

*Values*

# FIGHTING FOR OUR EUROPEAN VALUES

Reflection on a five-year mandate

*Katalin Cseh*

*Member of the European Parliament*

*2019-2024*

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# INTRODUCTION



I am incredibly grateful for the trust that voters have placed in me over the past five years, giving me the opportunity to serve my country and continent as a Member of the European Parliament. Serving as a representative is a tremendous responsibility, the highest honor, and an unparalleled service. We were the extended hands and personal delegates of hundreds of thousands of voters, tasked with making wise and responsible decisions on their behalf amidst an unprecedented pandemic, a massive economic crisis, a brutal war at our borders, and a crisis of the rule of law that has entangled our country.

I aimed to spend every moment of this mandate working diligently and upholding strong values to earn the trust placed in me. We achieved historic successes. We established the rule of law mechanism, secured more direct EU funding for local governments and civil society, and strengthened and expanded the anti-corruption blacklist. We enacted the first EU-level legislation against domestic violence, passed the European Green Deal, and much more.

We connected hundreds of Hungarian citizens, students, and advocacy groups with EU decision-makers, showcasing what a free, European, democratic Hungary looks like—radically opposed to Orbán's politics.

I thank my colleagues for their incredible dedication, and camaraderie that defined our joint efforts. I am grateful to our Renew Europe family for allowing me to fight for liberal values as Vice-Chair and for being so loyal allies in advocating for the rule of law in Hungary. I thank Momentum activists for their steadfast work in snow, frost, and scorching sun. And, of course, I thank my husband, Dani, for his unparalleled support.

This booklet is a reflection on the mandate, with a selective list of memories from a remarkable journey over the past five years.

Sincerely,

**KATALIN CSEH**



JUN 10, 2019.



## MY FIRST TRIP TO BRUSSELS – BY RAIL!



Upon being elected, I took my first journey from Budapest to Brussels by rail, a trip that took 20 hours and required four transfers.

This experience highlighted the urgent need for better rail connections across Europe. Such lengthy and inconvenient travel is unacceptable.

Throughout the mandate, we advocated for scaling up cross-border night trains across the continent.

Support TrainsForEurope

<https://trainsforeurope.eu/>

JUL 10, 2019.

## ADDRESSING URSULA VON DER LEYEN FOR THE FIRST TIME

*Before Commission President von der Leyen was elected by Parliament, she received a 'grilling' in every political group. This was the first time I had the chance to directly confront her about her political family, the European People's Party, failing to stand up to democratic backsliding in Hungary.*

Dear Madame von der Leyen,

Hungary's democratic backsliding has been going on and worsening for nine years. We witnessed the Orbán government re-writing the constitution, harassing NGOs, cracking down on judicial independence – while using EU funds to enrich oligarchs and family members.

We also witnessed two previous Commissions trying to contain this destruction – and failing to achieve meaningful progress. The backsliding continues, it is spreading to other European countries and we see no end of it.

*Central European University will start its new semester in Vienna, after being forced out of the country. Just last week, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was practically dismantled in yet another political attack on academic freedom.*

*Minister von der Leyen, your political group, the EPP keeps drawing red lines and Viktor Orbán keeps crossing each one of them.*

*So my question is: what can you say to reassure Hungarian citizens that the Commission will stand up for their rights? And what are the specific instruments you pledge to use to improve the Commission's efficiency in safeguarding the rule of law?*



Katalin Cseh  
@katka\_cseh

Addressed Minister [#vonderLeyen](#) today, reminding her what's at stake for my country. [@ceuhungary](#) will start its new semester in Vienna, bc it was chased away from a European country. Last week, the Academy of Sciences was basically dismantled in another attack on [#academicfreedom](#)



3:05 PM · Jul 10, 2019

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## OCT 13, 2019. - THE OPPOSITION TRIUMPHS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

Heartening news from Hungary – the local elections of 2019 October delivered huge opposition victories, including that of Gergely Karácsny, who was voted mayor of Budapest. Our first Momentum mayors like Tamás Soproni of Terézváros also took office.

## JAN 29, 2020. - FRIENDSHIP TRUMPS BREXIT – FAREWELL TO OUR UK FRIENDS

Perhaps the most emotional moment of the mandate – as we bid farewell to the United Kingdom by joining hands and singing Auld Lang Syne. This is our strong, big-hearted European family.





# MAR 21, 2020.

## JOINING A COVID-WARD AS A MEDICAL VOLUNTEER

In late 2019 and early 2020, COVID-19 swept across the world, bringing unprecedented challenges and profound changes to our daily lives.

As the pandemic reached Europe, I applied to volunteer at a COVID-ward of a Budapest hospital as a medical volunteer.

During those intense days, witnessing the heroism and unwavering dedication of healthcare workers deeply moved me. It was a humbling experience that underscored the urgent need for real support and recognition for those risking their lives to sustain our communities.

The pandemic starkly highlighted the critical roles of doctors, nurses, cleaners, shop clerks, delivery workers, bus drivers, and other essential personnel as the backbone of our societies. It was clear that our societal framework needed profound reform to rectify the injustices and inequalities that became so glaringly apparent during this crisis.

It was heartbreaking to witness that many frontline workers, despite their essential contributions, struggled to earn a living wage. The pandemic exposed deep flaws in our societal systems that need urgent attention and reform. This crisis must serve as a resounding wake-up call to build a more equitable and just society where everyone's contributions are valued and rewarded fairly.





## REMEMBERING JÁNOS CSÓKA-SZŰCS

On May 13 at 6 am, three police cars arrived at the home of our Momentum activist János Csóka-Szűcs in Gyula, a small town in Southern Hungary. Five policemen entered and searched his apartment, all his electronic devices were seized. He was taken to the police station. His crime: he posted a comment on Facebook critical to the Orbán government.

He was released short after. But as he explained: "These proceedings themselves are the punishment. A whole bunch of policemen came, although 2-3 would have sufficed. Local pro-government media reported that the "criminal" is being taken by police force." This is how intimidation works in Orbán's autocracy – and we did our utmost to bring his story to European decision-makers.

Addressing solidarity protesters, János said: "It wasn't me they wanted to intimidate (they know me enough to know it's not easy) it was everyone else. But keep on going! If you do, all this will be over faster."

**János Csóka Szűcs tragically passed away in November 2022. He embodied courage, determination, and initiative, qualities we admire greatly as members of Momentum. Fearless and resilient, he tirelessly worked for a better Hungary, undeterred by harassment. He firmly believed that truth remains truth, even when it displeases local autocrats.**

**We will never forget him.**



# JULY 7, 2020. – ADDRESSING ANGELA MERKEL ON HUNGARY’S DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING



Chancellor Merkel, The Hungarian rule of law crisis is at a critical stage.

Little over a month ago, a fellow member of my party, Momentum was detained by police because of a Facebook post criticising the Orbán government.

Index, the largest Hungarian news portal is fighting for survival because of Fidesz interference.

Municipal governments are being stripped of their revenues because they elected opposition mayors last year. Corruption and state capture are out of hand.

Madam Chancellor, Orbán has been in power for ten years. It’s been a decade of procrastination from Europe's side.

You can keep saying there’s nothing the Council can do, but that is simply not the case.



**Katalin Cseh**   
@katka\_cseh



The Hungarian rule of law crisis is at a critical stage. And Madam Chancellor, it’s been a decade of procrastination from Europe’s side.

[#EU2020DE](#) [@EU2020DE](#)



4:22 PM · Jul 8, 2020

Direct EU funds to local governments and NGOs – instead of funnelling them through a government which openly abuses them and trashes the EU's values.

This is a concrete mechanism on the table. The question is: will you support it, here and now?

Continuing to do nothing is a choice as well. A choice detrimental to the stability of the EU, and one more nail in the coffin of Hungarian democracy.



# JUL 22, 2020. INDEX, OUR LARGEST INDEPENDENT NEWS PORTAL GETS STRANGLERED BY THE REGIME

We did everything in our power to alert Europe to the political takeover of Index, Hungary's largest independent news site. We organized a demonstration in Budapest, we pushed back against Fidesz lies in Brussels, we brought the case to every single forum imaginable.

# index



**Katalin Cseh** @katka\_cseh · Jul 24, 2020

Unbearable to watch — mass resignations of editors, journalists & staff at [@indexhu](#) protesting the politically motivated sacking of their editor-in-chief

Europe, will you look away and do nothing — again?

Ppl in Budapest: see you at the protest. 6pm, Puskas square

JanosBodey



In my first op-ed for POLITICO, I argued that the disbursement of EU funds as the best leverage to fight attacks on fundamental rights – freeze funds to the Orbán regime, and redirect them to local governments and civil society.



# POLITICO

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## The future of Hungary's free media depends on EU money

To rein in Budapest's attacks on free speech, Europe's best tool is control of funds.

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Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán speaking to the nation in April this year | Attila Kisbenedek/AFP via Getty Images

OPINION

AUGUST 5, 2020 4:45 PM CET

BY KATALIN CSEH

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We pushed back against the lies of the Fidesz propaganda office. They circulated an “information sheet” on the Index case– we decided to correct it.

