



Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Mr. Michael McGrath
European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Brussels, 9 April 2026

Re: Urgent need for Commission action in response to threats to the integrity of Hungary's 2026 parliamentary elections

Dear President von der Leyen, dear Commissioner McGrath,

As Members of the European Parliament responsible for monitoring the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (Article 7(1) TEU procedure), we wish to bring to your attention a series of recent developments in Hungary which raise serious doubts as to whether the parliamentary elections of 12 April 2026 can take place in a genuinely free and fair electoral environment, in line with the principle of democracy as enshrined in Article 2 TEU.

Firstly, credible investigative reporting based on several European national security sources has pointed to a potential Russian interference operation in Hungary in covert support of the electoral campaign of the ruling Fidesz party.¹ These reports allege the deployment of an operation on behalf of Russia's military intelligence service and overseen by the First Deputy Chief of Staff of President Putin. The campaign reportedly follows a similar blueprint to the electoral interference campaigns that Russia has rolled out in several other countries, including most recently Moldova.² The interference team is said to operate out of the Russian embassy in Budapest under a diplomatic or service cover. Following these revelations, the Hungarian National Election Commission reportedly declined to engage with the national institutions responsible for detecting and countering foreign intelligence activities in order to examine these allegations, thus leaving them unaddressed.³ These allegations further corroborate the concerns regarding foreign interference as also expressed in the ODIHR needs assessment mission for the April 2026 Hungarian elections.

The investigative journalist who uncovered the aforementioned allegations was subsequently targeted in a state-led intimidation of unprecedented severity. Following a report by the Sovereignty Protection Office designating him as an enemy of the state, the Hungarian government filed criminal charges against him for alleged espionage, accompanied by a public campaign portraying him as a threat to the nation.⁴ The affected journalist nevertheless has a

¹<https://vsquare.org/putins-gru-linked-election-fixers-are-already-in-budapest-to-help-orban/>

²<https://vsquare.org/russia-propaganda-moldova-parliamentary-elections-tiktok-disinformation-ai-romania-cu/>

³<https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2026/03/Foreign-interference-and-institutional-responses.pdf>

⁴<https://telex.hu/english/2026/03/26/accusing-investigative-journalists-of-espionage-is-unprecedented-this-is-the-hallmark-of-putin-s-russia-accused-journalist-says>

longstanding track-record of credibly documenting cases concerning the infiltration of Russian interests in Hungarian political decision-making, including recent evidence of high-level contacts between Hungarian and Russian government officials regarding EU sanctions against Russian individuals and entities.⁵ The attack against a well-established journalist falls squarely within the well-documented, ongoing pattern of intimidation, criminalisation and stigmatisation of independent journalists, media outlets and civil society by the Hungarian government, including through ongoing use of the Sovereignty Protection Office. We wish to reiterate that the Commission itself referred Hungary to the Court of Justice over the Protection of National Sovereignty Law in October 2024. The Venice Commission also concluded that the Office's broad and vague mandate, lack of effective oversight and chilling effect on expression and association are at odds with international standards and that the relevant regulation should be repealed.⁶ In its 2025 Rule of Law Report, the Commission furthermore records that the Office's investigative activities have increased pressure on journalists and civil society. The continued use of that legislative framework and the related office, especially during an election period, marks a grave disregard for the rule of law and for the preconditions of a fair and free democratic process.

Thirdly, we wish to highlight the credible allegations of unauthorised access attempts to the opposition party's IT systems, as well as testimonies suggesting interference by state security structures in the handling of those allegations.⁷ Such conduct would point not merely to an uneven playing field, but to direct interference with the opposition party's capacity to campaign securely and effectively. These reports must therefore be assessed with the utmost seriousness, including in light of Union rules relevant to attacks against information systems, data protection, effective judicial protection and the requirements of a democratic electoral process under Article 2 TEU.

Finally, documentary evidence⁸ and public reporting⁹ details how individuals and entities linked to the governing party intimidate people in economically vulnerable and marginalized communities to vote for Fidesz. These widespread vote-buying operations take various forms, including the provision of basic food stuffs, money, livestock, or narcotics, as well as other methods of coercion such as threats to shut off water or electricity or to take children into custody. This comes on top of existing documentation of parties connected to Fidesz assisting Hungarians in Serbia, Romania and Slovakia to fill in their election ballots and transferring these mail-in votes to Hungary. These allegations point to a serious risk of coercion and distortion of voter choice at local level, which strikes at the heart of democratic integrity.

