



## Entrenched State–Party Fusion Ahead of Hungary’s 2026 Parliamentary Elections

April 2026

The Hungarian campaign environment is characterised by a persistent blurring of boundaries between state and party activities. Public resources and state communication are systematically used in ways that benefit the governing party, conferring a systemic advantage on incumbents. These practices are enabled by permissive legal frameworks and compounded by weak oversight and selective enforcement. In parallel, state institutions – including oversight bodies, as well as law enforcement and intelligence services – are increasingly deployed in line with governing party interests, further entrenching structural imbalances. Together, these dynamics distort the electoral playing field and effectively neutralise timely and effective legal remedies during the campaign period.

### Structural State–Party Fusion in the Campaign Environment

#### Government Communication as de facto Campaigning

International observers [have noted](#) a lack of separation between state messaging and ruling party campaigning. In practice, coordinated communication across the [government](#), [state institutions](#), [authorities](#) and [state-owned companies](#) closely mirrors the narratives and priorities of the governing Fidesz–KDNP alliance.

State-funded communication tools are routinely used in ways that benefit the ruling party. Government platforms disseminate content targeting opposition actors, particularly the TISZA party, with similar messaging amplified through publicly funded advertising. Initiatives such as the National Petition and earlier “national consultations”, including the so-called “Tisza tax” consultation, are formally framed as public information campaigns but function in practice as means of mobilisation aligned with governing party messaging.

Ahead of the elections, voters have been systematically exposed to government-funded communication closely aligned with campaign messaging. This includes the nationwide distribution of the National Petition, targeted letters to specific groups, and prime ministerial [messages enclosed](#) with utility bills. These communications are reinforced through billboards and public broadcaster branding and are financed from the state budget. In parallel, individuals registered for government COVID-19 updates (“Vakcinainfó”) [continue](#) to [receive messaging](#) presented as public information but reflecting partisan narratives.

## Legal and Regulatory Enablers

These practices are enabled by the legal framework. A 2018 amendment to the Electoral Procedure Act exempts state communication from campaign rules, allowing public resources to be used for partisan purposes with limited oversight.<sup>1</sup>

Attempts to challenge such practices have proven ineffective. A complaint submitted to the National Election Commission (NEC) by a colleague of the HHC argued that government communication of this kind constitutes unlawful political campaigning. The NEC rejected the claim, citing the absence of explicit candidate endorsement. On appeal, the Kúria dismissed the case on procedural grounds, citing lack of standing. This limited interpretation of the concept of standing in election-related disputes significantly limits judicial scrutiny of state–party fusion during the campaign period.

The use of state communication outside the formal campaign framework enables continuous political messaging that is not subject to campaign finance constraints. This creates a sustained visibility and resource advantage for incumbents, while circumventing the regulatory safeguards applicable to political parties and candidates.

## Proxy Campaigning

State–party alignment extends beyond direct government communication to broader mobilisation networks.

Public officials are [directly involved](#) in pro-government mobilisation structures, including the Digital Civic Circles and the so-called “Fight Club” digital infrastructure supporting incumbent messaging. Large-scale events such as the “Peace March”, organised by the Civil Alliance Forum (CÖF), are closely integrated with official state commemorations and feature explicit campaign messaging.

State-owned entities also contribute to this ecosystem. [Events organised](#) by the Hungarian National Lottery Company, including large public concerts, have been aligned with electoral priorities, reinforcing campaign visibility in key constituencies.

## Media Environment and Oversight Failures

Public service media has not ensured balanced electoral coverage, notably by [failing to provide equitable access](#) to major opposition actors. Oversight bodies have not effectively examined the alignment of funding, messaging and timing across government, party and affiliated actors.

Judicial oversight has been ineffective. In late March and early April, the Constitutional Court repeatedly annulled Kúria judgments that had found violations of electoral equality in cases involving public broadcasters and their social media activity.<sup>2</sup> The unprecedented back-and-forth between the Kúria and the Constitutional Court produced unusually harsh dissenting opinions and judgments verging on absurdity. For example, in one decision, the Kúria defined the content of a decision of principle, a compulsory element of Kúria decisions – as follows: *“The decision of the Constitutional Court is binding on all parties; therefore, the Supreme Court is required to follow it in the election case*

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<sup>1</sup> See Act CLXVII of 2020 on the Amendment of Certain Acts Relating to Elections.

<sup>2</sup> See Constitutional Court Decision nos. [1125/2026](#), [1147/2026](#), [1157/2026](#) and [1180/2026](#).

