



TYRANNY AND HOPE

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Tyranny and Hope

As soon as the Orbán government came to power in 2010, with a two-thirds majority in parliament, calling it a “revolution at the ballots”, it immediately sprang to the attack on two fronts. It began and continues to ruthlessly dismantle the constitutional system of liberal democracy while its national sovereigntist, “freedom fight” rhetoric questioned and undermined the essence of Hungary's membership in the European Union. Since then, state/central will has penetrated into numerous areas of politics, economics, education, culture and science, and even of everyday life, meanwhile insulting and dismantling political opposition, civil organisations, trade unions, intellectuals, journalists, teachers, students and average citizens. Creating permanently enemies and generating a state of emergency, persistent tension and fear, the Orbán regime has exacerbated the already existing political polarisation between citizen and citizen. On the international stage, the prime minister embarked on turbulent “geopolitical” games and adventures, breaking away from the tradition of Western orientation that has been taken for granted since the regime-change and introduced “Eastern opening” disregarding any people-friendly considerations.

Although the regime under construction does not have a confident theoretical doctrine from a political and philosophical point of view, it nevertheless provides its supporters and voters with sufficient ideological ground to define themselves in relation to their domestic and international opponents. From the aspect of political science and history, the authoritarian features of the new system are clear, however, we cannot speak of an open dictatorship – nor of a liberal democracy. In many aspects the Orbán era (such as its increasingly radicalised politics of memory and cultural policy) resembles the interwar period, while its propaganda campaigns show even the effects of the worst period of the 1950-ies (e.g. Peace March reminds of the former fight for peace as well as the conspiracy theories proclaiming George Soros as the main enemy). The result is, after all, a new, twenty-first century hybrid political regime that does not imprison its enemies, but rather lets them exit the country or even forces them to move abroad. Today, Fidesz is one of the globally identified nationalist-populist-nativist-right-wing political groupings, and the international media usually mentions its party leader together with authoritarian politicians like himself: Putin, Erdoğan, Trump, Marine Le Pen and of course his friend Salvini.

Over the last eight years, the European Parliament has, in an unprecedented manner, condemned a government of a member state of the European Union in a number of resolutions, including the dismantling of the rule of law, crude transformation of the electoral system, violations of fundamental human and minority rights, ruthless use of business methods in order to constrain media freedom and pluralism, corrupt spending of public funds (including EU transfers), harsh persecution of NGOs, measures to oppress university and academic freedoms, and in September 2018 it finally moved on to initiating the proceedings under Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union. The rapid and decisive non-action taken by the EU institutions and the member states against the Hungarian government was caused not only by disputes over legal competences, but also by a lack of political will – most notably inside the cente-right European political family, the European People’s Party. Although the membership of Fidesz was suspended in March 2019, following a series of scandals and the violation of minimum party loyalty, Fidesz members of the European Parliament were allowed to re-join the EPP political group – the problem-solving rupture has been prolonged. The Hungarian government campaigns to this day describe the criticism

coming from “Brussels”, Paris or Stockholm as an organised action by left-liberal political elites – although since 2015 they have gradually switched to an even more simplistic dichotomy; envisioning a global conflict between forces supporting and rejecting migration.

Still, the Orbán system got deeply isolated within the European Union: with the exception of neighbouring countries and Polish leaders, political meetings at the highest level are only held on ceremonial occasions in Budapest. The strategy of the Hungarian prime minister was openly relying on a desired rebellion of nations and their citizens hoping for a decisive breakthrough of populist and anti-European groups. Since this turn did not happen, the significance of Viktor Orbán's “troublemaking” attitude on the European political scene has fallen remarkably after the European elections in May 2019. The European public sphere is no longer dominated by the issue of migration – there is a hope that rational political debates may resurface again. In Hungary, almost no change is perceptible: Fidesz uses the migration issue as a trump card even in the October 2019 municipal election campaign.

In acute historical times, a policy-based critical evaluation of government performance is not enough - the Hungarian situation is evidently much worse than that. The anti-liberal ethos of the political rulers and their ultimate centralising endeavours pervade almost every field of community arenas and the open spheres of the society. There is a narrow-minded engineering approach, coupled with an uproar against intellectuals dealing with human studies and social scientists – based on an outdated concept of a work-based society. The prime minister's private hobbies: building stadium and small train railroad became the symbols of economic voluntarism of the era. As a result of its continued provincialisation, the country is increasingly being left out of the discussions concerning new global issues and from the search for common transnational and supranational political/policy solutions.

Political system, rule of law, media

When evaluating and categorising the Orbán regime – or looking for the place of Fidesz within the Hungarian party system – we should rather think in terms of a dynamic process. Looking at the party's thirty-year long history, we can observe an interesting mix of pragmatic decisions and calculations, ideological-voluntarist mission zeal as well as adaptability to a changing world – even drifting with events. The tendency, however, is clear: after two or three decades, the former liberal, alternative, radical organisation has become an authoritarian, hard-right party, even incorporating far-right ideas, with the current dominant name: a populist political party. This developmental path characterises the political system that has been built since 2010 just as much as the purely power-technical and money-making manoeuvres. The ruthless separation of friends and enemies, the offensive “pressing”, the application of the rules of military life and the football world in general, the effort to dominate the political moment and the politics of strength, the undermining of constitutional boundaries and the primacy of national thought were already detectable since the ideological turn-about in 1993-94 and even more so in the everyday life of the Orbán government as well as in its external communication between 1998 and 2002.

The Hungarian party system (similarly to many other Central European systems) differs from traditional Western European party systems in that the traditional cleavages in the sense of Lipset-Rokkan never reflected the Hungarian social reality. Due to different historical backgrounds,

after the political regime-change, neither the labour versus capital, nor the church versus secular state dichotomy became significant in the countries of the region. However, centre versus periphery and urban versus rural cleavages played a significant role: this is where a space for manoeuvre opened up, and this is what Fidesz exploited.

At the same time, in Western Europe, social change (primarily atomisation) has altered the parameters that structure party systems. Instead of the classic right-left opposition, the so-called GAL-TAN (green-alternative-liberal versus traditional-authoritarian-national) dichotomy developed. This is why traditional left parties and the traditional conservative forces have lost their support, as they slowly slip out of the main axis of party competition. On the right, an aggressive, populist and anti-cosmopolitan power area has emerged that is both anti-globalist and nationalist. According to their interpretation, national sovereignty has been undermined by the fact that in many cases the decision-making centre has been relocated from the national capitals to another, international level. In this political vacuum, parties such as the Front National, now known as the Rassemblement National in France, the Lega Nord, which is active throughout the whole Italy under the name Lega, or the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany have emerged or broke into the camps of the traditional parties from the fringe.

In a peculiar way, Hungary and Poland played a pioneering role in the transformation of European party systems. This “illiberal”, anti-democratic drift is explained with both economic factors and changes in the political identity of the voters. Irrespective of which aspect is more decisive – the aspect varies from country to country – what also plays a key role in loosening the roots of populism is to offer space in the political system and the modern society for voters who were so far unable to find a political home in a modern, globalised world. One way to do that is to make liberal-minded governments at European and national levels bring work to the people and not send people to where the jobs are. Meanwhile, they should not avoid identity politics struggles: the European Parliament elections in 2019 show that a populist tide can be restrained. Naturally, the situation is much worse when populist parties and politicians have already seized power.

During the regime-changes, Hungary was the first “post-communist” state to join the Council of Europe and to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights. In the early '90s, Hungary began negotiations with NATO, entered into an association agreement with the European Union, and later became a member of both “Western” organisations. Negotiations and fulfilling the criteria for EU accession have significantly contributed to the democratisation of Hungary. However, Hungary is the first country to refute the assumption that with the accession to the EU, European values such as rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights are to be taken for granted.

