



HUNGARY TURNS ITS BACK ON EUROPE

DISMANTLING
CULTURE, EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND THE MEDIA
IN HUNGARY
2010–2019



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been prepared by independent Hungarian intellectuals who wish to inform the Hungarian and international public as well as European institutions about the severe harm that the Orbán regime governing Hungary since 2010 has caused in the fields of education, science, culture, and the media.

The reason for preparing the present report is that the acts of the successive Orbán governments consistently run counter to and consciously violate the fundamental principles, values, and norms of the European Union, not only as regards the rule of law and political and social rights, but also in the case of the cultural areas discussed here. In Hungary, important European values are being jeopardised, including cultural diversity, scientific and artistic autonomy, the respect for human dignity, access to education and culture, conditions for social mobility, the integration of disadvantaged social groups, the protection of cultural heritage, and the right to balanced information, as well as democratic norms like ensuring social dialogue, transparency and subsidiarity.

By presenting the activities of the Orbán regime in the fields of culture, education, research, and the media, we provide information about areas little known to the international public. With our report, we wish to draw attention to the fact that an autocratic system has been constructed and consolidated in Hungary with the money of EU taxpayers and with the financial and political support of EU institutions. This system creates a worrying democratic deficit and severe social problems, while it also causes irreparable harm in the fields of education, science, and culture.

The authors of the report are leading researchers, lecturers, and acknowledged experts, including several academicians, professors, heads of departments, and a former Minister of Culture. The undertaking was initiated and coordinated by the Hungarian Network of Academics.

CULTURAL POLICY

The report claims that the Orbán regime considers culture important only as a means that helps achieve its political goals. The government's approach to culture is well illustrated by the fact that education, research, the arts, cultural heritage as well as healthcare and social care all belong under the same ministry.

The processes observed in different areas of culture (understood in a broad sense) show several similarities. Strong centralisation has taken place in every area over the past ten years, even if in slightly different ways.

The central political will is ensured by a radical reorganisation of ownership: in certain cases the short-term political goals of the government are best served by renationalisation (e.g., the nationalisation of schools previously run by local governments), in others, the government interferes with the private market through complex transactions conducted with the help of its oligarchs (e.g., buying up opposition media), or it may even privatise former state-run institutions or manage them through foundations (e.g., in higher education). Another typical method besides nationalisation is outsourcing certain public cultural functions (e.g., established churches now play a key role in education).

In addition to the transformation of ownership relations, the management of cultural areas is also characterised by extreme centralisation and manual control. Decision-making, even in minor questions, has been pushed up to the higher levels of public administration, which has irrational consequences and often results in an inability to function properly. Extreme centralisation is accompanied by dilettantism, which leads to chaotic situations. The Orbán regime has no experts on cultural policy with a clear vision of the state's role in preserving and developing culture and of the significance and limits of this role, or who could understand the importance of maintaining the autonomies inherent in this sector.

The Orbán regime politicises all aspects of culture, thus abolishing the autonomy achieved by certain cultural areas. The cultural policy of the Orbán regime does not rely on the specific characteristics and criteria of the various cultural fields, it only takes into consideration whether those engaged in cultural activities are loyal to the regime. As in all other areas, social and professional consultations have been eliminated from the decision-making process regarding culture; and this has led to a series of ill-considered decisions that only serve the interests of persons and groups close to the prime minister and lead to chaotic situations.

Instead of aiming to be conservative, preserving or conserving, the Orbán regime approaches culture with a transforming, re-interpretative and radical attitude. The regime's voluntarism is evident from the fact that if it cannot achieve its goals through the already existing, embedded, and relatively autonomous institutions, then it establishes new parallel institutions with a reallocation of public resources to these.

SYMBOLIC POLITICS

Symbolic politics has a key role in sustaining the Orbán regime. Symbolic politics focuses on national cohesion, nation-building, the ethnically based unification of the nation across the borders, and the symbolic strengthening of the role of Hungary as a middle power in the Carpathian Basin. Official national policy considers Hungarians living outside the borders part of the "nation's body", while the Hungarian citizenship given to these minorities and the significant support provided to their institutions by the Hungarian state serves the internal and external political goals of Fidesz.

The regime is characterised by the unscrupulous appropriation of national symbols and the sacralisation of power. Government discourse defines national cohesion on the basis of race and ethnicity, built on the symbols of Hungarian prehistory and legends. In the meantime, the opposition is excluded from the nation and is portrayed as an enemy serving foreign interests.

Government communication makes serious efforts to continually sustain the psychosis of fear and menace. Similarly to the practice of totalitarian dictatorships, simplified posters and fliers reiterating messages of a few words play an important part in the political communication of Fidesz. The propagandists of Fidesz use a wide range of means of linguistic occupation of the public sphere from coining new words through militarising public usage, to pathetic and kitschy metaphors, scapegoating, and the dehumanisation of their political opponents. These means were also put to use in the hate campaigns against the refugees, George Soros, and Brussels. Orbán's speeches and government communication repeatedly designate enemies and exaggerate the significance of their actions by accusing them of participating in a global conspiracy. The war on critical intellectuals is fought not only through voluntarist and administrative interventions into the field of culture, but also by means of symbolic politics and propaganda. Certain groups of intellectuals and independent civil organisations are regularly targeted by the media empire financed by the government.

Symbolic politics and all-pervasive propaganda are primarily meant to ensure the loyalty of groups at the lowest levels of social hierarchy, whereas in reality, social inequalities are becoming increasingly conspicuous, and the economic and social policies that focus on the interests of the national middle-class, eliminate the elementary forms of solidarity from the system of public redistribution, neglect and even despise the poor and the disadvantaged.

The Orbán government has involved the churches in its culture war, putting them into the service of ideological retraining. The regime exploits religious sentiment for its own legitimation, the sacralisation of power, and the justification of its timelessness and unquestionability.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Orbán government's radically centralising, arbitrary and half-baked interventions have caused severe damage in public education, aggravating the effect of the significant reduction of resources. Public education is no longer capable of training youth to become interested, open-minded, and future-oriented members of a modern, knowledge-based society with diverse and adequate competences. After 2010, schools owned by local governments were renationalised and subjected to an institution centralised to the extreme. The dictatorial management of education since 2010 has led to severe violations of the rights of pupils, teachers and parents alike, while professional consultation bodies and coordination forums have ceased to exist. The central measures made obligatory the framework curricula which restricted the autonomy of the teaching staff, abolished the textbook market, and significantly overburdened teachers by increasing their teaching and administrative workload, thus schools no longer have the opportunity to implement pedagogical strategies adjusted to the abilities of their pupils. The government has put public education into the service of its own ideological goals: central interventions into the curriculum do not aim to update the material and the pedagogical methods, on the contrary: they serve the indoctrination of outdated and extremely conservative contents.

Although the professed aim was to increase equal opportunities, PISA surveys reveal a widening gap between the performance of students coming from different social backgrounds and settlements. Reducing the age limit for compulsory education from 18 to 16 years of age, the termination of desegregation programmes, and the preferential treatment of

religious educational institutions, which only increases segregation, further enhance the disadvantages of those left behind. The material and the daily time spent at school significantly increased, creating a work overload for students and teachers. Vocational education was drastically oversimplified, and the proportion of general subjects was reduced to a minimum. Students and teachers demonstrated against their increased workload, as time spent in school, compulsory teaching hours and administration have extremely increased.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The current regime distrusts universities and intellectuals and underrates the social significance of knowledge as well as the European values of freedom of learning, education, and research. Universities are kept in financial dependency, turned into obedient executors of the government's intentions. The government directs and controls the institutions' operation by appointing financial chancellors besides rectors, thus seriously restricting the universities' autonomy. Distrust of intellectuals is also manifest in the government's measures taken deliberately to narrow opportunities of entering higher education. Thus, in Hungary – in contrast to international and European trends – the number of students in higher education is decreasing. This primarily means that youth of a less advantaged social and cultural background are excluded from higher education.

The government is trying to limit or hinder the activities of educational institutions deemed dangerous – especially in the field of social sciences – by compelling students to pay tuition fees for certain majors, by establishing parallel institutions, and by administrative means (e.g., expelling Central European University (CEU) from Budapest). In order to train civil servants to obediently serve the government's policy, the National University of Public Service (Nemzeti Közszołgálati Egyetem - NKE) was established and is excessively financed while lecturers at other universities need to work for humiliating salaries in run-down buildings with outdated infrastructure and equipment.

The internationalisation of higher education is given a significant weight among explicit governmental goals, this, however, is not directed at the integration into the European Higher Education Area but at the strengthening of the government's African and Asian foreign policy relations and economic network.

RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

The government strives to strengthen political control and to restrict professional and institutional autonomies in its science policies, as well. Following an earlier relocation of OTKA (the Hungarian Research Fund for Science and the Humanities, responsible for financing basic research) to a government agency, the expropriation of the research institute network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia - MTA) was the scandal of the past two years.

In June 2018, ideological attacks on academic researchers and institutions appeared in the government-affiliated media. Shortly afterwards, the government – violating the effective legislation – withheld from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences two-thirds of the budgetary support it was entitled to by law, the sum destined to finance its 15 research institutes. One year later, despite the resistance of the Academy and protests of the Hungarian and international scientific community, the government separated the research network from MTA by the force of a new law. A new institutional framework was created for the research institutions, which placed them under the supervision of a body whose composition guarantees that the government's intentions will be carried out; its president is the personal scientific advisor of Viktor Orbán. With this reorganization the freedom of research can be severely restricted. This contradicts the principles laid down in the Fundamental Law of Hungary. The new institutional structure allows the government to directly access the funds coming from international applications, especially from Horizon Europe, the research and innovation framework programme of the European Union. The minister's statements reveal an intention to restrict basic research and to support especially applied research in technology and natural sciences. Besides the strict control of academic institutions, the Fidesz regime also uses another method in the field of history and social sciences: it has founded an alternative network of government dependent research institutes in order to strengthen its own politics of remembrance, while closing existing ones which opposed this remembrance policy. The aim of these measures is to ensure the hegemony of the official interpretation of history and to confer the appearance of scholarly legitimacy to the government's rewritten narratives on Hungarian history.

ARTS

The distribution of public money in the field of arts is highly centralised and is also based on political criteria. It is characterised by a lack of transparency that makes it often impossible to trace; as a result, the distribution of resources among the participants in the sector is highly uneven.

The government has ensured its two-thirds majority in every board that makes decisions about the financing of culture by subjecting the previously independent National Cultural Fund (Nemzeti Kulturális Alap - NKA) to the Ministry of Human Resources (Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma - EMMI) and by giving the Hungarian Academy of Arts (Magyar Művészeti Akadémia - MMA), loyal to the government, one-third of votes in every decision-making body. Thus, MMA has a considerable influence on culture and the arts without actually having gained a real cultural significance, despite its excessive state funding. It is a reason for concern that the National Cultural Fund falls under a so-called ministerial budget, with no professional control over its utilisation.

Since 2010, a government majority rules over boards that appoint theatre directors, regularly evoking outrage with their decisions. The corporate tax system (TAO), introduced in 2009, which, despite its disadvantages, had meant a steady source of income for theatre companies, was abolished in January 2019 and replaced by central funding based on political preferences. This change damaged independent companies the most, while its main beneficiary was the National Theatre, which has had a right-wing management since 2013, but has only been moderately successful in ticket sales.

In the field of music, informal relationships have an increasingly great importance in the allocation of resources, the members of professional boards are not appointed by consensus, and the composition of these boards rarely guarantees professional control.