**Information sheet Outright lies and gaslighting  
about the events concerning the Hungarian online news portal „Index.hu”**

The editor-in-chief of *Index.hu*, ~~a the~~ top online Hungarian news portal, was dismissed by the owner of the portal which was followed by the resignation of around 80 other employees. Civil society leaders, people close to Index as well as tThe Hungarian opposition are is falsely claiming political interference by the Hungarian Government. In reality, the events occurred as a result of the takeover of the portal's advertising arm by a seemingly private entity led by a pro-government media mogul ~~business matters of a private entity, and the Hungarian Government refrains from commenting on such issues.~~

**What happened?**

The *Index.hu Ltd.*, the entity behind the Hungarian online news portal, is owned entirely by a private foundation since 2017. Being a “private entity”, of course, means little in a country where the Prime Minister's son-in-law and childhood pipe-fitter pal become the country's richest men, with businesses growing faster than Google.

Orbán has built an entire media empire based on the same playbook: pro-government businessmen arrive; outlets turn into propaganda machines. The very same chain of events went down six years ago at Origo, another portal. It was turned into the nastiest mouthpiece after unearthing several corruption scandals of top Fidesz officials that year.

The pressure on Index has been growing: two years ago, the editorial board set up an 'independence barometer' and pledged to the public to alert them about any meddling. In March 2020, a tycoon with close Fidesz-ties who orchestrated Origo's demise, Miklós Vaszily, captured over half of the shares in the firm that controls ad revenues of Index.

This was the context in which, aAround the 21st of June, information was published about plans by the owner to carry out a complete overhaul re-organizations of the portal in order to “increase its profitability”, although no such profitability motives were ever credibly established. Later, the Head of the Board of Directors of *Index.hu Ltd.* – on behalf of the owner – revoked the Editor-in-Chief of the portal from the Board of Directors due to leaking business secrets to a competitor online news portal – an allegation he flatly denies – and thus, the “loss of trust”. One month later, the Head of the Board of Directors initiated the removal of the Editor-in-Chief. Due to his dismissal, more than 80 employees resigned which led to significant attention and claims from the opposition that these events had occurred due to political interference – since who would doubt the words of an entire newsroom walking out to protect their integrity, risking their families' financial security in the middle of an economic meltdown and a global pandemic.

In an op-ed, I called on the European People's Party to **stand with journalists** and finally expel Fidesz.



Letter

# An open letter to the EPP on end of Hungary's press freedom

0 Comments



EU Political Opinion

BY KATALIN CSEH, BUDAPEST, AUGUST 6, 2020, 8:31:29 AM

0 co-observers





## NOV 5, 2020. - WE HAVE A RULE OF LAW MECHANISM!

We have a deal!

After 5 rounds of (masked-up) Trilogue negotiations with the Commission and the Council, we reached an agreement on the rule of law conditionality mechanism. A historic new law ensures that the EU can apply financial sanctions to respond to democratic backsliding.



## NOV 17, 2020



Orbán and Morawiecki threaten to blow up the entire EU budget and the historic COVID Recovery Fund because of the rule of law mechanism – but they fail. The concession they get: the Commission will not implement it for (at least) a year.

## DEC 15, 2020 - PLENARY SPEECH

### We have a rule of law mechanism!

Dear colleagues,

To understand what it means to have a rule of law mechanism, let me describe the special Groundhog Day we are stuck in, in Hungary.

You open the news, there's a corruption scandal: EU funds never arrived to our poorest communities, but ended up with a spouse of a Fidesz politician, or Mr Orbán's son-in-law. But Hungary's top public prosecutor is a former Fidesz member – so no investigation.

Since the beginning of our mandate, we raised these cases in letters, at hearings, at the Plenary. The answer we got: the EU is deeply concerned, but doesn't have the tools to take action. Come next January and the rule of law mechanism – this excuse is gone.

This is a victory for this Parliament. We fought for this with unity and resolve.

Yes, many of us are disappointed with Council, who yet again, failed to send a clear message.

But maybe it's my optimism as a new lawmaker – I still believe this time is different. And the difference is this Parliament – what we have achieved together and our commitment to keep going.

If the Commission fails to act - we will call out their dereliction of duty. If court challenges are used for delay - we will request an expedited procedure.

We have a tool in our hand, and we will use it.

This is the message of this resolution.





I Legislative acts  
REGULATIONS

22.12.2020

EN

Official Journal of the European Union

LI 433/1

REGULATION (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 16 December 2020

on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular point (a) of Article 322(1) thereof,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular Article 106a thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the Court of Auditors <sup>(1)</sup>,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure <sup>(2)</sup>,

Whereas:

- (1) The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). As recalled by Article 2 TEU, those values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.
- (2) In its conclusions of 21 July 2020, the European Council stated that the financial interests of the Union are to be protected in accordance with the general principles embedded in the Treaties, in particular the values set out in Article 2 TEU. It also underlined the importance of the protection of the financial interests of the Union and the importance of respect for the rule of law.

DEC 22, 2020

The rule of law regulation is published in the Official Journal of the European Union. Here it is!

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## **FEB 10, 2021. - PLENARY SPEECH**

### **I called for more transparency in vaccine procurement!**

Dear colleagues,

I strongly support a common European approach in vaccine procurement, it shields us from toxic divisions and helps smaller member states like my own.

But colleagues, we have been calling for the transparency of vaccine purchases for half a year now. And it's good to have a commitment now. But dear President, we should have heard this speech last June.

It was obvious from the beginning that extra efforts need to be made to increase transparency. But what we saw was a lack of clear communication, refusing accountability, evading questions from journalists. In a crisis, it's a recipe for disaster.

Uncertainty is everywhere these days, and our citizens expect to have all the information – about procurement, production, delivery. What will they get, when and how – and if something goes wrong, they deserve to know why.

Who took the decision to turn down millions of the frontrunner vaccines? Who negotiated? Which member states were dragging their feet? We need to know that.

Because accountability and scrutiny are not unnecessary nagging. But they are the cornerstone of democracy – and our number one job as Parliamentarians, and we will stand up for them in the future as well.



# MAR 3, 2021. - THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY FINALLY EXPELS FIDESZ



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Home / News / Politics / Future EU / Orbán's Fidesz leaves EPP Group before being kicked out

## Orbán's Fidesz leaves EPP Group before being kicked out

By Alexandra Brzozowski and Vlad Makszimov | Euractiv Est. 4min Mar 3, 2021



Orbán's Fidesz leaves EPP Group. [Shutterstock/focal point]

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 **Katalin Cseh** ✓  
@katka\_cseh

1989, Prague — Tamas Deutsch and Fidesz activists are protesting for democracy, get detained by police

2020, Hungary — under Fidesz' rule, an opposition activist criticises the government on facebook, five policemen take him from his home at 6am

Full circle. @EPP #ExpelFidesz



6:35 PM · Dec 15, 2020

## MAR 24, 2021. - PLENARY SPEECH

### We get banned from China

In an unprecedented move, the Chinese government slapped sanctions on us—members of the EP's Human Rights Subcommittee, for speaking up against Uyghur oppression.

Dear colleagues,

The oppression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang is the largest scale detention of minorities since the Second World War – and it is our duty as Parliamentarians to speak up against it.

It's no coincidence that this institution was singled out and targeted by outrageous sanctions only for doing our job.

What this Parliament stands for is the ultimate nightmare of the Chinese leadership. A united, value-based coalition, where Western democracies push back against the brutality of the Chinese regime. China is terrified of a united and value-based European foreign policy.

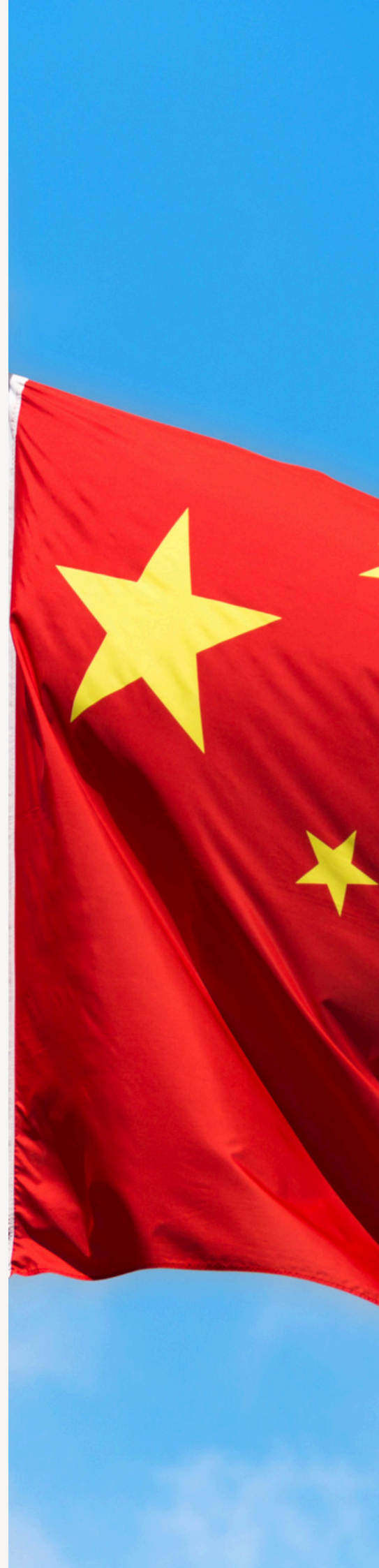
And that's why they cultivate their Trojan horses like Viktor Orbán, who kicks out a Western university and invites a Chinese one, and whose Foreign Minister regards the EU sanctions as useless exhibitionism.

