



HUNGARY'S ILLIBERAL REGIME MUST GO! FAIR AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL!

Recommendations of the V21 Group for a national minimum program

Under the Orbán Government for the past 10 years, Hungary has been drifting away from the European norms of the rule of law and a free market economy. Only **a change of government** can turn this ship around. Fidesz can be defeated by a unified opposition at the next parliamentary election, if political parties share a common vision of the country's future.

With the help of an electoral law cleverly designed to magnify his power, Viktor Orbán has secured a long-standing two-thirds majority in parliament. He has gradually dismantled the rule of law and replaced it with **authoritarian control**. Orbán depicts his rule as one of "national cooperation", but his regime fails to strengthen unity; instead, the country has been torn in two. Only pro-government voters qualify as "patriotic", while the opposition in its entirety is labelled "unpatriotic" by Fidesz. This government has eliminated a range of social benefits and continued to increase its power, even under the guise of anti-pandemic measures. The municipalities are drained of their main resources; the hundreds of thousands who lose their jobs face a tight-fisted government, while public funds are channeled in unprecedented amounts to a well-defined and narrow circle of businesspeople.

The V21 Group drafted its diagnosis in the spring of 2019 in a position paper entitled "**Breaking the Silence**". The local elections last autumn proved that vast numbers of people want a profound change in Hungary. The citizens understood that a real political turn requires the closest cooperation between all the opposition parties. The majority of voters expect the opposition to end the present conditions of a 'one-party state' and provide the socio-political structure of the future Hungary. To achieve this goal, we need a convincing common vision, capable of gaining majority support.

It is the duty of the opposition parties, movements and civil groups to lay the foundations of a fair state, offering equal opportunities to all. By the 2022 parliamentary elections, all Opposition candidates should represent these shared objectives. As a common basis, the V21 Group, using the government experience and professional expertise of its members, is offering a concise platform to build upon. This **National Minimum Program** is our contribution to creating a shared vision of the future for the citizens, and to establish a new approach to governance based on sound values.

We are firmly convinced that the country needs a **change of regime**. Orbán's "National Cooperation System" has to be abolished, but the pre-2010 socio-political conditions must also be superseded. This is the only way to prevent any future political group which seizes power, from abolishing the rule of law and splitting our nation in two.

According to our proposal, Parliament should involve the entire society in drafting a new and fair Constitution which would then be adopted by referendum. We recommend that the **new Constitution** guarantee the following for all Hungarian citizens:

- Equal opportunities and a fair livelihood,
- Fair market economy with strong employee representation,
- Rule of law and freedom of speech,
- A foreign policy focusing on Euro-Atlantic values and the real interests of the nation.

These central objectives are **detailed in the 21 points below**.

Equal opportunities and fair livelihood

1. A publicly funded health service must be accessible to all

The hurried measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed the inadequate management of the health service. The system suffers from severe underfunding, which has only worsened over the past ten years. Spending on health care needs to be increased by several hundred billion HUF, two-thirds of which should be spent on raising the salaries of doctors and medical staff. Health care requires an independent portfolio in the government.

2. Equitable livelihood for all

The economic boom of the past few years has benefited a certain group in Hungary, but elderly citizens have been neglected. Those living on the minimum pension are in a particularly difficult situation. Low pensions, and especially pensioners surviving far below the poverty line, need a raise based on realistic estimates of the subsistence minimum. Likewise, the minimum wage should reach the targeted European level.

3. Elimination of child poverty requires a state program

The government, through what they call a family-oriented policy, has created a tax and subsidy scheme that only benefits middle class families and children, while tens of thousands of children born in poverty are left without support. We want a comprehensive government program to curb the spread of child poverty and to alleviate a range of unfavourable geographic, educational, labour market and ethnic problems.

4. Fairer tax schemes and VAT reduction

More equitable VAT and income tax schemes are needed, with the focus on living conditions. The excessively high value added tax on consumer goods (27%) needs to go down to the level of the European average, while VAT on foodstuffs and housing should not exceed 5%. Parliament should discuss the introduction of a multiple-rate income tax scheme. The minimum target should be to make the minimum wage tax-exempt.

5. The School-leaving age must go back to 18 years

The school system should educate Hungarian youth up to 18 years of age to be able to meet the challenges of the 21st Century independently. The coronavirus pandemic has shown the opportunities of digital education, but it has also revealed the deficiencies in access to it. Children in poor families need support in purchasing digital devices. Education requires an independent portfolio in the government.

6. The first university degree should be free of charge

University education cannot be the privilege of the rich. The provision of free education up to the first degree will make higher education accessible to many talented young people. Our universities will be able to compete with foreign universities if we can hire the best teachers to educate the brightest Hungarian students.

7. We need to grow and prosper together with our Roma citizens

Segregation in communities and schools has not diminished; public education only exacerbates unequal opportunities. EU funds allocated to the inclusion of the Roma have been channelled to government clients. Constructive measures are needed to improve the situation, employability and real opportunities of the Roma. Our Roma citizens must be proportionately represented in public life.

