

# Hungary: a testing ground for illiberalism and a challenge for the European Union



DEMOCRACY &  
INSTITUTIONS

POLICY BRIEF  
APRIL 2026

Rarely has an election been so closely scrutinised or commented on in Europe. On 12 April, Hungarian voters will go to the polls for parliamentary elections that are proving very difficult, if not fatal, for Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has been in power for sixteen years. His main opponent, Péter Magyar of the Tisza (Respect and Freedom) party, is clearly leading according to the latest polls<sup>1</sup>, with a 10-point lead over the ruling party, Fidesz. Even polling organisations close to the government give Tisza a considerable lead. Apart from Fidesz and Tisza, only three other parties are in the running. Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland), a far-right party affiliated with the openly anti-Semitic, homophobic and conspiracy-theory-prone ESN (Europe of Sovereign Nations) political group, could enter Parliament, as it is credited with 4 to 8 per cent of voting intentions; it could play a kingmaker role following the elections. A second party, Fidesz's long-standing opponent, the Democratic Coalition (DK), is no longer winning over

voters now inclined to vote for Tisza and will likely fail to win any seats. As for the radical centre-left party, the MKKP (Two-Tailed Dog Party), it too risks suffering from tactical voting by Fidesz opponents who will cast their ballots for Tisza, and may fail to enter Parliament.

Despite Fidesz's massive advantage – having access to both public funds and media outlets amplifying the government's narrative for its campaign – Péter Magyar has managed to make his voice heard by running a campaign focused on national issues: promising to restore household purchasing power, denouncing Fidesz's systemic corruption...

One of Péter Magyar's first objectives, if elected, will be to demand the release of the billions of euros in structural funds frozen by the European Union and to invest this money in hospitals, education and transport. On European issues, the Tisza leader will no longer resort to systematic vetoes, but his positions

Clotilde Warin,  
Associate  
Researcher,  
on democratic  
issues

1 <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/hungary/>

*will not be entirely reversed: he will take a hard line on migration issues and will stand firm on Ukraine (proposing a referendum on its accession to the EU, refusing to send troops to Ukraine). He nevertheless intends to reduce dependence on Russian energy by... 2035 and limit China's influence in the country.*

*However, the now-consistent estimates predicting a heavy defeat for Fidesz are making the government very nervous and suggest a possible drift towards authoritarianism by Viktor Orbán. On 5 April, the Hungarian Prime Minister, aided by his ally, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, used the discovery of two bags of explosives near the gas pipeline supplying the country as a pretext to convene an emergency meeting of the Defence Council and, without evidence, blamed the attack on Ukraine. Viktor Orbán intends to boast of US support with the visit of Vice-President JD Vance just days before the election. Viktor Orbán seems prepared for anything, and the risk could be that he contests his defeat...*

Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian Prime Minister, has established himself as a key player in European Councils in recent years by breaking the unwritten rules between Member States based on respect and the pursuit of consensus, and by regularly exercising his right of veto, effectively paralysing European action. Faced with this almost systematic opposition based on a transactional logic, the European Union seems unable to find a solution. And, indeed, whilst concessions are made to him (behind-the-scenes negotiations, sometimes following one-on-one meals with some of his European counterparts), the number of issues blocked by Viktor Orbán is increasing: a €90 billion loan to Ukraine, the use of the European Peace Facility to reimburse arms donations to Kyiv, sanctions against violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank... And the 'Orbán method' seems to be catching on. The Hungarian Prime Minister now has Slovakia's backing in blocking two further dossiers: the 20<sup>e</sup> sanctions package against Russia and measures against the pro-Russian party in Tbilisi, Georgian Dream (GD).

Nevertheless, in a sign that the system he has built up over the past sixteen years is beginning to falter, Viktor Orbán faces the toughest election of his successive terms on 12 April. To meet this challenge, he is deploying his usual tactics (anti-EU tirades, outbursts against Ukraine), appearing alongside his allies – Russia but also the MAGA movement in the United States – and spending vast sums of money to influence the debate. Beyond the outcome of an election that promises to be a close-run thing, the Orbán case is first and foremost a challenge for the European Union. Is the EU sufficiently equipped to respond to such an erosion of the rule of law and the EU's founding principles within one of its Member States? What means does it have at its disposal, or might it envisage, to combat the paralysis of decision-making in the Council of the European Union, which is subject to the unanimity rule? For, beyond the Orbán case, the obstructionist behaviour of illiberal leaders now appears to threaten the functioning of a European Union founded on negotiation and trust.