So colleagues, let's not let China silence us,

Let's speak out with one voice loud and clear: that the comprehensive investment agreement is off the table until these sanctions are not lifted. And we should seriously consider a more comprehensive import ban on Xinjiang cotton.

Let's not be bullied into silence.

Thank you.





## APR 15, 2021. - WE REFORMED THE EU'S BLACKLIST TO EXCLUDE FRAUDULENT APPLICANTS

We took an important step towards reforming the EU's blacklist – something we have been advocating for since the beginning of the mandate. The glaring gap in our existing EU blacklist was that shockingly, it did not cover funds that are jointly managed with member states. Such funds make up 80% of our budget. The European Commission agreed with us that we need legislative action in our new financial regulation to expand the blacklist to the whole budget.



**Katalin Cseh** @katka\_cseh · Apr 13, 2021

We need a credible & effective European blacklist— to exclude fraudulent applicants from receiving EU funds again

This Thursday @ 10 in @EPBudgets, we hold a public hearing on the functioning of our existing framework & ways to improve it

Tune in!

[multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/committee-o...](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/committee-o...)



**Katalin Cseh** @katka\_cseh · Jan 15, 2021

Orban's son-in-law received 600,000 € EU funds for his

He has a \*proven record\* of fraudulent applications, caught by his own investigators.

...

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A close-up photograph of a wooden gavel resting on a stack of Euro banknotes. The gavel is positioned vertically on the left side of the frame, with its head resting on the top of the stack. The banknotes are fanned out, showing various denominations. The background is a blurred, light-colored surface.

## PLENARY SPEECH

Dear colleagues,

As we stepped into this Parliament, the EU's anti-fraud framework seemed like a water pistol against a forest fire – designed for addressing small irregularities, but simply inadequate in the face of systemic corruption, like what we witness in Hungary.

Many claimed it was impossible, but we rolled up our sleeves and got to work. And we did make major breakthroughs.

Creating the rule of law mechanism stands out as a crucial reform. It shows that the EU is finally taking up a fight.

And this financial regulation also includes important steps in the right direction. We've boosted transparency by improving our database of final beneficiaries, and we reinforced the EU's blacklist, which shockingly did not cover funds jointly managed by member states. Now it finally does.



APR 26, 2021. - GENERATION EUROPE.



MY PORTRAIT IN PARLIAMENT MAGAZINE



**Katalin Cseh**  @katka\_cseh · May 23, 2021



The fact that [#Lukashenka](#) even dares to divert a civilian aircraft flying between EU capitals shows the damage done by Trojan horses like Orban & the EU's passivity to deal with it

Thugs read the news too. They act this way because they do not expect a strong, united EU response

 26

 300

 1K



## MAY 23, 2021. - LUKASHENKA DIVERTS A RYANAIR AIRCRAFT

It was flying between EU capitals, with EU citizens on board – showcasing the dire need for common European defense capabilities.







ACCIDENTALLY BECAME A GIF. 😊



## MAY 26, 2021. - CALLING OUT INACTION FOR THE MISUSE OF EU FUNDS IN HUNGARY.

Thank you very much Chair, and thank you for this presentation and also for this discussion. Well, somebody mentioned impatience, that the Parliament is impatient and that we are hurrying things.

Well let me just say that yesterday evening I had a talk with my voters from a city called Mátészalka. It's situated at the Eastern end of Hungary, in one of the poorest regions. If you drive 50 kms away from the city Mátészalka, you end up to a village called Biri. This village is famous for one thing: people applied for European funding to establish a summer camp for poor children. What it ended up to be is a lavish castle for parties where the local Fidesz mayor's son hosts events for Instagram influencers.

Hundreds of thousands of euros went into that castle. So how can I explain to my voters in Mátészalka that we still need more time, that we are taking it slow? They are sitting there and they know that for next year's election, Mr Orbán will go around, spending the recovery money like free cash for all. For voters' benefits. And you know, my pro-European voters look me in the eye, and ask me - can you do really, like, anything in Europe? And I try to explain to them that yes, we have this regulation, it is better than before.

But please, Mr Koopman, give us some concrete dates. Something that I can say to my voters who place trust in this institution. Because "within this year, we are launching this procedure" - this is not enough. When? When the Parliament gave the deadline of June 1, then the Commission's spokesperson said that no guidelines will be finalized until the end of the court case. Has it changed? I hope yes. So please, give us something concrete to work with, and respect the voice of those people who are concerned about their money and about the inactivity of this institution that has been going on for a decade.

Thank you very much.

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europe.**

**JUN 9, 2021. - PLENARY SPEECH.**

## **Urging the commission to apply the rule of law mechanism**

Dear colleagues,

I have 90 seconds to convince you that we simply cannot protect our historic EU budget from corruption, if the Commission does not start applying the rule of law mechanism immediately. Not a few months from now, not after more guidelines are drafted – but immediately.

In 90 seconds, I could talk about Viktor Orbán's son-in-law, who continues to bag fortunes from EU grants, even though the EU's own investigators concluded that he defrauded the EU. Or I could mention Viktor Orbán's childhood friend, who used to be a humble gas-fitter, now he's the richest man in Hungary, with a company growing faster than US tech giants. He has received over ONE BILLION euros in EU grants. He just installed an 800 kg safe in his new luxury villa – maybe he's anticipating a slice of our Recovery Fund.

This is the ugly reality on the ground – what we've been calling out for years, and why we created the rule of law mechanism. So why does the Commission refuse to apply it? Is it naivety? Is it political capture? Or do EU officials brush this problem aside, saying it's a small member state, far away – even though our public money is at stake and Orbánism is spreading like wildfire.

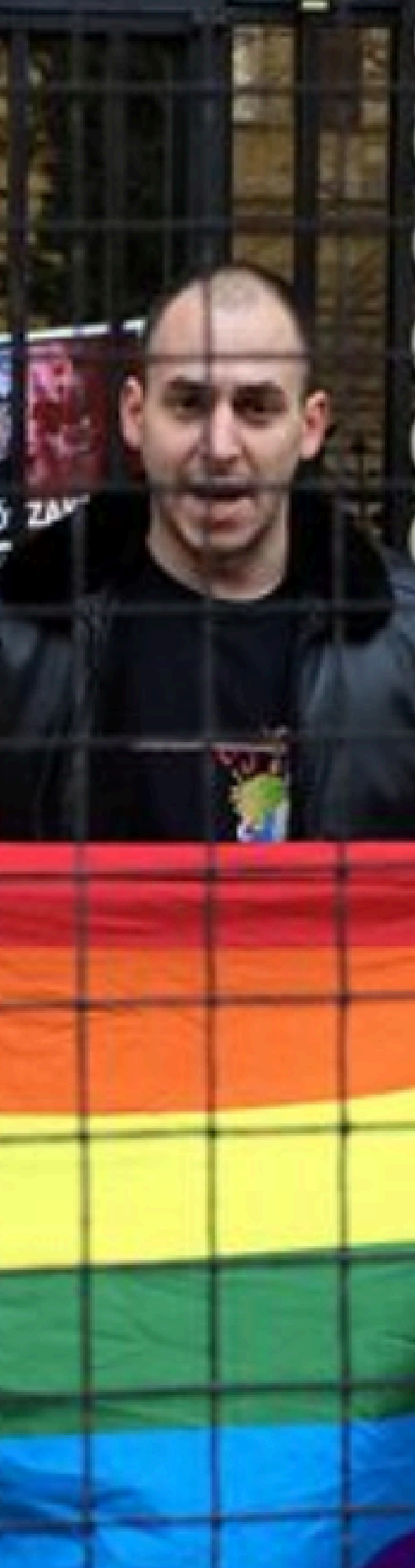
If the Commission President was directly elected, She would need to face voters and explain her failure to act directly to them. Then avoiding scrutiny, as it so often happens, would not be an option.

But this Parliament is the voice of 450 million voters. And we will not back down until the rule of law mechanism is properly implemented, and yes, we are willing to go to Court for this.

Because citizens demand results. And they deserve results, also.







**JUN 14, 2021. - PLENARY SPEECH**

## **Hungary passes the EU's first anti-LGBT law**

In 2014, Hungarian gay rights activist Milán Rózsa climbed into the fortified Russian embassy in Budapest.

He held up a rainbow flag, and called out Putin's anti-gay law, and the violence unleashed by it.

Milán was a friend of mine, one of the most passionate and brave people I ever knew. And a few months later, he took his own life. His tragedy sheds light on all the mental pain LGBTI people very often suffer from.

And this is beyond tragic that we are here today, To witness the exact replica of Putin's law being adopted in the EU.

Right now, in Hungary, it is illegal for teachers to talk to high schoolers about diversity and acceptance.

Or for kids to watch cartoons with queer characters in it.

The law conflates gay people with pedophiles.

And it incites violence and hatred, we already see that.

If this is not enough for the EU to take action, then nothing else will be.

So I tell you what to do:

Stop funding Viktor Orbán's corruption.

Apply the rule of law mechanism.

Because human rights abuses are only a means for him, and kleptocracy is the ultimate end.

Thank you very much.

