



HUNGARIAN
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COMMITTEE

Information Note on Recent Updates National Elections of Hungary 2022

Information Note
7 March 2022

Hungary will hold its national elections alongside with a national referendum on the 3rd of April 2022. The political campaign period will last from 12th of February 2022 until the end of the single round Election Day (3 April), for 50 days.

Following the [baseline information note](#) of 18 February 2022, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee publishes this update on some of the important developments in the campaign period towards the national elections and national referendum.

1. Electoral system

(a) National party lists

The single member constituency delegates finished the collection of recommendations on the 24th of February. Parties had to register the national party lists until 4 p.m. on the 25th of February. The National Election Office drew the order of the national lists for the ballots.

6 parties have national party lists (listed in order as on the ballots):

- Demokratikus Koalíció (Democratic Coalition) – Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Movement for a Better Hungary) – Momentum Movement (Momentum Mozgalom) – Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party), Lehet Más a Politika (Hungary's Green Party), Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Dialogue for Hungary),
- Normális Élet Pártja (Party for Normal Life),
- Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt (Hungarian Two Tailed Dog Party),
- Megoldás Mozgalom (Solution Movement),
- Mi Hazánk Mozgalom (Our Homeland Movement),
- Fidesz-KDNP (Alliance of Young Democrats – Christian Democratic People's Party).

At the national elections of 2018, 23 parties registered national lists, 12 more than this year (the United Opposition of 6 parties registered one Joint List for the first time in 2022). The number of lists show that the higher criteria for registering national lists (71 constituency candidates instead of 27 as at earlier national elections) did have an effect on holding back most of the sham parties to register without any purpose to gain mandates in the Parliament.

There are 11 additional parties¹ which do not have national party lists but does have single member constituency candidates. After the elections, it shall be seen whether the candidates/parties will refund the campaign finance state support to the central budget in case they do not reach the threshold of 2% of the votes (1% in case of national party lists).

(b) National minority lists

12 national minority lists are registered (listed in order as on the ballots): Armenian, Romanian, Croatian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Slovakian, Bulgarian, Polish, Slovenian, German, Serbian, and Greek.

The Roma Self-Government was not able to register a national minority list. Only the German minority has a chance due to the threshold of number of votes to gain a mandate, the other minorities will be able to delegate minority advocates. The United Opposition has 3 Roma candidates who expressed their commitment in a joint statement towards providing representation for the Roma community².

¹ Parties and number of candidates: ERP – 1, IMA – 5, ISZOMM – 51, LA75 – 2, Magyar Liberális Párt – Liberál – 1, MSZDDSZ – 2, Munkáspárt – 51, Polgári Válasz – 1, Reformerek – 1, VD – 2, Zöldek Pártja – 1

² B. Bozzay, [„Ők az ellenzék roma jelöltjei, történelmi lehetőségről beszélnek”](#) ('They are the Roma candidates of the opposition, they talk about historical opportunity'), *Telex*, 2 March 2022.

According to the polls the United Opposition has been losing somewhat of its popularity³, however most of the polls do not measure the overall chances with regards to the mandate allocation system.

(c) Referendum

The Constitutional Court rejected, on 22 February 2022 the last complaint, on the constitutionality of the referendum submitted by the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union in January 2022.⁴

2. Party and campaign finance

(a) General elections

The pervasive overlap between the government activities and the governing parties is stronger than ever as some examples show below.

The slogan and posters popularizing the government in the past several months are indeed contiguous with the campaign of the Fidesz-KDNP party coalition. The slogan built up by the government in the past year: 'Magyarország előre megy, nem hátra!' ('Hungary is going forward, not backward!'). The second negative sentence is displayed in a red square on a level behind the first one.⁵ The Fidesz-KDNP's campaign slogan is 'Előre menjük, ne hátra!' ('Let's go forward, not backward!'), and some of the posters display the opposition candidates' photos suggesting that they are the ones who are 'backward'.⁶

Members of the government who are also single member constituency candidates personally distributed laptop donations for children in their constituencies. The laptop donations for students are part of the digitalisation plan of 2021-2025 covered by the EU Recovery and Resilience Fund.⁷

The Government used the COVID-19 vaccine registration email list to share the government's point of view on the war in Ukraine along with smear messages about the United Opposition.⁸

Non-partisan actors make huge financial efforts on advertisements mainly on the Fidesz-KDNP's but also on the side of the United Opposition. According to the Facebook Ads Library the non-partisan actors' expenditure is multiple times higher than the parties' expenditure they support.