\* \* \*

The European Union has a problem with Hungary. The hijacking of the debate and the paralysis it causes within the European Council go hand in hand with a systemic erosion of democracy in Hungary. In sixteen years in power, the Orbán regime has seen the country plummet in the rankings of organisations that measure the state of democracy. Since 2018, Freedom House has classified Hungary as 'partly free'<sup>2</sup>; since 2020, the V-Dem Institute has described it as a 'hybrid regime'; and in 2022, the European Parliament designated it an 'electoral autocracy'<sup>3</sup>. Five key areas are now being brought to heel: the judiciary, following the 2011 constitutional amendment that undermined its independence and opened up key posts to Fidesz loyalists (such as the Attorney General); the media, over which the state has a stranglehold; the economic sector, controlled by Orbán's inner circle; a restricted civic space; and cultural issues marked by anti-LGBT stances and a rewri-

2 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2026>

3 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220909IPR40137/meps-hungary-can-no-longer-be-considered-a-full-democracy>

ting of history<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Hungary is the Member State (along with Bulgaria) with the worst ranking according to Transparency International (84<sup>th</sup> place)<sup>5</sup>. This illiberal context affects the European scene, not only because European policy issues are being exploited by Orbán for domestic political ends, but also because, in the context of European integration, domestic dynamics affect the European sphere.

This intertwining is reflected in this year's parliamentary election campaign. On the streets of Budapest, the Hungarian capital, posters for Fidesz, Viktor Orbán's party, feature the faces of Ursula von der Leyen, Volodymyr Zelensky and Peter Magyar, the Hungarian opposition leader standing in the April elections, alongside the slogan: "They are the risk". And the message is clear: "Vote for certainty. We are stability". For the first time, the edifice built from scratch by the former libertarian<sup>6</sup> – who has become one of the EU's most influential populist voices – and which seemed to be an impregnable citadel, is wavering. The opposition remains ahead in the polls, even though these favourable predictions do not guarantee victory for the opposition party, Tisza (Respect and Freedom), particularly given the peculiarities of the Hungarian electoral system, which constitutes yet another departure by Viktor Orbán from standard democratic norms. In fact, over the past ten years, Viktor Orbán has regularly amended the Electoral Act, most recently in the winter of 2025, to ensure Fidesz's success. Election after election, the number of parties able to stand has dwindled due to the rules imposed by the ruling party<sup>7</sup>: there were a dozen in the 1990s, fewer than 10 in 2012 and, this year, just 5. Furthermore, constituencies are regularly reconfigured and enlarged so as, for example, to include

Budapest suburbs that are more favourable to Fidesz than the capital's city centre. Now, the 'smallest' constituency comprises 55,000 voters. And the system guarantees a bonus to the party that comes out on top.

To silence his opponents and make people forget his poor national results (sluggish growth, a 5% budget deficit, inflation, depreciation and volatility of the forint, etc.), Viktor Orbán uses tried-and-tested methods: the designation of scapegoats accompanied by simplistic messages. Four years ago, during an already tense election, Viktor Orbán won by denouncing the "European warmongers" and promising "peace" and "prosperity" to his fellow citizens. It is difficult to reuse the same slogans when the country's economic situation is dire, but easier to single out a single enemy: Volodymyr Zelensky, accused of draining the EU's coffers, jeopardising the continent's stability, and branded as corrupt. Recent events reflect a willingness to succumb to political spectacle: a convoy from the Ukrainian state bank, Oschadbank, was intercepted in early March by Hungarian anti-terrorist forces; the drivers were temporarily detained, and the sums being transported (80 million dollars as well as gold bars) remain under seizure in Hungary.

Such sensationalism demonstrates the nervousness of a regime which, nevertheless, has brought political life to heel and placed civil society under a stranglehold. As the political scientist Edit Zgut-Przybylska aptly puts it, "Hungary serves as a negative laboratory, where civil society organisations, independent social movements and local authorities are constantly targeted within a weakened municipal system"<sup>8</sup>. State aid reaches only organisations aligned with Viktor Orbán's policies. Since 2023, as

4 These are the arguments that Viktor Orbán puts forward in his 'annual state of the nation addresses' – the most recent of which was delivered on 14 February 2026. <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/discours-devaluation-annuelle-de-viktor-orban-2026-02-14/> Or at the Demography Summits held in Budapest every two years, or during his visits to France to address RN activists in June 2025.