# JUL 19, 2021. - THE PEGASUS SPYING SCANDAL BREAKS.





## OCT 20, 2021 I WAS REELECTED AS RENEW VP



## NOV 10, 2021 - WE HAD THE HONOR TO HOST THE REV. GÁBOR IVÁNYI AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The Reverend Gábor Iványi is a true Hungarian hero – a prominent dissident during communism, and a consistent voice for humanism all his life. He was also a former friend of Orbán. His church was stripped of legal status – because he refused to toe the line and praise the inhumane regime. His charities are routinely harassed. Europe needs to hear his story.



## DEC 1, 2021. - WE TRAVELLED TO THE POLAND-BELARUS BORDER FOR A FACT-FINDING MISSION

In a shameful tactic, Lukashenka uses migrants as a weapon to weaken the EU, cynically instrumentalizing human lives. As representatives, we travelled to the border area to get first-hand knowledge from locals and civil society groups.



**Katalin Cseh** @katka\_cseh · Dec 1, 2021

...

We are at the Poland/Belarus border to get first-hand information about the situation. This is an EU crisis & it needs a united, humane response

We need tough steps against Lukashenka, who manufactured this crisis. And we cannot allow people freeze to death on the EU's doorstep



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## PLENARY SPEECH

Thank you Chair, Commissioner, dear colleagues,

Two weeks ago, we travelled to the Polish-Belarus border with a group of MEP colleagues. We spent there a day, talking to local communities – to get first-hand information about the effects of this hybrid war, where innocent people are being used as weapons.

The Belarusian dictator Lukashenka manufactured this crisis for his own sinister goals, and as a result, people are freezing to death on the EU's doorstep. Teenage children, a pregnant woman, and so many more.

Colleagues, the situation on the ground is dramatic. I was moved deeply by the kindness of local residents, in small towns in the border area. They are collecting warm blankets and food, and are doing anything they can to help – and it's a shame that they have to do it secretly and at night, because their own government cordoned off the border area and does not let anyone in.

These people understand that shoving problems under the rug, and blocking journalists, blocking MEPs access does not make the problem go away.

Looking the other way might be more comfortable, sure – but it's inhumane and it's not a solution.

Colleagues, this is a humanitarian emergency.

This is an EU crisis and we need a common EU response. This is not the time to turn down EU help for political reasons. We need a forceful Frontex engagement, We need humanitarian help and solidarity. And we need to continue putting pressure on the Lukashenka regime, because a democratic Belarus is the long-term guarantee of the EU's safety.

Thank you very much.



JAN 20, 2022 - I ADDRESSED PRESIDENT MACRON,  
HIMSELF A PEGASUS-TARGET TO PUT THE ISSUE  
ON THE COUNCIL'S AGENDA



Katalin Cseh @katka\_cseh · Jan 19, 2022



The #Pegasus scandal is Europe's Watergate.

I asked President Macron (himself a Pegasus target) to show his solidarity with journalists & politicians spied on by their own governments in Poland & Hungary.

The French EU Presidency should address the case in #Article7 proceedings





# PLENARY SPEECH

Dear Mr President,

The Pegasus spying scandal is the European Watergate.

And Mr President, you understand this more than anyone else in this Chamber – because you yourself were also targeted with the Pegasus software.

So I call for your solidarity, With the journalists, lawyers and politicians in Poland and Hungary – who were spied on by their own governments.

Most targets in Hungary have one thing in common: they were all critics of the Orbán government.

Clearly, this is their way to intimidate all of us who still dare to defy them.

So Mr President,

This should never happen in Europe. We have to acknowledge that.

And we ask the French Presidency to finally address democratic backsliding.

And to address the Pegasus spying scandal in Article 7 proceedings

Because if governments in Europe can continue to use secret service weapons against political opponents ,

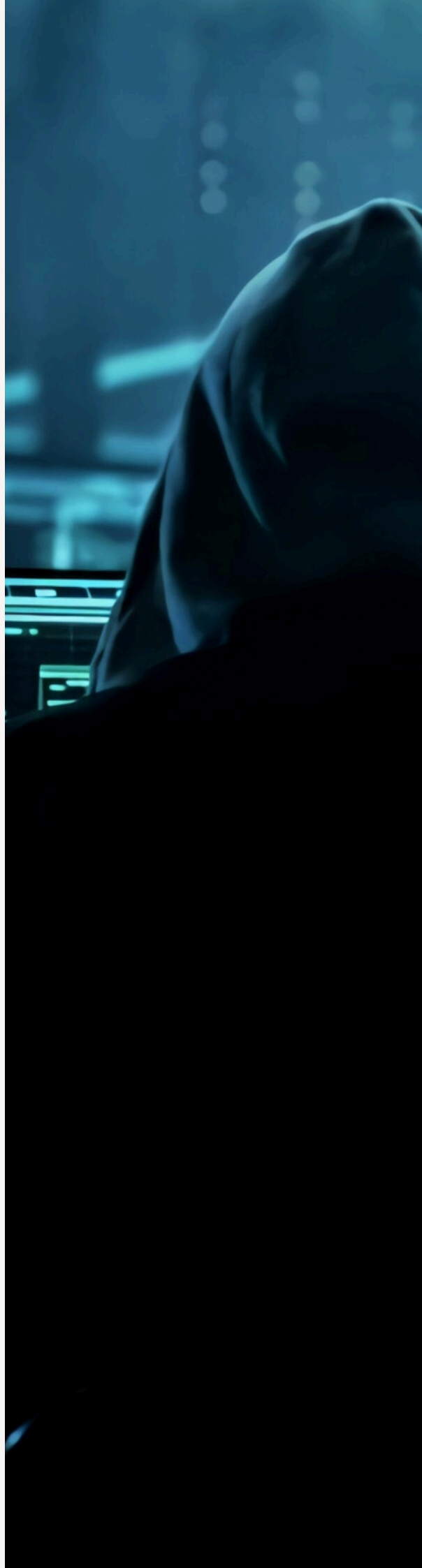
To go through family pictures, to listen in to private conversations without any consequences,

Then we cannot speak of democracies anymore.

And thus the very foundation of the European Union will fall apart.

The EU has to take action – and the French Presidency now has the chance to do so.

Thank you very much.





## **FEB 16, 2022. - PLENARY SPEECH Calling for EU sanctions on Russia – right before the invasion**

Dear Colleagues,

Let's pause for a moment and let the dark truth sink in: for the first time in decades, there is a very real chance that there will be war in Europe.

As we debate in this very house, there are still Russian troops staring down Ukraine in the EU's eastern neighbourhood. We all read the news that they might attack today.

Many of us in this chamber come from countries bordering Ukraine. This is real. This would be our war. We might not be fighting it, but we will feel the consequences. And we should feel responsible for preventing it too.

Yes, we are in the 24th hour, but Europe has not exhausted all of its opportunities. We need to leave no doubt that a war will entail severe repercussions. This must include suspending the Nord Stream II project, or closing Europe's financial system for Russian state-sponsored actors.

In the longer-term, we will need to rethink our ties with Russia. If Putin is capable of holding a continent on high alert for months, Europe must have the tools to do the same. This is an existential question.

Before achieving this, all the Commission's talk about a geopolitical commission remains empty.



**FEB 24, 2022. RUSSIA INVADES UKRAINE.**



**Katalin Cseh**  
@katka\_cseh

Started today at the border town of Tiszabecs. Seeing the tragedy of people fleeing their homes, so many locals show up to help, donate essentials, cook warm food.

We're amplifying their calls for support: better coordination, UA, RU interpreters, warm blankets are much needed.



## FEB 26, 2022. TWO DAYS AFTER THE INVASION, WE TRAVELLED TO UKRAINE ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION

As a European representative, I wanted to get first-hand knowledge from the ground, and then amplify these voices in the European Parliament, channel support to the right places.

## MAR 1, 2022. PRESIDENT ZELENSKY ADDRESSES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT – AND NOT EVEN THE INTERPRETER CAN HOLD BACK HIS TEARS



**Zach Basu**  
@zacharybasu

Translator chokes up as Zelensky addresses the European Parliament: "Nobody is going to break us. We are strong. We are Ukrainians. We have a desire to see our children alive. I think it's a fair one."



12:59 PM · Mar 1, 2022



# MAR 1, 2022. WE ORGANIZED A DEMONSTRATION IN BUDAPEST TO SHOW OUR SUPPORT TO UKRAINE



Budapest stands with Ukraine.

Our opposition alliance deplors Viktor Orban's decade-long policy of cozying up to Putin, a war criminal.



10:02 PM · Mar 1, 2022







**MAR 14, 2022. INTERVIEW WITH  
THE DAILY SHOW'S JORDAN KLEPPER**

One of the highlights of the campaign was meeting The Daily Show crew on the Danube bank. Their Hungary special is available on

YouTube: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=O-YuZPT1NzM>

As I told Jordan Klepper— we'll keep fighting, because our country deserves so much better.



# APR 3, 2022. - OUR OPPOSITION ALLIANCE SUFFERS A CRUSHING ELECTION DEFEAT

## Thoughts after election night.

First and foremost, our task is self-reflection: confront the facts and understand the reasons. Despite all our efforts and hard work, our messages did not resonate with voters beyond our urban, liberal base.

Our prospects are truly bleak. Not only did Orban win a supermajority, neo-fascist Our Homeland entered Parliament. That means 70%+ for radical right, xenophobic and homophobic politics. I am deeply worried for minorities, and dangerous hate-mongering tearing our society apart.