Some of the single member constituency candidates of Fidesz-KDNP used in their campaign the exact number of the tax reimbursement voters of the candidate's constituency received altogether from the State in February 2022 after the decision to reimburse tax payers raising children with all the personal income tax paid in 2021. The candidates were not transparent about how they obtained these data.⁹

(b) Referendum

There is no campaign finance limit on the referendum campaign. The government as the initiator of the referendum may spend unlimited amounts on the campaign and cover it from public funds.

³ *Politico*, [Hungary — 2022 general election](#)

⁴ See [IV/81/2022 Decision](#) of Constitutional Court

⁵ Example of government billboards [here](#)

⁶ Example of Fidesz-KDNP billboards [here](#)

⁷ See e.g. F. D. Csatári, [„Iskolai laptoposztással jogszerűtlenül kampányolt a fideszes képviselőjelölt, de büntetést nem kell fizetnie”](#) ('The Fidesz's candidate campaigned unlawfully by distributing laptops in schools but she does not have to pay a fine'), *Telex*, 23 February 2022

⁸ *RTL.hu*, [„A kormány az oltás miatt megadott emailcímeiken terjeszti az ellenzékéről, hogy katonákat küldenének Ukrajnába”](#) ('The government spreads via the email addresses shared for the purpose of vaccination about the opposition that they would send soldiers to Ukraine'), 25 February 2022

⁹ G. Tenczer, [„Forintra pontos helyi szja-visszatérítési adatok jelentek meg a fideszes jelöltek választási kampányában”](#) ('Data of personal tax reimbursement appeared exact to the last Forint in the election campaign of Fidesz candidates'), *Telex*, 19 February 2022

3. Election campaign and media

See the first [update](#) of the Mertek Media Monitor's election campaign news monitoring.

(a) General elections

Mr. Viktor Orbán acting as Prime Minister has been sharing information first often at his Facebook site on important government decisions for example about COVID-19 restrictions. The site is also used now for campaign purposes.¹⁰

Both parties have been reacting to the war in Ukraine in their campaign messages. The pro-government actors (including the public media) and the government itself have published commercials and have been spreading fake messages attributed to Mr. Márki-Zay¹¹. Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Zsolt Semjén distinguished between Muslim and non-Muslim migrants in his Islamophobe speech.¹² The United Opposition has organised four protests until date for peace and demanding the government to take more serious steps against the invading Russia.¹³

Mr. Miklós Soltész, Secretary of State for Churches, Minorities and Civil Affairs addressed to the public an anti-opposition speech at the opening of a church.¹⁴

The head of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority and Media Council claimed in an interview that independence of the media is not possible and it is not important for the average citizen.¹⁵ The National Association of Hungarian Journalists made a declaration criticising the statements of the head of Media Council, but the National News Agency refused to publish it.¹⁶

(b) Referendum

The government has started the referendum campaign with bill boards, posters and TV commercials¹⁷. The opposition parties decided not to participate in the referendum campaign at all. The government's commercial runs with the label of social commercial instead of political commercial misleading the audience.

Civil society organisations launched their referendum campaign on the 28th of February calling for invalid votes.¹⁸

4. Complaints and appeals

The National Election Commission has been rejecting complaints on distribution of laptops by candidates acting also as government officials.¹⁹ The rejecting decisions were based on the 2018 amendment to the Electoral Procedure Act which declared that activities arising from functions, determined by law, of local self-governments and other State entities shall not be considered election

¹⁰ [Facebook site](#) of Orbán

¹¹ See e.g. [commercial](#) of pro-government 'Aktuális', [news](#) at the public media, [video](#) about the Prime Minister's meeting at the Ministry of Defence

¹² B. Cseke, [„Semjén Zsolt elmagyarázta, mi a különbség az iszlamista migránsok és az ukrán menekültek között”](#) ('Zsolt Semjén explained what the difference is between Islamic migrants and Ukrainian refugees'), *Telex*, 1 March 2022

¹³ See the [first](#) and [second](#) solidarity demonstrations, the protest [against a Russian bank](#), and [against the news provision of the public media](#)

¹⁴ T. Fábrián, [„Soltész Miklós elment egy templomáldó ünnepségre, és gyurcsányozott egyet”](#) ('Miklós Soltész attended a church consecration and ended up scolding Gyurcsány'), *Telex*, 20 February 2022

¹⁵ Á. Lampé, [„Koltay András: A média függetlensége egy önmaga által gyártott mítosz”](#) ('András Koltay: Independence of the media is a myth generated by itself'), *24.hu*, 21 February 2022

