



FLASH REPORT ON THE ARTICLE 7 PROCEDURE

8 June 2026

The Article 7 procedure concerning Hungary, which has been ongoing since 2018, focuses on serious breaches of the EU's fundamental values, covering several rule of law and human rights issues not addressed by other EU procedures. The new government of Hungary has made several welcome commitments to address the systemic problems that have developed over the past decade and a half in the areas covered by the procedure, but addressing these properly is a longer-term process. In order to make an informed decision on whether the threat to the EU's fundamental values has been removed, it will be necessary to examine not only legislative changes but also their practical implementation.

The procedure under Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union may be initiated to determine whether there is a clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2. These fundamental values of the EU include respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. With regard to Hungary, the Article 7 procedure was initiated in 2018 on the proposal of the European Parliament, based on the so-called [Sargentini Report](#). Since the start of the procedure, representatives of the Hungarian government have been heard on numerous occasions in the Council by representatives of the other EU Member States, but no recommendations have been addressed to Hungary, even though the procedure would allow for this. Since 2018, the European Parliament has examined the developments during two comprehensive visits to Hungary; as a result, the [Delbos-Corfield Report](#) in 2022 and the [Strik Report](#) in 2025 summarised the violations of Article 2.

Meanwhile, other EU proceedings have also been launched in relation to Hungary: the European Commission has launched numerous infringement proceedings on the grounds that Hungary has violated EU law, and in several cases the Court of Justice of the European Union has already ruled that Hungary has failed to fulfil its obligations under EU law; in 2022, the conditionality mechanism was launched to protect the EU budget; and access to EU funds has been tied to conditions in other ways as well due to various issues related to corruption, the rule of law, and human rights. Nevertheless, the Article 7 procedure continues to play an important role, in part because it covers areas not addressed by other EU procedures or that cannot be addressed within the framework of other EU procedures, and it provides an opportunity to issue recommendations before sanctions are imposed.

Hungarian civil society organisations have been monitoring the developments related to the procedure from the outset, and over the past seven years have on several occasions compiled analyses highlighting the shortcomings that persist in various areas, as well as the government's successive actions that violate and threaten the rule of law and human rights. In addition, they have formulated

detailed recommendations to improve the situation. The General Affairs Council, where representatives of the Member States also discuss developments related to the Article 7 procedure, will hold a hearing on the matter at its next meeting on 16 June 2026. Below, we therefore briefly review the areas covered by the procedure and the changes that are expected or desirable in relation to them.

At the outset, it is important to note that the past four governmental terms have led to systemic deficiencies in the relevant areas that cannot be resolved overnight. It must also be emphasized that these problems can only be resolved in a truly satisfactory and long-term manner if the steps taken toward a solution are accompanied by respect for EU values and EU law, as well as international standards, and a genuine commitment to their enforcement – an indicator of this could be, for example, the proper implementation of the judgments by the Court of Justice of the European Union. It is also essential to involve stakeholders in decision-making, to conduct broad professional and public consultations, and to reach decisions in a transparent process, breaking with the practices of recent years. It must also be taken into account that the institutional system left to us by the previous governing majority is burdened with structural problems, the system of checks and balances lies in ruins, and changes must take place in an environment that currently still lacks the organisational and personal guarantees of institutional independence that must be established to ensure the stability of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. This is particularly important because the new government also holds a two-thirds (constitutional) majority in the Parliament: in the long term, democratic governance cannot rely solely on the self-restraint of the political majority in power; it requires lasting institutional safeguards.

During the election campaign, the TISZA party highlighted numerous issues in the areas covered also by the Article 7 procedure, including the system of checks and balances, the fight against corruption, the independence of the judiciary, and the shortcomings of the electoral system; and the new government has made forward-looking promises in many areas that are to be welcomed from the perspective of the rule of law and human rights. However, the few weeks that have passed since the new government was formed have naturally not been sufficient for these promises to take shape in concrete measures, and detailed proposals and solutions still need to be developed in many areas. Furthermore, while the creation of a new regulatory environment is an extremely important step, it is only the beginning: only the practical application of the rules can highlight potential shortcomings, thereby providing an opportunity for correction as well. As the practical problems related to the results of the judicial reform implemented to gain access to EU funds also demonstrate, evaluating how the rules are applied in practice is essential.

Although positive developments may, hopefully, make it possible to close the Article 7 procedure in the foreseeable future, Member States currently do not have, nor can they have, sufficient information to make an informed decision on the fate of the procedure at the Council's June meeting; it would be premature to decide on this matter at this stage. This is not merely a formality: just as with the conditions of accessing EU funds, it is true for the areas covered by the Article 7 procedure as well that resolving the specific, systemic problems identified within this framework will contribute to making our country strong, liveable, safe, and just.