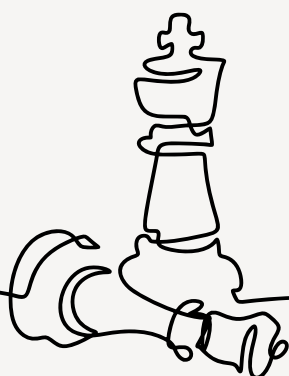
We fought an uphill battle. As the OSCE unveiled, the race was unfair— with Péter Márki-Zay's 5 minutes of state TV airtime in 4 years; with Orban's refusal to debate; with our 1,500 billboard spaces against his 12,000; with reports of irregularities

The shadow of the war was an important factor. Many unattached voters believed the lies spread through Orban's vast propaganda machine— that the opposition are warmongers and would drag Hungary into the war in Ukraine. Their fear was debilitating and we couldn't push back.

I feel proud that our six-party alliance managed to set differences aside & unite— but we need to work harder to gain voters' trust, to make them believe we represent a credible alternative that is ready to govern our country, and has solutions to their everyday worries.

As the cost of living crisis worsens and Orban becomes evermore isolated as the only remaining Putin-supporter in the EU, we need to brace for years of deep crisis.

That's also the reason we need to keep fighting. For Hungarians, and for our enduring vision of a better country. Every oppressive regime falls one day. We continue to resist and will always have faith in our country. We need Europe not to give up on us either. NGOs, journalists, academics, LGBT+ people & all of Orban's targets are EU citizens too— and they deserve Europe's support.



## **APR 5, 2022. - AFTER A YEAR-LONG DELAY, THE COMMISSION FINALLY TRIGGERS THE RULE OF LAW MECHANISM**

The European Parliament kept fighting for the implementation of the regulation. We contended that delaying the implementation of the legislation was blatantly unlawful. The Commission basically decided to postpone enforcement until it fit with Orbán's electoral calendar. This is not the way to credibly stop an autocrat.

”

**The decision to trigger the Rule of Law mechanism came after repeated calls from Parliament and with considerable and unnecessary delay.**

**Katalin Cseh**

Renew Europe MEP

**renew europe.**

**renew  
europe.**



**APR 6, 2022. – PLENARY SPEECH**

## **I call out the Council for their decade of inaction on the Article 7 procedure**

The Article 7 procedure was one of the unused instruments to stop Orbán's attacks against democracy. It was not used – because the Council refused to use it.

Thank you, Chair.

Dear colleagues,

After Sunday's election, it's very hard not to be deeply worried about what comes next in Hungary. Who will be the next target?

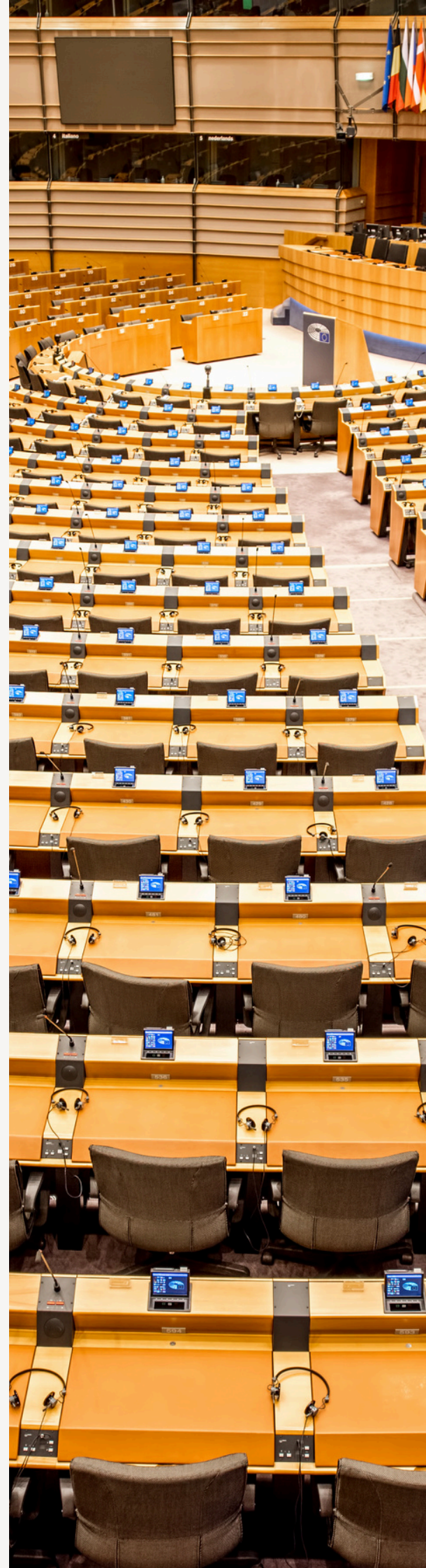
In the past years, we saw independent media outlets being muzzled, one after the other, NGOs stigmatized, opposition activists put in police detention for Facebook posts, local governments starved out of their finances, and we also saw minority groups singled out and attacked, and the LGBT community being the latest.

Colleagues, these attacks escalate after every single victory. We are already at the point where the government hacks into the phones of critics with secret service weapons. But we know it can get worse – and if the history is right here, it will get worse. And it is absolutely worrying.

And European institutions do not seem to be getting anywhere. Three and a half years of Article 7 proceedings produced absolutely no results. The European Commission waited over a year to trigger the rule of law mechanism. Maybe because Council told them so?

So my question to the Council is this: what exactly is your plan to change this? Because minorities, journalists, or human rights defenders in Hungary are European citizens as well. What can you say to them, beyond empty words?

Thank you very much.







**MAY 10, 2022. – PLENARY SPEECH**

## **Standing up for the women of Ukraine**

Colleagues,

A woman near Kyiv was repeatedly raped by a Russian soldier, while her young son was crying in the boiler room. A mother and her underage daughter were raped by three men in Kherson. Day after day, bodies of naked women are found with signs of torture and rape.

And I know it's not comfortable to hear. And I also know some politicians insist that we look away. But this is the reality emerging from Ukraine.

It may not be happening right here, but it's happening right now, in 2022, in Europe, in a European country.

We're talking about hundreds of cases. These are not isolated instances – it's a deliberate war tactic. And colleagues, these are war crimes.

So the European Parliament must send a clear message to the perpetrators:

That one day, you will need to stand in front of an international tribunal, and you will need to answer to these unspeakable crimes.

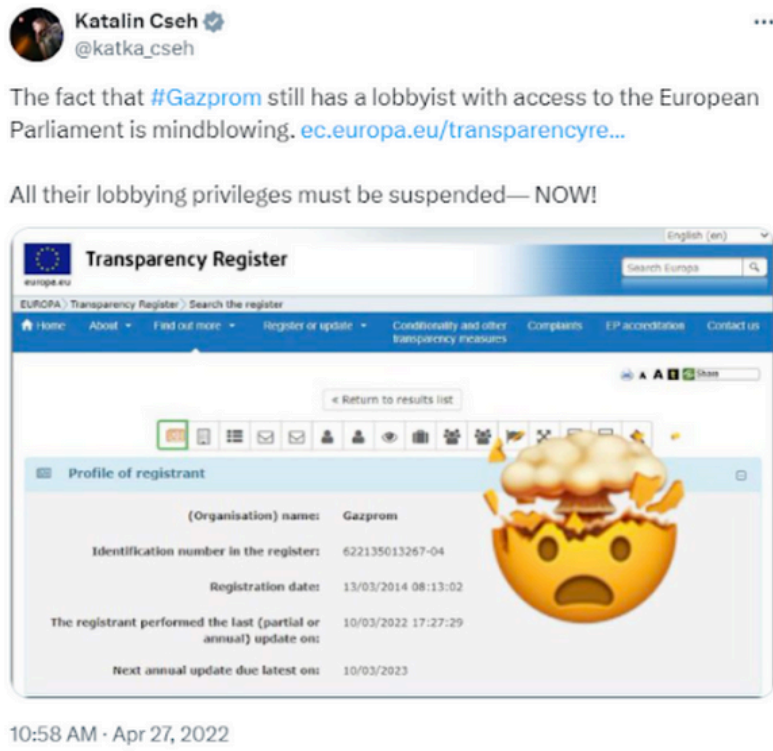
This house calls for a special international tribunal. We already need to establish an interim office in the Hague, and the EU should provide financing for that.

Because Every single one of these cases needs to be recorded.

And accountability may not happen today or tomorrow, as it should.

**But it will happen. And justice will be served.**





## **JUN 2, 2022. - WE KICK RUSSIAN LOBBYISTS OUT OF THE EP**

Upon our initiative, the European Parliament kicked Russian lobbyists out. We already called for this in April, and finally secured it.

## **JUN 29, 2022. - I RECEIVED PARLIAMENT MAGAZINE'S MEP OF THE YEAR AWARD!**

I was so grateful to receive the Parliament Magazine's award for my work contributing to the EU's COVID response — especially on my birthday!

Thank you to all those who voted and congratulations to all great colleagues who have been nominated.





## JUL 7, 2022. - MY REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF THE EU'S FINANCIAL INTERESTS GETS ADOPTED

The Plenary adopted my report with a sweeping majority. We continue to push for strong and credible anti-fraud action.