The costs of maintaining classical music institutions are high, productions are expensive, and private sponsorship is undeveloped, therefore the dependency on the state is more substantial in this field than in the case of literature or fine arts. Strong financial dependency, the lack of transparency in the system of applications, and highly personal decision-making procedures force the participants to develop political loyalty and to lobby. The government is not reluctant to sponsor music, there are significant amounts spent on the support of classical music, but their distribution is ad-hoc and arbitrary, and there are also leaders appointed on political grounds whose professional activities are often controversial. At the same time, however, the destruction and takeover experienced elsewhere has not become typical in music life, which might be explained by the fact that most classical music genres are not suitable for direct political instrumentalization.

In the field of literature, billions have been allocated to two institutions led by openly pro-government literary managers. Most projects of the Talent Development in the Carpathian Basin Ltd. have been failures so far, and the Petőfi Museum of Literature is meant to become a "literary power centre". There are also plans to create the Petőfi Literary Agency within the latter, the purpose of which is still unclear at present. Meanwhile, the funding of literary associations established after the regime change and committed to democratic culture has been drastically reduced.

In the field of contemporary fine arts, political selection works in a covert but all the more efficient manner: there are not enough resources, institutional partners, exhibition spaces and publicity, thus the conditions of artistic creative work are not secured, and the institutional guarantees of artistic freedom are missing.

The Orbán government has also centralised the allocation of public funds for film production: the former public foundation which operated as a social and professional organisation was replaced by the Film Fund managed by government commissioner for film Andy Vajna. In spite of this, the financing of films was far less influenced by government policy than anticipated, while the evaluation criteria introduced by Vajna have proved efficient and led to a boost in the production of Hungarian feature films. Nevertheless, it may be suspected that Vajna's person and influence further strengthened the hegemony of American films in Hungary, and the practices he introduced often seem to explicitly contradict the recommendations of the Council of Europe on national film policy. Furthermore, it does not bode well for the future that after Vajna's death the experts who had professional standing, left the National Film Fund and were replaced by professionally insignificant members.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Since there is no ministry responsible for culture, museum professionals do not even have the opportunity to acquaint decision-makers with their opinion on the orientation taken by the development of individual institutions and the network of institutions as a whole. The 2013 Act on Museums no longer requires a field-specific degree from museum directors. Museum directors are thus people loyal to dominant national or local political or economic circles. Aspects of power and representation as well as touristic and business aims replace the professional points of view in the management of museums. The law of 2013 abolished county museum organisations (in which the smaller museums of a county were affiliated with a central museum), and these museums are now managed by towns. The state seized the ownership of collections and of properties, except for the museums in larger towns. Local authorities have closed parts of collections citing property development reasons (e.g. the section representing the houses and everyday life of Finno-Ugric people in the outdoor museum of Zalaegerszeg). The government establishes new museums without consulting those involved and makes decisions about relocating national collections in order to further its own political goals and to cater for the financial interests of influential party members and entrepreneurs. Museums in the countryside barely subsist, and research has

been put on the back burner. Museums are underfinanced, the initial salary of professionals with a university degree is at subsistence level, while the workload is irrationally high.

The core activity of the National Széchényi Library is collecting and preserving the documents of written Hungarian cultural heritage. Being underfinanced, the library cannot perform this task. Its official acquisition budget has been 0 (zero) HUF since 2006. Even the nominal value of its annual budget has been decreasing for about 6 years, while its utility debt has reached 700 million HUF. As a result, the library cannot even pay its employees the legally guaranteed salaries. Moving the National Széchényi Library from Buda Castle is part of the government's symbolic politics: cultural and scientific institutions are forced to move out of the Buda Castle district so they can be replaced by government offices. Having said that, building a new edifice to host the national library would be a justified move. The National Széchényi Library can no longer perform its tasks at its present location, and its storage facilities are completely full. However, instead of erecting an up-to-date 21st-century library building, the government has chosen a cheaper solution, i.e., moving the library to another location. This is not a feasible solution, as the buildings mentioned in the press from time to time (e.g., former military barracks) are unsuitable to house the national library.

2012 saw the abolition of the only central institution of protection of Hungarian historic monuments, which had existed since 1872. As a result of mostly ad hoc, irresponsible, and often chaotic decisions and reorganisations that lack any coherent strategy, the professional organisation of the protection of historic monuments has been completely eroded since 2010, and professional decisions cannot go against the political will. There are only few individual projects – backed by massive propaganda – on a national level, mostly entirely pointless reconstructions of long-destroyed buildings, which cannot be conceived as real conservation work on historic monuments, but which are very expensive and contribute to creating false national consciousness. The institutionalised national protection of historic monuments has practically ceased to exist in Hungary.

MEDIA

Since 2010, Fidesz has raised from public money its own media empire, which today covers around 75 percent of the political-public media market. State advertisements cost hundreds of billions a year, most of which land at the media close to the government, while multinational companies and Hungarian firms give in to the political pressure and tend to spend the majority of their money assigned for advertising at pro-government media. The few remaining independent media try to survive without advertising revenues.

The media funded from public money has become an instrument of overt government propaganda. It does not meet any requirement of public service, its information sharing activity is unilateral, biased, and partial, important news are often concealed, while the distortion of news and the deception of the audience are regular.

The deliberate ambition of the governing party, which directly or indirectly influences the majority of the media market, is to oust trust-worthy, reliable, value-based media from the public space and to fill their space with low-quality, superficial tabloids that offer oversimplified, ready-made news that take advantage of fears, and are based on lies, and half-truths.

The report shows that in the ten years since 2010, the activities of the Hungarian government in the areas of generating and transmitting knowledge, creating culture, and preserving the cultural heritage have set the country back by decades. Autonomous cultural institutions and the professionals they employ have suffered huge losses, have exhausted themselves in upholding resistance, and have little energy left.

The Orbán regime, although it wears the mask of Christianity and surrounds itself with the props of democracy, has turned its back on Europe, on progress, on the values of universal culture and civilisation, through its ethnic-national exclusivism, its anti-Enlightenment stance, its radical anti-humanism, and its denial of elementary human solidarity with those in need, whether Hungarians or refugees. The present overview of the developments in Hungary may have a significance larger than itself: it may serve as a cautionary tale of the long-term consequences that can be expected when populism becomes the governing force in a country, dismantling the system of checks and balances, and using cultural institutions to serve its own political goals.

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by independent Hungarian intellectuals who wish to inform the Hungarian and international public as well as European institutions about the severe harm that the Orbán regime governing Hungary since 2010 has caused in the fields of education, science, culture and the media.¹

The reason for preparing the present report is that the acts of the successive Orbán governments consistently run counter to and consciously violate the fundamental principles, values, and norms of the European Union, not only as regards the rule of law and political and social rights, but also in the case of the cultural areas discussed here. In Hungary, important European values are being compromised, including the respect for human dignity, widespread access to education and culture, the creation of the necessary conditions for social mobility, the integration of disadvantaged social groups, cultural diversity, scientific and artistic autonomy, the protection of cultural heritage, the right to balanced information, as well as democratic norms like ensuring social dialogue, transparency, and subsidiarity.

With our report, we wish to draw attention to the fact that an autocratic system has been constructed and consolidated in Hungary with the money of EU taxpayers and with the financial and political support of EU institutions. This system creates a worrying democratic deficit and severe social problems, while it also causes irreparable harm in the fields of education, science, and culture.

The authors of the report are researchers, lecturers, and professionals working in the affected fields, many of whom also contribute to the work of non-governmental organisations. The initiative came from and was coordinated by the Hungarian Network of Academics (Oktatói Hálózat, OHA).²

Before proceeding to present the situation in each field, we will attempt to locate the Orbán regime in the context of 20th-century Hungarian history, and to provide a brief overview of its main characteristics.

HUNGARY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In order to understand how the Orbán regime functions, we should briefly summarise the history of Hungary in the 20th century, as the Horthy regime of the interwar period, the communist regime emerging after WWII, and the Orbán regime settling into power after the 2010 elections show many similar characteristics despite their obvious differences.³

In 1919, Miklós Horthy took control over the country from foreign occupation forces after a failed revolution. Horthy held a position which had existed in Hungary since the 15th century: he was governor of a kingdom without a king. This position endowed him with virtually unlimited power. In order to strengthen social cohesion, state propaganda labelled communists and Jews as enemies. In the fight against the “foreign” elements infiltrating Hungarian society, great emphasis was placed on the ancient origins of the Hungarian people, the cultivation of Hungarian traditions, and the glorification of the farming and shepherding lifestyle of Hungarians. In order to retain its power, the Horthy regime relied partly on the Hungarian upper middle-class that developed from the ranks of the landed gentry, and partly on the peasantry. Its cultural and educational policy supported the middle-class of feudal origins, while it exerted control over the peasants.⁴

The Horthy regime aimed at the revision of the Trianon Treaty that concluded WWI, therefore it “considered it especially important to spread revanchist ideology in educational and cultural institutions. Its objective was to produce educated and self-confident nationalist recruits through the development of the school system, which would help the regime prevail over

1 In 2019, two important analyses of the Hungarian situation were prepared at the initiative of the V21 group, but these do not focus on the areas of culture. The V21 Group's position paper entitled *Breaking the Silence* can be found here: <https://www.v21.hu/breaking-the-silence>, last seen: 31.10.2019, while the analysis entitled *Tyranny and Hope* by the Hungarian Europe Society can be read here: https://europatarsasag.hu/hu/open-space/onkeny-es-remeny?fbclid=IwAR0v_45EGXNqrDOLkUtGUO4DSvz6k4r_FRPP9XjoPwtlccr6uT6VtcXZaK0, last seen: 31.10.2019.

2 The Hungarian Network of Academics is an autonomous organisation of lecturers and researchers active in Hungarian higher education. See: <http://oktatoihalozat.hu/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

3 See András Bozóki's article “Száz év talány” [One Hundred Years of Mystery] in the January 2019 issue of *Mozgó Világ*: <http://mozgovilag.hu/2019/04/09/bozoki-andras-szaz-ev-talany-januari-szam/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

4 The latter was achieved by direct methods: Prime Minister István Bethlen's decree, introduced in 1922, tied voting rights to property census and set a rather high age limit for participating at elections. See Ignác Romsics, “Választójog és parlamentarizmus a 20. századi magyar történelemben” [Voting Rights and Parliamentaryism in 20th-century Hungarian History]. In: *Múltról a mának* [About the Past to the Present]. Budapest: Osiris, 2004.

the neighbouring peoples and reintegrate them when the time arrived to reclaim the lost territories. This was the concept of 'cultural superiority'.⁵

This educational and cultural policy also served to keep the urban bourgeoisie and the industrial working class (both providing the basis for the critique of the system) away from power. In 1920 the Horthy regime introduced the so-called "numerus clausus" in higher education, which made the number of students admitted to universities dependent on the proportions of the various ethnicities in society. This law clearly aimed at curbing the number of Jewish students, and restraining the urban intellectuals, a significant number of whom were of Jewish descent. The anti-Semitic measures and propaganda of the autocratic regime made anti-Semitism an enduring element of public opinion in Hungary. This gained significance during the Holocaust, when about half a million Hungarian Jews were deported with the active participation of the Hungarian state, while Hungarian society watched with passive indifference.⁶

The Horthy regime was created with the support of the Catholic and Calvinist churches dominant in Hungary. The churches had a strong presence in the field of education, and these two denominations had a decisive influence on important cultural events as well.⁷

Horthy's semi-feudal, autocratic regime sided with Nazi Germany from the mid-1930s onwards and entered WWII in 1941 as a military ally of Germany. Although the Horthy era was characterised by a multiparty system and parliamentary opposition, and in the more consolidated periods the press also enjoyed relative freedom, "...the regime conserved authoritarian, patriarchal social conditions based on master-and-servant relationships, and millions of people became homeless or disenfranchised. In the end, the Horthy regime drawn into the war took its farewell in the saddest manner possible: with the pointless death of over one hundred thousand soldiers and the annihilation of more than half a million Hungarian citizens of Jewish descent."⁸

After WWII, a brief period of democracy followed in Hungary, eradicated by an autocratic regime that followed the Soviet model. The history of the communist regime in Hungary can be divided into two periods: the first is associated with Mátyás Rákosi (1949–53), and the second with János Kádár (1956–89). In the first period, the communist regime deprived of its wealth and forced into emigration the Hungarian middle class that served as the basis of the Horthy regime, eliminated the class of functionaries, deprived well-off peasants (the "kulaks") of their means of production and their land, and expelled the churches from education and cultural life. Following the Soviet example, the new regime relied on industrial workers – at least in theory – and advocated internationalism instead of nationalism. Its external enemies were the international capitalists, while its internal enemies were those loyal to the old regime or belonging to social groups meant to be eradicated, as well as various existing or fictitious political types (fascists, reactionaries, social fascists, Trotskyists, etc.). Labelling someone as an enemy or class alien posed severe dangers (social declassing, existential annihilation, forced relocation, showcase trials, etc.). Ministry positions were occupied by cadres from the people who were considered reliable, and state administration was under the total control of the Communist Party. "Furthermore, parallel structures were created, i.e. the party formed similar units covering certain areas supervised by the ministry."⁹

In the Rákosi era, ready-made Soviet panels were adopted in education and culture, and centrally controlled culture and education propagated the alleged successes of the Soviet Union. The regime completely eradicated the spaces of intellectual autonomy. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences was under political pressure, threatened with drastic budget cuts, and placed under party control through administrative measures. In art, socialist realism was the expected style, and all other artistic forms were stigmatised.