These grave electoral anomalies cannot be seen in isolation, as they unfold within the broader context of Hungary's persistent and systemic rule of law breaches, which include long-standing violations regarding inter alia the functioning of the electoral system, media pluralism, misuse of state resources, pressure on civil society and independent journalism, and the absence of

⁵<https://vsquare.org/kremlin-hotline-hungary-colluded-with-russia-to-delist-sanctioned-oligarchs-companies-and-banks/>

⁶ [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2024\)001-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2024)001-e)

⁷<https://telex.hu/direkt36/2026/03/26/detective-with-inside-knowledge-of-the-operation-against-tisza-party-speaks-up>

⁸https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCwQR5HRWR8&fbclid=IwVERDUAQzfs5leHRuA2F1bQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAo2NjI4NTY4Mzc5AAEe0XQtJngoOGB8i-FnSBeJtHmC90mU23kzvvg0S2wsO2-FMlhOhT1kTP1heI_aem_58WKAUmMqsJw4-hIsoksYA

⁹<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c36r0068xp2o>
<https://telex.hu/english/2026/03/27/independent-documentary-accuses-orban-government-of-mass-voter-intimidation>

effective institutional safeguards. In an electoral system that has already been systemically distorted through inter alia a ‘winner takes all’ system and the unbalanced redrawing of electoral districts, these developments skew the system even further in favour of the ruling party through illegitimate means. What these developments further illustrate, is how the myriad of concerns already expressed in relation to the upcoming Hungarian elections, including in ODIHR’s needs assessment mission, with regard to possible foreign interference, abuse of state-linked powers, intimidation of investigative journalism, manipulation of the information space, and unlawful interference with political competition, are grave, pervasive and real.

In its November 2025 interim report under Article 7(1) TEU, the European Parliament again documented Hungary’s persistent undermining of the rule of law and continuous breaches of EU values, including in relation to the electoral framework. The European Parliament expressly called upon the Commission, in cooperation with the OSCE, to ensure that the elections in Hungary in 2026 are free and fair, are properly monitored and fully comply with the principle of democracy.

In view of the above, we therefore call on the Commission to act urgently and to make full use of the instruments at its disposal. In particular, we urge the Commission to:

1. Publicly assess, before and immediately after election day, whether the conditions for free and fair democratic competition in Hungary are being undermined by disinformation, foreign information manipulation and interference, state-resource misuse, intimidation of journalists, or unlawful interference with opposition actors.
2. Use the European Centre for Democratic Resilience and all other relevant Union structures without delay to monitor, analyse and publicly document disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference affecting the Hungarian elections, including coordinated campaigns, AI-generated deceptive content, and the amplification of manipulated narratives online.
3. Vigorously pursue and, where necessary, expand infringement action in respect of violations of Union law relevant to media freedom, audiovisual regulation, digital services, attacks against information systems, data protection, and the operation of the Sovereignty Protection Office and related measures. The Commission has already opened proceedings against Hungary on several of these grounds, and this enforcement effort must continue where the integrity of the electoral process is at stake.
4. Take due account in all rule-of-law-related tools, including in budgetary conditionality assessments and the Article 7 TEU procedure, of election-related abuses that may affect the implementation and enforcement of Union law and the effective protection of Article 2 TEU values.
5. Engage closely with ODIHR/OSCE findings and recommendations, and state clearly and unequivocally that any election marred by serious, systemic irregularities, intimidation, coercion, or information manipulation will have consequences for the Union’s assessment of the rule of law and democratic standards in Hungary.

The Union cannot credibly defend democracy externally while failing to react when the integrity of elections inside the Union itself is placed under such serious strain. Where there are credible indications that a Member State’s electoral process is being distorted through

intimidation, abuse of public power, manipulation of the information space, or foreign interference, this cannot be dismissed as a domestic matter but warrants EU enforcement intervention. As Guardian of the Treaties, the Commission has both the competence and the duty to act within the framework of Union law and in defence of the values set out in Article 2 TEU.

We would therefore be grateful for an urgent response setting out what concrete steps the Commission is taking, or intends to take, in relation to the integrity of Hungary's 2026 parliamentary elections.

Yours sincerely,

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MEP Michał Wawrykiewicz (EPP, PL) - Shadow Rapporteur
MEP Krzysztof Śmiszek (S&D, PL) – Shadow Rapporteur
MEP Sophie Wilmès (Renew, BE) – Shadow Rapporteur
MEP Konstantinos Arvanitis (The Left, EL) – Shadow Rapporteur