### REPORT on the protection of the European Union's financial interests – combating fraud – annual report 2020

9 6 2022 - (2021/2234(INI))



## JUL 23, 2022. - ORBÁN LASHES OUT AT 'RACE-MIXING' IN EUROPE – AND SPARKS INTERNATIONAL OUTRAGE



### Hungary PM Viktor Orban criticises 'mixing' of Europeans and non-Europeans

"We [Hungarians] are not a mixed race... and we do not want to become a mixed race," Viktor Orban said during a speech on Saturday, sparking outrage from opposition MPs and European politicians.

"We [Hungarians] are not a mixed race... and we do not want to become a mixed race," Viktor Orban said during a speech on Saturday.

His comments sparked outrage from opposition MPs and European politicians.

Katalin Cseh, an MEP from Hungary's opposition Momentum party, tweeted: "To all 'mixed race' people in [Hungary](#), whatever this senseless racist outburst means: Your skin color may be different, you may come from Europe or beyond-you are one of us, we are proud of you. Diversity strengthens the nation, not weakens it."





## JUL 23, 2022. - HAPPY BUDAPEST PRIDE!

Every year at the Budapest Pride March, we aim to show Europe and the world that Hungary is so much more than the far-right lunacy it is increasingly known for. We marched with our fellow citizens to celebrate diversity & stand up for human rights. This is our country too.

Happy #BudapestPride!

LOVE IS LOVE

## SEP 12, 2022. - THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECLARES: HUNGARY IS NO LONGER A DEMOCRACY

A sad milestone: the European Parliament, the democratically elected voice of 450 million EU citizens, ejects Hungary from the group of democracies. The first step of tackling a problem is recognizing there is one.





## PLENARY SPEECH

Dear colleagues,

With this report, the European Parliament is about to become the first EU institution to officially declare that Hungary is not a full democracy. And that is incredibly painful to say out loud. My generation was the first one to grow up in a democracy, and for now, it looks like we were also the last one. But that gives us all the more reason to keep on fighting.

The first step of tackling a problem is recognizing there is one. That's a step forward.

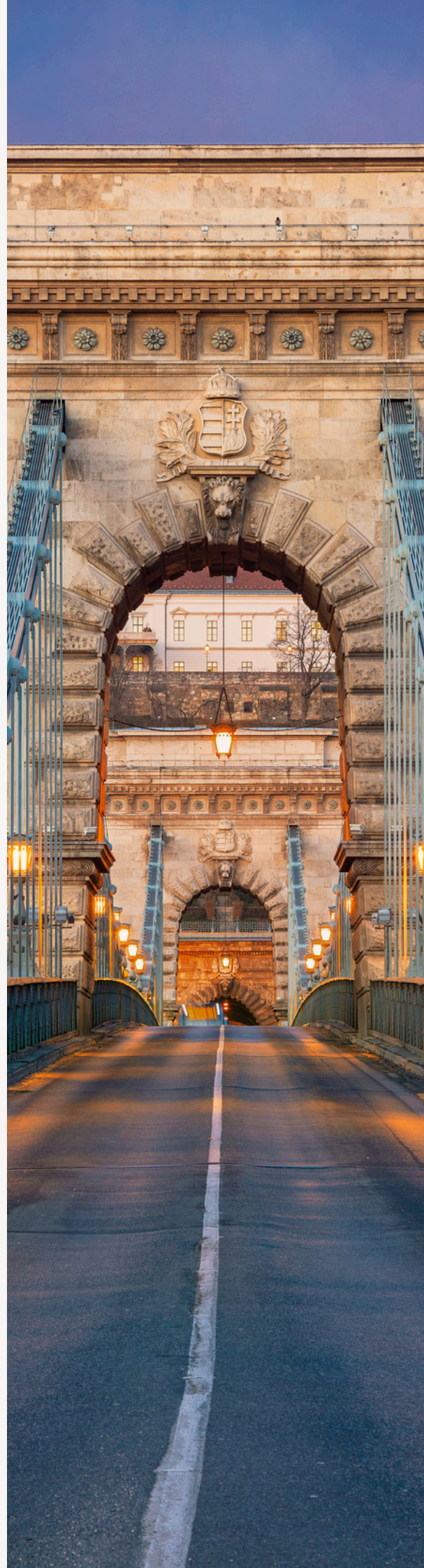
But there's still a long way to go. And that is mirrored by the European Commission's intransparent backroom dealing with the Hungarian government.

I tell you where the Commission should be instead. On the ground, visiting local governments, schools and hospitals, and civil society in Hungary. Directing the EU's support to people who are suffering the consequences of the EU's first autocratic government.

Our Renew Europe group laid out the roadmap in our Smart Conditionality proposal: in cases of systemic breaches of the rule of law, re-direct funds to people who need it the most.

**It is not too late.**

Thank you.







## **SEP 14, 2022. LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS: STRONGER MAGNITSKY SANCTIONS**

In her State of the Union address, President von der Leyen announces that the EU's Magnitsky Act will include corruption as a punishable offence. This has been our longstanding demand in Renew Europe's Human Rights team. Well done, colleagues!

### **PLENARY SPEECH**

Dear colleagues,

The EU Magnitsky law was a major step. But it's a job half-done – until corruption is included as a punishable offense.

All major democracies sanction corruption– the US, Canada, recently the UK. And only the EU is missing.

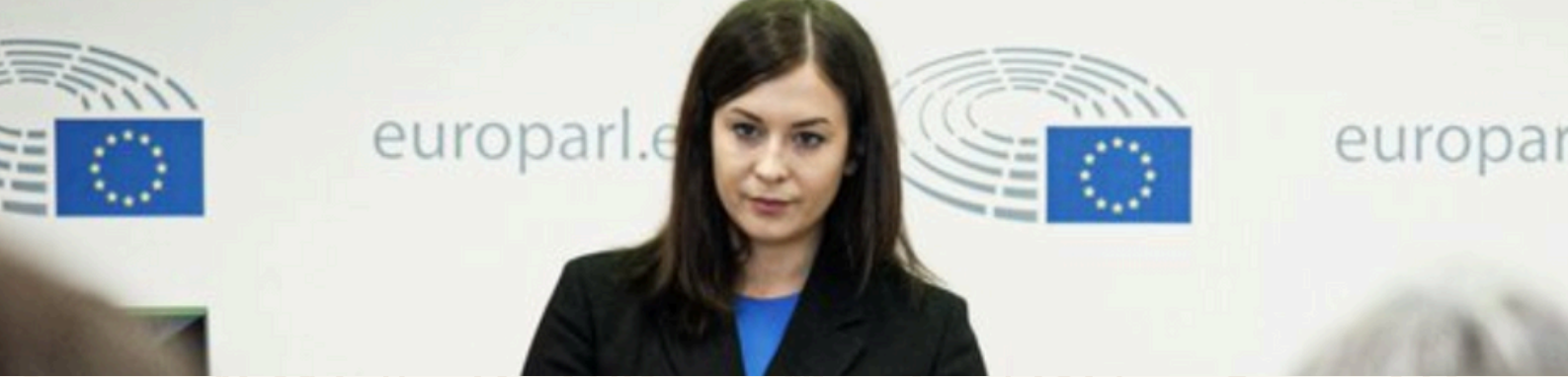
This is not just a minor policy detail. We are risking to become a safe haven for dirty money. The corrupted autocrats who are fretting over the recent sanctions in the City of London basically see a billboard here, saying: bring your money here, it's safe here, it's the only place in the West where you won't be sanctioned. This is absurd.

And the reason behind this, is again: the unanimity rule. Because our own kleptocrats like Mr Orbán, still have a veto over our foreign affairs.

Remember colleagues what Alexei Navalny told us last November: until Putin's oligarchs park their yachts in the ports of Europe, no-one in the Kremlin will take European sanctions seriously.

This is about our credibility – and our credibility is the key to our safety. Because authoritarians read the news as well. They know when we're divided, and they will weaponize it. So it's time to take this weapon away.

Thank you very much.



## **NOV 9, 2022. WE HOSTED TEACHERS AND STUDENT PROTESTERS IN BRUSSELS – TO AMPLIFY THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

A nationwide movement is sweeping across Hungary, protesting the crisis of public education. We invited teachers and students to Brussels— giving them a platform to address EU decision-makers. Colleagues from the EU's side literally teared up as they listened to their stories.

Participants shared their personal testimonies. They described an environment of oppression and intimidation. We are at a point where teachers are getting fired for engaging in civil disobedience, the only form of protest left after the government outlawed strikes. Teachers and high-schoolers get threatened by school districts if they dare to organize strikes, go to protests or speak up.

Orban's mighty propaganda machine is going after teenagers in ad-hominem attacks. They smear protesters as being paid by Soros or the US.

Officials in the European institutions were in disbelief, upon learning that teachers barely earn about 400 euros per month. They asked if the interpreter missed a zero.

A gay student described how harrassment intensified after the government's shameful homophobic law. And nowhere is the crisis more dire than in disadvantaged roma communities, segregated from their white peers, neglected for decades.

It needs to be absolutely clear for EU institutions: this is a rule of law issue and a democracy issue. Access to education, labor rights, the freedom of speech and assembly are all undermined.