5 András Bozóki, "Száz év talány." [One Hundred Years of Mystery] *Mozgó Világ*, January 2019. <http://mozgovilag.hu/2019/04/09/bozoki-andras-szaz-ev-talany-januari-szam/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

6 "The Hungarian chapter of the Holocaust of European Jewry constitutes not only the greatest tragedy in the history of Hungarian Jewry but also the darkest chapter in the history of Hungary. Never before in the history of the Hungarian nation were so many people expropriated and murdered in so short a time as in 1944. [...] the hundreds of thousands of people victimized in 1944 fell prey to the connivance of their own government." Randolph L. Braham, "Magyarország és a holokauszt" [Hungary and the Holocaust]. *Beszélő* 7/ 4. <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/magyarorszag-es-a-holokauszt>, last seen: 31.10.2019; <https://www.rferl.org/a/1342538.html>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

On the reactions of the Hungarian population, see: http://www.holokausztmagyarorszagon.hu/index.php?section=1&type=content&chapter=11_1_1, last seen: 31.10.2019.

7 For example, Hungary organised the Eucharistic Congress in 1938.

8 András Bozóki, "Száz év talány." [One Hundred Years of Mystery] *Mozgó Világ*, January 2019. <http://mozgovilag.hu/2019/04/09/bozoki-andras-szaz-ev-talany-januari-szam/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

9 László Eörsi, "Ideológiai pragmatizmus és (ön)cenzúra [Ideological Pragmatism and (Self-)Censorship]." *Világosság*, 2008/11-12. <https://epa.oszk.hu/01200/01273/00051/pdf/20090513141719.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

After the suppression of the 1956 revolution and the ensuing period of bloody retaliation, the Kádár regime consolidating in the early 1960s declared an amnesty in 1963 for the majority of those convicted in 1956, distanced itself from earlier Stalinist politics, and publicly condemned the showcase trials and the personal cult of the Rákosi era. Kádár offered a new kind of deal to Hungarian society, according to which “who is not against us is with us”. This meant that citizens were no longer expected to openly acclaim the system, they could silently withdraw into a depoliticised personal sphere in which – thanks to attempts at economic reform – they could create a kind of private consumer autonomy. The earlier voluntarist and utterly ideologized politics were replaced by a more pragmatic and rationalistic kind; the rhetoric of the Kádár era mentioned communism with decreasing frequency, and the ideological rigidity of the system gradually relented. The cultural policy of the Kádár regime also became less rigid, exerted less pressure on education and culture, and managed these areas with more refined means, although a not less strong hand. Intellectuals were still strictly controlled, but cultural policy strived to win over the intellectual elite. Supported, tolerated, and banned authors and works were distinguished in the cultural scene, which left a much wider room for authors compared to the Rákosi era. Education management aimed at the integration of people from lower social classes, as they were considered the social basis of the regime. In the limited public sphere that emerged in the Kádár era, various social problems could be discussed – with the exception of taboo subjects, of course. In its heyday, the Kádár regime not only enjoyed the support of wide segments of the population, but – due to the allure of a more relaxed cultural policy, which was also sensitive to quality – it gradually won the loyalty of a great part of the intellectual elites. In the 1980s, Kádár's Hungary, which had long been considered the “happiest barracks” of socialism, experienced an economic crisis, and its bases of legitimation were also shaken. The regime change of 1989–90 put an end to outdated and outmoded Kádárism, some elements of which nevertheless have survived in Hungarian society to the present day.

Behind the still existing façade of modern liberal democracy, the Orbán regime has created a unique blend of the elements of former autocracies. The administrative group monopolising the state (the Prime Minister and his circle) have transformed education in line with their power-related objectives, impeding social mobility and the reproduction of an independent intellectual class. Churches have regained their former role in the management of education and culture. The government has designated “migrants”¹⁰ and – with an increasing frequency – “Brussels” as its main external enemies, while it also conducts anti-elite and anti-intellectual propaganda with veiled anti-Semitic allusions.¹¹ The symbolic politics of the Orbán government emphasises continuity with the Horthy regime in power between 1919 and 1944. At the same time, it follows the example set by the communist dictatorship by maximising the use of propagandistic means, suppressing contrary opinions, and ideologically manipulating the subject of history taught in schools. All previous Hungarian autocratic regimes tried to keep the lower classes of society away from politics and intentionally restricted their opportunities to influence decision-making, which is also one of the intentions of the Orbán regime.

Of course, the political and social structures created after 2010 cannot be described as mere echoes of former systems. Before discussing their specific and unique characteristics, however, we must present a brief overview of the regime change of 1989-90 and the following two decades.

After the regime change of 1989-90, the party-state dictatorship was replaced by parliamentary democracy and the planned economy of state socialism by capitalism. Hungary was transformed into a democratic society through a peaceful process. As a result of constitutional reform, the creation of the conditions of the rule of law, and the introduction of civil liberties and market economy, Hungary now had the opportunity to catch up with Western Europe. Hungary joined the OECD in 1996, became a NATO member in 1999, and acceded to the European Union in 2004. However, the regime change and the international integration of the country failed to meet the – exaggerated – expectations in several respects. The folding of the uncompetitive socialist heavy industry increased unemployment, social inequalities intensified, and the improvement of the population's living standards fell behind expectations. The privatisation of state and cooperative property – during which members of the former elite had an unfair advantage – and the massive influx of international capital into the Hungarian market provoked resentment in many. A survey conducted in 2006, sixteen years after the regime change, showed that the majority of the Hungarian population viewed the regime change in a negative light, and considered themselves at a disadvantage because of it.¹² The assessment of the regime change has improved somewhat in the past years, but it is still

10 András Bozóki, “Száz év talány.” [One Hundred Years of Mystery] *Mozgó Világ*, January 2019. <http://mozgovilag.hu/2019/04/09/bozoki-andras-szaz-ev-talany-januari-szam/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

11 See for example the persecution of the philosophers and the campaign against George Soros.

12 https://www.napi.hu/magyar_gazdasag/a_rendszervaltas_vesztesei_vagyunk.423965.html, last seen: 31.10.2019.

significantly more negative than in the other countries of the Visegrád Group.¹³

This is also reflected by the fact that large segments of Hungarian society still experience a kind of nostalgia for the Kádár regime, which guaranteed full employment, ensured relative prosperity and security, and the dictatorial aspects of which slowly fade from biased collective memory. A series of value surveys have proved that, in contrast with Western societies, which consider democratic values important, in Hungarian society security is regarded as the most significant aspect, which is also expressed in the strong demand for a caretaking state.

“Hungarian society's value structure rests on rational yet closed thinking, a relatively weak commitment to democracy, distrust, a lack of tolerance, and a demand for strong state intervention.”¹⁴ This peculiar mentality characterising Hungarian society provided favourable conditions for the emergence of a new autocratic system.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORBÁN REGIME

HUNGARY'S PATH FROM DEMOCRACY TO AUTOCRACY

20 years after the regime change of 1989-90, another regime change began in Hungary, but as opposed to a shift from autocracy to democracy it led from democracy to autocracy. Fidesz, led by Viktor Orbán, won 68% of the seats in the parliamentary elections of 2010. Orbán had already won the elections in 1998, but lost power in 2002. After the 2010 victory, he began constructing an autocratic system, which has since become virtually impossible to defeat by democratic means.¹⁵

In 2011, world-renowned Hungarian economist János Kornai summarised as follows the main steps of the regime change begun in 2010, i.e. the dismantling of the system of checks and balances:

- “Parliament has been converted into a voting machine that turns out laws on an assembly line at incredible speed.
- The post of Hungary's head of state, the President of the Republic, is no longer held by a personality who stands above parties and embodies the unity of the nation, but by a willing, obedient party devotee.
- The key office of Chief Prosecutor has been filled by a tried supporter of the ruling party.
- The National Elections Commission, whose task is to oversee elections, was replaced before its term expired, by a new committee composed almost exclusively of Fidesz supporters.
- The powers of the Constitutional Court, the chief guardian of constitutionalism and the fundamental office of judicial independence, were brutally restricted, a step that dealt in itself [is] a fatal blow on the principle of checks and balances.”¹⁶

The Orbán regime also started eradicating the freedom of the press: “The new media regulations, i.e. the institutional reorganization of the media authority and the passage of the Media Act, produces a level of centralization in the world of public media and political communication comparable only to the propaganda machine of communist dictatorships.”¹⁷

The new power structure built after 2010 intervenes in an aggressive and voluntarist manner into economic processes, aiming for total supervision and control. The main instrument in the Orbán regime's policy of redistribution is the tax benefit, which clearly favours the wealthier layers of society and impedes social mobility.

Evaluating the phenomena listed above, Kornai concluded that Hungary was transformed from a democracy into an autocracy, and the only objective of the ruling elite was to retain power for as long as possible.