¹⁶ D. Szalay, [„Nem engedi ki az MTI OS a MÚOSZ a Médiatanács elnökét bíráló közleményét, pedig a bíróság már többször kimondta, hogy az ilyesmi törvénytelen”](#) ('The Hungarian Telegraph Office National News Agency does not let through the statement of the National Association of Hungarian Journalists criticising the president of the Media Council even though the court already declared that such acts are unlawful'), *Media1*, 23 February 2022

¹⁷ See examples of [posters and bill boards](#) and a [TV commercial](#)

¹⁸ See the campaign website [here](#)

¹⁹ See e.g. Decisions [96/2022](#), [97/2022](#), [109/2022](#), [132/2022](#) of National Election Commission

campaign activity. Complaints were rejected as well by the National Election Commission on similarity of the government's and the Fidesz-KDNP's posters allegedly misleading voters.

The Curia (Hungarian Supreme Court) changed the decision of the National Elections Commission and ruled that the government's email sent to the email list of people who gave consent to receive government information (COVID-19 vaccine registration list) was unlawful when including statements about the united opposition as the government's information provision should be visibly separated on government activities and criticising the activities of parties and candidates.²⁰ Legal remedy before Constitutional Court is still open for the government.

5. Third party actors

(a) Pro-government NGOs

The pro-government Civil Union Forum and the associated Civil Union Public Benefit Foundation (CÖF-CÖKA) will hold a rally on the national holiday of 15th March 2022. They call these rallies Peace March, and have organised in the past several times to demonstrate support for the Fidesz-KDNP government.²¹ The united opposition will also have its own demonstration on the national holiday which they refer to as government changing assembly²².

(b) Churches

According to a government decree published on the 1st of March, the government donates to churches arable land and some properties where they operate social institutions.²³ There have been other decisions this year supporting churches such as the renovations of 1400 churches in Hungary and 400 of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries.²⁴

The Eurotrans Foundation published a video with Hungarian priests in Romania calling the local Hungarians to vote at the national elections and to vote for 'One of Us'.²⁵

(c) Pro-Fidesz-KDNP organisations abroad

The Eurotrans Foundation assists Hungarian citizens in Romania to register for the election and to vote by mail. The Eurotrans Foundation conducts its activities in cooperation with the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) party which is closely connected to the FIDESZ-KDNP party coalition. The Eurotrans invites Hungarian citizens living in Romania to register for the elections 'not to lose the financial benefits provided by Hungary'.²⁶ Eurotrans is also running a campaign with local well known people calling for votes for the governing party coalition.²⁷

6. Suppression of votes/unlawful campaign activity

According to the calculations of demographer Mr. Balázs Kapitány, voter tourism poses real risk in 32 towns and villages. Mr. Kapitány emphasized that voter tourism may change the results only in two constituencies (Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg county 04 and Hajdú-Bihar county 04).²⁸ According to Mr. Róbert László from the Political Capital Institute, there are not much changes in the address registry, he believes that the registrations were already done before the National Election Office started to

²⁰ [Decision Kvk.II.39.260/2022/5](#) of Curia

²¹ *Hungary Today*, 'Pro-Gov't Org CÖF to Hold 'Peace March' Shortly before Election', 4 January 2022

²² A. Hercsel, '„Március 15-én kormányváltó nagygyűléssel válaszol a Békemenetre az ellenzék” ('The opposition will respond with a government changing assembly to the Peace March on the 15th of March')', *Index*, 18 February 2022

²³ [1098/2022 \(1 March\) Gov. Decree](#)

²⁴ See the press release [here](#)

²⁵ See the video [here](#)

²⁶ See e.g. [here](#)

²⁷ See e.g. Facebook post [here](#)

²⁸ M. Kacs Kovics, '„Kapitány Balázs: 32 településen van reális veszélye a voksturizmusnak a választásokon” ('Balázs Kapitány: there is a real risk of voter tourism at 32 settlements')', *HVG*, 15 February 2022

publish the number of voters per settlements and constituencies.²⁹ It should be noted that the alleged voter tourism concerned mainly Hungarian citizens living in Ukraine close to the border, and people fleeing the war in Ukraine changes the context of this practice.

There were some reports of unlawful recommendation collection such as mayors sent letters to the habitants that they believe the ruling parties should remain in power claiming that it is a 'political and human interest' to vote for the candidate of the Fidesz-KDNP³⁰; some Fidesz-KDNP candidates collected recommendations in official buildings of the local or minority self-government³¹ which is unlawful according to the Electoral Procedure Act.