*in which it was issued, even if it is not consistent with the established practice of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court.”*

The repeated annulment of substantively similar rulings across separate proceedings points to a broader pattern in which judicial attempts to address structural imbalances are systematically neutralised by the Constitutional Court. The resulting “ping-pong” between the Kúria and the Constitutional Court undermines the timely and effective adjudication of electoral disputes during the campaign period. For example, in one of the cases, the initial complaint was lodged on 8 March, while the Kúria delivered its final judgment to date only after the elections, on 13 April 2026.<sup>3</sup>

## **Instrumentalisation of State Institutions**

### **Use of Coercive Powers Against Political Actors**

Recent reporting points to a particularly concerning example of potential state–party overlap involving law enforcement and intelligence services. Investigative outlet Direkt36 [reported](#) on an alleged covert intelligence operation targeting the opposition TISZA party.

According to the reporting, a 2025 police operation against two IT specialists assisting the party – initially justified by allegations related to child sexual abuse material – was reportedly conducted under pressure from the Constitution Protection Office, Hungary’s domestic intelligence service. The allegations related to child sexual abuse material were not substantiated. Instead, investigators uncovered indications of a coordinated attempt by intelligence agents to infiltrate and compromise the party’s IT systems.

Statements from individuals involved in the investigation claim that members of the investigative team viewed the operation as resembling a covert intelligence action targeting a political actor. While these allegations should prompt an independent investigation, the information disclosed and evidence presented raise serious concerns about the potential use of state coercive powers in the electoral context.

### **Institutional Responses to Foreign Interference Risks**

Institutional responses to allegations of [foreign interference](#) have been notably restrained, raising serious concerns regarding preparedness and oversight. The National Election Commission’s [rejection of proposals](#) to formally involve counter-intelligence services, combined with the National Security Committee’s closed-door consideration of the issue [without public clarification or follow-up](#), has limited scrutiny of credible risks. This constrained institutional engagement not only weakens transparency and accountability but also reinforces incumbents’ structural advantage within the electoral process.

### **Selective Application of Oversight and Audit Frameworks**

The alignment of oversight bodies with governing party priorities is also reflected in the application of campaign finance rules.

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<sup>3</sup> Kúria Decision no. [Kvk.V.39.103/2026/3](#).

In its 2022 audit of campaign financing, the State Audit Office developed a methodology for identifying third-party campaign activity. Under this framework, activities by third-party actors may constitute prohibited in-kind support where they (i) occur during the campaign period, (ii) are capable of influencing voter choice, (iii) directly benefit a political party, and (iv) relieve that party of campaign-related expenditure.

However, recent developments raise concerns about the consistent application of these standards. The Digital Civic Circles have organised large-scale political events aligned with the governing alliance, featuring party leaders and explicit electoral messaging and voter mobilisation, including during the official campaign period. Applying its own criteria, an HHC [public interest submission](#) argued that these activities may constitute third-party campaign expenditure in support of the ruling party.

The State Audit Office partially dismissed the submission, citing a December 2025 amendment to party financing rules,<sup>4</sup> which it interpreted as permitting such arrangements. This raises questions about selective interpretation and enforcement of campaign finance regulations.

### **Constitutional Challenge to EU Political Advertising Regulation**

Institutional interventions have also targeted the broader regulatory environment governing political competition.

Following restrictions introduced by the [EU Regulation on the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising](#), Hungary's Commissioner for Fundamental Rights [petitioned](#) the Constitutional Court to review the Regulation's compatibility with national law. The petition argues that the Regulation creates legal uncertainty, risks infringing fundamental rights, and raises concerns relating to sovereignty and constitutional identity.

If endorsed by the Constitutional Court, this interpretation could [weaken campaign financing oversight](#) of political advertising and enable renewed large-scale online campaigning by Hungarian actors targeting domestic audiences. The initiative has been supported by *amicus curiae* submissions from the governing party and the Prime Minister's Office, indicating coordinated institutional backing.

### **Implications for the Electoral Environment**

The combined effect of these practices is a structurally uneven electoral playing field. The use of state resources for political messaging, the integration of mobilisation networks with state structures, and the selective application of oversight mechanisms reinforce incumbency advantages. At the same time, weakened judicial and regulatory oversight limits the availability of effective remedies during the campaign period.

These dynamics do not reflect isolated irregularities but rather a systemic pattern that distorts electoral competition and undermines the conditions for a genuinely level electoral playing field.

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<sup>4</sup> See Section 4(2a) of Act XXXIII of 1989 on the Functioning and Financial Management of Parties.