Areas covered by the Article 7 procedure

1. The system of checks and balances and the independence of institutions of human rights protection

The former governmental majority systematically dismantled the system of checks and balances, weakened constitutional institutions, and undermined their independence, for example by appointing and electing leaders loyal to the ruling party. In doing so, they deprived these institutions of their ability to serve as effective checks on the executive branch. This also significantly weakened the system for protecting fundamental rights. The current governing party's programme places emphasis on the restoration of this system, such as ensuring the independence of the Constitutional Court and the effectiveness of the Ombudsperson system. Related to this is the fact that the Prime Minister has signalled the removal of numerous public officials. However, it is not yet known, for example, how this will be carried out, nor how the long-term organisational and personnel guarantees of institutional independence, which are essential for the stability of a democratic state based on the rule of law, will be established.

2. The functioning of the electoral system

In recent years, problems related to the [electoral system](#) have exceeded flaws and shortcomings of the electoral law in the narrow sense: the entire electoral environment has become distorted. The blurring of lines between government communication and party campaigns, the use of state resources for campaign purposes, the operation of public media, and the limitations on electoral remedies have collectively undermined the conditions for fair political competition. The fact that the former opposition was able to achieve an electoral victory leading to a change of government even under these circumstances does not mean that systemic problems have been resolved. Although the new government promises to review the electoral system, real change can only come from comprehensive reform based on broad professional and public consultation and taking into account the previous findings of the Venice Commission, the OSCE/ODIHR, and European courts.

3. The independence of the judiciary and the rights of judges

Since 2010, the former ruling party majority has undermined judicial independence as part of its efforts to dismantle the system of checks and balances. Concerns in this regard [have arisen in numerous areas](#): abuses in the appointment of judges and judicial leaders, the lack of transparency in the allocation of court cases, and the inadequacy of court resources and salaries for judges and court staff have all jeopardised the independent work of judges and the right to a fair trial. The National Judicial Council's right to be meaningfully involved in legislative processes and processes concerning judicial organisational matters is still not adequately enforced. Judicial independence in adjudication has also been undermined in several respects, and judges' freedom of expression has been curtailed by political smear campaigns against them. The failure to enforce European and Hungarian court rulings posed a particular problem. It is encouraging that, during her confirmation hearing, the new Minister of Justice identified "restoring the independence of the judiciary and strengthening its functionality" as one of his most important tasks. However, no concrete legislative proposals have yet been submitted in this regard, so the above concerns remain.

4. Law-making

In recent years, the [law-making process](#) has become closed, unpredictable, and dominated by the executive branch. Public consultation on draft legislation was merely a formality and did not allow for genuine dialogue; the obligation to consult was often circumvented. Within the Parliament,

procedural tools were regularly used to pass controversial bills without substantive debate, a situation exacerbated by the abusive application of emergency government decrees under the state of danger. The state of danger ended in May after six years. Public participation appears as a priority in the new government's communications, and their programme includes commitments to improving the quality and transparency of legislation, as well as substantive professional and public consultation; however, the development of specific structures is still in progress. Several significant bills have already been introduced by individual Members of Parliament, and in these cases, the lack of public consultation was not justified by the time constraints that undoubtedly weigh on the new government otherwise.

5. Corruption and conflicts of interest

In the area of anti-corruption efforts, the change of government in 2026 was followed by a policy and structural shift, although the practical elimination of previously identified shortcomings is still in its early stages. The new administration has initiated several decisive and symbolic steps to uncover abuses: Hungary has officially submitted its application to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), a comprehensive review of secret and disadvantageous public investment contracts has begun, and preparations are underway for a constitutional amendment aimed at reclaiming state assets outsourced to public interest asset management foundations performing public functions, including assets allocated to the Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC). According to the government's announcement on 8 June 2026, legislative reforms are expected to take effect in the near future in areas closely linked to the conditionality mechanism or the super milestones set forth in Hungary's Recovery and Resilience Plan (such as the reform of the asset declaration system and the expansion of the Integrity Authority's powers). Changes planned for the coming period also include a radical reform of the anti-corruption institutional framework through the establishment of the National Asset Recovery and Protection Office and a new Authority for the Prevention of Corruption; however, the exact powers of these offices and the details of the reforms are not yet known.

6. Privacy and data protection; freedom of information

Hungary previously had a strong tradition of information law, but in recent years, safeguards regarding data protection, oversight of state surveillance, and guarantees of freedom of information have been significantly weakened. The regulation of secret surveillance still does not comply with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, and guarantees for effective external oversight of surveillance for national security purposes remain absent. Furthermore, the regulation of mandatory data retention still does not comply with European law, and the use of facial recognition systems has raised further fundamental rights concerns. In the area of freedom of information, reforms in recent years have failed to address the fundamental problem that access to data of public interest can often only be enforced through lengthy court proceedings. Although the new government has signalled its intention to review the regulation of intelligence services, the specific direction and details of this review remain unknown for now. No similar commitments regarding the strengthening of freedom of information have been made to date. Real change requires institutional and procedural safeguards that ensure the protection of privacy and the transparency of public authorities in practice.