Teachers and students in Hungary are EU citizens too— and they need Europe's support. While there is immense sadness in these stories, the courage and perseverance of these people was so incredibly uplifting. They face attacks and intimidation at every turn, for standing up for something as basic as a right to a quality education. But they keep fighting.

These kids and teachers are never listened to by their government. And they were just grateful that EU officials sat down to talk to them. "It was the first time in my life I felt I had a homeland"— a student participant said.

One of the most gratifying moments of my MEP career.



High school students get tear-gassed  
in Hungary for protesting.



# DEC 20, 2022. - STAND UP AGAINST PREDATORS OF PRESS FREEDOM!

In my Plenary speech, calling for a strong and enforceable European Media Freedom Act, I reminded colleagues what's breaking news is like in the world of personality cult and grotesque propaganda.

## PLENARY SPEECH

"Good evening, and welcome to the evening news. Viktor Orbán changed his profile picture. The photo got 60.000 likes in a few hours. Not only likes, but comments also. Many think he looks more handsome than earlier. Others believe the photo depicts a confident and strong leader."

So this is an actual quote from a "news show" in Hungary's second-largest TV station. It happens to be owned by Orbán's childhood friend.

Colleagues, assault against media freedom doesn't always entail imprisoned journalists. Autocrats got much more sophisticated.

It can happen through politically connected oligarchs capturing newsrooms. Hungary's Népszabadság, Origo, Index were all muzzled like this.

So, commissioner, we need a strong and enforceable Media Freedom Act that also tackles media market concentration.

We need effective protection from spying, guarantees for the independence of public service media – and in general: strong European rules.

Europe needs to honor the memory of Daphne Caruana Galizia and Jan Kuciak, reporters, who were murdered for doing their job. And the best way to do so: stand up against predators of media freedom.





# MY OP-ED IN PARLIAMENT MAGAZINE

<https://library.myebook.com/the-parliament/the-parliament-issue-557-march-2023-the-energy-edition/4631/#page/11>



**Katalin Cseh** (Renew, HU) is Vice-Chair of the Renew Europe group in the EP and a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Human Rights

## Hungarian media is under attack. The EU needs the legal tools to confront predators of press freedom

**“G**ood evening, and welcome to the evening news. Viktor Orbán changed his profile picture. The photo got 60,000 likes in a few hours. Not just likes, but comments too. Many think the Prime Minister looks more handsome than earlier. Others believe the photo depicts a confident and strong leader.”

This is a genuine quote from a “news show” broadcast on TV2, Hungary’s second-largest television channel, on 21 June 2020.

The channel happens to be owned by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s childhood friend Lórinç Mészáros who, in a matter of years, evolved from his origins as a humble pipe-fitter into the country’s richest man, with a company growing faster than some American tech giants.

The European Union’s Media Freedom Act needs to understand and reflect on its new reality: assault against media freedom doesn’t always entail imprisoned journalists. Autocrats have become much more sophisticated. Oppression of media freedom can also happen through politically connected oligarchs capturing newsrooms.

Viktor Orbán has built an entire media empire using this playbook. Hungary’s biggest news portals, Index and Origo, were both muzzled in this way.

In 2020, a well-known pro-government media mogul took over Index. Editor-in-chief Szabolcs Dull was dismissed, triggering the collective resignation of the portal’s journalists, thus marking the end of the outlet as we know it.

An eerily similar chain of events occurred in 2014 at Origo. The owner, Deutsche Telekom, unexpectedly fired editor-in-chief Gergő Sálings. Scores of journalists resigned. Slowly but surely, the news site was transformed into the nastiest of government mouthpieces. It was a clear (and

ultimately, successful) attempt to silence a newsroom that broke multiple corruption scandals about top officials in Orbán’s Fidesz Party that year.

Renew Europe has long been calling for a strong and enforceable Media Freedom Act – one capable of tackling the critical problem of media market concentration.

In Hungary in 2018, around 400 local newspapers, news channels, radio stations and more were merged into the newly created Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA) conglomerate.

According to Hungarian investigative media outlet Atlatszo, full ownership of KESMA was transferred to a lawyer associated with Mészáros, Orbán’s childhood friend-turned-billionaire, in 2020. In a report published that same year, the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom found that KESMA “represents a huge and unprecedented concentration of media in the hands of oligarchs who are friendly to the ruling party”.

While the creation of KESMA is clearly at odds with both fair competition and media pluralism, the EU has been reluctant to look into it. EU rules must ensure transparency of ownership structures, public media finances, and state advertising.

In the wake of the Pegasus spyware scandal, which targeted journalists not only in Hungary but Poland, Greece and Spain, it has also become clear the EU needs effective protection from spying. This should be in the form of strong and enforceable EU-level rules that prohibit the use of military-grade spyware from infiltrating and tracking a journalist’s device. And, importantly, there should be no loopholes.

Europe needs to honour the memory of Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia and Slovak journalist Ján Kuciak, both of whom were murdered for doing their job. And the best way to do so is to stand up against predators of media freedom. ●



**“Oppression of media freedom can also happen through politically connected oligarchs capturing newsrooms”**

journalists not only in Hungary but Poland, Greece and Spain, it has also become clear the EU needs effective protection from spying. This should be in the form of strong and enforceable EU-level



## JAN 20, 2023. - WE TRAVELLED TO UKRAINE TO DELIVER DONATIONS

We travelled to Beregszasz and Kyiv with a Momentum delegation to deliver power aggregators & inverters to help Ukraine's power shortages. There is a Hungary beyond Viktor Orbán and we stand with Ukraine.

In Borodyanka, we talked to Svitlana, a math teacher who continues to hold classes from the backyard of her house, which was shelled by Russians. Putin will never break the spirit of the Ukrainian people.







## **FEB 24, 2023. ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAR, WE ORGANIZED A DEMONSTRATION TO STAND WITH UKRAINE**

### **My speech at the rally.**

Good evening!

Thank you for being here. Thank you for showing that there are many of us who stand not with the aggressor, but with the victims, alongside the people of Ukraine who are defending their homeland, including Hungarians in Transcarpathia. We will speak the truth about the war, even if tomorrow's propaganda will attack us for it; and we do not consider our Western allies our enemies, but rather the war criminal Vladimir Putin.

It has never been more important to raise our voices. To show to Europe and the world that there is another Hungary. And this other Hungary, loudly and clearly, sends this message: Slava Ukraini!

Since the outbreak of the war, I have visited Ukraine twice – we travelled to Transcarpathia, Lviv, and Kyiv. Because I am a representative, and a concerned Hungarian. I simply feel it is my duty to get information directly from those affected and ask how we can help. Meanwhile, Viktor Orbán has only ventured to the border, wearing a bulletproof vest.

In Ukraine, I met heroic Europeans defending their homeland. I met Svitlana, the math teacher whose school and house were destroyed, and now she holds classes in her garden. What I saw in Ukraine bears no resemblance to what is pouring out of Orbán's propaganda machine.

The truth is that the Russians are indiscriminately firing at residential buildings, hospitals, and playgrounds. They use rape and torture as weapons.

They tear children away from their families and deport them to Russia. These are vile and heinous war crimes. And they are not isolated incidents. This is a systematic, deliberate war tactic. Directly from Putin and Lavrov. And if anyone then defends Putin at the European Council meetings, it is like spitting into the mass grave of Bucha.

War criminals cannot be excused. They cannot be called friends at joint press conferences. War criminals must be brought before an international tribunal.

Of course, this does not happen overnight. But what we can immediately start with the help of the EU is the collection of evidence. This sends a message to all war criminals: maybe not today or tomorrow, but the day of reckoning will come.

The European Union was born literally from the ruins after the horrors of World War II. Our moral anchor is the phrase “never again.” Now is the time to take this seriously. This is why we work in Brussels, while propaganda lies that we are plotting sex-change operations for preschoolers.

We cannot allow the Fidesz lie factory to distort the reality of war and war crimes. We all have to do something against the lies.

So I would ask something of you— When at the family table or at work, your conversation partner, hardened by public television, blames President Zelensky or the Ukrainian people for the war — do not walk out of the room. Ask a few simple questions: Are the Ukrainians attacking Moscow, or are the Russians attacking Kyiv? On what planet is "peace advocacy" standing by Putin, who fires cluster bombs at kindergartens?

And how would it serve Hungarian interests for Orbán to undermine the Western alliance? The alliance we voluntarily joined, and which is the only guarantee of our security?

No matter how difficult, we must stand up for the truth, and we must not allow ourselves to be torn away from Europe.

The people of Ukraine and the Hungarians in Transcarpathia are fighting and sacrificing their lives because they want to belong to the European Union.

to one of history's most successful collaborations, which has brought peace to a continent that has been at war for a century, which provides prosperity and security to its citizens.

It is a disgrace that Viktor Orbán would most willingly walk out of this alliance. While our neighbors are shedding their blood for it, while our own predecessors shed their blood for it. This is a historical crime. And it is our historical responsibility - not to let this happen.

Thank you very much.





**MAR 8, 2023. I GOT INTERVIEWED  
BY LIVING LEGEND JON STEWART!**

The power of Viktor Orban's propaganda machine —blaming the US and Brussels for Hungary's record-high inflation, over 40 percent for food products— even had Jon Stewart pause for a second. Then he remembered Fox News.



**Sep 7, 2023**

I represented the Renew Europe group at the  
Conference of Presidents



**Sep 13, 2023.**

Addressing President von der Leyen after her State of the Union address – and calling for holding the line on the rule of law.