In April 2010, Fidesz and his coalition partner, the Christian Democratic People's Party, gained 53% of the vote, which according to the electoral law at the time represented a 2/3 majority in Parliament. By that time, Viktor Orbán's party had not tolerated internal debates and counter-opinions, but after the formation of the second Fidesz government, it eliminated the possibility of external criticism, too: it made institutions whose constitutional function is to guard the rule of law in a democratic state harmless. Paradoxically, the main custodian of the transformation has become the new Constitution, the Fundamental Law. On the one hand, the Fundamental Law and related

pivotal laws seem to reflect the results of a public poll, raise a number of (perceived) popular ideas as well as legal institutions to a constitutional rank, but do not follow the logic of constitutional law when not putting in place effective safeguards against the potential abuse of power – on the contrary, they ensure that the government remains in power and avoids the problem of responsibility. As several international organisations have pointed out, while elections are free, they are no longer fair, which is the consequence of the distorted electoral law, one-sided media preponderance and the manipulative regulation of the election campaign. Remedies for the government's disregard of the rule of law are today severely restricted due to the erosion of judicial independence, the reduction of the Constitutional Court's powers, the downgrading of the ombudsman system and many other institutional changes. The lack of media pluralism and the silencing of information of public interest make it impossible to have a reasonable social discourse and also weaken the chances of restoring a dialogue-based democracy.

A situation that was previously unimaginable has developed: (at least one, but rather more) member states would not meet the accession criteria if they were to join the European Union today. The reverse or anti-democratic transition resulted in the Freedom House “downgrading” a member state in 2019: it moved Hungary from the list of free countries to a group of partly free countries, an unprecedented moment in the history of Hungary and the EU since 1989. This assessment was in line with other similar indices, such as those of the Bertelsmann Foundation, the World Bank or the World Justice Project, as well as Article 7 and other infringement proceedings against Hungary, all regarding the rule of law.

Deconstructing the rule of law is a threat to the European Union as a whole, not just to the citizens of the country in question. In addition, representatives elected in an unfair competition are involved in the EU decision-making system. If illiberal practices are left without consequences, this may encourage other member states to violate the rule of law – and indeed, it has already happened. However, the principles of the rule of law, such as judicial independence, are indispensable for an investment-friendly environment and for the functioning of the internal market in general, so that agreements can be enforced even in case of a breach of contract. The rule of law in criminal matters is also essential for effective cross-border judicial cooperation. Indeed, national courts will only automatically recognise each other's judgements if they can rely on an independent court to hear all defendants' cases, while respecting procedural guarantees. Data necessary for investigations are also shared between member states only if it is clear that they will not be used to discredit political opponents in show trials.

The European Union tried, with more or less success, to exert external pressure on the Hungarian government to comply with the rule of law, which was sufficient only for certain minor issues, but did not fundamentally change the illiberal system. To replace tyranny with the power of law, there has to be a Hungarian party or coalition with a strong commitment to the rule of law, ready to build self-restraint mechanisms, tolerating constructive criticism and wanting to reverse the downgrade of the rule of law. This is not self-evident, since the whole set of current rules serves the respective power-holders, so in the event of a supposed change of government, even new leaders would benefit from the established system.

During the second democratic transition, important decisions must be made to rebuild liberal democracy. The first thing to return to is the basic idea of constitutionality, since due to inherent human weakness those in power may also misuse it, and therefore restrictive measures must be included in the system. As James Madison said: “If Men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.” The second task is to restore the independence of institutions, first and foremost by appointing leaders based on meritocracy as opposed to leaders chosen based on political loyalty. The Constitutional Court will have an outstanding role in restoring constitutionality. There have been many ideas in the media and scientific literature to change the composition of the Constitutional Court, from further increasing the number of constitutional judges to creating an appeals court or a super-constitutional court to overrule Constitutional Court decisions. The third issue is the problem of legal continuity: is it acceptable for a “forcible” Fundamental Law to be considered a legitimate constitution, and for related constitutional court rulings to be normative, or whether the new democratic system should be founded after a caesura on a completely new basis? The dilemma here is that the Fundamental Law and related fundamental laws and institutions formally meet the criteria of the rule of law. In reality, however, these are Potemkin documents, institutions and procedures that merely conceal or even legitimise the existing system that actually - in a substantive sense - denies the rule of law. If, after a comprehensive political turn, the Fundamental Law was abolished, it would be necessary to decide whether to revert to the Constitution of 1989 in its status in 2010, or to rectify its flaws, to adopt a new constitution, one that citizens would really feel their own. The new constitution should be ratified by a referendum. By accepting the interdependence of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, political freedoms and, in general, the prestige and enforceability of fundamental rights should be restored, to which the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights would serve as canon. Amending the electoral law and guaranteeing media pluralism is a matter of urgency, as well as the strict anti-corruption legislation.

The current Hungarian government does not intend to join the European Public Prosecutor's Office, established in October 2015 as a new, autonomous EU institution under the framework of enhanced cooperation, and since joined by twenty-two member states. This is a very important step in the history of a united Europe: the European Public Prosecutor's Office is responsible not only for investigating but also for prosecuting fraud against the EU budget and crimes affecting the financial interests of the European Union. If it could operate in Hungary, Péter Polt's monopolistic rule on which investigations should be opened – at least the ones regarding the European Union budget – would be broken. Fidesz's national sovereign rhetoric cannot conceal that what they fear the most is that it might shed light on the illegal background of the sudden and suspicious enrichment of Hungarian oligarchs close to the political power using European taxpayers' money. Nevertheless, numerous cases of abuse were reported by the independent/oppositional Hungarian media and the international media, leading to repeated investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office and the Budget Committee of the European Parliament, followed by reprimanding reports.

Hungary's accession to the European Public Prosecutor's Office was supported by the 680,000 citizens by signing a petition following the action of member of the Hungarian Parliament Ákos Hadházy and opposition parties. In the event of a change of government, the entry would be necessary not only to reinforce the process of European unity, but also because the new body would

protect the financial interests of the European Union against any Hungarian government without political influence, precisely for using EU funds that help in the economic development of the country legally.

All in all, reforming the constitutional order based on international requirements, comparative law, taking into account the interactions of the parts and their contexts, while respecting domestic legal culture and traditions is the way how to reconstruct the democratic system of the rule of law.

This period of political and legislative recovery, including adjustment to new times, will be a particularly difficult task for the media system that has been subordinated to and uniformed by the political power. The first European-level scandal was triggered right after Viktor Orbán came to power in 2010 as one of his government's first measures was passing a media law that has restricted media freedom to an unprecedented extent. One of the spectacular elements of the new legislation was the prospect of an outstanding fine for violation of the law. The really effective measure, however, was granting virtually unlimited power to the Media Authority (NMHH): the independence of the public service providers was lost as they placed their economy, assets and broadcasting under the control of the government-appointed president of a media authority. The Media Council, formed entirely of Fidesz candidates, was given a free hand to decide on radio frequency bids, used its competences to completely clear the market from broadcasters which do not belong to the interest sphere of the ruling party. Through networking the coverage areas, a large number of centralised, right-wing Christian and national radio channels have been practically created, in violation of the principle of local radio transmitting. The survival of the critical Klubrádió was made possible only by a series of lawsuits and sustained international pressure – the radio is however inaccessible to most rural listeners. With the dissolution of independence and multi-party control of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI), it was monopolised and loyal leaders were appointed to the top positions.

Another major weapon of the government's political methods was the use of a variety of economic instruments. This includes strategic and selected placement of state advertisements in violation of the rule of law: in the unprofitable Hungarian press market, Fidesz goes far beyond the previously experienced disproportions exceeding central orders offered exclusively to friendly media. Following this practice, market players also withdrew their ads from independent and left-liberal media outlets, forcing radios, magazines, and scientific journals to close, due to lack of funding. In order to regulate profitable commercial television, the head of government set out to acquire ownership positions. When this was temporarily unsuccessful, in 2014, the parliament introduced a so-called advertising tax, which actually taxed media service providers for advertising. Unlike its competitors, the RTL Klub, which was to be penalised, would have had to pay 40% of its annual turnover as a tax - the tax was finally reduced to 7.5% in 2017 after an EU investigation. The breakthrough finally came when Andy Vajna, then a government member as special envoy for film industry, bought the other big commercial television company, MTM-SBS, which broadcasts on TV2, and then transformed it into a pro-governmental tabloid channel not being afraid of publishing false information again and again.