One of the Fidesz-KDNP single member constituency candidates campaigned with children at the opening of the gym of a kindergarten.³²

There is evidence that some of the candidates submitted signatures of deceased people on their recommendation letters.³³ There have been also reports that some people found after checking at the website of the National Election Office which parties have submitted their votes that their signatures were used in some cases even by parties they never recommended.³⁴ These acts are frauds, and punished by the Criminal Code. The allegations concern the Party for Normal Life (Normális Élet Pártja) and the Solution Movement (Megoldás Mozgalom).

7. Hostile environment

Hateful speeches and interviews were given by Fidesz-KDNP members of the parliament against LGBTQ people³⁵ in light of the referendum, and against Muslim people³⁶ in the context of the year's long anti-migrant campaign and the high numbers of people fleeing to Hungary from Ukraine. LGBTQ organisations demanded in an open letter from the united opposition to cancel a campaign video of prime minister candidate Mr. Péter Márki-Zay as they considered the video hateful.³⁷

The smear campaign continued to discredit human rights NGOs. There were new pieces published in the pro-government media outlet, Magyar Nemzet with excerpts from video calls with former staff-members of such organisations³⁸. (See also Section 8 of the [Baseline Information Note](#) by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee)

Unknown actors put leaflets with fake news on the opposition candidate in mail boxes of voters in a Budapest (06) constituency.³⁹ Using the title and style of the civil society initiative 'Print It Yourself!'

²⁹ [HírKlikk, „A voksturizmushoz kapcsolódó piszkos munkát valószínűleg már korábban elvégezték”](#) ('The ugly work concerning voter tourism must have been done earlier'), 16 February 2022

³⁰ Zs. Sarkadi, [„A szabolcsi 5-ös választókerület polgármesterei levélben kampányolnak a fideszes jelölt mellett”](#) ('Mayors of the Szabolcs 05 constituency campaign in a letter for the Fidesz candidate'), [444.hu](#), 12 February 2022

³¹ See news on such recommendation collection practices for example

Gy. Kerénye, [„Jelenetek egy kampányból: aláírásgyűjtés a Jászságban”](#) ('Scenes of a campaign: signature collection in the 'Jászság)'), [Szabad Európa](#), 20 February 2022

T. Bod, [„Saját magát buktatta le az önkormányzati helyiségben aláírást gyűjtő fideszes képviselő”](#) ('The Fidesz candidate got himself caught collecting signatures in the local government office'), [Magyar Narancs](#), 12 February 2022

³² B. Cseke, [„Népviselőbe öltöztetett óvodásokkal kampányolt a Fidesz szabolcsi jelöltje”](#) ('Fidesz candidate in Szabolcs campaigned with kindergarteners dressed in traditional folk costumes'), [Telex](#), 21 February 2022

³³ T. Pál, [„Gödény György pártja halott emberek aláírásait tartalmazó ajánlóleveket adott le”](#) ('The party of György Gödény submitted recommendation letters with signatures of deceased people'), [Telex](#), 23 February 2022

³⁴ B. Cseke, [„Országszerte hamis ajánlásokat adott le Gödény György pártja, de így is lehet rájuk szavazni”](#) ('György Gödény's party submitted fake recommendations countrywide but it is still possible to vote for them'), [Telex](#), 4 March 2022

³⁵ See e.g. the statement of Mrs. Judit Varga, Minister of Justice published on the English website of the government, which is usually more moderate than the government statements in Hungarian language:

[About Hungary, 'Justice Minister: Child Protection Act under attack on new front'](#), 18 February 2022

³⁶ B. Cseke, [„Semjén Zsolt elmagyarázta, mi a különbség az iszlamista migránsok és az ukrán menekültek között”](#) ('Zsolt Semjén explained what the difference is between Islamic migrants and Ukrainian refugees'), [Telex](#), 1 March 2022

³⁷ B. Bogatin, [„Melegjogi szervezetek kéri az ellenzékét, hogy töröltessék Márki-Zay mozgalomának szájerező kampányvideóját”](#) ('LGBTQ organisations ask the opposition to delete the campaign video of Márki-Zay's movement connected to the 'Szájér case)'), [Mérce](#), 23 February 2022

³⁸ See the article series at the website of the 'Magyar Nemzet', pro-government news outlet [here](#)

³⁹ See a Facebook post by the candidate on the fake leaflets [here](#)