13 András Bíró-Nagy (ed), *Rendszerváltás, demokrácia, és a magyar társadalom* [Regime Change, Democracy and Hungarian Society]. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/13268.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019. (p. 21)

14 András Bíró-Nagy, *Illiberal Democracy in Hungary: The Social Background and Practical Steps of Building an Illiberal State*. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andras_Biro-Nagy2/publication/316994178_Illiberal_Democracy_in_Hungary_The_Social_Background_and_Practical_Steps_of_Building_an_Illiberal_State/links/591c994ba6fdcc233fcb1fc/Illiberal-Democracy-in-Hungary-The-Social-Background-and-Practical-Steps-of-Building-an-Illiberal-State.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019. Bíró-Nagy refers to this study: I. Gy. Tóth. „Bizalomhiány, normazavarok, igazságtalanságérzet és paternalizmus a magyar társadalom értékstruktúrájában”. Budapest, TARKI Social Research Institute, 2009. http://www.tarki.hu/hu/research/gazdkult/gazdkult_elemzeszaro_toth.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

András Bíró-Nagy (ed), *Rendszerváltás, demokrácia, és a magyar társadalom* [Regime Change, Democracy and Hungarian Society]. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/13268.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.; http://www.tarsadalomkutatas.hu/kkk.php?TPUBL-A-920/publikaciok/tpubl_a_920.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019; in English: http://old.tarki.hu/en/about/staff/kelt/rewsok_keller.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

15 <http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai2017-HVG-interju.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

16 János Kornai, “Számvetés” [“Taking Stock”]. *Népszabadság*, 7 January 2011.

English version: <http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai2011%20Taking%20stock%20-%20NSz.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

17 Ibid.

OVER-CENTRALISATION OF THE STATE

In his 2012 article titled “Centralization and the Capitalist Market Economy”, János Kornai reviewed the economic¹⁸ policy of the first two years of the Orbán regime from the point of view of centralisation, providing concrete examples. In the article, he also touches upon the areas discussed in the present report. Centralisation and the expansion of the state affected the fields of education, culture, science, the media and entertainment: schools were taken away from local governments and placed under state control, and national curricula compulsory for every school were elaborated. The rights of universities were also restricted: the appointment of rectors became a state competence. The state had previously supported artistic activities through applications managed by public foundations: these public foundations were abolished in 2011. Their assets and decision-making functions regarding the applications were transferred to state authorities.¹⁹ The National Media and Telecommunications Authority, the paramount state body for media affairs, was created in 2012. Radio and television departments were obliged to use the material provided by the central news office.

CLIENT SYSTEM AND CHANGE OF GUARD

The autocratic system was built and consolidated in Hungary between 2010 and 2019. The Orbán regime gradually and systematically dismantled liberal democracy, the rule of law, the system of checks and balances, and equal access to public information, it abolished the constitutional guarantees of social security, and undermined the principle of equal human dignity.

The state has been captured by a closed clique of political and economic entrepreneurs, whose members operate the system to promote their own interests. Liberal democracy has been replaced by the Orwellian sounding “System of National Cooperation” (NER), which in practice functions as a competitive autocratic regime. The concept of public liberty has lost its meaning, and the regime is legitimated by some still existing individual rights (like the freedom of travel), ethnic nationalism promoted by the full force of propaganda, and the economic boom generated by EU funding. Power is personalised and centralised, social autonomies are being abolished, the regime relies on the power-dependent chains, patron–client relations, and a new kind of feudalism. Nearly every organisation that could counterbalance unrestricted power – at central or local level – is headed by the people loyal to the political leader, party devotees guided by his intentions. Within a few weeks following the elections in 2010, radical changes were introduced in the management of various fields, the leaders of state administration and state-owned companies were replaced down to the middle-level management. The employees of public administration were renamed government officials, indicating that from now on they served the government instead of the public.

The economic policy of the Orbán regime, which operated through unscrupulous nationalisation followed by privatisation, raised corruption to the rank of public policy,²⁰ and created a widespread client system which favours the chosen based on their political loyalty through the redistribution of various public assets and state commissions.²¹

According to Bálint Magyar, the Orbán regime is essentially a “mafia state” with a family structure, whose guiding principle is financial gain.²² The various levels of social hierarchy are also structured by this logic: the family, friends, allies, loyal clients, and at the bottom the subjects, who do not share the financial benefits, but who are promised the symbolic compensation of belonging to a community.

The system uses a carrot and stick tactic: it provides jobs, financial security, and varying levels of support to those loyal to it, but it is ruthless with its opponents (dismissals, disciplinary procedures, deprivation of resources, closing of institutions, etc.).²³ The Orbán regime excludes those who criticize the system. The regime regards autonomous, thus necessarily critical intellectuals as its main enemies, and continuously restricts their activities in all areas of cultural life. The confessed aim of the

18 The first part in Hungarian: <http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai2012%20Kozpontositas%201%20-%20Nepszabadsag.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019, the second part in Hungarian: <http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai2012%20Kozpontositas%202%20-%20Nepszabadsag.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019, the full text in English: http://nol.hu/belfold/centralization_and_the_capitalist_market_economy-1297262, last seen: 31.10.2019.

19 And to the Hungarian Academy of Arts, a public body established in 2011, about which Kornai writes elsewhere (http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai_Hungary's%20U-Turn%20-%20full.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019) that it is “with powers that would be unimaginable in the West” (see also the chapter on Arts).

20 András Láncki, rector of Corvinus University, chairman of Századvég Foundation loyal to the government, said the following to a government newspaper: “What is called corruption is basically the primary policy of Fidesz.” In: <https://www.magyaridok.hu/belfold/lanczi-andras-viccpartok-szinvonalan-all-az-ellenzek-243952/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

21 See, for example, the privatisation of state-owned lands or the 2013 “tobacco shop skulduggery”, when the government seized and redistributed the operating licenses of 38,000 tobaccos shops.

22 Bálint Magyar (ed), *Magyar polip – A posztkommunista maffiáállam* [The Hungarian Octopus: The Post-Communist Mafia State]. Budapest: Noran Libro, 2013.

23 See Orbán's speech before the 2018 elections: “we will take revenge after the elections – moral, political and legal revenge alike.”

regime is to replace the elites, or, as the Hungarian far right has put it in the past decades, “to change the guard”. This is what the regime’s cultural policy seeks to achieve when it establishes new institutions in the field of culture besides the already existing, well-connected, and relatively autonomous organisations, and concentrates the majority of state-owned resources in these new establishments. The new despotism, which Ágnes Heller called postmodern tyranny, can also be observed in the unpredictability of cultural management.

THE ORBÁN REGIME AND EUROPE

Hungary has been a member of the European Union since 2004, and relations with the EU were harmonic until 2010. The relationship soured after the “polling booth revolution” announced by the second Orbán government²⁴, the new regime change which gradually eliminated the democratic checks and balances and went counter to European values and norms in every area, culminating in the propaganda wars on “Brussels”. The Prime Minister has been fighting “a national freedom fight” against the European Union for years and has repeatedly compared the EU (often referred to as “Brussels”) to oppressive empires, even though the economic success of his government is mainly the result of EU funding. European institutions reacted to this previously unprecedented situation in a slow and cumbersome manner, and it took them nine years to trigger the Article 7 procedure against Hungary.

Relations and interdependencies between the EU and Hungary are complex. According to András Bozóki and Dániel Hegedűs, the Orbán regime is one of the hybrid systems occupying the grey zone between democracy and dictatorship, but its unique feature is that it is “externally constrained” on account of its EU membership.²⁵

The authors claim that relations between the Hungarian hybrid regime and the EU are controversial: the EU plays an important part in restricting the Orbán regime, but also in sustaining and legitimising it.

As regards constraining the Orbán regime, the EU’s actions are “Janus-faced”, as it “lacked the political and legal tools to confront effectively the Hungarian government over the dismantling of liberal democracy and liberal constitutionalism except for initiating infringement proceedings against the country.”²⁶ At the same time, European institutions “could secure respect for personal freedoms at a relatively high level.”²⁷

Orbán’s foreign policy in the past years has clearly indicated that he covets a leading role in European politics. Although he managed to draw the attention of the European public to himself with his radical anti-refugee stance, his position has weakened in both the European People’s Party and in the newly elected European Parliament. Orbán strives to polarise ideological differences in both domestic and European politics, and he has approximated the European parties of the far right.

What Orbán called his “peacock dance”,²⁸ i.e. his attempts to deceive and hoodwink his partners, has proved successful against the EU for a long while, but debates about Hungary started at European platforms as early as 2011, and these debates have repeatedly addressed the question of the rule of law in Hungary. The European Parliament adopted the Tavares Report in 2013²⁹ and the Sargentini Report in 2018,³⁰ the latter of which contributed to triggering the Article 7 procedure against Hungary: Orbán’s room for movement in Europe seems to be narrowing.

²⁴ With the expression “polling booth revolution”, Fidesz attempted to present its election victory as a revolution.

²⁵ “Since 1989, Hungary has been the first—and so far, only—state in Europe that had a consolidated Western-type liberal democracy, but which has abandoned this democratic regime by transforming its political system into a hybrid regime. [...] On the other hand, Hungary is the first, and currently only, completely developed hybrid regime within the EU.” In: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2018.1455664>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²⁶ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2018.1455664>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <http://nol.hu/velemeny/20120604-pavatanc-1312137>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²⁹ The full text of the Tavares Report in Hungarian: <http://files.egyutt2014.webnode.hu/200000043-bf764c16cf/A%20teljes%20Tavares%20jelent%C3%A9s.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

³⁰ The full text of the Sargentini Report in Hungarian: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0250_HU.html?redirect, last seen: 31.10.2019.

“...WE MUST EMBED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN A CULTURAL ERA.”

By presenting the cultural, educational, science, and media policy of the Orbán regime, we aim to provide information about areas which are little known to the international public. As the above quotation indicates, the cultural policy of the regime is inseparable from the views of its authoritarian leader on politics, power and history, and from his vision of the future.

After winning a two-thirds majority due to the biased electoral system, Viktor Orbán said the following about the role of culture in consolidating his rule in a speech delivered in Tusnádfürdő on 28 July 2018:

“I interpret the two-thirds victory we won in 2010 as our being mandated to bring to an end two chaotic decades of transition and to build a new system. In the economy, this is embodied in a Hungarian model, and in politics it is embodied in a new constitutional order – a new constitutional order based on national and Christian foundations. Our two-thirds victory in 2014 mandated us to consolidate this system. (...) And our two-thirds victory in 2018 is nothing short of a mandate to build a new era. It is important to remind ourselves, however, that an era is always more than a political system. An era is a special and characteristic cultural reality. An era is a spiritual order, a kind of prevailing mood, perhaps even taste – a form of attitude. A political regime is usually determined by rules and political decisions. An era, however, is more than this. An era is determined by cultural trends, collective beliefs and social customs. This is now the task we are faced with: we must embed the political system in a cultural era. This is why it is logical – and in no way surprising – that it is precisely in the field of cultural policy that we have seen the explosion of what is currently the most intense debate.”³¹

Thus, Orbán envisages a greater role for culture in the cycle beginning with 2018 than before. He has always regarded culture as a means to attain his own political goals. The “cultural policy” of the regime is inseparable from its propaganda, its power, and its symbolic politics. Its cultural policy cannot be understood on its own, without the dominant political formula.

The depreciation of culture, education, science, healthcare, and social care by the government is well demonstrated by the fact that these areas were merged into a single giga-ministry in 2010 and have since been managed by undersecretaries. This giga-ministry was first named the Ministry of National Resources, then it was renamed as the Ministry of Human Resources, indicating the prime minister's moderate interest in these areas as well as his opinions about the citizens.

Thus, the area of culture does not have its own ministry, and a comprehensive cultural policy of the state is also missing. Cultural policy has been replaced in practice by symbolic politics.³² The Orbán regime has no experts on cultural policy with a clear vision of the state's role in preserving and developing culture and of the significance and limits of this role, or who could understand the importance of maintaining the autonomies inherent in this sector. The Prime Minister has no use for such experts. Orbán's underlings do not have their own views, instead they echo the messages announced by their leader.

The characteristic trends of current Hungarian cultural policy are the following:

- the interpretation of culture in an exclusively national framework;
- the homogenisation of the concept of culture and the rejection of cultural diversity;
- reviving a Hungarian identity based on resentment, the “unification of the nation” on an ethnic basis, and the programme of rebuilding an ethnic-tribal community across the borders (“nation-building”);
- turning the symbols of Hungarian national identity into political instruments;³³
- a distorted view of history, the mutilation of Hungarian history;³⁴
- forcing retrograde, anti-modernity contents into the school curriculum;

31 <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedekek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-xxix-balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-es-diaktaborban>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

32 See András Bozóki, “Családi tűzfészek – A kultúra a szimbolikus politika fogságában [Family Problems: Culture Held Captive by Symbolic Politics].” *Mozgó Világ*, October 2013. http://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00154/pdf/EPA01326_mozgo_vilag_2013_10_6803.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

33 See the chapter on Symbolic Politics.

34 According to the Fundamental Law, the period between 1944 and 1990 does not form part of Hungarian history because Hungary lost its national sovereignty during the German and Soviet occupations; the Fundamental Law of Hungary in Hungarian: <https://www.parlament.hu/irom39/02627/02627.pdf>, last seen 31.10.2019; the Fundamental Law in English: <https://www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019; see the chapter on Symbolic Politics.

