Press release

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European Parliament

Hungary's emergency measures: MEPs ask EU to impose sanctions and stop payments

- Indefinite state of emergency and limits to free speech incompatible with EU values
- Commission should open infringement procedures and Council should proceed with Article 7
- EU funding must become conditional on respect of rule of law

MEPs are concerned about emergency legislation in Hungary against COVID-19 and call on the EU to act

Democracy and fundamental rights are under threat in Hungary, say most MEPs, who urge the Commission and the Council to protect Hungarian citizens and rule of law.

In a debate with EC Vice-President Vera Jourová and the Croatian Presidency of the EU, a majority of speakers underlined that the emergency measures taken by the Hungarian Government to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, including the declaration of an unlimited state of emergency, are not in line with EU rules and warned of the increasing risk to democracy.

Several MEPs called on the European Commission to finish scrutinising the legal changes and open infringement procedures. They specifically asked for payments to Hungary to be stopped, in the framework of the new financial perspectives and the recovery plan, unless rule of law is respected. They also criticised the passive attitude of the Council and insisted it moves on the Article 7 procedure initiated by the Parliament.

Some MEPs defended the decisions taken by a democratically elected Parliament in Hungary and compared the exceptional measures adopted in the country with those taken by other EU member states, such as France or Spain.

Background

In its resolution of 17 April, Parliament already stated that the decisions in Hungary to prolong the state of emergency indefinitely, to authorise the government to rule by decree, and to weaken the Parliament's oversight, are "totally incompatible with European values".

MEPs highlighted that all COVID-related measures "must be in line with the rule of law, strictly proportionate [...], clearly related to the ongoing health crisis, limited in time and subjected to regular scrutiny."

You can watch the debate via Video on demand.

Further information

Statement by EP President David Sassoli on the situation in Hungary in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak (1.04.2020)
EP Research Service: The Impact of Covid-19 Measures on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights in the EU (23.04.2020)
Rule of law concerns in member states: how the EU can act (infographic)
EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material

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