The tactically selected distribution of ownership positions has taken a particularly adventurous turn in the print media and in the case of Hír TV. A drastic public breakup between

Orbán and Lajos Simicska, former economic patron of Fidesz, a press tycoon and Viktor Orbán's old alliance, has led to several changes in the political line taken by Magyar Nemzet and Hír TV - while the grey eminence of the government, Árpád Habony stepped forward as a temporary owner of several media products. The left-wing Népszabadság, gradually renewed after the regime-change and still with a significant readership, was handed over to the Austrian media entrepreneur Heinrich Pecina – who trades with Russian investors, too – who then sold the newspaper at a good price to Lőrinc Mészáros, an oligarch within Orbán's circle; the newspaper was then cut short, and journalists were let go amid cheers of the pro-government media. It was at the same time when dailies published in the countryside were centralised and uniformed. The last straw was the creation of an unprecedented right-wing press conglomerate called KESMA (Central European Press and Media Foundation). Legislative tricks have been used to avoid the Hungarian Competition Authority, and the Media Council has again passively and silently tolerated the merger, which constitutes an infringement of media pluralism. With the creation of KESMA, the Orbán government has clarified what previous economic and legislative manoeuvres have sought to obscure: its media policy aims to disseminate and reiterate systemic regime propaganda - still under the guise of alleged liberal media dominance. More recently, the government has been scrambling to regulate Facebook and other Internet content providers – the real intention may well be to narrow down alternative sources for Hungarian users.

In the event of a real political turnaround, the first step should be the immediate eradication of the current distorted media system and the radical transformation of public media broadcasting which serves the interests of the current political power spreading a lot of fake news. Besides guaranteeing the independence and autonomy of the traditional mass media, it will not be easy to create a neutral competition field on the overturned media market (where since the attacks RTL Klub has become one of the last bastions of press freedom in Hungary). Among possible instruments, supporting high quality, investigative journalism (using also EU funding), requiring transparency of ownership structures in case of financial support of newspaper, as well as promoting and developing fact-checking and media education can lead to a way out. After the crisis period hopefully comes to an end, the new government, political parties and non-governmental organisations must join all the European debates that have long been devoted to the burning political and professional problems of the media world, which has gone under revolutionary changes in the twenty-first century.

Economy, EUR, NER (System of National Cooperation)

The Hungarian economy is deeply integrated into the European single market. However, the government's special way - called unorthodox - policy since 2010 has often conflicted with the dominant economic ideas, norms and rules in the European Union. From the nationalisation of private pension funds through the introduction of sector-specific taxes to the – selectively implemented - fight against multinationals, the rhetoric accusing the European Union of colonisation at the beginning of the decade, and the propaganda calling the EU institutions opponents of the cuts of household costs become part of the shift to populism on the ground of alleged national sovereignty. Financial nationalism determines the financial policy – the use of the forint as a currency is enshrined in the Basic Law, contrary to the spirit of the accession agreement. The government has pushed for an increase in the proportion of Hungarian property in the large banking sector and has spent a huge amount on it while fighting for independence from

international financial institutions (especially the IMF). Finally, the vulnerability of the Hungarian financial markets was reduced and they were able to increase room for manoeuvre in the monetary policy, allowing for non-standard economic stimulus measures, such as economic development activity in theory unrelated to the central bank's mandate. At the same time, fixing the Hungarian forint and boosting domestic ownership makes it difficult to conduct transactions in foreign currencies and threatens growth in a small open economy. It also increases the dependency of banks that therefore become less and less responsive to market signals and more in relation with the national bank programs – returning to the one-tier banking system of the eighties. Since profits of the banks are not determined by market competition, but their success is based on their ability to adapt to government concepts, they may be far from efficient in the long run.

The economic policy of the National Cooperation System is usually characterised by nepotism and corruption, while its relationship with multinational corporations has changed over time. While the second Orbán government made several decisions that led to conflicts of interest, the third Orbán government serves their interests with low taxes and by imposing the “slave law” on employees. The government apparently does not strive to bring the production culture and productivity to a higher standard in Hungary by requiring the quality aspects of expertise employed by the multinationals.

In case of a democratic political turn, Hungary's entry into the Eurozone is a clear and urgent requirement – dropping out is increasingly dangerous as the focus of the EU's institutionalised decision-making might shift to the increasing group using the single currency. In the meantime, it is advisable to lobby for the restructuring of EU financial institutions and for the reform of the rules: the Banking Union created in 2012 does not sufficiently take into account the specificities of the Central and Eastern European region and the market structures dominated by foreign capital. An economic policy ambition could be to establish a close link with the emerging “hidden developing state” in the context of the European Commission's investment plan. The coordination of national development bank plans linked to a more active role of the European Investment Bank as part of the Juncker Plan could provide an important opportunity for the Hungarian economy to catch up, particularly with reference to small and medium-sized enterprises. It may become a new objective of Hungarian industrial policy to invite those parts of production chains of large multinational companies which have a higher added value due to a higher professional content. The new government must also create the conditions for this in the areas of education policy and health care.

The radical right-wing political force coming to power again in 2010, has thrown itself into realigning the ownership structures of the Hungarian economy with huge élan. In this top-controlled world, political trust tends to override capabilities, performance, and market excellence. In many sectors (construction, IT, savings cooperatives, gambling, central public relations services, and placement of public advertisements) tenders are so one-sided that the same loyal entrepreneurs (oligarchs) always win the contracts, most of which are projects implemented from taxpayers' money. The budget thus serves to enrich some of the chosen and gradually distorts former economic and political power relations even more.

Besides narrowing the circle of users of public funds, a recurring experience is that the theoretically independent authorities, which are supposed to guard the purity of competition, not

only do not hinder the restriction of competition, but rather became the instruments of the exercise of power. The State Audit Office, the Hungarian National Bank – as a financial supervisor – and the Hungarian Competition Authority have been the servants of political considerations. This process involves tailor-made, targeted legislation, the demise of formerly prudent institutions, and counterproductive personal selection for key positions.

The official slogans of the central economic policy, the protection of the national economy's sovereignty and the strengthening of domestic enterprises could be controversial, though valid goals, but the Hungarian government does not actually strengthen the Hungarian-owned economy - it only generously supports loyal oligarchs such as Lőrinc Mészáros, István Tiborcz, and a few dozen of their companions. The tsunami of state space occupation has swept through new sectors; the tobacco industry has already fallen, agriculture, banking, telecommunications only partially, next in line is retail and the Budapest airport, while certain sectors, primarily the car industry, which is the backbone of the Hungarian economy, have remained devoid of conquest of the National Cooperation System. Of course, an economic system where there is no product development, no real business negotiation with banks on credit terms, the export volumes are low, and where there is no need for global market adjustment, but only political capital and trust matter, creating easy state orders and cheap financing, that kind of economic system can't be successful a few miles away from the Hungarian border.

In case of a political change, the oligarch clientele system of the Hungarian economy must be abolished, rejecting all forms of state-captive corruption, eliminating cooperation between the party leaders, local little kings and big entrepreneurs, creating market relations in all competitive sectors and opening public procurement gates to entrepreneurs from Hungary and the European Union.

Old and new policy challenges

In the last years, opposition parties in Hungary have sought to unmask failures and omissions of the government's policies in two key areas, where citizens have everyday experiences. One is the education system and the other is health care. Since Fidesz came to power, both policies have become severely ideological and burdened with taboos and dogmas.

Although education is a member state competence in the European Union, it has recently received increasing attention. It is clearly indicated by the fact that the European Commission is proposing to double the Erasmus budget – and indeed triple, according to elected president Ursula von der Leyen – and that it has been discussed by the European Council at the level of heads of state and government. This is because education plays a key role in areas of environmental protection, demographic change and migration, as well as in adapting to a rapid technological change (artificial intelligence, proliferation of digitalisation) and challenges of democracy (fake news, populism). The objective, to which the member states (including the Hungarian government) agreed, is to create a European Education Area by 2025, where people wishing to learn can move freely between countries and where education strengthens the European identity and democracy. Over the last decade, higher education in the European Union has undergone a major expansion: the proportion of tertiary education graduates has increased almost everywhere, reaching 40.7% for the 30-34 age group. The aim is to create a high quality, inclusive, innovative European higher education system

and to ensure equal access for all social strata.