- impeding the autonomous development and the self-regulating operation of culture, voluntarist interventions in the operation of the cultural sector;
- ignoring the social value of knowledge, promoting “workfare” society;
- total indifference to and gravely irresponsible management of the cultural heritage;
- extreme centralisation; direct control over cultural institutions;
- special treatment of certain institutions and areas headed by privileged leaders who have an informal relationship with the prime minister; ad hoc decisions catering for the interests of the clientele;
- aggressive occupation of space; supplanting autonomous intellectuals in order to achieve a wholesale change of elites, harassment of prominent professionals;
- complete lack of professional grounding and real social dialogue in the preparation of decisions;
- ignoring quality and performance, rewarding loyalty;
- conscious and systematic underfinancing of public institutions; ad hoc financing instead of normative funding;
- economic blackmailing of institutions which resist centralisation efforts, disrupting their activities and rendering them meaningless through administrative means;
- establishing institutions loyal to the regime parallel to the already existing, well-embedded, relatively autonomous ones, and reallocating public resources to these new institutions;
- preferring certain elements of popular entertainment in culture to innovative and autonomous cultural activities;
- radical eclecticism: outdated, retrograde elements, a mixture of kitsch and modern high-tech in the tastes of the regime;
- megalomaniac attraction to spectacular, “grand” projects;
- disproportionate support given to spectator sports in preference to culture.

The items in the above enumeration are interrelated. Underfinancing culture, education, science, and the arts leads to the depreciation of expertise and the suppression of autonomous intellectuals, as well as their replacement by intellectuals loyal to the regime. The centralisation efforts serve the objectives of power politics: nationalising schools, imposing uniform school textbooks, rewriting the school curriculum in an ideologically distorted manner, restricting the autonomy of universities, closing certain university departments, forcing out the CEU, nationalising the research network of the Academy, and establishing new, politically loyal institutions (e.g. House of Terror, Institute for the Study of Hungarian Identity, Veritas Institute, etc.). Further measures include narrowing the fields of contemporary arts, eliminating professional applications, remodelling urban public spaces, and the near-total occupation of the press and the media.

Thus, the cultural policy of the Orbán regime is guided by power politics. The Orbán regime has replaced cultural policy with identity politics and symbolic politics, and the full-scale attack on the cultural sector is meant to achieve the replacement of the elites.³⁵

Viktor Orbán's speech delivered at Kötcse before his victory in the 2010 elections, which gave him a constitutional majority, indicated all those ideological tenets which help us understand the internal logic of the regime's symbolic politics of. On this occasion, Orbán not only spoke about the “central field of power”³⁶ for the first time and stated the priority of power politics, but he also discussed at length the role of the social elites: “the real problem in Hungary today is that there is no system of evaluation sanctioned by the community that could help select those elites from the entire Hungarian nation whom we could expect to provide us with examples and models. This is the point where we must understand and accept that politics and culture are necessarily interconnected”.³⁷ This phrasing in fact claims that the right to appoint the new elites resides with those who have received a strong enough political mandate from the electorate.

As early as in 2009, Orbán made loyalty to the government the most important criterion of joining the new elite. If the task of the government is to “naturally represent certain national issues”, then the intellectuals of the new system must also

35 “He does not fight a classical cultural war – as that would require arguments –, but replaces the elites, the aim of which is to eliminate intellectual and political independence and to ensure positions to the cadres loyal to Orbán.” In: András Bozóki, “Családi tűzfészek – A kultúra a szimbolikus politika fogságában [Family Problems: Culture Held Captive by Symbolic Politics].” *Mozgó Világ*, October 2013. http://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00154/pdf/EPA01326_mozgo_vilag_2013_10_6803.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

36 This phrase reveals the intention to create a political space with a single pole.

37 <https://www.hirextra.hu/2010/02/18/megorizni-a-letezes-magyar-minoseget-orban-kotcsei-beszede-szorol-szora/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

acknowledge “the end of the value debates”, or at least accept that these debates must stay within “the close circles of the elite”. The intellectual elite must not be complacent, arrogant, or overly ambitious, Orbán remonstrated with his supporters: they should not claim the right to have a say in political governance, like the “fallen” leftist-liberal intellectuals used to do under their own government. Orbán explicitly stated that the future of the new elite exclusively depended on their loyalty to the system. In turn, he promised them “the conditions necessary for a tranquil state of mind, creative activity, and a beautiful, noble and distinguished life”.³⁸

Thus, the most important doctrinal questions of cultural policy were decided in Viktor Orbán's speech at Kötcse in 2009, well before the change of government in 2010.³⁹ The main task of the cultural elite is to serve the “government of national affairs” and publicly represent its system of values, but only elected politicians have a real social mandate to determine these values. The programme announced at Kötcse has nothing to say about the freedom of art, research, and education, professional and institutional autonomies, the forms of cultural self-government, the role of professional civil organisations, or the acknowledgment of the specificities, traditions, or meritocratic values of certain cultural areas.

Beyond declaring a one-sided relation of dependence, the Kötcse speech reveals nothing about the cultural preferences of the party leader who is preparing to govern, his plans on establishing institutions, the intended changes in the manner and extent of the responsibility assumed by the state, or the financing of culture. True to the spirit of the “end of value debates”, there is no intention to discuss these in an open and democratic manner.

Orbán has no vision about the future of culture, or the future of Hungarian culture in particular; he only talks about subordinating culture as a whole to further his own pragmatic and political ends. It is not surprising, then, that cultural policy has been replaced by identity politics, realised through the means of symbolic politics in line with political expectations.

It follows from the above that this cultural policy contains no coherent narratives, not even a conservative worldview. Culture interpreted as symbolic politics becomes a tool for transforming reality, because reality, in this context, is no more than its own perception, the image formed about it. The regime's approach to culture is not preserving, conserving or conservative, but transforming, reinterpreting, and radical. As a result of the lack of coherence and the total indifference to the real nature of culture, NER creates products devoid of taste or concept, pointlessly megalomaniac projects, radical eclecticism, a kind of national Disneyland. Besides the romantic philosophy of restoration, cultural policy also includes aggressive propaganda used at pop festivals and cultural irredentism as well as an emphasis on the role of tourism and sports in expressing national pride and identity.

The regime likes to portray itself as conservative, whereas its approach to all traditions – even to Christianity – is impatient and radical. Members of Parliament decide, based on political criteria and following a central directive, whether a denomination can be considered “established” and thus eligible for state subsidies. The regime wields the concept of Christianity as a weapon against those who think differently or have a different religion. Forcing Christianity into a national mould denies its universal character. The regime interprets Christianity in a “tribal”, ethnic, “pagan” framework, not considering it a value in itself, but an instrument: it is valuable as long as it protects “Hungarians” from “aliens”.

The Orbán regime politicises all aspects of culture, thus it abolishes the autonomy achieved by certain cultural areas. The cultural policy of the Orbán regime does not rely on the specific characteristics and criteria of individual cultural fields, only on the fact whether those engaged in cultural activities are “for or against” the regime. Accordingly, the accolades given by the regime also follow the political logic of “friends or enemies” described by Carl Schmitt: “our people” are rewarded, but “our enemies” cannot hope to be publicly acknowledged. “Hostile” authors and intellectuals are put on an unofficial “blacklist”, and they cannot even be invited to events organised by rural community centres.

The democratic and critical public spaces established after 1990 have shrunk in the past decade, replaced by a newly constructed, representative, courtly-feudal public sphere based on loyalty. 80% of the media has come under the direct or indirect control of the governing party in the past year, and recently the majority of the media organisations involved have been placed under the management of a foundation close to the government. “Independent” media are few and far between, while the domination of the media and the centralised management of the press ensures the government's discursive hegemony in public life.⁴⁰

³⁸ https://mandiner.hu/cikk/mit_akar_orban_a_kulturpolitikaban, last seen: 31.10.2019.

³⁹ <https://www.hirextra.hu/2010/02/18/megorizni-a-letezes-magyar-minoseget-orban-kotcsei-beszede-szorol-szora/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁴⁰ See the chapter on Media.

Since Orbán came to power, the language of extremism and hate speech have become common and prevalent in public discourse, fuelling hostility against the political enemy (i.e. the opposition) and against “migrants”. The populist rhetoric spewed by the propaganda relies on the distrust and welfare chauvinism, strengthened by previous dictatorships, of the majority of Hungarian society, and it has gradually forced out and into a defensive position the opposing discourses which use arguments of solidarity, humanism, and common sense.

The propaganda of the Orbán regime, which envisages constant crises, enemies, and conflicts, and dehumanises the “aliens” – whether Syrian refugees or George Soros – has grave consequences on the collective mentality. Today, xenophobia is the most prevalent in Hungary of all Member States of the European Union.⁴¹

The cultural image of the Orbán era is defined by the “hegemonic masculinity” of the governing elite and by the system's distrustful, oppressive and condescending approach to women. The social policy and rhetoric of Fidesz also reveal a retrograde, outdated view of the family, in which women are primarily mothers, preferably mothers of several children, whose professional careers and achievements are secondary. Women are the victims of discrimination in a wide range of social areas. Nevertheless, the government does not consider important the institutional guarantees of equal opportunities or the study of inequalities and gender stereotypes in society and the job market, as in 2018 it simply closed Gender Studies programmes in Hungary. The government's insensitivity to women is even better exemplified by the fact that the parliamentary majority of Fidesz has not ratified the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence to the present day.

The Orbán regime masquerades as Christian, but due to its radical antihumanism, its denial of basic human solidarity to those in need, whether Hungarians or refugees, its ethnic-national exclusivism and anti-Enlightenment stance, it has made huge steps in the opposite direction from European civilisation and modernity.

41 “Hungarians' hatred of immigrants is the strongest in Europe”; <https://qubit.hu/2018/03/02/a-magyarok-gyulolnek-a-legjobban-mindenki-mast-europaban>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Vera Messing and Bence Ságvári, *Looking behind the culture of fear: Cross-national analysis of attitudes towards migration*. Budapest, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Regional Project *Flight, Migration, Integration in Europe*, 2018. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/14181-20180815.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

SYMBOLIC POLITICS

SYMBOLIC POLITICS AND PROPAGANDA

The Orbán regime owes its lasting success not only to the booming global economy and the influx of EU money, but also to the symbolic politics by which the system ensures that large segments of the electorate identify with its ideology and values.

Therefore, despite Orbán's quip in 2008 ("Don't pay attention to what I say but to what I do"⁴²), it is important to pay attention to the communication of the Prime Minister, the government, and Fidesz, as analysing it may help to understand Orbán's power politics. The long and winding road that took Orbán from being vice president of the Liberal International to announcing the "illiberal state" (which is partly built on far right topoi) was accompanied by changing narratives.

The symbolic foundations of Orbán's power are the will to unite the nation on an ethnic basis (which re-actualises the primary objective of the Horthy regime), the creation of a strongly hierarchical political arrangement, called the System of National Cooperation (Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere - NER) or the "central field of force", the plan of supplanting the elites (which aims at the extrusion of liberal intellectuals), politics of force (which aim to neutralise thoughts of resistance), the declaration of a revolutionary situation (i.e. the "revolution of the voting booths", which aims to make more acceptable the break with the earlier consensus and compromises), the radical transformation of the institutional system, and the disruption of norms and customs, all of which are relentlessly reiterated by state propaganda.