**STATE OF THE UNION**  
#SOTEU

In the past years, after some hesitation, the Commission took firm steps to address democratic backsliding. Clearly, there will be growing pressure to abandon this path. But we cannot, and must not.

**Katalin Cseh**  
Renew Europe MEP

**renew europe.**



# PLENARY SPEECH

Dear colleagues,

Looking back at our mandate so far, as the President highlighted, there is a lot to be proud of. Europe stood united in the face of unprecedented challenges, from the pandemic to Putin's criminal invasion of Ukraine. But the mandate is not over. Even in this final stretch, we must work with the same determination we did at the start.

The global political climate is turbulent, and liberal democracy is under threat. Is the EU prepared for the possibility of a second Trump presidency? We need to be – and strategic autonomy is the place to start. Putting Treaty change on the table, and finally abolishing the unanimity rule in foreign affairs is something we should not shy away from.

For Europe to be a bulwark of democracy and a strong ally of Ukraine, we need to have our own house on order. We cannot fight Putin without fighting the Putinization of our member states.

In the past years, after some hesitation, the Commission took firm steps to address democratic backsliding. Clearly, there will be growing pressure to abandon this path. But we cannot, and must not.

Our values, and an unwavering commitment to rule-of-law action is simply non-negotiable.

Colleagues, the world needs Europe's voice and leadership like never before.

**But Europe is only as strong as our values are.**

Thank you.



## OCT 15, 2023. THE POLISH OPPOSITION EMERGES VICTORIOUS – AND GIVING US ALL HOPE

My friends – you are an inspiration. Your fight for democracy, for women’s rights, for an independent justice system shines a light accross Europe and gives us so much hope to keep going. Even with all odds against us.

Keep in mind that the Polish opposition competed in a race that is far from free & fair. They had an entire state apparatus mobilized against them.

If these results stand, what they have achieved is  
\*monumental\*





**WOMAN. LIFE. FREEDOM**



**MASHA AMINI**



## DEC, 2023. - THE EP'S SAKHAROV PRIZE IS AWARDED TO MAHSA AMINI

Woman. Life. Freedom. Let's reflect on three simple, but profound words.

When we say woman – we think of a young woman whose life was taken by the murderous Iranian regime. Who could have been you and me. We think of all women and girls who should never endure such treatment.

When we say life – we think of our most precious gift, one that must be safeguarded by society and upheld by international law. Protesters standing up for this very fundamental right must be supported by the European community.

When we say freedom – we think of rights which we hold sacred, and the devastating consequences of living without them. We think of women in Iran and Afghanistan who know what it means to have their basic freedoms stripped away. Their rights, their lives, their dignity.

Jina Mahsa Amini's murder was a senseless act of aggression. Yet her life and sacrifice ignited the light of resistance in many women and men, all longing for the very rights for which she paid the ultimate sacrifice.

We have an obligation to stand united and show our support. To send a message to the people of Iran that they will always find an ally in Europe in their struggle for a free and prosperous future.

Let's protect this light that fuels the righteous fight for women's rights. Women's rights are human rights, in Iran and around the world. I ask you to join us and award this year's Sakharov Prize to Jina Mahsa Amini.

Thank you.



# JAN 17, 2024. WE WILL NOT STOP UNTIL THE RULE OF LAW MECHANISM IS CONSISTENTLY APPLIED.

In December 2023, Orbán set a troubling precedent by effectively extorting funds from the EU through his veto threat. During a crucial summit, Orbán wielded the threat of veto against the EU's unanimous decision to commence membership negotiations with Ukraine.

Instead of formally vetoing, he strategically left the room. This maneuver came just a day after the European Commission controversially unblocked €10.2 billion in frozen funds earmarked for Hungary, previously withheld as a punitive measure due to Orbán's undermining of the rule of law.

The Commission's abrupt concession and Orbán's subsequent acquiescence on the Ukraine issue raised serious concerns of a quid-pro-quo arrangement. By yielding to blackmail, the Commission seriously compromised EU principles of democratic governance, and emboldened bad-faith acts of extortion.

The case clearly shows that the unanimity voting rule threatens the integrity of EU policy making, and must promptly be abolished.

The screenshot shows the Guardian website interface. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the text "Support the Guardian" and "Fund independent journalism with €12 per month". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "News", "Opinion", "Sport", "Culture", "Lifestyle", and "More". The main content area features an opinion article by Katalin Cseh. The article title is "Like Putin, Viktor Orbán is learning he can act with impunity: the cash keeps flowing". A sub-headline reads "The EU's capitulation to the Hungarian PM's blackmail is a grave mistake. He seeks to reshape the bloc in his image". The article is dated "Sun 17 Dec 2023 15:40 CET" and has "251" shares. A note indicates "This article is more than 6 months old". To the right of the article is a "Most viewed" section with several article thumbnails and titles, including "The experts: oncologists on the simple, doable, everyday things they do to try to prevent cancer", "How to be a Norwegian parent: let your kids roam free, stay home alone, have fun - and fail", "Netherlands 1-2 England: player ratings from the Euro 2024 semi-final", "Live Euro 2024: England head for Berlin final with Spain as Koeman fumes at VAR - live", and "Ollie Watkins' bolt from blue stuns Netherlands and sends England to final".

## PLENARY SPEECH

Dear colleagues,

I'm honestly not sure if the European Commission fully comprehends the extent of the damage it has done by giving in to Viktor Orbán's blackmail. First of all: it invited not just Orbán, but all other aspiring autocrats to do the same, over and over again. Prepare to hand out huge sums of money and send Orbán out of the room whenever there's a unanimous decision. Because this is how extortionists work.

But there's an even more serious problem. It also undermined our values. Consider what happened right before the EU decided to unblock billions of euros to the Orbán government, and praise them for their great progress in rebuilding the rule of law. Hungary introduced the so-called "sovereignty protection bill", a piece of legislation that is shockingly oppressive, even with the Orbán regime's standards. The law threatens journalists and civil society organizations with jail time for participating in international funding programs. Its intention is crystal clear: to crush dissent, to silence independent media, and threaten opposition parties.

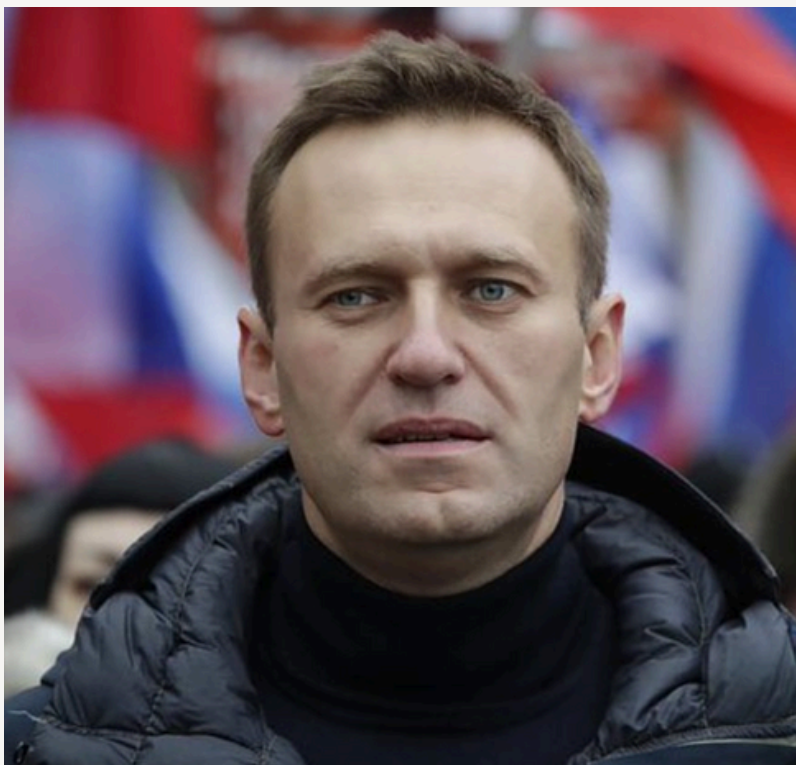
And I'm seriously asking this: Does the Commission view this as progress? Do you think this deserves a reward? Because this is the signal that you just sent. You practically gave a green light to this law.

As so often before, the European Parliament remains the only protector of democratic values among the EU institutions. And we are gearing up for a fight. We were the architects of the rule of law mechanism, we made EU money conditional on upholding the EU's founding principles, and we will not stop until it's consistently applied.

Thank you.







**FEB 16, 2023. - WE NEED TO  
KEEP GOING - IN ALEKSEI  
NAVALNY'S MEMORY**

As every freedom-loving person across the globe, we were heartbroken to learn about Navalny's death.

He was the embodiment of courage himself, who held a mirror to Putin's cowardice like no one else. It is now up to us to honor his sacrifice.

**MAY 1, 2024 - THE 20TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF HUNGARY'S  
EU ACCESSION.**

On May 1, 2004, Hungary joined the European Union. We took our place in a community where we belong, where we were destined to arrive.

We now know that we can never take this historic achievement for granted & we fight for our European future with everything we've got.



**renew  
europe.**





*Katalin Cseh*  
*Member of the European Parliament*  
*2019-2024*

**renew  
europe.**