5 <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025>

6 Viktor Orbán began his political career by opposing the holding of free elections and the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In 1992, he became Vice-President of the Liberal International at the Mainz Congress.

7 To be able to field a national list, a party must put forward candidates in a certain number of individual constituencies (75 out of 106 constituencies), which is not feasible for a number of parties and is also more costly. Because of this system, Jobbik, a neo-Nazi party that has since shifted slightly towards the centre, fields candidates at local level but does not have a national list.

8 Edit Zgut-Przybylska, "Poland Shows Hungary How Grassroots Democracy Can Defeat Authoritarian Drift", Social Europe, December 2025 <https://www.socialeurope.eu/poland-shows-hungary-how-grassroots-democracy-can-defeat-authoritarian-drift>

Marzenna Guz-Vetter notes<sup>9</sup>, NGOs receiving foreign funding have been subject to systematic state surveillance under the Act on the Protection of National Sovereignty. This hostile environment has contributed to a decline in the number of registered NGOs (from 23,450 in 2010 to 19,190 in 2023), but more significantly, one in six NGOs has had to change its area of activity or forgo foreign funding for fear of legal repercussions. Similarly, the media have been placed in the hands of individuals close to the government. “Between 2015 and 2023, more than €1 billion in public advertising and subsidies was paid to pro-government media, whilst a group of companies linked to Lőrinc Mészáros, a childhood friend and ally of Prime Minister Orbán, secured public contracts worth €1.56 billion, 83% of which were financed by EU structural funds”<sup>10</sup>, notes the report by the Central European platform of debate and analysis, Visegrad Insight, denouncing the “oligarchisation” of Hungary.

Beyond his actions at the national level, Viktor Orbán has greater ambitions and intends to position himself as the leader of the ultra-conservative “MAGA” – style international movement. He dreams of heading an alternative EU, faithful to the alleged roots of a Europe supposedly corrupted by “wokism”. On 16 January, the day the election campaign was launched, a video featuring messages of support from 11 far-right leaders was published on X, including his running mates from the ‘Patriots for Europe’ group in the European Parliament (Marine Le Pen; Alice Weidel of the AfD in Germany; the Dutchman Geert Wilders of the PVV, as well as the Italian from the Northern League, Matteo Salvini), Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Czech President Andrej Babis. Non-European figures also joined in on the basis of their ideolo-

gical alignment, such as Argentine President Javier Milei and Benjamin Netanyahu.

Viktor Orbán intends to flaunt his alliances with major powers, even if they are adversaries or rivals of the European Union. Since returning to power in 2010, the Prime Minister has steadily strengthened his ties with China, a country with which he established a “comprehensive strategic partnership” in 2024. By 2023, China had become the country’s leading investor. To stave off the creeping budget deficit exacerbated by the freeze on European structural funds, Hungary took out a €1 billion loan from China in the spring of 2024. From 2010 onwards, Viktor Orbán also chose to strengthen ties with Russia, citing Vladimir Putin as a successful model of an illiberal regime. Over the years, Hungary’s dependence on Russia has grown. This is evident in the energy sector (in 2025, 92% of its crude oil came from Russia, compared with 61% in 2022; the Paks II nuclear power plant project was entrusted to Russia, etc.). But it is also political: a very recent article<sup>11</sup> reports the existence of a direct line between Hungary and the Kremlin, which has been providing Russia with confidential information from European Council meetings for years. Viktor Orbán himself has visited Moscow four times since February 2022, and Péter Szijjártó, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, has been there on more than ten occasions. Furthermore, during the campaign, agents from the Russian intelligence service (GRU) have set up shop in Budapest, raising the possibility of electoral interference along the lines of what occurred in Moldova. As for the election observation mission led by the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) dispatched for the April elections, it is being coordinated by Vladimir Putin’s former interpreter, Daria Boyarskaya<sup>12</sup>...