However, in Hungary, the increase in the proportion of tertiary education graduates is severely hindered by government administrative measures. While overall funding for higher education has improved in recent years, the proportion of publicly funded places has declined (currently 59% of students study in such places) and this tendency is not compensated for by broad and easily accessible, supportive scholarship system that would promote social mobility. Making the intermediate language exam a requirement for higher education admission is expected to further reduce the proportion of tertiary education graduates. Hungarian tertiary education is thus moving away from the objectives of the European Union: Hungary, along with Croatia, is the other member state with a lower tertiary education rate (currently 33.7%, far from the 40% target). This tendency has developed despite the sensible shortage of tertiary education graduates on the Hungarian labour market: their employment is well above the EU average and their income premium is also the highest. In addition, Hungary is the only member state with a higher rate of tertiary education graduates moving abroad than people without a higher education degree. Hungarian education – and higher education in particular – is much less involved in adult education than necessary, which would be an effective way of adapting to the needs of the labour market and developing flexible educational pathways for the disadvantaged.

Institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential to guarantee the quality of higher education. However, in Hungary, the establishment of the chancellery system severely impaired institutional autonomy, and on several occasions the government intervened directly on issues of freedom of education and research (abolition of gender studies, ideological warfare against the CEU, centralising of academic research institutes). While five Hungarian universities were included in the first circle of European Universities planning to build “universities of the future”, government attacks are threatening this result: after gaining EU projects, the exit of several highly successful researchers and the move of the CEU (one of the above mentioned five Hungarian universities) to Vienna can accelerate further emigration. According to government communications, current plans to transform higher education – the introduction of the “Corvinus model” – aim to increase the financial autonomy of universities and the flexibility of institutions. The composition of the maintaining foundation of the Budapest Corvinus University justifies fears that the university will actually be transformed into an elite business school serving corporate interests.

A new, democratic government will urgently need to restore university autonomy and freedom of research. It should change the measures that disproportionately affect disadvantaged students and help institutions to ensure that students not only begin but also successfully complete their studies. The gates have to be wide open, while the competence filter should only be applied for the master's degree after acquiring the BA degree, since a BA degree today is to be seen as equivalent to the final exam at secondary level thirty years ago. It is necessary to ensure the development of high quality higher education that meets the needs of the labour market through transparent, performance based agreements with the universities relied on data and impact studies. Reforms that meet the requirements of the twenty-first century need to be developed and implemented with the involvement of often side-lined social scientists and natural scientists teaching at universities, as well as student representatives.

The OECD evaluates the performance of Hungarian public education every three years.

Since 2000, PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) studies have measured applied mathematics, applied science and literacy skills toward the end of compulsory school age, i.e. at the age of 15. The purpose of the study is to explore how students can apply what they have learned at school to everyday situations. This provides information on how the educational system in their country has prepared them to comply on the labour market. Until the last known measurement (in 2015, the latest data will be published in 2019 with the results of the previous year), Hungary was, in general, in the middle of the field in all three areas, but most recently it was drifting to the last third of the field, indicating that the direction is bad and that ideologically controlled centralisation does not work. One of the sources of the serious problems in public education is that where family background determines the performance of students to the greatest extent in comparison it is Hungary. In addition, the country is also lagging behind the European average regarding adult education.

The situation could be improved by reducing the effects of educational segregation and school selection introduced in a new education policy of a democratic government. The good news is that the necessary know-how is available in the country – there are decades of research available beyond the excellent team of professionals. Ninety-five percent of the population might be able to pass the final exam after middle school. Vocational training can also be shaped by a similar logic: real vocational training could start in the two years prior to graduation, and if the profession takes more than two years to acquire, the learning process could be postponed beyond the compulsory school age, which should of course be immediately raised to 18 years, again. If an ambitious reform were also possible, a secondary language examination for the final exam would have to be required as an output requirement – an achievable goal. The introduction of tools for its realisation – greater autonomy for schools and principals, freedom of choice of curriculum and textbooks, recognition of the autonomy of alternative schools, quality assurance and teacher education reform – would automatically come to the policy makers' desk. One of the starting points for new government decisions can therefore be the huge database of PISA surveys, showing with ruthless sincerity the problems of the country's education system.

When we think about the reform of Hungarian public, vocational and higher education, we can use one word to describe the guiding principle for making policy decisions: equity. One of the basics of market economy under the current transformation called the fourth industrial revolution is a stable deepening of education and basic skills. And a system in which training costs are shared between the business sector, individuals and the state may be ideal to increase participation in adult education. An enormous improvement in the adult population's ability to adapt to labour market changes can be achieved if the potential of lifelong learning can be exploited. The slogan of lifelong learning is not to use it compulsory when applying for EU funds, but because it requires significantly more graduates to operate new technologies – a key to innovation and economic growth. It seems inevitable that a Green Paper should be drawn up, possibly by consensus, so that education policy efforts can be pursued across government cycles.

Comprehensive health care reform has not been succeeded in carrying out since the regime-change. There was also no paradigm shift to end the sector's subordinate role; most policymakers still regard health care as a budgetary burden. From 2010, for eight years, health care policy has become has been put into the shade as a task within a mammoth ministry – while still largely dominated by structures inherited from the era of socialism. In addition, the Orbán governments

have directly reversed previous reform initiatives. Thus, over the past decade, Hungarian health care has drifted to the sidelines – not only regarding the European Union average, but also the Visegrad Group countries. There are so many differences in quality and access to services in the country that we can no longer talk about a systemic operation.

Budgetary underfunding of health care increased after 2010; it had fallen from 47% of the EU average at the time of Hungary's accession to 38% by 2015. In 2010, the share of health care expenditure was 7.6% of GDP, according to the latest 2017 figures, falling to 6.9% - meanwhile with an increasing share of private financing. At the same time, the government has set up an unprecedented centralized health care system in the European Union, owing, among other factors, to the re-nationalisation of hospitals and the abolition of autonomous funding of the sector through the National Health Fund. The withdrawal of resources can be measured in human lives: if the Hungarian system had achieved at least the performance of the Czech health care system, the number of premature deaths – people under 70 – would have been estimated seventy-thousand less between 2011 and 2014. However, the current power establishment is interested in maintaining the current system; the allocation of funds, and the preference for investing in the development of private care serve to build a clientele and, in addition to stagnating public expenditures, the government can spend these investments on other, often prestigious, priorities.

A political turnaround calls for a paradigm shift: health care should be seen as an investment in human capital, an important condition for long-term economic development and an equal-ranking production factor. It is a political priority to once again have an independent ministry of health, which would contribute to the necessary improvement of the moral and mental status of the profession as well. Simultaneous use of immediate crisis therapy and a government program that increases efficiency and a long-term complex strategy is inevitable. It is essential to ensure human resources, stabilise salaries in the sector, halt further perish of health care and eliminate unworthy conditions, while re-establishing health care policy requires a clear, consensual vision. It is necessary to clarify the role of the state, the market and the individual in a modern health care system, and how the financing and institutional structure can ensure its development contributing to the increase of life expectancy.

New challenges

Digital society

Countries with rapidly evolving digital technology have an increased influence on global economic, social and political processes and maintain their strategic autonomy, ensuring their place in the global economic competition. Digitisation affects every segment of economies and societies (growth, employment, competitiveness, education, transport, environment, energy, agriculture, etc.), primarily due to the spread of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data economy, and robotics.

With respect to global trends, the European Union as a whole has strengths and weaknesses, but within these European development trends, the Hungarian results are extremely unfavourable. Hungary remained at 23rd place in the ranking of the 28 EU member states in 2017–19, while it was slowly but increasingly lagging behind the EU average. Thanks to the network coverage investments in recent years, the next-generation network coverage has exceeded the EU average. On the other hand, the largest gap remains in the use of digital public services and digital

technologies in business, where the country has taken the 25-26th place in the ranking. Only approximately fourteen percent of Hungarian companies use advanced computer systems, which is the worst rate in the entire European Union. The use of E-commerce, big data and cloud services are similarly limited in the economy. The proportion of ICT professionals in employment is close to the EU average, though it is altered for the worse by the increasing trend of working abroad – while demand for such skills is more and more significant. In terms of broad swathes of the population, the level of internet skills is also below average. Although the government adopted the National Infocommunications Strategy (2014–20) in 2014 and announced various sector-specific strategies and programs that have begun to be implemented over the last few years, they have only resulted in average progress being achieved. After all, the country's relative position has not changed.