7. Media freedom

Media freedom has been systematically undermined over the past decade and a half: public service media has functioned as a propaganda tool, only pro-government delegates have been appointed to the media authority, state advertising spending has distorted the market, and independent newsrooms have had to operate under increasingly difficult conditions. State advertising spending

has clearly ceased since the election, which is an important step forward in itself, but no regulatory changes have been made so far. Nor have relevant European regulations (e.g., EMFA, TTPA) been implemented to date. This could change at any time; there has already been an announcement regarding the upcoming reform of the regulation of public service media, but no concrete steps have been taken yet. Policy consultations with professional organisations have not begun, and the preparation of the regulatory work remains non-transparent for the time being.

8. Freedom of association and the situation of civil society organisations

With the change in government, the pressure previously exerted on civil society organisations has significantly decreased, and smear campaigns and stigmatisation have essentially disappeared from mainstream public discourse. Legislative steps aimed at abolishing the Sovereignty Protection Office also reinforce this positive trend. At the same time, the government's promises do not prominently include a review and reform of the legal and operational environment for civil society organisations. The irregularities uncovered in the state funding system have received significant attention in the case of certain sources (particularly the National Cultural Fund), but the same cannot be said for other funds intended to support civil society organisations. Dialogue and collaboration with civil society have begun in certain sectors, but this is not yet widespread or systematic.

9. Women's rights

In recent years, addressing structural gender inequalities has not been a government priority: the gender pay gap (16.9%) is among the highest among EU Member States; the employment rate for women, particularly for those raising three or more children and for Roma women, lags significantly behind that of men; the directive aimed at increasing women's representation in corporate boards has not been transposed; and there has also been a regression in the area of reproductive rights. The previous government also failed to ratify the Istanbul Convention, even though Hungary has one of the highest rates in the EU of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence and threats (49.1%). The new government cycle may signal change: women's representation in the Parliament has increased significantly, gender equality has been included in the government's programme, and a review of the stricter abortion laws is on the agenda. To realize the new government's stated intentions, policy dialogue and the involvement of civil society and experts are necessary, including for the [effective implementation](#) of the Pay Transparency Directive.

10. The rights of LGBTQI persons

The human rights of members of the LGBTQI community have been severely restricted by government rhetoric and policies over the past decade and a half. Exclusionary legislation has been condemned by several domestic and international court rulings. The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly [ruled against](#) Hungary for failing to ensure a swift, transparent, and accessible procedure for legal gender recognition, that is, for transgender individuals to align their official documents with their social reality. According to the [Court of Justice of the European Union](#), the anti-LGBTQI propaganda law, which introduced content-based restrictions, violates, among others, the EU's fundamental principles, making restrictions on LGBTQI-themed gatherings unacceptable as well. The new government has not yet made a clear commitment to repealing laws that restrict the human rights of sexual and gender minorities and to executing relevant court rulings, although anti-LGBTQI rhetoric has disappeared from central official communications.

11. The rights of persons belonging to the Roma minority

Systemic disadvantages affecting persons belonging to the Roma minority persist in Hungary, particularly in the areas of education, housing, employment, and access to services. One of the most serious problems among these is educational segregation, and Hungary has still not fully implemented the relevant judgments of the European Court of Human Rights to eliminate this and has not developed an effective desegregation policy. It is a positive development that the new education administration has rhetorically broken with the previous approach that accepted segregation; however, long-term, systemic measures are necessary for actual change. In the area of housing, the rules that allow local governments to tie settlement or property acquisition to conditions pose a new risk: based on experience to date, the respective local decrees result in indirect discrimination against Roma families and reinforce housing segregation.

12. The rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees

In recent years, in the area of asylum, Hungary has not only restricted access to international protection at the systemic level but has also, in several instances, [openly](#) disregarded the binding rulings of the Court of Justice of the European Union. This now has significant and continuously growing [financial consequences](#). Although the new government has generally declared that it will implement the obligations stemming from EU law, no draft legislation has yet been made public in the few weeks since the formation of the new Parliament and government.

13. Economic and social rights

The shortcomings previously identified in the area of economic and social rights remain unchanged, and the regulatory framework has not been modified. The institutions of collective labour law have not changed in substance: the right to strike, particularly for public service employees, remains significantly restricted. The amount of state benefits ensuring a minimum standard of living has not increased since 2008 and still falls short of the level necessary for the actual subsistence of those in need. Legislation criminalising poverty as a petty offence remains in force; however, the partial decriminalisation of begging by the Constitutional Court in May 2026 represents a step forward.

Previous joint analyses and recommendations in relation to the Article 7 procedure by the civil society organisations authoring this document:

- [Selected questions and recommendations for Hungary in the Article 7\(1\) TEU procedure](#) (October 2025)
- [Selected recommendations for Hungary in the Article 7\(1\) TEU procedure](#) (May 2023)
- [Band aid for rule of law wounds – actionable recommendations for legislative amendments improving the system of checks and balances in Hungary](#) (November 2020)
- [Stating the Obvious – Rebutting the Hungarian Government’s response to the Reasoned Proposal in the Article 7 procedure against Hungary](#) (October 2019)