

"Hungary can no longer be considered a full democracy"

European Parliament said

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USPA NEWS - The European Parliament condemns the "deliberate and systematic efforts of the Hungarian government" to undermine European values and demands results in the Article 7 process. The lack of decisive EU action has contributed to the emergence of a "hybrid regime of electoral autocracy", i.e. a constitutional system in which elections occur, but respect for democratic norms and standards is absent, MEPs say.

The report adopted on Thursday, with 433 votes for, 123 against, and 28 abstentions, builds on the one with which Parliament triggered the Article 7 procedure in 2018, to provide an overview of developments in Parliament's 12 areas of concern. It thereby demonstrates how the values enshrined in Article 2 of the EU Treaties, including democracy and fundamental rights in the country have further deteriorated since 2018, through the "deliberate and systematic efforts of the Hungarian government", and exacerbated by EU inaction.

EU institutions need to act

European Parliament deplores the inability of the Council to make meaningful progress to counter democratic backsliding. MEPs emphasise that Article 7 does not require unanimity among member states to identify a clear risk of a serious breach of EU values, nor to issue concrete recommendations and deadlines. They say any further delay in acting under Article 7 rules to protect EU values in Hungary would amount to a breach of the principle of the rule of law by the Council itself.

MEPs urge the Commission to make full use of all tools at its disposal and, in particular, the budget conditionality regulation. At a time when EU values are especially under threat by the Russian war against Ukraine and its anti-EU actions, they also call on the Commission to refrain from approving the Hungarian RRF plan until Hungary has fully complied with all relevant European Semester recommendations and implemented all the relevant judgements of the EU Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights; exclude from funding those cohesion programmes contributing to the misuse of EU funds or to breaches of the rule of law; and apply the Common Provisions Regulation and the Financial Regulation more stringently in order to tackle any misuse of EU funds for political motives.

Four years after the report that started the Article 7 process, MEPs remain concerned about several political areas concerning democracy and fundamental rights in Hungary. Some of the main areas are the functioning of its constitutional and electoral system, the independence of the judiciary, corruption and conflicts of interest and freedom of expression, including media pluralism. Academic freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of association, the right to equal treatment, including LGBTIQ rights, the rights of minorities, as well as those of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, are also problematic.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield (Greens/EFA, FR), Parliament's rapporteur on the situation in Hungary, said: "The conclusions of this report are clear and irrevocable: Hungary is not a democracy. It was more urgent than ever for the Parliament to take this stance, considering the alarming rate at which rule of law is backsliding in Hungary. Beyond acknowledging Fidesz's autocratic strategy, the large majority of MEPs supporting this position in the European Parliament is unprecedented. This should be a wake-up call for the Council and Commission."

Article online:

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