Hungarian adaptation to the requirements of the new digital world and the information society is still slow. Teaching basic and high-level digital skills need to be significantly improved, and so does the training of professionals. Furthermore, it is necessary to examine why the Hungarian business sector is the one that performs the worst in terms of digital technology integration in the European Union. The question is whether the Hungarian budget could support the digital development of Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises. A future democratic, open-minded new government should pay particular attention to appropriate funding of research and innovation in the field of artificial intelligence, data economy, and robotics - in order to successfully get involved in international cooperation systems. Digitisation, especially the implementation of the G5 system and the emergence of infinite mobile applications in everyday life, production, and services, will soon radically reshape Hungarian society as well. In the knowledge-based digital economy and society, the new political leadership must adopt and put into practice completely different values instead of turning to the historical past.

Migration policy

Since the 2015 crisis, Fidesz has been using the so-called “migrant” threat as a wonder weapon. The opposition has been proved to be quite helpless regarding the xenophobic communication campaigns based on fear and mistrust, inciting hatred. While the whole of Europe has been shaken by the wave of asylum seekers reshuffling political power relations, the Hungarian government has considered and still considers the question as a purely security issue. It unscrupulously links terrorism to migration, defending Christian values against “Muslim invasion” in its rhetoric, responding to irregular migration with drastic laws and criminalising the problem. The wire fence on the southern borders of Hungary has become the symbol of isolation and the fortress approach. While for the European Union as a whole, the Hungarian border barrier would offer no real solution at all in case masses of people driven into exile once again arrive to Hungary through the Balkans in the future. Nevertheless, the reduction of refugee institutions and services, the creation of a transit zone open only to Serbia, the disregard for human rights, the blocking of EU-level refugee reform plans, and the loud rejection of international law on the rescue of asylum seekers in distress at sea generated resentment in Hungary only in a small number of social groups. In addition to protests by NGOs, the government has received harsh criticism from mainstream European politicians and parties, mainly for its scandal-mongering campaign against George Soros, for the falsely formulated question of the quota referendum or for starving asylum seekers.

However, the reasons for the success of the Orbánist propaganda in Hungary go back a long way. When making the further radicalisation of demographic nationalism a political guideline, they

probably took into account the increasing tendency for migration in the age of globalisation. Furthermore, in proportion, Europe's openness is far above the world average. The frontiers of the European Union are in a state of war or half-war, making the whole continent vulnerable from geopolitical and migration aspects. Besides, the race for welfare benefits and the convergence of wages at the global level increases the sense of competition – and welfare chauvinism is getting stronger as well. A significant part of European public opinion, including the population of Visegrad Group countries, is increasingly negative about migration and has become receptive to simple and drastic crisis management methods offered by populist forces.

The demographic fragility of the country (relatively high mortality, ageing population, low fertility, then significant emigration and the resulting loss of population) has increased significantly in Hungary since the early 1980-s. Fertility-centred population policy and making migration taboo have long-standing discursive and institutional roots since the Kádár era. The social embeddedness of solidarity is low: a large part of the public has had serious fear of immigration-induced competition since the mid-1990-s. The poster campaigns launched by Fidesz have also taken advantage of this concern while keeping quiet about the integration policies of Western societies. Instead, the audience of the pro-government media is bombarded with – often false – news about the harsh conflicts caused by migrants.

In case of a political turn, regardless of its composition, a democratic government would inherit a difficult situation. Asylum policy should be interpreted within the context of a broader and more general migration policy, simultaneously reflecting on immigration, migration, and remigration processes. Moreover, it should find a way to reduce the legitimate and unjustified fears of the non-migrant population. In addition to the right to migrate and the rights of migrants, the right to a home, a place of residence and the right to stay must also be respected by potential migrants and the domestic population. Migration policy and the resulting professional and political discourse should openly discuss the differences between migrant and non-migrant populations in terms of interests and social status. Social membership can be extended to newcomers with a communication emphasising the similarities only after recognising the narrow ethno-cultural preferences of the public, descending from historical reasons and experiences of speaking a small language.

Most importantly, as part of the European Union's common foreign policy, Hungary must pursue an active peace and stabilisation policy in Ukraine and in the neighbourhood of the continent, the success of which may reduce migration tensions. To this end, the financial background of the UN's specialised bodies also needs to be strengthened. A change of approach in economic policy could reduce the amount of forced migration (rootlessness) caused by social, economic and ecological impacts. The policy of direct EU support for the most important non-European countries hosting refugees may also be endorsed by the new Hungarian government, while the burden sharing within the European Union should be developed in view of the historically established migration routes. Hungary should be involved in the development of a comprehensive EU migration policy to assist the sedentary population.

Of course, the hate campaign in the public media must be stopped immediately! It is necessary to put an end to the hysteria-intensifying “crisis caused by mass migration” and to return to the normal functioning of public administration in this area as well. The inhumane treatment of

asylum seekers and the unacceptable official actions should be eliminated. The security of the European Union's borders must not be guaranteed by maverick populist politics, but by EU cooperation. The future Hungarian government, with the involvement of the civil sector and the local population, will be able to manage the tensions caused by migration more successfully, while respecting European standards.

Climate change

The rhetoric of the Fidesz government is mostly mocking and disparaging when the opposition and NGO-s call for an effective response to climate change. The environmental activism of the head of state, who allows all this happen, is rather amusing than credible. Viktor Orbán vetoed stricter EU budget targets at the European Council and made it clear that he would need more financial support in exchange for his concessions. His old-fashioned ideas are evident: despite the slippage in licensing of the Paks-2 nuclear power plant, its loss-making business model, and the Russian dependence, the Orbán government is still planning to open another mine while the rest of the world invests in cheaper renewable energy.

Nevertheless, since the Paris climate summit, according to latest calculations, the global average temperature rise should be kept below 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees to avoid ecological catastrophe. The awareness of citizens who perceive the threat is clear: Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion are moving millions around the world. The new generation is demanding concrete actions from politicians in non-violent demonstrations. Green parties have forged ahead in the European elections, especially in the western member states. Now decision-makers of any countries cannot ignore and must respond to the growing dissatisfaction. Although little has happened in effect, the majority is committed to protecting the Earth at the level of words and commitments. The European Green Pact, planned by the new European Commission, is likely to reflect how important it has become to face the consequences of climate change at European level.

In case of a political turn, a new Hungarian government must recognise the fundamental interest of the Hungarian population in taking the most radical steps in the field of environmental protection and climate policy, since the Carpathian Basin is particularly exposed to the consequences of the climate disaster. Part of the EU funds should immediately be redirected to regenerative agriculture, while forestry and water management need to be reformed in order to prevent desertification in half of the country. Hungarian local communities must be prepared for the increasing frequency of heat waves and extreme climatic phenomena, while the education of young people must include preparations for climate change. Hungary should play an active role in international negotiations so that every country could contribute to the defence against negative effects, to energetic renewal and the transition to environmentally friendly natural resources to an appropriate extent in accordance with its ecological footprint.

