

Democratic Backsliding: The State of Electoral Integrity in Hungary

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Persistent systemic challenges continue to affect Hungary's compliance with OSCE commitments related to democratic elections. Numerous long-standing OSCE/ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed. The most pressing issues cumulatively contribute to an electoral environment that questions the overall fairness of the process.

Today, the situation is characterized by systematic deficiencies in:

- separation between state and party activities,
- media pluralism, equitable access to public broadcasting, and ethical use of social media by political actors,
- transparency and oversight of campaign financing,
- restrictions on the use of public resources for political purposes,
- independence and effectiveness of electoral oversight mechanisms,
- fairness of electoral district boundaries,
- equality of voting rights for citizens abroad and national minority voters.

Blurring of state and ruling party functions remains a central problem. The government's information campaigns often mirror the ruling parties' messaging, creating uneven conditions for electoral contestants, while extensively relying on state resources.

The campaign environment and financing continue to lack transparency and effective oversight:

- Public resources are frequently used in ways that serve partisan objectives.
- Online political activities remain largely unregulated, despite significant spending by governmental, party, and third-party actors.
- The enforcement of existing rules is often inconsistent or delayed.

Recent legislative developments have increased concerns about transparency and equality in the electoral framework:

- The redrawing of single-member constituencies in 2024 occurred without consulting the public and experts or involving opposition parties. Several districts appear to favour the governing party. The Venice Commission expressed serious concerns regarding this change in its [opinion](#).
- The June 2025 removal of campaign spending limits will reinforce existing imbalances.
- Structural issues persist, including
 - the absence of legal provisions for domestic election observation,
 - unequal arrangements for citizens voting abroad,
 - lack of progress in implementing the European Court of Human Rights judgment in *Bakirdzi and EC v. Hungary* (2022) concerning national minority voters.

Unprecedented context ahead of the April 2026 general elections:

- Although the official campaign period begins only 50 days before Election Day, an intense campaign is already ongoing due to the emergence of a strong opposition party.
- The gap between government supporters and their opponents indicates a highly polarised society.
- Governing party continues to exploit state resources and non-partisan actors to strengthen their position and discredit opponents.

These interconnected set of grave concerns call for close and comprehensive monitoring of all aspects of the electoral process in the period leading up to the elections.

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