<sup>9</sup> Marzenna Guz-Vetter, “Central European Civil Society Is Caught Between Austerity and Authoritarianism”, Visegrad Insight, July 2025 <https://visegradinsight.eu/central-european-civil-society-is-caught-between-austerity-and-authoritarianism/>

<sup>10</sup> Karolina Choina, Wojciech Przybylski and Luca Soltész, “De-Oligarchisation as a Strategy to Enhance Security and Political Freedom of Hungary and the European Union”, Visegrad Insight, Autumn 2025 <https://visegradinsight.eu/app/uploads/2025/12/Europe-Future-Forum-2025-Polish-Hungarian-Seminar-One-De-oligarchisation-Brief-Visegrad-Insight-Res-Publica-Foundation-Felczak-Institute.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/03/23/orban-opponent-calls-alleged-russian-backchannel-treason/9187fd1e-26ca-11f1-a0f2-3ba4c9fe08ac\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/03/23/orban-opponent-calls-alleged-russian-backchannel-treason/9187fd1e-26ca-11f1-a0f2-3ba4c9fe08ac_story.html)

<sup>12</sup> Daria Boyarskaya, who is a special adviser at the Vienna Liaison Office of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, served as Vladimir Putin’s interpreter (notably during meetings with Donald Trump during his first term) and worked at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is on the list of individuals subject to sanctions in Poland and is barred from entering the country.

Eager to appear as a major leader, Viktor Orbán is overplaying his closeness to the United States, whilst the Trump administration continues to send negative, even hostile, signals to an EU it intends to bring to heel. Indeed, the US national security strategy mentions its desire to support conservative right-wing forces in Europe: “We wish to collaborate with countries that share our values and wish to regain their former glory”<sup>13</sup>. A statement that applies perfectly to Hungary. On Truth Social, the US President displays unwavering support, extolling their closeness: “Under my leadership, relations between Hungary and the United States have reached new heights of cooperation and achieved spectacular results”<sup>14</sup>. This year, the date of the major gathering of the conservative right – the Hungarian edition of the CPAC (Conservative Political Action Conference) – was brought forward to 21 March so that Donald Trump could attend in person, as he did last year, but Trump did not make the trip. And the only attendees were second-tier American officials such as Stefano Forte, president of the New York Young Republican Club, and two lesser-known members of the House of Representatives: Russ Fulcher and Andy Harris. Fidesz has been consoling itself since the announcement of a visit by US Vice-President JD Vance a few days before the election, on 7 and 8 April. In reality, the links between Viktor Orbán and the MAGA (Make America Great Again) sphere remain one-sided. Through the Lajos Batthyány Foundation, which notably funds CPAC Hungary, Orbán has generously remunerated American lobbyists tasked with developing a pro-Hungary narrative within circles close to Trump in the US, and in particular with promoting an end to US support for Ukraine<sup>15</sup>. Close ties have been forged with the Heritage Foundation, one of Washington’s most active conservative think tanks.

To spread his ideas, Viktor Orbán does not rely solely on his allies, nor on a single organisation. The Lajos Batthyány Foundation

(BLA) also funds the Centre for Fundamental Rights, as well as the Danube Institute and the newspaper *European Conservative* – all organisations whose aim is to protect national identity and sovereignty, and to preserve ‘Christian traditions’. The Hungarian Prime Minister also decided, as of 2022, to replace the IFAT (Institute of Foreign Affairs and Trade), the think tank linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA), which reports directly to the Prime Minister. In 2023, an American, Gladden Pappin, originally from Missouri and holder of a PhD from Harvard on a subject rather removed from contemporary geopolitics<sup>16</sup>, was appointed to head the institute. As co-organiser of the Balkan Forum, held annually in Budapest in the spring, the Institute of International Affairs has chosen to present increasingly scripted debates; panels are no longer even open to the question-and-answer session, despite this still being a much-anticipated part of the event.

Under the leadership of the influential Balasz Orban<sup>17</sup>, Viktor Orbán’s political director and author of *Understanding the Hungarian Strategy*<sup>18</sup>, the main vehicle for this intellectual rearmament outside Hungary is the Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), better known to the general public than the Institute of International Affairs, as it targets school and university students and presents itself as ‘not neutral in terms of values’ and committed to fostering ‘patriotism’, ‘respect for traditions’ and ‘the future of the Western world’. The MCC, which runs universities with radical conservative political leanings in Hungary, Austria and Slovakia, and which plans to continue its expansion, is lavishly funded. The Hungarian state has granted it a phenomenal budget, estimated at €1.5 billion, through Cardinal Law XXVI of 2020<sup>19</sup>. This endowment included real estate as well as a 10% stake in the state-owned oil and gas company MOL and in the pharmaceutical firm Gedeon Richter. This ensures it a

13 “We want to work with aligned countries that want to restore their former greatness”. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>

14 <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116286710096907230>

15 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/dec/10/hungary-viktor-orban-republicans-ukraine-aid?s=03>

16 His thesis focuses on the functioning of the medieval church.

17 No relation to Viktor Orbán.

18 Balázs Orbán, *Understanding the Hungarian Strategy*, La Nouvelle Librairie Éditions, Iliade collection, 2023. Published in Hungarian and translated into 5 languages.

