

## Hungarian Presidency debriefs EP committees on priorities

**Ministers are holding a series of meetings in parliamentary committees to present the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council.**

Hungary holds the Presidency of the Council until December 2024 included. This text will be updated regularly as the hearings take place.

### Constitutional Affairs

On 19 September, **European Union Affairs Minister János Bóka** highlighted the need to reform the EU for upcoming enlargement and told MEPs that the Presidency envisions two ministerial-level discussions on the future of Europe. He raised concerns about maintaining interinstitutional balance when reforming the Framework Agreement between the EP and the Commission and mentioned the transparency of interest representation, EU accession to the European Court of Human Rights, and the EU Ethics Body as other priorities.

MEPs debated issues including the Hungarian government's stance on EU values and its compliance with EU Court of Justice judgments. Many speakers raised concerns on the Prime Minister's recent visits to Moscow and Beijing, while others advocated enhancing national authorities' role in EU decision-making. Hungary's announcement that it will seek an opt-out from migration rules and its national assembly's position that European elections should be abolished were also discussed.

### Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

On 23 September, **Anikó Raisz, Secretary of State for Environmental Affairs and Circular Economy**, said the Presidency would push for a more competitive Europe while addressing the triple challenge of reducing pollution, mitigating climate change, and preserving biodiversity. MEPs quizzed the Minister on the EU's greenhouse gas reduction target for 2040, the Clean Industrial Deal, COP29, recent floods in Europe, the circular economy, pollution, new genomic techniques, chemicals, the role of forests and soil monitoring.

**Péter Takács, Secretary of State for Health**, highlighted, as priorities, adopting Council conclusions on cardiovascular diseases and renewing EU cooperation on organ donation and transplants. The Presidency also intends to adopt the updated Council recommendation on smoke-free environments and advance on the pharmaceutical package. MEPs quizzed the

Presidency on measures foreseen on rare diseases, equal access to medicines, shortages in the healthcare workforce, the competitiveness of the EU's pharmaceutical industry as well as mRNA vaccines.

On 7 October, **István Nagy, Minister of Agriculture**, emphasised that the Presidency would push for a farmer-oriented EU agricultural policy that secures EU food sovereignty, food security and protects agriculture and consumers. MEPs asked questions on how Hungary would tackle issues such as EU food waste, water management and soil monitoring, reducing methane emissions, new genomic techniques, and biodiversity including protection of pollinators. They also asked how the Presidency would proceed with the strategic dialogue on agriculture.

### Development

On 26 September **Tristan Azbej, State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians**, said that the Presidency would pay particular attention to the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, especially in the Sahel region. Mr Azbej also mentioned as priorities the implementation of the EU's Samoa Agreement with the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific region, tackling the root causes of migration in partner countries, and supporting the Global Gateway initiative and the Team Europe approach to development.

MEPs raised questions about the credibility of the Presidency's claims to advocate for human rights and democracy, given the rule of law concerns around the government as well as its ties with China and Russia. They also raised the importance of addressing the global persecution of Christians, and plans for closer cooperation with partner countries and countries of origin on returns and readmissions.

### Agriculture and Rural Development

**István Nagy, Minister of Agriculture**, informed MEPs on 7 October that the Council will draft priorities for the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post-2027. According to the Hungarian Presidency, protecting farmers and making the EU's agriculture sector more competitive must be at the centre of the new CAP.

A number of MEPs agreed that the focus should be on farmers' needs and called for increased funding for the new CAP. Several MEPs inquired into the Presidency's plans to support small farmers and requested EU food products and agricultural imports to the EU be subject to the same rules.

### Transport and Tourism

On 14 October, **Mr Nándor Csepreghy, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Construction and Transport**, said the Presidency would focus on four priorities: connectivity, competitiveness, transport safety, and greening the transport sector. It is also eager to start triologue discussions on new driving licence rules and the European Maritime Safety Agency. **Ms Anikó Túri, State Secretary for Administrative Affairs**, added that there is a need to address the impact of

climate change on the EU's tourism industry, rising accommodation costs and staff shortages in the travel industry, and how to balance the interests of tourists and local communities.

Transport MEPs called on the Presidency to progress discussions on revised weights and dimensions rules as well as new rules governing the disqualification of drivers. Some MEPs were eager to know how Presidency will improve the west-east transport corridor, military mobility, and China's efforts to secure controlling interests in EU critical infrastructure.

### **Economic and Monetary Affairs**

On 18 November, **Minister of Finance Mihály Varga** gave an overview of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency on economic governance, financial services, the capital markets union, and taxation issues.

MEPs primarily raised concerns about corruption and rule of law in Hungary as well as an anti-EU sentiment fuelled by the government, all of which represent a deadweight on the Presidency's aspirations. A few MEPs asked for more details on specific pieces of legislation such as energy taxation, the payment services directive, the bank crisis resolution rules, and the implementation of the economic governance framework.

### **Industry, Research and Innovation**

On 21 November, **Minister for Culture and Innovation, Balázs Hankó**, emphasised the need to strengthen European research and innovation to restore EU's global competitiveness. He highlighted challenges such as underinvestment, fragmentation of the European Research Area, and the need for better knowledge valorisation across all member states. He said that the Presidency will aim to increase funding for research, reduce administrative barriers, foster collaboration, and ensure inclusivity for all EU countries.

During the debate, MEPs raised concerns over the exclusion of Hungarian researchers from EU programmes and the lack of cooperation between universities. Concerns were also expressed over restrictions on academic freedom in Hungary, political influence over research agendas, and the promotion of outdated gender roles.

### **Culture and Education**

On 3 December, **Culture and Innovation Minister Balázs Hanko, State Secretary for Public Education, Zoltán Viktor Maruzsa and State Secretary for Sport, Ádám Schmidt** referenced several important events held by the Presidency: a high-level meeting on public education policies; the Conference on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, which dealt with the role of local communities in protecting patrimony affected by wars; and the EU Youth Conference, which sought to promote dialogue between young people and decision-makers, among others.

MEPs questioned the Presidency on what their government is going to do to reverse the suspension of Hungarian universities from Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes. MEPs

also asked about the Hungarian centralised education system, its strategy to increase the number of students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses and the ban of mobile phones in schools. MEPs also asked how Hungarian authorities were using major sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, to improve the lives and wellbeing of citizens.

### Further information

[Committee on Constitutional Affairs](#)

[Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety](#)

[Committee on Development](#)

[Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development](#)

[Committee on Transport and Tourism](#)

[Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs](#)

[Committee on Industry, Research and Energy](#)

[Committee on Culture and Education](#)


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