



# Hungary should respect the EU's basic values, say MEPs

Plenary sessions

**Parliament will draw up a report on whether EU laws and values are respected in Hungary, it decided on Thursday. Further to this report, it will then decide whether to activate EU Treaty Article 7, which is used to investigate a clear risk of a serious breach of EU common values. Its resolution also calls on the European Commission to monitor closely the changes to some of Hungary's laws and how it puts them into practice.**

The Hungarian authorities should comply with the recommendations, objections and demands of the Commission, the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission and amend the laws concerned, respecting the EU's basic values and standards, says the resolution, tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups and approved with 315 votes in favour, 263 against and 49 abstentions.

The European Parliament expresses its "serious concern" about Hungary with regard to the exercise of democracy, the rule of law, the protection of human and social rights, the system of checks and balances, and equality and non-discrimination.

Parliament also instructs the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, in cooperation with the Commission, the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission, to follow up how Commission and Parliament's recommendations have been put into practice and to present its findings in a report.

## What needs monitoring?

MEPs call on the Commission to monitor closely any amendments to and the enforcement of the Hungarian legislation, as well as its compliance with the letter and spirit of the EU treaties. The Commission should conduct a thorough study to ensure:

- the full independence of the judiciary,
- that the regulation of the Hungarian National Bank abides by EU legislation,
- that the institutional independence of data protection and freedom of information is restored and guaranteed,
- that the right of the Constitutional Court to review any legislation is fully restored, including the right to review budgetary and tax laws,
- that media freedom and pluralism is guaranteed by the letter of the Hungarian Media Law and the way in which it is put into practice,
- that the new electoral law meets European democratic standards and respects the principle of political alternation,
- that the right to exercise political opposition in a democratic way is ensured both within and outside institutions, and

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- that the law on churches and religious denominations respects the basic principle of freedom of conscience and refrains from subjecting the registration of churches to the approval of a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian Parliament.

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## **Activating article 7?**

MEPs call on the Conference of Presidents (EP President and leaders of the political groups) to consider, on the basis of the Civil Liberties Committee report, to activate the necessary measures, including EU Treaty article 7.1, which is used in the event of a clear risk of a serious breach of EU common values.

## **Background**

The new Hungarian constitution was approved by its Parliament on 18 April 2011 and entered into force on 1 January 2012. The resolution notes that the cardinal laws passed to implement it raised concerns with regard to the independence of the judiciary, the central bank and the data protection authority, fair conditions for political competition and political alternation, subjecting the income tax system to a two-thirds majority and giving the current majority exclusive rights to appoint officials for an unusually long term.

On 17 January 2012 the European Commission started infringement procedures against Hungary with regard to the independence of the central bank, the lowering of the mandatory retirement age of judges from 70 to 62 years old, and the independence of the data protection authority. The Commission also asked the Hungarian authorities for further information on the independence of the judiciary. The Hungarian government was given one month to respond.

*Procedure: non-legislative resolution*

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