

European Elections 2019 - Renewing the Political Agenda for a United Europe
- conference organised by the Hungarian Europe Society -

12-13 April 2019, Friday-Saturday

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

The forthcoming European elections between 23 and 26 May 2019 hold major importance for the future of the European Union, and within it for Hungary and Central Europe. We do not only witness the competition of traditional political parties, but also a shift towards populism and the emergence of Eurosceptic political formations, which seek to secure their place and influence European politics. The potential strengthening of anti-European and radical right-wing forces might bring a restructuration in the European party families and consequently a break with European party politics as we now know it.

The Hungarian ruling party, Fidesz, plays a very significant role in the all-European partisan race. Its membership has been suspended inside the biggest European party family, the centre-right European People's Party - meanwhile its leader; Viktor Orbán enjoys the support of populist, radical right wing groups and their electorate. It is not a surprise that the early campaign of the centrist political forces at the European level, the liberal ALDE, just like the French En Marche!, led by President Emmanuel Macron, often focus their critical remarks on the Hungarian Prime Minister. Namely, human and minority rights, the rule of law, constitutional checks and balances, freedom of the media, independence of the judiciary have become fundamental issues in the defence of liberal democracies and European values against the attacks of non-liberal politicians.

Elections to the European Parliament, assumingly the first time really European ones in history, seem to strengthen the polarisation between representatives of ideologically conflicting political camps - supporters of open societies and their enemies - throughout the European Union. The political situation has peculiarly changed especially in the Visegrád countries since the last European contest five years ago, where "anti-globalist" populism gained ground based on the rhetoric of national sovereignty and a "cultural counter-revolution". At the same time, we should not neglect the impacts of Russian influence and propaganda as well as the consequences of the crisis inside the transatlantic alliance. Do we have political answers and a renewed agenda to the current challenges in order to defend and strengthen our liberal political system in a rapidly changing social and media environment at national and European levels?



Program on 12 April 2019, Friday

14.30 - 15.00 Registration

15.00 - 15.15 Welcome Address

István Hegedűs (Chairman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest): European Elections in 2019: The Orbánisation of Europe?

15.15 – 17.00 First Session: Regional Characteristics of Populism and Illiberalism

Václav Štětka (Lecturer in Communication and Media, Loughborough University; Researcher, Charles University, Prague): Political Communication in the Age of Populism: Lessons from Central Europe

Smaranda Enache (Co-Chair, Liga Pro Europa, Târgu Mureș; Former Romanian Ambassador to Finland and Estonia): Anti-European Political Manoeuvres and the Civil Society

Wojciech Przybylski (Editor-in-chief, Visegrad Insight; Chairman of Res Publica Foundation, Warsaw): The Future of Illiberalism in the Eastern Part of the European Union

Jürgen Dieringer (Member of the Hungarian Europe Society; Professor at Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel): The Territorial Dimension of Anti-EU-voting in Central European Countries

Moderator: **Zsuzsanna Végh** (Vice-chairwoman, Hungarian Europe Society; Research Fellow, European-University Viadrina, Berlin)

Debate

17.00 – 17.45 Skype Presentation: **Daniele Albertazzi** (Senior Lecturer in European Politics and Postgraduate Research Director, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham): Italian Populism and Liberal Democracy

Debate



Program on 13 April 2019, Saturday

8.45 - 9.15 Registration

9.15 – 10.00 Key-note Speech

Mihai-Razvan Ungureanu (Professor, Faculty of History, University of Bucharest; Lecturing Professor, Diplomatiche Akademie, Vienna; Senior Researcher, Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa, Vienna; former Prime Minister of Romania): Bad Times Just Around the Corner?

Debate

10.00 - 11.30 Second Session: Citizens' Attitudes and Voting Behaviour – Reasons and Impacts

Isabell Hoffmann (Senior Expert, Europe's Future, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh): European Elections: Opinions, Identities, Politics

Sophia Gaston (Visiting Research Fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science; Director of the Centre for Social and Political Risk, London): Nostalgia, Media and Populism

Michal Vašečka (Programme Director, Bratislava Policy Institute): Wind of Change under Tatras? Slovakia between Mafia State and Liberal Democracy.

Moderator: **Erik Uszkiewicz** (Vice-chairman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest)

Debate

11.30 – 11.45 Coffee Break

11.45 - 13.15 Third Session: The New European Parliament

Paweł Zerk (Programme Co-ordinator, European Power Programme, European Council on Foreign Relations, Paris): Political Landscape after the European Elections



Corina Stratulat (Head of European Politics and Institutions Programme and Senior Policy Analyst, European Policy Centre, Brussels): The European Institutional Puzzle in Political Context

Edit Zgut (Guest Lecturer, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw; PhD Researcher, Institute for Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences): *A Sonderweg* for Central Europe and an Increasing East-West Divide?

Moderator: **Györgyi Kocsis** (Vice-chairwoman, Hungarian Europe Society, Budapest)

Debate

Break

15.00 – 15.45 Key-note Speech

Julie Smith - Baroness Smith of Newnham (Director, European Centre, Department of Politics and International Studies, Cambridge University; Member of the House of Lords, London): The Political Consequences of Brexit for the European Union and the United Kingdom

Debate

15.45 – 16.00 Special Address

Karolina Wigura (Head, Political Section, Kultura Liberalna; Assistant Professor, Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University): Fear and Hope - Thirty Years After the Collapse of Communism

16.00 - 17.30 Round-table Discussion: Confronting Populist and Authoritarian Tendencies - The Renewal of Liberal Democracy and the European Project

Participants: **Karolina Wigura** (Head, Political Section, Kultura Liberalna; Assistant Professor, Institute of Sociology, Warsaw University), **Guillaume Klossa** (President, CIVICO Europa; Founder, EuropaNova, Paris), **László Jankovics** (Member of the Hungarian Europe Society; Fiscal Economist,



European Commission, Brussels), **Péter Krekó** (Executive Director, Political Capital Institute, Budapest)

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

17.30 – 17.45 Conclusions

Supported by:

Friedrich Naumann
STIFTUNG

FÜR DIE FREIHEIT