Budapest at the time of centralisation and growing democratic deficit

One of the first decisions of the pro-government majority in the new parliament formed in 2010 was to change the local electoral law, justified by the political motto of "saving public spending". In Budapest, the reduction in the number of locally elected politicians from 66 to 33 was linked to changes in the boundaries of constituencies (gerrymandering) and changes in the rules in the

distribution of mandates – the latter of which introduced D'Hondt system to strengthen stronger parties and to weaken smaller ones. Partly as a result of the new rules, Fidesz also secured a majority in the Budapest General Assembly and won the position of the city mayor, for the first time since 1990. After the re-election of Fidesz which brought a 2/3 majority in April 2014, the rules were once again changed, influencing the results of the local elections, when in June the parliament modified the local election law, this time specifically only in the case of Budapest. In order to secure Fidesz's power, the composition of the capital's municipal body was completely changed by the new law: instead of direct elections, 23 new district mayors, the mayor of Budapest and 9 representatives from the compensation lists formed the new assembly. This was repeatedly justified by the media as “saving public money”, but in reality Fidesz was confident that they would have a majority among the directly elected district mayors rather than on the party list. In practice, the municipality of Budapest has become a “mandatory association of districts” – and the interest of the capital as a whole is not the approach at all. As direct party rule prevails and no Fidesz representative can do anything to defy Viktor Orbán's will, the liberal and left-wing population of Budapest could not form a self-government that could become a strong competitor to the central government.

The centralisation of public services in Hungary is an important power technical component of the new political course launched in 2010. Education and health care, which were largely decentralised in the 1990-ies, were re-centralised. The same happened with public services (water, waste water, etc.) with the method of price regulation, similarly to the period of socialism. As a result of the reorganisation of public functions, the total amount of municipal expenditures in the state budget has been reduced by 30%, while municipalities no longer receive any budgetary resources from the personal income tax. All this increased the vulnerability of local governments and their dependence on central transfers.

These trends prevail in dramatic proportions in Budapest: the per capita budget, adjusted with purchasing power, is in the last place among the ten capitals of Central and Eastern Europe, far behind Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, Prague, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Bucharest, and somewhat behind Sofia and Bratislava, too. An important feature of a centralised system is that it gives more to loyal municipalities when it comes to distributing development funds (essentially financed by the European Union). A key example of this is the public transport system in Budapest: the government supported the urgent renewal of one metro line only on the condition that the municipality could not argue against other government ideas and wishes – and even the suburban railway had to be handed over to the government free of charge.

Another means of strengthening central government control is the direct management of major developments through the act on “priority investments”. In the developments voted for by the parliament, the local government, non-governmental organisations, civil groups and the general public have lost all their say in decisions. As a result, there is a single will in areas that are key to the prestige investments of the leading party and the central government – Lajos Kossuth Square, the Castle (including the prime minister's new residence), City Park (intended as a museum quarter, partly giving space to buildings removed from the Castle).

The protests in Hungary, especially in Budapest, are often driven by the outrage over centralised plans. Resistance is hindered by the whispering propaganda and concrete examples that

cities and settlements can only receive development funds if they are aligned with pro-government policies. In some cases, the protesters achieved partial success by initiating a local referendum and the collection of signatures against the Budapest Olympics and a civil movement established to save the Roman coast in Budapest convinced the ruling party to reverse its original idea.

However, the municipal elections of October 2019 cannot be considered predictable – this time major opposition parties have nominated joint candidates for both the Budapest mayor and district mayor positions. The promises to solve local problems are very prominent in the unfolding campaign. The candidates are talking about modern, liveable, sustainable, safer cities and local communities, while promoting quality public services and environmentally friendly transport. The relative success of the opposition would hardly cause a comprehensive political turn, but it would open a gap in the monolithic political system and increase the likelihood of a future change. After such a change, the original meaning of self-government will have to be restored in Budapest, in larger cities and in small settlements.

Minorities and discrimination

The situation of Roma people is disadvantageous compared to the majority societies all over the world. This is true for Hungary, too, where Gypsies face difficulties (from poverty to racist discrimination) in every segment of life that make it impossible for their communities to break out of their position by their own strength. Since 1990, several government programs have been launched to bring about change and to support non-governmental/community-based initiatives, as have the Soros Foundation and other international organisations worked to ensure the sustainable development of the Roma minority.

Since 2010, the Fidesz government has abandoned this conflict-ridden terrain, using the Roma people and some Roma politicians and local governments for their own short-term political goals. Local and national minority self-governments are under centralised control, and their operation, optimised for election mobilisation, is accompanied by serious corruption affairs, as in the case of the organisation Lungo Drom and Fidesz member of parliament Flórián Farkas. Roma people have become even more dependent due to public work programs: although access to employment may have positive effects, local government leaders typically use the system to keep the most vulnerable at bay. The government lowered the compulsory school age from 18 to 16, which has put a significant number of Roma young people in severely disadvantaged position on the labour market due to the high rate of students repeating years in schooling – many still fail to complete the 8-grade primary school by the time they turn 16. School segregation has once again intensified, with local “Gypsy-free” institutions operating within church-run schools. The attacks on NGO-s were not ineffective: well-functioning programs came to an end, and after 25 years the ERRC (European Roma Rights Centre) moved to Brussels, while most human rights defender organisations in Roma affairs were left with almost no financial resources.

The fall-back of the Roma minority in relation to the majority society has not changed in the last decade. Discrimination is still present, albeit overt racism seems to be quieter – “thanks” to the xenophobic anti-refugee propaganda suppressing all other issues – but authorities and average people share high levels of anti-Roma attitudes, according to surveys.

In case of a political turn, all of this should change drastically. The “Roma issue” as a party political game needs to be eliminated, there should be a return to the respect of the rule of law, human dignity and minority rights while catch up programmes and scholarships for talented students have to be launched. There is a need for improving the health care, education, labour market and housing situation of the Roma, moreover, for a spectacular breakthrough in these areas in order to end this unworthy situation for the whole of Hungary. Given the scale of EU funds, if the support is used effectively, this task does not seem to be impossible at all.

In terms of gender equality, Hungary ranks second last among EU member states, according to the 2017 index of the European Institute for Gender Equality Index. The political representation of women is so low that Hungary is the last here. According to the rankings published by the World Economic Forum, gender equality in Hungary has not progressed at all in the past decade, while Hungary ranked much lower in 149 countries – in 2018 it was ranked 102. Despite the fact that promotion of gender equality is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals as well of the priorities of the European Union, the “illiberal” government propaganda is now defining the issue as a matter only pushed by the left and liberal political camps.

The greatest inequality is in the time spent on care and household work in Hungary: women are responsible for almost all of these tasks. The current government is not allocating enough resources for social care systems – especially the elderly care, patient care and education – consequently, they fulfil their role inadequately or not at all. Thus, women cannot rely on the state in areas where they are disproportionately overwhelmed compared to men and, in the absence of political representation, cannot assert their special interests. On the one hand, the Orbán regime is only willing to discuss the situation of women in the context of demographics – as potential mothers and carers – and on the other hand it channels family policy support in such a way as to favour already well-off and two-parent families. In this way, the wealthy – partly through the transfers they receive – can enjoy the benefits of private education and health care, while the poor do not receive sufficient support. At the same time, propaganda against “gender ideology” makes it impossible to allow women's issues – poverty, discrimination, harassment at work, domestic violence and lack of political representation – to enter the focus of public debates and of policies in a sober manor. A good example of this is the hysterical pro-government media campaign targeting ELTE – which eventually led to the arbitrary abolition of the gender major, disregarding the fact of valid accreditation.

The most urgent task would be to increase women's security, in particular the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, which has already been adopted by most EU member states (to which the European Union itself has acceded) and the institutionalisation of appropriate policies, particularly for the protection of most vulnerable – such as women living in deep poverty. A review of the social assistance system and a substantial increase of this amount, especially for those caring for young children, people with disabilities and the elderly is inevitable, as is the shift to distribution based on need. In case of a democratic political turn, the institutional care system needs to receive proper funding, and wages must be raised in feminised sectors, if for no other reason – to reduce exodus of labour. It all has to go hand in hand with acting against gender stereotypes and prejudices as well as against sexism – by raising awareness in education and in public life.

While more and more member states of the European Union are allowing same-sex marriage, and more and more national legal systems are regulating family relations of same-sex couples – issues regarding inheritance, adoption, adoption of a partner's child, surrogacy, etc., by one of its first measures, the Hungarian government defined marriage in the Basic Law exclusively as a relationship between a man and a woman - thus excluding same-sex couples from the opportunity of this legal institution. Although registered partnership still exists, this cannot be considered as a competitor to marriage or an equivalent solution. In addition, nothing guarantees its survival in the future, given that its rules are contained in a simple law. A further restriction is that the foundation of the family has been declared marriage, which implicitly excludes members of the LGBTQ community from the concept of family.