(‘Nyomtass te is!’) regular samizdat, fake booklets were distributed in the 3rd district of Budapest with fake information on the opposition candidate of the constituency.⁴⁰

Criminal procedures have been initiated against members of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) which is a member of the united opposition with the accusation of corruption.⁴¹ Thirty tax officers searched the office, shelter and dormitory operated by the Oltalom Charity Society because of unpaid taxes. The head of the Society, Mr. Gábor Iványi claims that the State owns the Society money which causes the Society’s inability to pay the taxes. The head of the Society often criticises the prime minister and the government.⁴² The timing might be considered strange since both cases were known publicly before for a long time; the authorities took steps during the campaign period; and the huge scandal of a Secretary of State (Mr. Pál Völner), the head and members of the Hungarian Chamber of Judicial Officers (Mr György Schadl and others), the president of the Budapest-Capital Regional Court of Appeal (Mr. Péter Tatár-Kis), and some university employees broke out just a few months ago.

The Union of Teachers announced a 2 hours strike to be held on the 31st of January. The government submitted a complaint to the court after the announcement, the first instance agreed with the union in its non-final decision. The teachers decided not to postpone the strike despite the decision not being final because they suspected the government misusing legal remedies to postpone the strike. After the strike, the government passed a Gov. Decree practicing its powers arising from the state of danger due to the pandemic. According to the Decree, schools have to continue almost all the classes even during a strike what undermines the right to strike. Teacher conducted 1-day civil disobediences protesting against the new Decree across the country. The union prepares a new strike from the 16th of March for indefinite period since there is no willingness for negotiation from the side of the government, instead the government threatens teachers and the union with ‘consequences’ if following through with the strike, and accuses them of just executing orders from the opposition and of violating the children’s right to education.⁴³

8. Election observation

ODIHR opened its election observation mission in Hungary on the 24th of February.⁴⁴ NGOs across Europe requested Member States to second the deployment of short term election observers to the ODIHR mission.⁴⁵

The European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO) announced the deployment of its international election observation mission to Hungary.⁴⁶

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Péter Szijjártó threatened the Ambassadors deployed to Hungary with diplomatic consequences in case they would practice their right to observe the elections.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ L. Szily, [„Egy, a Fidesz érdekét szolgáló óbudai kampánybrosúrához egyszerűen ellopták a „Nyomtass te is!” címét és fejlécét”](#) (‘The title and header of the ‘Print It Yourself!’ was simply stolen for a campaign brochure serving the interests of Fidesz in Óbuda’), *444.hu*, 23 February 2022

⁴¹ G. Brückner, [„Horváth Csaba zuglói polgármestert parkolási korrupcióval gyanúsítja az ügyészség”](#) (‘The Public Prosecutor’s Office accuses with parking related corruption Csaba Horváth, the mayor of Zuglói’), *Telex*, 23 February 2022

⁴² B. Szalai, [„Napi kampány: A NAV új akcióba kezdett Iványi Gáborék ellen”](#) (‘Daily Campaign: The National Tax and Customs Administration started a new action against the group of Gábor Iványi’), *Szabad Európa*, 22 February 2022

⁴³ B. Czékmán, [„A diktatúrák módszereit idézi a pedagógussztrájkot ellehetetlenítő kormányrendelet a PDSZ szerint”](#) (‘According to the Democratic Union of Pedagogues, the Government Decree making teacher’s strike impossible recalls the methods of dictatorships’), *Mérce*, 12 February 2022

⁴⁴ OSCE ODIHR, [‘ODIHR opens election observation mission in Hungary’](#), 24 February 2022

⁴⁵ European Platform for Democratic Elections, [‘EU states must second sufficient observers to ODIHR’s EOM’](#), 22 February 2022

⁴⁶ European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations, [‘ENEMO has deployed International Election Observation Mission to Observe 2022 Parliamentary Elections in Hungary’](#), 24 February 2022

⁴⁷ HVG, [„Szijjártó kikérte magának, hogy finoman megfenyegette volna a nagyköveteket, szerinte kemény volt”](#) (‘Szijjártó disproved allegation that he had softly threatened the Ambassadors, he is saying that he was tough with them’), 18 February 2022

For more details see:

[Mertek Media Monitor: Hungarian News Monitoring, 2022 Election Campaign – Part 1](#)

[Hungarian Helsinki Committee: Baseline Information Note on the National Elections of Hungary 2022](#)

[Hungarian Helsinki Committee: A Threat Assessment of the 2022 Hungarian Parliamentary Elections. 2022](#)

[Unhack Democracy: ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Briefing](#)