According to Orbán, the democratic rule of law can legitimately be restricted in times of crisis, therefore the awareness of a crisis must be sustained and communicated continuously. Orbán's narrative of conflict also serves this objective: the recurring themes of his speeches are fighting, warfare, and struggle, and his world view is extremely dichotomous, characterised by the opposition of good and bad, friends and enemies.

The successive Orbán governments have spent enormous amounts of money on the propaganda of national cohesion, and the success of this propaganda is all the more surprising because it is often in contrast with actual government policies. The System of National Cooperation (NER) promises a cohesive, cooperating society, whereas in reality social inequalities are becoming more conspicuous, and economic and social policies focusing on the interests of the middle-class neglect and even despise⁴³ the disadvantaged social groups and the poor, eliminating even the elementary forms of solidarity from the system of public redistribution.

The costly "national consultations" in which the prime minister directly invites the opinion of citizens (and which comprise questions that suggest the expected answers) also serve to strengthen the fictitious image of national cohesion and of a benevolent power guided by the opinion of its citizens.

Orbán relies on the idea of an ethnic nation instead of a political one. This also explains the change in the official denomination of the country: the Hungarian Republic was renamed Hungary, and the confessed aim of the Prime Minister is to preserve it as a "Hungarian country"⁴⁴ (sic!). National cohesion is defined on the basis of race and ethnicity; therefore, the propaganda also aims to strengthen an ethnic, tribal concept of the nation. The best example of this is Orbán's speech delivered on the occasion of erecting the monument of National Cohesion, an enormous, totem-like statue of the Turul (the mythical bird of Hungarian origin legends) in 2012 at Ópusztaszer, an artificial national memorial site. According to this speech, all Hungarians "are born into the Turul".⁴⁵ National identity as defined by propaganda means a national cohesion based on premodern values and primordial, ascriptive relations, which can be measured by the so-called "performance of Hungarianness" long advocated by the far right,⁴⁶ or "the Hungarian quality of existence".

The policies of the government are not restricted to Hungary, as its political and economic activity expands to include the Carpathian Basin, i.e. the territories of neighbouring countries inhabited by Hungarian minorities. The Hungarian

⁴² https://hvg.hu/itthon/20110905_wikileaks_orban_fides, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁴³ This is what János Lázár, the former Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, meant when he famously declared that "those who have nothing are not worth more".

⁴⁴ See, for example: <https://www.facebook.com/kormanyzat/posts/1909194985819879/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁴⁵ http://nol.hu/belfold/orban__minden_magyar_turulba_szuletik-1336025, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁴⁶ The source of this expression is an article written by István Csurka: "Néhány gondolat a rendszerváltás két esztendeje és az MDF új programja kapcsán" [A Few Thoughts on the Two Years of Regime Change and on the New Programme of MDF]. *Magyar Fórum*, 20 August 1992. <https://web.archive.org/web/20021114113758/http://www.miep.hu/csiforum/gondolat1.htm>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

government spends ever larger sums on supporting Hungarian political groups, parties, media, universities, artists, and private individuals across the borders, it buys and supports sports associations and touristic enterprises, builds stadiums, exerts its economic influence and provides aid for buying property, etc. on the territory of Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia.⁴⁷ The official national policy regards Hungarians living across the border as part of the “nation’s awarded to the Hungarian minorities of neighbouring countries, serves to unite the nation defined on an ethnic basis and to overwrite the Treaty of Trianon, ensuring the victory of Fidesz at future elections.

The Orbán regime is based on three fundamental ideological documents: Orbán’s speech at Kötcse in 2009, the Declaration of National Cooperation (NENYI, 2010), and the preamble to the Fundamental Law that replaced the Constitution, i.e. the National Avowal (2011).⁴⁸ This ideology is fine-tuned and actualised by means of Orbán’s radio communications aired on Friday mornings, his speeches given on national holidays, and especially his annual addresses delivered in Tusnádfürdő, Romania, in the centre of the area inhabited by ethnic Hungarians.⁴⁹

The three fundamental documents have an important ideological and propagandistic function: to create a narrative which appropriates and rewrites history, and which forms the basis of the new political system constructed by Fidesz. The NENYI was published as the fundamental document of the System of National Cooperation (NER); Fidesz regarded it as a sacred text, published it in ornate binding, and giving it a place of prominence in every public institution, displayed it on its own separate table.⁵⁰ Every first-time voter received a decoratively bound copy of the Fundamental Law (claimed to be “carved in stone”, then amended seven times). Its preamble, the National Avowal, provides a distorted narrative of Hungarian history and emphasises the decisive role of Christian values. These texts, just as Orbán’s ceremonial addresses or his monologues at Tusnádfürdő, in fact appropriate and take possession of language, putting it into the service of propaganda. It was at Tusnádfürdő that Orbán proclaimed the “illiberal state” in 2014, and that he proposed the protection of “Christian liberty” as the task of “illiberal democracy” in his speech in 2019.

The monopolisation of national symbols also serves the effort to create a fictitious community and achieve the sacralisation of power: prominent Fidesz members hold press conferences against a background formed by dozens of Hungarian flags. At the same time, the European flag is effaced: besides the Hungarian flag, the Parliament building only flies the Szekler flag created in 2009. The first Orbán government displayed the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen’s crown, also known as the “Holy Crown”, by transporting it by ship on the Danube between Budapest and Esztergom (the first royal seat in Hungary). Historical relics were removed from the National Museum and displayed in the Parliament building. In 2002 Fidesz called on the population to continue wearing the Hungarian cockade (a symbol of the Revolution of 1848, traditionally worn on 15 March) for weeks, up to the elections. The publication of the Fundamental Law at Easter 2011 was celebrated by a sacralising exhibition in the Hungarian National Gallery (housed in the former royal palace) with the title “Heroes, kings, saints”. In 2018 the state commissioned a new national song, which, however, was met with ridicule, thus the experiment proved to be a failure.

Symbolic politics also include events organised to pretend a national consensus in favour of the government. National holidays are celebrated in front of huge crowds (transported to the venue by centrally hired buses), national flags, popular dance ensembles, and young audiences who are paid to participate. The often-repeated slogan “There is one flag, there is one camp” is intended as another symbolic manifestation of unity. This symbolic statement also means that the opposition, regarded as the enemy, is excluded from this common camp, i.e. from the nation itself. A so-called “civil” organisation founded with government support organised the so-called Peace March on several occasions, calling the system’s devotees to the streets of Budapest in order to demonstrate the social endorsement of the regime.

Major celebrations devoid of political content and catering to the tastes of mass culture have also proliferated: these include the National Gallop (an equestrian event), as well as pálinka and sausage festivals and fairs, at which the Prime Minister and the Fidesz elite like to make an appearance as “ordinary” people.

47 For example through the state fund named after Gábor Bethlen, which distributed 88 billion HUF (ca. 265 million euros) in 2018 as “national policy support” across the borders (https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20190628_bethlen_gabor_alap_hataron_tuli_tamogatás, last seen: 31.10.2019).

48 András Bozóki, “Családi tűzfészek – A kultúra a szimbolikus politika fogságában” [Family Problems: Culture Held Captive by Symbolic Policy]. *Mozgó Világ*, October 2013. https://epa.oszk.hu/01300/01326/00154/pdf/EPA01326_mozgo_vilag_2013_10_6803.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

49 The Bálványos Summer University and Student Camp was formerly held in Bálványosfürdő, and later at Tusnádfürdő. The press refers to the event as Tusványos, blending the names of the two settlements. The peace treaties closing WWI took Transylvania from Hungary and annexed it to Romania. Viktor Orbán attends the events of the summer university and student camp every year, giving speeches that interpret his policies and set new political directions on the territory of a foreign state.

50 On this decree and the reactions, it provoked, see e.g. the following blog entry: <https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2010/07/04/read-the-large-print>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

THE LINGUISTIC OCCUPATION OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

The appropriation of the language is aptly illustrated by the changes in the terms referring to Hungarian citizens in accordance with political trends: in 1996, Fidesz called the electorate “citizens”, in the 2000s they used the term “the people”, in 2015 they introduced, then after a short while abandoned the phrase “hardworking common people”, and now they prefer the expression “the Hungarian people”.

Similarly to totalitarian systems, the most important communicative aim of NER is to fully occupy the field of power of the language, and to shape its political usage according to its own ideology. Fidesz advisors have realised that language is the most important instrument for conquering minds. It is the instrument by which they may access people's thoughts and emotions almost unnoticed. “No, the most powerful influence was exerted neither by individual speeches nor by articles or flyers, posters or flags; it was not achieved by things which one had to absorb by conscious thought or conscious emotions. Instead Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously. [...] Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all”, Klemperer writes in his analysis of the language of the Third Reich.⁵¹ The propagandists of Fidesz use a wide range of means of linguistic occupation from coining new words through militarising public discourse to pathetic and kitschy metaphors and the dehumanisation of their political opponents. These means were also put to use in the hate campaigns against the refugees, George Soros, and Brussels.

Similarly to the practice of totalitarian dictatorships, simplified posters and fliers reiterating messages of a few words play an important part in the political communication of Fidesz. After 2010, billboards in public spaces have become the primary means of government communication. The uniformized, graphically simplistic billboards display messages which are embarrassingly aggressive, linguistically unsophisticated, and lack originality. The graphic and verbal messages of billboard campaigns such as “Deeds come first!”, “Only Fidesz!”, “Respect to Hungarians”, “Enough!”, “Trust Fidesz!”, “The time has come!”, etc. bear an uncanny resemblance to the propagandistic posters of dictatorships.

SCAPEGOATING

The war on critical intellectuals is fought not only through voluntarist and administrative interventions into the field of culture, but also through propaganda and the means of symbolic politics. Certain groups of intellectuals have become the targets of repeated attacks by the media empire sustained by the government. The first wave of the recurring propaganda campaigns against independent intellectuals began in 2011, when several outstanding philosophers – including such internationally renowned experts as Ágnes Heller – were accused of misusing project funding. The accusations implied that the previous socialist-liberal government provided “immense” funding to these scholars for political reasons, which they squandered and spent for their own benefit. A police report was soon filed after the smear campaign launched by the government-affiliated media, followed by an investigation by the police and the prosecutor's office, which lasted almost for one and a half years, and which abounded in humiliating moments. The investigations concluded that no crime had been committed, but the victims of the propaganda campaign were not rehabilitated morally at the forums where they had been slandered, in spite of several successful libel suits. In retrospect, it seems obvious that the real objective of the campaign was not to achieve a criminal sentence, but to denigrate and discredit the intellectuals the government found inconvenient, and to inflame the masses poorly informed about the affair.⁵² The artificially generated public uproar was not devoid of anti-Semitic overtones, either (e.g. inscriptions placed in buildings of Eötvös Loránd University). The government did not encourage these directly and openly, but rather provoked them in a cynical and calculated manner. This story is significant because the methods first tried there have remained part of the government's anti-intellectual campaigns.

Attacks on international capitalism (the IMF, the banks, and the global “financial capital”) have been an important part of government propaganda since 2010. This was followed by the 2013 campaign against George Soros, which unscrupulously demonised the figure of the American billionaire of Hungarian descent, depicted his role in international and Hungarian politics in a wildly unrealistic manner, and contained anti-Semitic connotations. George Soros created the Soros Foundation in Budapest in 1984, in the socialist era. Until 2007, the Foundation supported various scientific, artistic, educational, social, etc. projects with ca. 30 billion HUF (corresponding to ca. 90 million euros today), and contributed to a significant extent to

⁵¹ Victor Klemperer, *LTI - Lingua Tertia Imperii*. [The Language of the Third Reich.] Reclam Verlag Leipzig, 1947: p.15.

