIAN NATIONAL FOR EVADING RUSSIAN EXPORT BAN**

The US authorities have detained a Hungarian man on suspicion of engaging in illegal export activities to Russia, according to the US Department of Justice. Bence Horváth, 46, a resident of Spain, was detained at San Francisco International Airport on Aug 23 as he entered the United States,

the statement issued on Monday said, adding that he and his associates were suspected of criminally breaching the 2018 Export Control Reform Act. The authorities said Horváth operated as part of an international intermediary and procurement network with direct contractual relations with Russian government institutions. He and others operating in Spain, Serbia, Hungary, Latvia and other unnamed countries are suspected of procuring American technology and smuggling it to Russia.

## **HUNGARY LAUNCHES SPACE TRAINING PROGRAMME IN ENGLISH**

Hungary's UniSpace programme, established by a consortium of 21 Hungarian universities to train the next generation of space industry professionals, has launched instruction in English in addition to Hungarian, the ministry of foreign affairs and trade, which supports the initiative, said on Wednesday. The three-semester UniSpace programme, started in 2022, offers courses in space technology, space health and nutrition, space science and space policy. The programme, coordinated by the Ludovika University of Public Service, produced its first graduates in the spring.

Information, in English, on enrolling in the course is available at: <https://kti.uni-nke.hu/szakiranyutovabbkepzesek/szakiranyutovabbkepzesi-szakok/vilagurpolitikai-tanacsado/altalanos-informaciok>