



What Can Liberals and Democrats Fight With? Finding a Winning Narrative in the High-stakes 2024 European Elections

- international conference organised by the Hungarian Europe Society –

Date: 5-6 April 2024 (Friday-Saturday)

Venue: ibis Styles Budapest Center, 1074 Budapest, Rákóczi út 58.

The Hungarian Europe Society - together with its partners, the 21 Research Center and the Republikon Institute - intends to continue its investigation on the future and renewal of liberal democracy globally and in Europe. Having in mind the ongoing turbulent changes in the international political arena as well as the forthcoming presidential race in the United States, this international conference focuses on the elections for the European Parliament in June 2024. From our perspective, political and civil actors and their supporters/electorate are mostly divided along the populist/illiberal/anti-European/anti-American versus liberal/democratic/pro-European/Atlanticist cleavage. This is especially the case in Hungary. Our objective is to discuss the necessary strategy/vision/narrative as well as the political communication methods and other political skills, including the organizational tasks, we all face in a hybrid political regime under Orbán and Orbánism. A definite regional aspect will be given to our approach in the light of recent political shifts in Slovakia and Poland. Here, again, the risks of the manoeuvres – and the nationalist-sovereigntist *Sonderweg* – of the Hungarian government will be analysed thoroughly. Especially because in a more and more hostile international environment, the capabilities of the European Union as a strong geo-political actor need to be reaffirmed and should not be undermined.

Program:

5 April 2024, Friday

13.30 – 14.00 Registration

14.00 – 14.15 Welcome

- **Lars-André Richter** (project director, Central Europe and the Baltic States, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Prague)

- **István Hegedűs** (chairman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest): Orbánism, Liberal Democracy, and the Future of Europe



14.15 – 15.15 Afternoon Session: Liberal versus Anti-liberal Values in Hungary and the Orbán-government's Sovereigntist Policy

moderator: **Erik Uszkiewicz** (vice-chairperson, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest)

- **Dániel Róna** (director, 21 Research Center, Budapest) and **Kata Kiss** (analyst, 21 Research Center, Budapest): Attitudes of the Hungarian Society towards Gender Roles - an International Comparison

- **Zoltán Ranschburg** (senior analyst, Republikon Institute, Budapest): The Economic Dimension of a Populist Political Regime

- **István Szent-Iványi** (senior fellow, János Kodolányi University; former Member of the European Parliament, Budapest): Hungary's Options in a Turbulent Global Environment

15.15 – 15.45 Debate

15.45 – 16.15 Coffee Break

16.15 – 17.00 Evening Session: Polarisation, Protest, Populist Communication

moderator: **István Hegedűs** (chairman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest):

- **Jacquelien van Stekelenburg** (professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Sociology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam): The Move from Electoral to Protest Politics in the Netherlands and Beyond

17.00 – 17.30 Debate

6 April 2024, Saturday

9.30 – 10.00 Registration

10.00 – 11.30 Morning Session: From the Central European Stage to the International Political Arena: The Future of a Liberal World Order

moderator: **István Hegedűs** (chairman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest):

- **Zora Jaurová** (member, National Council of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava): Navigating Slovakia's Political Trajectory: An Orbán-Inspired Route?



- **Jacek Kucharczyk** (president of the executive board, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw): Lessons for Europe from the Polish Anti-populist Turn
- **Roland Freudenstein** (founder, Brussels Freedom Hub; director, Brussels Office, Free Russia Foundation): Are the Bad Guys Winning? - The Challenge of Autocracy and the Global Solidarity of Democrats
- **Zsuzsanna Végh** (program officer, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Berlin; member, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest): An Illiberal International on the Horizon?

11.30 – 12.00 Debate

12.00 – 12.15 Closing Remarks

The conference is supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.



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Central Europe and the Baltic States

The project is implemented by the Hungarian Europe Society with its partners, the 21 Research Center and the Republikon Intézet.



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