⁵² Gábor Klaniczay, “Filozófus-boszorkányüldözés” [The Witch-Hunt for Philosophers]. *Élet és Irodalom*, 4 February 2011.

the creation of an open society in Hungary.⁵³ Like the foundation, the Central European University (CEU), founded by Soros in 1991, and based in Budapest since 1995, has also played an important part in the international integration of East Central European intellectuals. The anti-Soros campaign of the Orbán government constructed a narrative framework based on a conspiracy theory, linking the figure of Soros to the refugees (or “migrants”, as the Fidesz propaganda calls them) and to the civil organisations aiding the refugees (labelled as “Soros organisations” or “Soros agents”), and created a lurking, menacing phantom, the “Soros network” or “Soros army”, etc. Government propaganda ties every civilian action, every measure taken by the opposition, and even every contrary opinion in Europe to this phantom. In the past few months, the phrase “pro-migration forces” has had a similar function in government propaganda: these forces are claimed to be responsible for every measure and action unfavourable to Fidesz in European politics.

The all-pervasive propaganda and symbolic politics aim to obtain and sustain the loyalty of groups at the lowest levels of social hierarchy. The billboards display the first-person plural symbolising national unity (“we”) as opposed to the personified enemy: “We won’t allow Soros to laugh last!” The Soros campaign scares the masses with the “harmful” activities of the scapegoated businessman and philanthropist: “Soros intends to bring in millions from Africa and the Middle East”. The combat narrative and the continuous communication of victory sustains the atmosphere of menace and creates an opportunity to construct new enemies or emergencies if needed. The anti-migration propaganda conducted since 2015 is the most important instrument of fear mongering, which at the same time holds out the promise of safety: those in power will protect the terrified population from “migrant hordes”.

As mentioned above, the European Union is also portrayed as a hostile foreign power. In a speech given at a celebration in 2011, the Prime Minister announced the fight against “Brussels” (meant to symbolise the European Union, whose rotating presidency was held by Hungary at this time), putting it into the context of Hungarian freedom fights against oppressing foreign powers of the past, i.e. Vienna and Moscow. The billboard campaign with the text “You have the right to know what Brussels plans!” finally provoked a reaction from the EU, and the Commission issued a detailed response to the false accusations of the Hungarian government.⁵⁴

The government has also conducted campaigns against independent civil organisations and their supporters since 2014, using not only the press, but also the tax authorities and the police for this purpose. One of these campaigns disrupted the activities of the Norway Grants in Hungary. After this, the government used its parliamentary majority to pass an anti-civilian law, the so-called Stop Soros Act. Regarding this case, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Open Society Foundation turned to the Constitutional Court of Hungary and to the European Court of Human Rights, while the European Commission launched an infringement procedure against Hungary.⁵⁵

PUBLIC SPACE AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS

THE REGIME CHANGE OF 1989-90 IN PUBLIC SPACES

The first visible results of the regime change of 1989-90 included the removal and replacement of the public symbols of the forty-year-long communist dictatorship. In addition to removing red stars and the coat-of-arms of the People's Republic and to renaming streets, squares, and public institutions, this also meant the removal of monuments, public statues, and memorial plaques that displayed the most compromised symbols. In contrast with 1956, when the revolution began by tearing down the huge statue of Stalin that symbolised the hated system, the unavoidable iconoclasm that usually accompanies major historic changes took place in a legally regulated, organised and peaceful manner after 1990. It was an original idea to keep the best-known, iconic statues of the communist past, which had lost their place and function, and to display them in a statue park in the outskirts of the city, preserving this era in social memory with ironic overtones.

After the regime change, the right to erect and license monuments – as well as the burden of funding these – was transferred to the newly established local governments. The former central authority that had invited and evaluated applications for public statues, issued permits, and carried out execution was abolished, and the central management of this domain was given up. The former representations of the power of the party-state, which had relied on a more or less uniform system of ideology and taste, were replaced in public spaces by images of national past and local history, a diffuse

⁵³ George Soros' foundation also financed the Oxford studies of the young Viktor Orbán (still a democrat at the time).

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/facts_matter_hungarian_government_campaign_hu.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁵⁵ https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-4260_hu.htm, last seen: 31.10.2019.

cavalcade of varied, conflicting interpretations as regards their content, values, and aesthetics. In the first twenty years after the regime change, there were hardly any monuments financed by central public investments,⁵⁶ and leftist-liberal governments devoted little political attention to public spaces. The reason, besides a lack of funds, was that the strong symbolic and political traditions of the left had already been discredited in the second half of the Kádár era and even more so after the regime change. The socialists wanted to free themselves of the label of being successors to the communist party and avoided ideological manifestations in order to prove their commitment to the new civilian-democratic structure. The intellectuals responsible for liberal policies underestimated the importance of symbolic politics and adopted a pragmatic approach instead: in the first disputed issue, the inclusion of the Holy Crown into the coat-of-arms of the republic, they gave in to the will of the right in order to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Because of this, the right had a much more favourable position in the area of symbolic politics. The first conservative government led by József Antall did not benefit much from this, unlike Viktor Orbán, newly turned to the right, who launched a vigorous offensive in this field during the time of his first government (1998–2002).

FIDESZ'S RIGHT TURN: THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY CREATION

The symbolic politics of the current Hungarian government cannot be understood without a brief overview of the changes in the identity of Viktor Orbán and Fidesz after the regime change. The increasingly obvious right turn of Fidesz (originally a liberal party) after 1993 was motivated by the party elite's realisation that following József Antall's death and the end of the era of his party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), there was no efficient political force on the right, even though the majority of voters were right-wing. Aspiring for this role, Orbán's group strived to create a new image for Fidesz in the mid-nineties as the centre around which a large right-wing people's party could be organised. They were also aware that this was not possible without constructing a strong distinctive identity and without professional marketing and communication. Symbolic politics in fact constitutes identity construction: the conscious creation and implementation of one's own language, symbols, and rituals, etc. as opposed to those of others. Between 1994 and 1998, while it was in opposition, Fidesz created the anti-communist identity of a "civic party" and won the 1998 elections with the slogan of a "civic Hungary". This identity, however, was considered a "political product" from the start, as an important personage linked to Fidesz has recently let slip.⁵⁷ Even during his first coalition government, Orbán had already made intense efforts to strengthen Fidesz's hegemony on the right by undermining his own coalition partners and political allies, in stark opposition with the principle of "civic cooperation". The growing importance of the cult of Saint Stephen and nationalistic symbols in official representations after 1998 was entirely due to pragmatic considerations: to provide a wider ideological basis for Fidesz as the only political representative of a unified right, and thus to make it acceptable to larger segments of the electorate. In this respect, it was convenient for Orbán that the mille-centenary of the foundation of the Hungarian state occurred during his first cycle in power. In contrast with the half-hearted commemorations organised by the socialists to celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the Hungarian conquest in 1996, Saint Stephen's historic achievement⁵⁸ was commemorated by the newly formed cult of "millennial flags" given to every settlement in the country, spectacular celebrations, hundreds of statues of Saint Stephen erected all over the country, and a series of high-budget films and music shows. The anniversary provided an opportunity to smuggle back into the public consciousness, strengthen, and make half-official some of the massive ideological panels of the nationalist traditions of the 19-20th-century Hungarian right: e.g. that the greatest historical achievement of Hungarians was the successful preservation of their identity and of Hungarian "statehood" in spite of all the injuries and injustices suffered in the course of their history. Orbán used this opportunity to take daring symbolic actions: the Hungarian royal crown was moved from the neutral space of the National Museum to the Parliament building of the republic in the course of spectacular ceremonies, where it is still guarded today and functions as the focus of representative events. The introduction of the crown into the space of an official public cult marked the beginning of a new trend of intentionally mystifying and mythicising symbolic politics that have tried ever since to merge the constitutional framework of a modern, secular state based on democratic pluralism with the cult of a superior power of sacred origins and unquestionable authority. This process continued with the adoption of the Fundamental Law in 2011, which expressly gives constitutional rank to the "role of Christianity in preserving nationhood" and to "the achievements of our historical constitution and [...] the Holy Crown, which embodies the constitutional continuity of Hungary's statehood and the unity of the nation". At the same time, the word "Republic" was deleted from the official name of the country.⁵⁹

In spite of all this, Orbán lost the 2002 elections. This, however, did not result in a reconsideration of his strategy of identity

⁵⁶ With the possible exception of two monuments commemorating 1956, i.e. the monument of martyrs in Lot 301 by György Jovánovics and the 1956 monument in Felvonulási Square.

⁵⁷ <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/a-rendszer-igazsagait-vedem-93802>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁵⁸ The conversion to Christianity and the foundation of the Hungarian state.

⁵⁹ The Fundamental Law of Hungary in Hungarian: <https://www.parlament.hu/irom39/02627/02627.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019; the Fundamental Law in English: <https://www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

construction, quite on the contrary. This was the time when the slogan “There is one camp, there is one flag” was first used openly to address all right-wing voters. Orbán started organising a large-scale national movement with calculated intentions and unprecedented energy, developing his “infrastructure” of identity creation. The establishment of the party's own places of cult (e.g. the House of Terror, Citizen's House, Tusnádfürdő), the elaboration of its own rituals from national holidays to the celebration of Fidesz's “birthdays”, the institutionalised regular political ceremonies (annual evaluations, the speeches delivered at Tusnádfürdő and Kötcse, political meetings, peace marches, etc.) all serve to hold together and consolidate the camp, referred to as “our political family”. Further examples include centrally organised, uniformly choreographed and regularly repeated events such as national consultations, countrywide tours, civic circle meetings, public forums, campaign tours, etc.⁶⁰

Fidesz's identity politics after 2002, during the years in opposition was defined by the notorious and controversial idea that “the homeland cannot be in opposition”. In Tusnádfürdő, Orbán formulated his tenet “the left breaks in upon its own nation whenever it can”. It became increasingly obvious that Fidesz lay claims to the exclusive political representation of the nation, while the left and the liberals did not have – nor do they have today – an effective remedy against the aggressive manipulation of Orbán's identity construction, which aimed at the political polarisation of society. An example of this was the issue of the 2003 referendum on dual citizenship, which Fidesz did not support in the beginning, but when they realized the subversive potential of the topic and the opportunity to address all Hungarians living across the borders, they availed themselves of this opportunity in an unscrupulous manner, and used it to stigmatise “anti-national”, “internationalist” forces. (It should be noted that Orbán frequently uses such compact, easily recognizable and repeatable linguistic formulas; this is in fact one of the successful communicative methods of his identity construction: the advantage of such phrases is that they are necessarily repeated in any critical reactions they provoke, which only serves to strengthen their identifying function. Besides an advantage in thematising, the aim of this offensive communication is to define the linguistic space of public political discourse through controversial phrases instead of democratic debate.)

AFTER 2010: NEW DIRECTIONS IN ORBÁN'S IDENTITY POLITICS LEANING ON THE TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY

Fidesz's landslide victory in 2010 was a result of the unsuccessful crisis management, poor governance, inept communication, and nationwide loss of credibility of the left-liberal parties, as well as of the social demagoguery at the centre of Fidesz's political communication after 2002,⁶¹ and the loud “national” propaganda promoted at every forum for years. However, the two-thirds majority was “too much victory” for Fidesz, and the governing party had to radically transform its symbolic political strategy. The identity politics designed for a dual political field – the dichotomy of “us” versus “them” – was now replaced by the programme of “unifying the nation”, which followed from the new doctrine of the “central field of power”.

