

ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY.

FONDEMOS' VIEW:



© Attila Kisbenedek / AFP — Speech by Péter Magyar before his supporters, Budapest, April 12, 2026.

The failed negotiations between Washington and Tehran, President Trump's erratic statements and Vice President Vance's visit to Islamabad dominated the media spotlight. Yet, in our view, it may be in Hungary that one of the most significant political events of the year unfolded on Sunday 12 April.

With a record turnout of 77.8% — the highest in the country's post-Communist history — early results

credit Péter Magyar's Tisza party with approximately 53.5% of the vote, against 37.8% for Viktor Orbán's Fidesz.

Viktor Orbán, 62, in power since 2010, built what he himself described as an *"illiberal state"* in his landmark 2014 Băile Tuşnad speech. Since then, the dismantling of Hungary's democratic institutions has become a textbook case. Fidesz rewrote the Constitution, redrew constituencies in its own favour, brought the judiciary under growing political control and restructured the media landscape: the public broadcaster became a propaganda outlet, most private media passed into the hands of government allies, and the Central European University was forced out of Budapest. Hungary's Freedom House score dropped by 20 points out of 100, making it **the first EU member state to be downgraded from "Free" to "Partly Free."** The European Parliament labelled it a *"hybrid regime of electoral autocracy"* in 2022. Domestically, the regime pursued an overt anti-LGBT+ agenda, created a *"Sovereignty Protection Office"* tailor-made to intimidate civil society, and initiated Hungary's withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, a first time for an EU member state.

On the European stage, Orbán systematically turned Hungary into an institutional blocking force at a time when the EU was undergoing an existential strategic redefinition. More troubling still, **Putin's Russia — a dictatorship that imprisons its opponents, assassinates its dissidents and wages a war of aggression against a sovereign state — directly exported its practices into Hungary.** In March 2026, investigations revealed the deployment by Russia's GRU of *"political technologists"* to the Russian embassy in Budapest to assist Orbán's re-election campaign. Transcripts of exchanges between his foreign minister and Russian officials were published by a consortium of investigative journalists.

This is no longer a diplomatic rapprochement: it is the interference of a dictatorship in the electoral process of an EU member state. During his last term in office, Orbán appeared less as a servant of Hungarian interests than as a relay for the Kremlin.

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Péter Magyar, 45, is a former Fidesz member and ex-husband of Orbán's former justice minister. Still a regime loyalist two years ago, he publicly broke with it in 2024 after a presidential pardon was granted to a man involved in covering up pedophile crimes, denouncing the Orbán project as "*a political product*" concealing "*massive corruption.*" His Tisza party, founded barely two years ago, channelled the discontent of a population hit by economic stagnation (0.4% growth in 2025) and the highest food prices in the EU. Three-quarters of voters under 30 declared their intention to vote for him. **Magyar has signalled a decisive break with Fidesz's legacy.** His landslide victory with an unexpected supermajority is widely read as a mandate for democratic reform, with Magyar confirming on election night his alignment with the mainstream centre-right political family at EU level.

For anyone who stands on the side of democracy, the rule of law and political freedoms, one can only welcome Viktor Orbán's anticipated defeat. What Péter Magyar's mandate will deliver, however, remains unknown. Fondemos hopes it will embody a genuine break with the liberticide and oligarchic politics of the past sixteen years and not simply their continuation under a new face.



© Sean Gallup / Getty Images — Crowd celebrating the victory of the Tisza party in the parliamentary elections, April 12, 2026.