In addition, in recent years, an increasing number of governmental or close-to-the-government actors have made extreme statements about the LGBTQ community that grossly violate human dignity. The latest scandal has arisen around the advertising campaign of a multinational manufacturing company: at the sight of same-sex couples an outrageous, seemingly individual Fidesz action ensued, accompanied by hypocritical government communications. In many cases after 2010, it occurred that the police did not approve the Budapest Pride March in the downtown (as part of the Budapest Pride Festival every year) despite the fact that the event could have been held by the rulings of the court and thus violating the freedom of assembly.

The lack of action against hate-motivated crime continues to violate the rights of the LGBTQ community (together with other minority groups). Anomalies in the criminal justice system and inadequate law enforcement lead, among other reasons, to a low willingness to report hate crimes and due to the authorities which disregard the bias motivation, they carry out procedures for systematically under-qualified crimes.

One of the most important tasks of the next democratic government will be to immediately change this discriminatory constitutional and legislative framework and to open the possibility for same-sex couples to marry, protect family relationships and have the freedom to have children. In the future, not only must diversity be respected, but people belonging to sexual minorities must be acknowledged equal in all areas of life by a complete change of attitude. Every effort must be made to reduce hate-motivated violence, protect potential victim groups, increase willingness to report and conduct fair, comprehensive procedures. Strengthening the institutional framework for social sensitisation, awareness campaigns and victim support is essential. Democratic politicians should be present at Pride events – as is now self-evident in the more enlightened parts of the world.

Hungarian national minorities in the captivity of NER

The outlines of Viktor Orbán's foreseeable “nation-policy” were already tangible following István Mikola's careless statement during the 2006 election campaign: the idea of providing Hungarian citizenship and the right to vote to Hungarians living beyond the borders expressed that what is important is not the responsibility for the Hungarian minorities, but keeping political power inside Hungary in the long run. Indeed, Fidesz's 2010 election victory brought a strategic turning point: government actors are focusing on integrating/assimilating Hungarians and their representatives beyond the border in the System of National Cooperation (NER).

The current Hungarian government has established a patronage system in which it controls Hungarian political organisations, through them the elected local authorities (the county, city, municipal councils) and can therefore influence local and state decisions. As a result of investments and founding new institutions, as well as their continuous financing, it partly creates, partly transforms media and culture according to its own ideology. Today, through newspapers, radios, TV-s, webpages, magazines, publishers, sports clubs, colleges, universities, associations, Hungarian churches, tourism companies, it currently controls a large part of Hungarian public life beyond the border. Most of the financial support for the Hungarian minority institutions is provided by Hungary, and the political party selected by Fidesz is the exclusive distributor of the money through the foundations it has set up to this end, or, for example, through the Hungarian National Council in Vojvodina, which has been placed in serving position. Hungarian minority institutions have either become money distributors or have been liquidated. Since the number of persons with dual citizenship is significant, the Hungarian nationalities have a direct state law relationship with Hungary; there were practically whole enclaves created under the Hungarian state's partial authority in areas inhabited by Hungarians, such as the Székely Land. At the same time, although the Romanian government/state makes symbolic concessions to anti-Hungarian nationalism, it behaves fundamentally indifferent, and the enormous amounts of state money from Hungary make it easier to fulfil its official duties in those areas. Intellectuals belonging to the majority nation, mainly because of their lack of language skills, are not at all aware of the life and internal ethno-political dynamics of the Hungarian minority. The public is no longer concerned with the “Hungarian affair”; Hungarians are not included in the problematic set of issues that appeal to everyone – neither for, nor against. Meanwhile, migration is often the only way out for young people: families with children and grandparents move to EU member states, often bypassing Hungary. At the same time, however, there has been a massive turnout of Hungarian middle class voters voting for the new Romanian and Slovak liberal parties.

The Hungarian opposition plays no role in the political life of Hungarians living abroad – it simply is not present there. If Hungary had a change of government, it would have to reckon with the Orbán empire built in Romania and Serbia – and the question of whether or not it could abandon public money distribution. There can be no withdrawal of the right acquired in dual nationality, but electoral abuse must be prevented – and discrimination against Hungarians working in Western Europe must be eliminated by allowing letter voting for everyone. There should be an attempt to reclaim the concept of expropriated national interests from Fidesz by getting rid of nationalist rhetoric while protecting minority rights, in order to enhance bilateral and regional cooperation with neighbouring countries in a more liberal framework provided by the European Union. In parallel with the rediscovery of Transylvania and the Hungarian-populated areas, instead of dominant one-sided explanations of history and introverted national attitudes – along with liberal intellectuals from that area – committing to spreading an alternative, open world view.

Hungarian foreign policy in the European Union

Hungary has long been a loyal member of the Foreign Affairs Council and other external relations bodies of the European Union, even after 2010, when Viktor Orbán occasionally declared his dissent. However, the situation has gradually changed. In recent years, the Hungarian government has on several occasions openly opposed an EU position, supported by all or a large

majority of the member states, sometimes even by hindering the signing of an agreement or issuing a resolution. These cases were typically related to migration and criticism of other “illiberal” or authoritarian political regimes and leaders. In March 2018, the statement of a joint EU position was prevented by Hungarian diplomacy in one of the discussion rounds on the UN migration package in New York; in May, a draft statement with African countries was rejected at the Marrakesh meeting, and in preparation for summit between the European Union and the League of Arab States in February 2019, the Hungarian veto was enforced. In April 2018, when the EU called on China to comply with international standards, because of the Hungarian resistance the document was ultimately issued on behalf of the other twenty-seven member states, not the whole community. Hence the Hungarian special way made it impossible to formulate common EU foreign policy positions in many cases. All this led to the event in May 2019, when the ambassador of Finland, on behalf of the other 27 EU member states, presented the critical statement of the community against Israel in the Security Council of the United Nations – simply ignoring Hungary's objection.

Thus, the Hungarian government has gradually become the “enfant terrible” of the European Union also in the field of foreign policy. The debate on the old idea of introducing qualified majority voting in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, with the expressed support of the newly elected President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, will be soon another scene of conflict. On the contrary, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó said that the reform “will be opposed by the Hungarian government in all existing forums, and Hungary will be not alone doing so, because unanimity is essential for European unity”. This national sovereignty approach may lead to further tensions, since Hungary has gradually transformed from a loyal member state into an uncomfortable and later unwanted partner, the weakest link in the EU foreign policy – other member states directly interpret it as being under the influence of foreign countries.

In case of a democratic political turn, the defiant populist special way in the area of common foreign and security policy must obviously be abandoned; in accordance with a more inclusive approach to migration and a critical view of authoritarian regimes. Even from a pragmatic point of view this shift would be necessary: for Hungary – and for medium-sized member states – the only real opportunity for a significant increase in their international influence is European cooperation based on mutual solidarity, as evidenced spectacularly by the united EU support of Ireland during the Brexit negotiations. Instead of special deals, the new Hungarian government can play an active role – representing the principle of respect for human rights – and get much more successful in the international political arena in the future if it becomes one of the advocates of joint European efforts.

This approach could also bring about a paradigm shift in international development and humanitarian aid. In public thinking, Hungary still lives as a state that needs financial help itself. Since the '90s, funding has come from the Community/EU budget, first from the PHARE funds, then from the pre-accession funds, and since 2004 from the regional development and structural funds and other sources of funding. However, Hungary has (again) become a part of the West, and the world expects it to act as an international donor. Still, governments spent only a fraction of the Hungarian budget on developing poor countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia or Central America, and helping countries and populations affected by all kinds of humanitarian disasters, whether of human or natural origin. Compared to EU Member States with similar economies, Portugal and Greece are “outperforming” in terms of GDP/development aid, but even in the Central European region it is striking that both Poland and the Czech Republic have overtaken Hungary as an

international aid provider. International aid is a classic example of European burden-sharing: both the Member States and the EU institutions support less fortunate parts of the world from their own budgets. In the face of political upheaval, as the country's economy grows, it is expected that the new government will invest much more in international development and humanitarian projects.

