

Rule of law in Hungary: Parliament calls on the EU to act

- Proposal approved by 448 votes to 197
- EP sees a clear risk of a serious breach of the EU founding values in Hungary
- Judicial independence, freedom of expression, corruption, rights of minorities, and the situation of migrants and refugees are key concerns
- Council may address recommendations to Hungary to counter the threat

Parliament has asked EU member states to determine, in accordance with Treaty Article 7, whether Hungary is at risk of breaching the EU's founding values.

The request was approved by 448 votes to 197, with 48 abstentions. To be adopted, the proposal required an absolute majority of members (376) and two thirds of the votes cast - excluding the abstentions.

This is the first time that Parliament has called on the Council of the EU to act against a member state to prevent a systemic threat to the Union's founding values. These values, which are enshrined in [EU Treaty Article 2](#) and reflected in the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), include respect for democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights.

MEPs called on EU countries to initiate the procedure laid down in [Article 7\(1\) the EU Treaty](#), noting that despite the Hungarian authorities' readiness to discuss the legality of any specific measure, they have not addressed the situation, "and many concerns remain". They stress that this is the preventive phase of the procedure, providing for a dialogue with the country concerned, and that it is "intended to avoid possible sanctions".

Parliament recalls that Hungary's accession to the EU "was a voluntary act based on a sovereign decision, with a broad consensus across the political spectrum" and underline that any Hungarian government has a duty to eliminate the risk of a serious breach of the EU's values.

Parliament's key concerns relate to:

- the functioning of the constitutional and electoral system,
- the independence of the judiciary,
- corruption and conflicts of interest,
- privacy and data protection,
- freedom of expression,
- academic freedom,
- freedom of religion,
- freedom of association,
- the right to equal treatment,
- the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including Roma and Jews,
- the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and
- economic and social rights.

Quote

[Judith Sargentini \(Greens/EFA, NL\)](#), who authored the report, said: “In the week that we debate the state of the Union, the European Parliament sends out an important message: We stand up for the rights of all Europeans, including Hungarian citizens and we defend our European values. Now it is up to the European leaders to take their responsibility and stop watching from the sidelines as the rule of law is destroyed in Hungary. This is unacceptable for a Union that is built on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights.”

Next steps

The proposal for a Council decision will now be sent to the EU member states. They may, acting by a majority of four fifths, determine the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach of the EU values in Hungary. The Council would first have to hear the views of the Hungarian authorities, and Parliament would need to give consent. The EU member states may also choose to address recommendations to Hungary to counter the risk.

At a later stage, the European Council may determine, by unanimity and with the Parliament's consent, the existence in Hungary of a serious and persistent breach of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights. This could eventually lead to sanctions, such as the suspension of the voting rights in the Council.

Further information

[The adopted text will be published here \(12.09.2018\)](#)

[Video recording of the debate \(11.09.2018\)](#)

[Press conference with the rapporteur \(12.09.2018\)](#)

[Rule of law concerns in member states: how the EU can act \(infographic\)](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)

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