

in collaboration with



A free Hungary in a Stronger Europe

Friday 25 - Saturday 26 October 2024

Budapest

Merlin Színház Theatre ([link](#))

CONTEXT

As Hungary takes the helm of the European Union presidency, a unique opportunity arises to reignite the flame of unity and progressivism within the nation and across the continent. Against the backdrop of challenges posed by authoritarian rule, Budapest becomes the stage for a gathering of democratic, socialist, and green activists determined to shape a brighter future.

A freer Hungary in a stronger Europe means breaking away from the shadows of authoritarian control and moving towards a future where every citizen's voice matters. It's about dismantling systems that restrict media freedom and transparency, ensuring that truth, not propaganda, shapes our democracy. People deserve more than hollow promises—they deserve essential services that work for them, not for the few. And true freedom means building an economy that offers quality jobs and opportunities for all, not just those loyal to the regime. This Hungary is one where citizens can live without fear of censorship or exclusion, where the economy thrives through investment in innovation and fairness, and where solidarity replaces division. A new Hungary is within reach, one that leads with openness, justice, and hope—standing tall as part of a stronger, more united Europe.

This upcoming conference symbolises a resurgence of hope and underscores the urgent need to refocus on how Europe serves its people. At the heart of the progressives' initiatives lies a shared vision for a Europe that prioritises accessible public services, true democracy, social dialogue, sustainable infrastructure, universal welfare, quality housing, and renewable energy. It's a model that sees these elements not just as ideals but as essential drivers of growth and prosperity for all.

In Budapest, amidst the exchange of ideas and the forging of alliances, this conference marks a pivotal moment in the journey toward a Europe that truly delivers value for its citizens, guided by principles of solidarity and progress.

Progressive forces are coming together to emphasize that true freedom goes beyond just words – it requires actions. First, freedom means living in a **real democracy**, where corruption is rooted out, the media is free, and everyone is treated equally under the law. Second, freedom means being **free from daily struggles**, where good jobs, affordable housing, and quality healthcare allow people to live with dignity. Finally, freedom means feeling **secure about the future**, protected from the threats of war and climate change. The commitment of democratic, socialist, and other progressive forces to building a free Hungary within a strong Europe is unwavering.

For information and registrations

<https://fepe-europe.eu/event/call-to-europe-a-free-hungary-in-a-stronger-europe/>

AGENDA

16:00 **Registrations & Networking Coffee**

16:45 **Welcome Address**

- **Maria João Rodrigues**, FEPS President
- **László Andor**, FEPS Secretary General

17:00 **S&D Panel**

True Democracy: Media Freedom & Rule of Law in the EU and Hungary

In an era where democratic values and human rights cannot be taken for granted any more, the protection of media freedom and the rule of law are critical to preserving a functioning democracy. Across Europe, these pillars are under threat, as seen most starkly in Hungary, where government control over media and assaults on judicial independence have raised alarms. Reaffirming the integrity of free press and an independent judiciary is essential not only for Hungary but for the entire European project, ensuring that citizens' voices are heard and that rules are applied without bias.

Discussion with:

- **Birgit Sippel**, S&D MEP and Coordinator for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
- **Lisa Kretschmer**, Head of Advocacy, Reporters without Borders
- **András Léderer**, Head of Advocacy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee
- **Sándor Rónai**, Member of the Democratic Coalition Presidency and former MEP
- **Ágnes Urbán**, Media Analyst, Hungarian media watchdog Mérték Media Monitor
- **Áron Demeter**, Head of Research and Communications, Amnesty International Hungary

Moderated by: **Viktor Kazai**, Researcher, Institute for European Studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and Senior Expert on the Rule of Law, Civil Liberties Union for Europe

18:30 **S&D Leaders' Session**

Intervention by progressive leaders on how to steer a new course of action for Europe and Hungary to deliver a society based on democracy, quality jobs and prosperity for all.