Following the change of government in 2010, the Hungarian government – as a consequence of gradual detachment from democratic values – has been increasingly involved in conflicts inside the European political sphere. As a collateral loss to this discord, the Visegrad Co-operation became a victim a few years later – both in terms of the changed Hungarian attitude towards the block and in terms of the European image of the V4.

In the aftermath of the regime-change, the objectives of the Visegrad Group were to achieve the democratic transition and the transformation to a market economy, to move closer to the European Union, and later to join it, and to co-ordinate and mutually support each other. Since the accession in 2004, the V4 has set new goals in representing the interests of the four new member states within the European Union, integrating the region into the political and economic bloodstream of the EU and providing credible support for the accession of Western Balkans and Eastern European countries. Other Central European countries have also initiated joining the group – their failure indicates the cohesion of V4 at the time.

However, the Visegrad Group, which has gradually built itself up as a constructive European factor, today evokes the image of obstruction and a potential source of problems for the political forces believing in a closer European integration – both within the region and across the European Union. In order to balance fast-breaking conflicts with the EU institutions, the Orbán government sought to build a counter-pole snatching the opportunity of the refugee crisis peaked in 2015 finding a hinterland in the Visegrad Group which had somewhat lost its orientation by then – at least in rhetoric. The government took the advantage of the international attention following the influx of refugees trying to reach Northern and Western Europe through the country, and successfully put its Visegrad partners on a common anti-migration, sovereigntist and nationalist platform. At that time, populist parties in all three countries saw the crisis as an opportunity to increase their domestic support ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Although Orbán, together with Jarosław Kaczyński, still announced a cultural counter-revolution starting from the region in 2016, the unity of the four has apparently broken by now. While Budapest and Warsaw continue to fight about the issues of the rule of law with EU institutions, realising European Union as well as French and German initiatives to deepen co-operation in various policy areas, Bratislava and Prague are trying to shine a more positive light on themselves in the eyes of the others – and they really do need to improve their reputation and governance quality. In spite of the visible cracks and divisions, the Hungarian government continues to present the Visegrad Group as a strong, united alliance, however, this can be taken less and less seriously at European level.

Hungary is a medium-sized country embedded in the Central European region, and 15 years after Hungary's accession to the European Union, Hungary needs substantial co-operation to effectively represent its interests and ideas in the European Union, relying on its allies, in order to support the development of the country. The Visegrad Group and even wider Central European frameworks may continue to be a logical starting point, but this requires a positive European way of thinking by V4 once again. In order to revitalise the democratic foundations of regional cooperation,

the Hungarian political turn is most presumably unavoidable. Moreover, the desirable Central European historical identity of a new political leadership and the constructive behaviour inside the European Union is easy to be reconciled.

The biggest scandal in Hungarian foreign policy is the special friendship with Russia, which has not only undermined co-operation and trust within the European Union, but also poses a serious problem even for the Trump administration in the US. Generally speaking, the eastern turn of Hungarian foreign policy led by Viktor Orbán – the policy of Eastern opening and a broadly interpreted rapprochement with Russia, the revaluation of the relationship with China and the Middle East – is not simply a consequence of and a by-product of the gradual break with the traditional Western orientation and the permanent conflicts. On the contrary, the Eastern turn is the essence of the Orbánist foreign policy, both at ideological and political levels. For Orbán's centralised authoritarianism, as it is well-known from his famous speech delivered in Băile Tuşnad in 2014, Eastern political models, and most notably the Russian regime, are the patterns and the justifications. And the multi-layered nature of the current Russian course allows it to serve as a source of legitimacy for discourses that focus on universal, traditional and “Christian” values, as well as on “particularly Hungarian” aspects – whichever is needed in a special moment.

From a political point of view, Orbán's Eastern turn is a means of maximising the room of manoeuvre following the populist-sovereigntist concept of the nation. The government seeks to use its relationships with two, and even three, power poles (Washington, Brussels, and Moscow) to play the superpowers against each other. The system of the Euro-Atlantic alliance based on the ideology of liberal democracy intervenes in the government's domestic politics – the obvious way of pushing back this influence is by befriending the rival political power centre. By pointing to Russian, Chinese and Arab-funded prestige investments, the government may even give the appearance of a multi-legged Hungarian economy. Of course, the inflow of capital from the East cannot bring about a major change in the structure of the economy due to its miniscule volume compared to investments already arrived and still coming from Western direction and from the EU funds - this is even truer regarding Hungary's export markets.

The Eastern turn is inadequate to guarantee Hungary's security and prosperity, moreover, Russia is a geopolitical threat to the Central European region. In case of a democratic political change, new leaders and actors will naturally work to fully return to the Euro-Atlantic co-operation system and restore mutual trust – parallel eliminating the transmission of Russian propaganda and its unscrupulous use in the government media - while urgently re-tuning relations with Russia and the Eastern states in accordance with the strict framework ensured by Hungary's alliance system.

Searching for solution

The current authoritarian political regime wants to establish itself in Hungary in the long run. We do not know how long an extremely centralised regime will be able to stay in power – months, years, decades? However, an unexpected political turn cannot be ruled out based on historical experience. It is also true that neither the internal processes within the ruling party, neither the street protests nor the politics of the opposition are pointing in this direction.

Hungarian resistance to the Orbán regime is fragmented and incidental. Various forms of

protest by opposition political organisations and the civil society have not stopped the advancement of the Fidesz bulldozer, although in some exceptional cases the central will has been prevented from implementation. A large part of the society observes political developments with considerable apathy, while the governing force has a broad and disciplined electorate. Compared to Fidesz's mobilisable resources, the capabilities of their political adversaries are minimal, and the effectiveness of their activist networks seems rather limited in the local societies. In this situation, the colourful opposition has no easy task, just as nowhere in the world it has been succeeded in developing easy and non-violent methods of defeating and eliminating populist-nationalist leaders in power. Moreover, opposition parties in Hungary have been struggling for years with the dilemma of co-operation and unity vice versa their ideological differences and internal competition in the captivity of the electoral system rewritten by Fidesz, whilst in the meantime they have not excelled in formulating a political alternative beyond criticising the Orbán regime. A romantic anti-party sentiment as well as old conflicts between NGO-s and the opposition also often hindered joint actions and the use of the tools of direct democracy.

One of the most serious difficulties for the Hungarian opposition is not the elaboration of high-quality electoral programs, but the presentation of successful, effective language and narrative that attracts larger groups of citizens. While every Viktor Orbán's speech in Tusványos begins with an analysis of the crisis in the world – the coming of a new era – and then continues with the question how Hungary can survive and cope in this international environment: “Will we benefit from the emerging new world order?” – similar, statesman-like views on a broader horizon (promoted as major events) have never or have rarely been expressed by opposition politicians. Thus, there is a lack of a conceptual framework for meaningful political action, a worldview that opposes the simplistic Orbánist populism, which at the same time grasps and sketches - as far as possible - a full picture of the historical period we are currently living in.

Although without any concession to introverted, exclusive nationalism, it should become self-evident in the rhetoric of left-wing, liberal and green parties - while defending the idea of a united Europe - that they act as Hungarian politicians in the interest of the Hungarian political community; of the republic. Playing an active and initiator role as an equal negotiating and debating partner, rather than showing following behaviour according to “small country” complex that has dominated public thinking for a long time! In order to conquer the electorate, it is imperative that the opposition's top leaders act as capable, pragmatic and ready-to-act politicians, both at home and in the European Union – as opposed to a prime minister who easily breaks away from previous routines and represents himself as the “strongman of Europe”. With a mandatory respect for the principles of liberal democracy, there is a need for flexible thinking instead of doctrines in our postmodern era when former fundamental truths are being repeatedly questioned. Not to mention that politics is not science, but the art of action. As the nature of traditional liberal democracies is under transformation all around the world, and instead of/beside the rational representation of group interests, identity political struggles are becoming dominant; it is in this arena that the Hungarian opposition has yet a lot to do, finally confronting Viktor Orbán's Bonapartist thinking and acts.

It was as if hope had shined through ahead of the October 2019 municipal elections.

Budapest, September 2019