19 <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a2000026.tv>

comfortable annual budget of several million euros. From 2022, the MCC also opened a branch in Brussels, to supposedly move away from the ‘fruitless debates’ of Brussels think tanks<sup>20</sup>, and in practice to focus conferences and publications on issues of gender, deregulation or criticism of environmental policies. On the challenges facing the future of Europe<sup>21</sup>, the MCC clearly sets out its agenda: the aim is to build a community of nations and thereby restore ‘democracy’ and ‘national sovereignty’. And the grievances listed are well known, as they are the very points repeated ad nauseam by Viktor Orbán himself: the EU is said to suffer from a democratic deficit linked to unelected institutions and an opaque decision-making process. The drift towards a quasi-federal European structure would contribute to restricting the Member States’ room for manoeuvre; and the expansion of the powers of the Commission and the European Parliament would further discredit an institution already undermined by bodies deemed to be ideologically biased. In the European Parliament, Viktor Orbán’s aim is to build an alternative majority in order to wrest the EPP (the Christian Democrats of the European People’s Party) from the orbit of the historic majority alliance that the EPP forms with the S&D group (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats). An alliance that has proved effective in recent votes highlighting the breakdown of the ‘cordon sanitaire’ currently underway at European level<sup>22</sup>. To establish this new dynamic based on the articulation of a new narrative, a ‘Democracy Interference Observatory’<sup>23</sup> (DIO) has been set up, which takes the exact terminology of the European institutions and twists it. Henceforth, disinformation is said to be the work of EU institutions, and freedom of expression is claimed to be curtailed by the EU in rhetoric

reminiscent of that used by US Vice-President JD Vance at the 2025 Munich Security Conference<sup>24</sup>. The aim of this new initiative is to “uncover, document, and analyse how the European Union and EU-affiliated actors influence national elections across Europe”. And, indeed, this Observatory launched by MCC Brussels is a direct response to the Commission’s establishment, as part of the ‘European Democracy Shield’, of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience, whose aim is ‘to anticipate, detect and counter threats to our democracies’<sup>25</sup>.

Faced with such a powerful force, European responses appear weak, lacking in substance and, above all, slow in a tense geopolitical context, at a time when Russia’s war of aggression has entered its fourth year, and in a democratic situation weakened by the end of USAID funding, which had enabled a large number of civil society organisations to survive in a hostile environment. The EU, as a normative structure, struggles to respond to the informal exercise of power by illiberal governments, as Edit Zgut-Przybylska has been analysing for several years<sup>26</sup>. In fact, the EU fails to grasp and counter clientelist corruption, media control by oligarchs or allies close to illiberal governments, or electoral clientelism. The new context is more difficult to grasp: structural pressures are no longer diffuse but are now driven by clearly identifiable actors operating at different levels. Daniel Hegedüs explains this perfectly in his latest report<sup>27</sup>. The civic sphere is under converging attack from established or emerging illiberal forces both within and outside Member States, and benefits from the support of illiberal and conservative alliances that have consolidated following the 2024 elections, particularly in the European Parliament, where there are now three political

---

20 <https://www.euractiv.com/interview/fidesz-linked-eu-think-tank-plans-to-shake-up-brussels-bubble/>

21 Rodrigo Ballester, Damille Devenyi et al., “The Great Reset: Restoring Member States’ Sovereignty in the European Union”, March 2025. <https://europeanstudies.mcc.hu/uploads/default/0001/01/b9a68e04cc3f4ae7bbadf037290cd7242feef6b.pdf>

22 The alliance between the EPP and far-right political groups, including Viktor Orbán’s, enabled the passing of legislation undoing measures from the ‘Green Deal’ (the deforestation law); most recently, in March, the alliance between the EPP and the three far-right political groups on the new ‘Return Regulation’, which strengthens the tools for deporting people in an irregular situation within the EU.