Fair market economy with strong employee representation

8. Let us build a competitive, knowledge-based economy

Hungary's future lies in the development of a knowledge-based economy, resilient to crises, relying on domestic small and medium-sized enterprises. Rural development goals should encourage healthy food production in agriculture. Hungarian and EU development funds must promote the development of a value-added economy in accordance with the rules of fair and transparent competition.

9. We want regular interest harmonisation procedures

While the government refuses to negotiate with employee representatives, it continually amends the Labour Code at the expense of the workers. We want a new Labour Code. Workers' rights and the right to strike should be formulated with the participation of the employers' and workers' organisations. This code must guarantee the rights and financial independence of the Trade Unions.

10. The development of the disadvantaged regions is a common social interest

Instead of convergence to the EU average, entire regions in Hungary have been left without resources and are wasting away. The government has spent the EU funds allocated to rebuild these regions to advance the business interests of their clientele. A Regional Development Council with the participation of the government and the association of municipalities should be formed to ensure a new and more equitable distribution of funds for rehabilitation.

11. Hungary must join the European Public Prosecutor's office

Legislation related to EU directives does not apply to public procurement in Hungary; the actual practice serves only to increasing the wealth of the clientele of the governing party. It is in the interest of the citizens not to leave any form of corruption unpunished, even if the perpetrators are part of the political elite or related to entrepreneurs. Hungary must join the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

12. Let us create a green Hungary

The Fidesz government fails to see the real scale and impact of global climate change. Hungary must join all international agreements on climate protection that serve the future of all humankind. The government must support the adoption of green technologies and the development of local production and consumer chains that reduce environmental impact and global dependence.

Rule of law and freedom of speech

13. We want a new and proportionate electoral law

The Fidesz electoral system severely distorts the representation of the will of the electorate and prevents the creation of a multi-party coalition capable of governance. We call for a new and proportionate electoral law. We must allow all Hungarian citizens living outside the country as ethnic minorities in neighbouring states, as guest workers in the West and as members of the diaspora in the wider world, to participate in the Hungarian elections under uniform rules.

14. A prime minister should not be elected to serve for more than two cycles

With its parliamentary majority, Fidesz has gradually dismantled the institutions of the rule of law and multi-party democracy, replacing them with authoritarian rule. The time constraints on eligibility for office should guarantee that a single person cannot seize power by parliamentary means. According to the new Constitution which we propose, one person may only serve as prime minister for a maximum of two parliamentary cycles.

15. The president of the republic should be elected by direct vote

More and more countries elect their president directly. In exercising his constitutional powers, the president must comply with the demands of the voters, not the Parliament; when directly elected, the president will guarantee the observance of the sovereignty of the people. The president must defend national unity and abide by the constitutional norms when signing legislation submitted by the Parliament.

16. Municipalities must become bodies of civil self-government

Fidesz has undermined the municipalities, and measures taken during the pandemic could render local governance financially unworkable. The state must return primary education and primary health care to the municipalities. Municipalities must control local issues again to ensure the social network and the personal participation of the citizens.

17. Public media must be socially controlled

Fidesz has turned the public media into its own propaganda channels. The press monopoly, thriving on government advertising, uses its publications to influence and deceive public opinion. Social control must ensure a balanced functioning of the state media, independent of government. We want to eliminate the press monopoly and ensure real competition in the advertising media market at the same time.

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A foreign policy focused on Euro-Atlantic values and the real interests of the nation

18. Hungary's international relations must be based on Euro-Atlantic values

When Communism fell, our main goal was to converge and align with Western models and organisations. Most of our citizens believe that our safety is guaranteed by NATO, while our welfare is assured above all by our membership in the European Union. Hungary is interested in building and strengthening her existing alliances, instead of seeking adventures with suspicious and dangerous outside powers.

19. We must establish the conditions to adopt the Euro

At long last, Hungary as a sovereign state is not controlled by foreign powers. A substantial majority voted in a referendum to join the political and economic community of the EU. It is our fundamental interest to ensure the smooth operation of the EU and to solve its internal problems. We need all the benefits of integration. We must create the economic and social conditions for the adoption of the single European currency, the Euro.

20. We must stop financially unfeasible mega-investment projects

After 2010 and for no well-founded economic reason, the Orbán government entered into large-scale contracts with distant, foreign partners, guided by suspicious political motives. The costly expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant using Russian technology was a rash move; the Russian loan at high interest increased the country's debt. Nor does Hungary need the new railway to Belgrade, built with an expensive Chinese loan.

21. Hungary must play its role in solving global problems

The Fidesz government and Viktor Orbán are trying to enhance their international position by opposing the majority and thus hindering constructive solutions in various organisations and forums. Hungary's true interest is to play a constructive role in finding joint answers to global challenges, including international efforts to deal with climate change and migration.

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