Video message by: **Iratxe García Pérez**, S&D President

Lead speakers:

- **Gaby Bischoff**, Member of the European Parliament and S&D Vice-President
- **Klára Dobrev**, Head of the Hungarian Delegation, S&D Group

Conversation with:

- **Petra Bayr**, Member of Parliament of Austria and Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Development, Social Democratic Party, Austria

- **Liutauras Gudžinskas**, Vice President, Lithuanian Social Democratic Party LSDP and Associate Professor of Comparative Politics, Vilnius University
- **Tamás Székely**, President of VDSZ (Federation of Chemical Workers of Hungary)
- **Zoltán Vajda**, MP, Chair of the Budget Committee, MSZP

Moderated by: **Zsolt Kerner**, Journalist, 24.hu

19:35 **Dinner Address** by

- **Imre Komjáthi**, President of MSZP

19:45 **Networking Dinner Reception**

Saturday, 26 October 2024

09:00 **Registrations & Coffee**

09:30 **Welcome back**

László Andor, FEPS Secretary General

09:40 **Panel discussion**

Investing in the Just Transition is investing in Europe's Future

A just transition is essential for shaping a future where economic prosperity and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. By investing in sustainable industries, quality jobs, and social protections, Europe can lead the way in addressing the climate crisis without leaving workers or communities behind. This approach ensures that the transition is not only fair but also serves as a foundation for long-term economic resilience and social cohesion.

Discussion with:

- **Daniel Attard**, Member of the European Parliament, S&D Group
- **Atanas Pekanov**, Economist, Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO) and former Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria in charge of EU funds
- **Miłosława Stępień**, Just Transition Coordinator, CEE Bankwatch Network
- **Richárd Barabás**, Co-President, Dialogue-Greens

Moderated by: **Andrea Casamenti**, Just Transition Policy Coordinator, SOLIDAR

10:45 **Coffee Break Session with Pills of Progressivism**

Desk 1 – Social Europe – with **FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies)**

Desk 2 – Community Activation – with **Esély Közösség**

Desk 3 – Youth and Disadvantaged backgrounds – with **Institute for Social Democracy**

Desk 4 – Housing for Youth – with **Demokratikus Lendület (DEL)**

Desk 5 – Navigating the Just Transition – with **CEE Bankwatch Network** and **MTVSZ (Friends of the Earth Hungary)**

Desk 6 – The Digital Transition – with **Atelier Europe**

11:45

Panel discussion**Jobs, Health, Housing - Progressive leadership for shared well-being**

Access to good jobs, quality healthcare, and affordable housing are the pillars of shared well-being in any society. Progressive leadership must prioritize policies that address these fundamental needs, ensuring that everyone can thrive in a fair and equitable Europe. By championing investment in public services, social protection, and affordable housing, progressives can create the conditions for a more inclusive society where economic security and social justice are intertwined. The last five years of EU policy making delivered important initiatives, like the directive on adequate minimum wages which also focused on the promotion of collective bargaining. What the next cycle can deliver to strengthen the social dimension of the EU should be discussed together.

Discussion with:

- **Gaby Bischoff**, Member of the European Parliament and S&D Vice-President
- **Gergely Arató**, Member of the Hungarian Parliament and former State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Hungary
- **Gábor Harangozó**, Program Director, Institute for Social Democracy & former Member of the European Parliament
- **András Bíró-Nagy**, Director, Policy Solutions

Moderated by: **László Andor**, FEPS Secretary General

13:00

Networking Lunch

14:00

Change starts Locally

- **Gergely Karácsony**, Mayor of Budapest

Interviewed by: **Kata Jaksity**, Journalist and Communication Expert

14:30

**Inputs from the Youth on a “Free Hungary”
Your Call for Hungary in Europe**

Short pitches by youth representatives and young elected politicians

- **Márton Gyekiczki**, Érd 4. választókerület képviselője
- **Dorina Keresztes-Nagy**, Societas
- **Tanja Cakić**, Democratic Dialogue Network

15:00

High-level talk**A Free Hungary in a Stronger Europe**

Hungary's future lies in a Europe where freedom, democracy, and social justice prevail. As democratic values face increasing pressure and new populist challenges, progressive leaders must stand united in defending the rule of law, media freedom, and human rights. A clear commitment to EU norms and standards is particularly important when a new political cycle begins in the EU, with questions about improving economic competitiveness, continuing enlargement towards the South-East and the East, and creating a new Multiannual Financial Framework. In all these, Central European countries are major stakeholders and should have a strong voice. By strengthening Hungary's place in the European family, we can build a more cohesive and resilient Europe, one that upholds the core principles of equality, solidarity, peace, and shared prosperity.



Discussion with:

- **Ágnes Vadai**, Member of the Hungarian Parliament and Vice President of Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)
- **Zita Gurmai**, Vice President of MSZP, President of PES Women and Member of the Hungarian Parliament
- **Maria João Rodrigues**, FEPS President

Moderated by: **Kata Jaksity**, Journalist and Communication Expert

15:45

Closing Remarks

- **László Andor**, FEPS Secretary General
- **Kata Tüttő**, Member of the Budapest Assembly and Vice President of the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions



This conference is produced with the financial support of the European Parliament.
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