23 <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/mcc-brussels-ldemocracy-interference-observatory/>

24 “In Britain, and across Europe, I fear that freedom of expression is on the wane.” [https://securityconference.org/assets/user\\_upload/MS\\_C\\_Speeches\\_2025\\_Vol2\\_Ansicht.pdf](https://securityconference.org/assets/user_upload/MS_C_Speeches_2025_Vol2_Ansicht.pdf) (p.18)

25 [https://commission.europa.eu/european-centre-democratic-resilience\\_fr](https://commission.europa.eu/european-centre-democratic-resilience_fr)

26 Edit Zgut-Przybylska, *Informal Power in Hungary and Poland*, ed. Routledge, 2026

27 Daniel Hegedüs, “How to better protect and support civil society in the EU?”, IEP, 2026 [https://www.authlib.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/AUTHLIB\\_PP\\_2026\\_01\\_Hegedus\\_Final.pdf](https://www.authlib.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/AUTHLIB_PP_2026_01_Hegedus_Final.pdf)

groups belonging to the radical nationalist right or the far right<sup>28</sup>.

To counter the risk of paralysis in European action caused by such obstructionist behaviour, the Council has so far opted for flexibility, for example by issuing statements on behalf of 26 Member States, or by welcoming Hungary's 'constructive abstention' to get certain texts passed. But the Council has other weapons at its disposal and could, in the current context of increased deadlock, choose a more assertive path to send a clear signal to illiberal forces, such as suspending the voting rights of a Member State "which deviates significantly and persistently from the values of the Union", or even moving forward through 'enhanced cooperation', which can be established with a minimum of nine Member States in order to circumvent the unanimity rule. Ideas are also being put forward to lend greater credibility to Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union, which provides for a sanction mechanism against a Member State failing to uphold the rule of law and which has been invoked against Hungary in particular but has never been successfully implemented. One such proposal, put forward by the Jacques Delors Centre in Berlin (Hertie School), would be to revitalise the Article 7 procedure and bring it to a successful conclusion by condemning Hungary for "breaching the principle of solidarity" within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy<sup>29</sup>. Other avenues might involve, for example, extending the mandate of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED)<sup>30</sup> in order to provide continuous and more flexible support to civil

societies under attack by illiberal leaders within the EU.

\* \* \*

These are all avenues that would lend greater credibility to the European Union, whilst the outcome of the Hungarian election remains fairly open. Indeed, an Orbán victory or a contested defeat remains a possibility, which would spell the end of hopes for a swift resolution but would, in fact, pave the way for the search for more robust solutions. An increasing number of Member States, exasperated by Hungary's behaviour, appear ready for this. If Peter Magyar wins, Hungary will no longer resort to systematic vetoes, but its overall positions will not fundamentally change on certain key issues, such as Ukraine or migration challenges. And, above all, the system locked down by Fidesz may also prevent Peter Magyar from having any real room for manoeuvre, particularly in budgetary terms. A fragile majority could lead to early elections and thus to Orbán's early return. Even if he loses, the risk of seeing a vengeful Orbán be present in a fragile European context (coalition governments in the Czech Republic and Poland...) should not be underestimated. Whatever the outcome of the election on 12 April, more assertive action on the part of the EU is essential to avert the risk of inaction and to bolster the credibility of a European Union that its opponents are keen to portray as weak.

- 28 Patriots for Europe (PfE), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Europe of Sovereign Nations,  
29 Ulrich Karpenstein, Thu Nguyen and Luke Dimitrios Spieker, "A Matter of Solidarity: A New Approach to Revive Article 7 TEU Against Hungary", Hertie School Centre Jacques Delors, September 2025 <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/a-matter-of-solidarity>  
30 This mechanism, for the time being, aims to support civil societies in non-EU countries. <https://democracyendowment.eu/>

Managing Editor: Sylvie Matelly • The document may be reproduced in part or in full on the dual condition that its meaning is not distorted and that the source is mentioned • The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher • The Jacques Delors Institute cannot be held responsible for the use which any third party may make of the document • Original version • Edited by Marjolaine Bergonnier • © Notre Europe - Jacques Delors Institute

Institut Jacques Delors

Penser l'Europe • Thinking Europe • Europa Denken  
17 rue d'Antin, 75002 Paris, France  
[www.delorsinstitute.eu](http://www.delorsinstitute.eu) • [info@delorsinstitute.eu](mailto:info@delorsinstitute.eu)