The innovation of the two-thirds majority in identity politics was the creation of the above-mentioned System of National Cooperation (NER). At its inaugural meeting, the new Parliament declared that “the Hungarian nation gathered its remaining forces in spring 2010, and conducted a successful revolution in the voting booths”.⁶² The part of the public accustomed to democratic conditions hardly noticed (they could not even imagine) that Orbán announced a real historic caesura here, according to which Hungarians “overthrew” (sic!) in the “revolution of the voting booths” the “old system” (sic!) of the democratic rule of law created by the regime change, and replaced it with a new system, which “is open to all Hungarians living on either side of the borders. This is an opportunity and a requirement for everyone who lives, works, or has an enterprise in Hungary”.⁶³ The exceptional nature of this step is also shown by the fact that it was accompanied by the first attempt at the symbolic occupation of public spaces (which at the time provoked only smiles from the opposition), i.e. the above-mentioned decree about displaying the Declaration of National Cooperation (NENYI) in public offices. This was soon followed by the next attempt, introducing the “table of the Fundamental Law” in local government offices, and by promoting the new view of history in the public media under the informal control of Orbán and his group, as well as at exhibitions, in book-series, and even in mass cultural products.

“THE STRENGTH, THE STRENGTH IS WHAT UNITES US...”⁶⁴

It should be remembered that government propaganda celebrated the adoption of the Fundamental Law – even though it was preceded by a procedure that violated the international principles of constitutionality – as laying the “hard as granite”

⁶⁰ Here we are only dealing with the visible aspects of right-wing “community construction”, but it is obvious that intense activity was also taking place in the background: setting up the national organisation of the party, organising a team of activists who could be deployed at short notice, creating Fidesz's own media empire, and laying the solid economic foundations of this quickly expanding political venture.

⁶¹ E.g. after 2010 the Orbán government launched a campaign against the IMF, the banks, and multinational companies.

⁶² http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/cikk/a_nemzeti_egyuttmukodes_nyilatkozata, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁶³ Viktor Orbán's speech at the inaugural meeting of the Hungarian National Assembly (14 May 2010). Source: <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-magyar-orszagguyes-alakulo-ulesen-2010-majus-14>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁶⁴ <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/visszanyerte-eleterejet-az-orszag>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

foundations of a new major historical era.⁶⁵ The architectural metaphor was apt because the planned and partly implemented transformation of the capital's most important and symbolic public spaces was indeed regarded as the architectonic and architectural embodiment of the spirit of Orbán's constitution.

From the start, the grandiose constructions served Orbán's thinly veiled historical ambitions and aspirations as a statesman: he wanted his system to be perceived as a renewal and re-founding of the thousand-year-old Hungarian nationhood in the third millennium and linked to the vision of Hungary's new status in Europe. Orbán's every gesture promised Hungarians an expansive, strong, proud, and globally successful Hungary, a kind of compensation for the severe wrongs the nation had endured. On the one hand, Orbán builds on the political traditions of self-pity and resentment, while, on the other hand, he consciously transcends these. After 2010, symbolic politics centred on the representative portrayals of *a unified nation, a strong state, and a charismatic leader who is ready to act*. “Great opportunities, great deeds, great ancestors, and great resolve could combine into an era of national unification. The disintegrating liberal era could be followed by a national era of growth and enthusiasm”,⁶⁶ Orbán said in his 2014 speech given at the inauguration of István Tisza's statue on Kossuth Square, rebuilt and renamed the Main Square of the Nation. In his Tusnádfürdő speech of 2018, Orbán went even further on the path of “daring to be great”, claiming that after the successful completion of national unification, the third two-thirds majority could now begin a “new era” of “nation-building”, the era of “rebuilding the Carpathian Basin”.⁶⁷

It would be difficult not to interpret this as a claim that 21st-century Hungary must become able to exert its power and influence far beyond the country's borders. While Orbán openly urges a closer integration of the economy, energetics, transportation, etc. of the countries of the Carpathian Basin and of Central Europe understood in a wider sense, he expressly or tacitly sees Hungary as the motor of this integration. (The Prime Minister considers Hungary's “unique political stability” as the country's main competitive advantage, and he probably believes that he will have more room for movement beyond the borders than the politicians of the neighbouring countries, who have to devote part of their attention to their reelection.) In any case, the ethno-nationalistic rhetoric that Hungary must be made a “country of the Hungarians” in the context of “rebuilding the Carpathian Basin” seems to be veiled irredentism, which attempts to restore – in a historical perspective, for the moment – the Hungarian hegemony lost in the Treaty of Trianon, without following the outdated and impossible dream of the revision of the borders, which would be unrealistic in 21st-century Europe. As early as in 2009, Orbán claimed in his speech given in Kötcse that “we Hungarians have a specific and unique way of looking at the world”, a “cultural quality that distinguishes us from all other national communities”.⁶⁸ The programme of rebuilding(!) the “body of the nation”, understood as a *natural* ethnic-tribal community that transcends borders, is clearly a coded rephrasing of the age-old idea of Hungarian *cultural superiority*. Allegedly, this superiority is embodied today in the “smart” political alliances of the unified, strong, and triumphant Hungarian nation state and his single leader, as well as in the international successes of the V4 community.⁶⁹

Looking back from the present, the first symbolic political decisions of the Fidesz government clearly reveal the Prime Minister's personal aspirations. For example, Viktor Orbán used the ceremonial inauguration of the statues of István Tisza and István Bethlen to draw thinly veiled parallels between himself and his predecessors. He not only talked about the similarity and recurrence of political situations and roles: by enumerating the virtues of his predecessors, he also praised his own. “After the cowards, the dreamers, the adventurers and the collaborators, Hungary was at last led by a prudent politician again. [...] There were few politicians in Hungary who could provoke the hostility of both the left and the right, especially that of the radical left and the radical right [...] both sides knew that whoever gained his support would not be defeated in Hungary. Therefore, his political opponents both feared him and tried to win his goodwill.” A prudent politician cannot be guided by particular ideologies: “he did not and could not commit himself to any of the fashionable ideologies [...] he was neither a democrat nor a reactionary, neither a kuruc nor a labanc,⁷⁰ neither a liberal nor a conservative; he was solely and exclusively Hungarian”,⁷¹ said Orbán in 2013 about Prime Minister István Bethlen, who had consolidated the Horthy regime, but it is clear that he was in fact speaking about his own post-2010 self.

65 As has been mentioned above, the text of the law, “carved in stone”, has already been amended seven times, six of which occurred in the first three years.

66 http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/beszed/orban_viktor_beszede_a_tisza_istvan-szoborcsoport_ujraavatasan, last seen: 31.10.2019.

67 <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/orban-viktor-beszede-a-xxix-balvanyosi-nyari-szabadegyetem-es-diaktaborban>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

68 http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/cikk/megorizni_a_letezes_magyar_minoseget, last seen: 31.10.2019.

69 <https://www.origo.hu/nagyvilag/20190621-orban-viktor-es-a-visegradi-negyek-attoro-sikeret-hozta-az-unios-csucs.html>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

70 Kuruc and labanc: opposing political positions in the War of liberation against Habsburg reign (17th and 18th centuries).

71 <https://2010-2014.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/miniszterelnok/beszedek-publikaciok-interjuk/visszanyerte-eleterejet-az-orzag>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

THE OCCUPATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

As regards the presence of NER in public spaces, there was a new wave of renaming streets, squares and institutions immediately after 2010, similar to the one that took place after the regime change. These new names, however, were those of prominent right-wing figures of pre-Trianon Hungary and of the Horthy era.⁷² Statues of personages ideologically inconvenient to the regime (e.g. those of Mihály Károlyi and György Lukács) also fell victim to this process. The loudest reaction was provoked by relocating the monument of former prime minister and martyr Imre Nagy. In a symbolic gesture, the statue of the leader of the 1956 revolution was moved from the vicinity of the Parliament, a site connected to his martyrdom, to the foot of the former communist party headquarters, as a reminder that he had been a communist party leader. Typically, the place of the statue was occupied by the reconstruction of a long-forgotten, but aggressively irredentist and anti-communist monument erected in Horthy's time.⁷³

Important moments in the symbolic occupation of public spaces included the reconstruction of Kossuth Square and the removal of all institutions that “did not belong” there (e.g. the Museum of Ethnography), renaming the Superior Court as Curia and relocating it into its former elegant palace, moving the Office of the National Assembly into the square, etc. Furthermore, the proposal to move the Prime Minister and his office out of the Parliament and into Buda Castle was also revived, citing the separation of the administrative branches. The only reason why this did not happen earlier was Fidesz's defeat in the 2002 elections.⁷⁴ Soon it became clear that Orbán would like to take over the entire Buda Castle district for government purposes: not only the office of the prime minister, but also the most important ministries are to move into the crowded historic neighbourhood, which cannot be justified by other than symbolic political considerations. The area is in fact unsuitable for such purposes, and the implementation of this plan consumes vast amounts from the central budget.⁷⁵ The appropriation of the monumental Royal Palace (which has been used for cultural purposes for fifty years, but never as a royal residence) is even more absurd, not only because it requires moving huge public collections such as the Hungarian National Gallery or the National Széchényi Library at significant costs and with significant losses, but also because the remodelling of the building is worrying from the point of view of monument protection, and the political decision about the final functions of the representative spaces has not been taken yet. The huge domed building towering over the capital is a sensitive venue as regards symbolic politics: this was the residence of Miklós Horthy, Governor of Hungary, whom Viktor Orbán has praised as an “exceptional statesman”.

The key to the best understanding of the symbolism of public spaces is the new Fundamental Law of Hungary in force since 2012, more precisely its preamble titled *National Avowal*.

Even before the adoption of this document, in 2011, Parliament approved the large-scale remodelling of Kossuth Square, after which the Imre Steindl Programme was extended to the surrounding streets and squares as well, in several stages. The historic square had certainly been neglected, and its restoration had long been planned. Nevertheless, the speed at which the new regime embarked on the costly venture was conspicuous, especially as they had just introduced a series of extraordinary measures because of the desperate situation of the national economy.

The special symbolic significance of the square was defined by the first section of Parliament's resolution No. 61/2011 (VII. 13.) on the reconstruction of the square: according to this, Kossuth Square is “the constitutional main square of Hungary”⁷⁶ (sic!). (This is also why the construction was classified as a *special national economic investment*, i.e. it was exempted from complying with the effective urban development plans, building regulations, monument protection rules, and public procurement regulations.) The resolution also states the intention of the authors of the constitution to restore the square's

72 Statues of Kuno Klebelsberg (Minister of Culture and Religion under Horthy) and Albert Wass (Anti-Semitic writer in the interwar period) were erected all over the country, and Count István Bethlen also received a full-length statue. In 2015, there was also a private initiative to erect a statue of Bálint Hóman, the minister responsible for the anti-Jewish laws, which was generously supported by both the state and the local government and was only abandoned due to the strong American protest. This is also the reason why Horthy does not have a public statue. (It must be noted, however, that there is a growing tendency to erect privately financed memorials in private spaces, e.g. of Horthy, Count Teleki, etc.) The statue of the anti-Semitic monk, philosopher, and cultural politician Gyula Kornis has been inaugurated recently.

73 See the revealing title of an article in the government media: “Left-Liberals May Wail: There Will Be a Trianon Memorial on the Site of Imre Nagy's Statue”. <https://888.hu/kinyilott-a-pitypang/sivalkodhatnak-a-ballibek-trianon-emlekhely-lesz-a-nagy-imre-szobor-helyen-4152672/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

74 The Sándor Palace, the former residence of prime ministers, which was renovated at this time, has housed the Office of the President of Hungary since 2002.

75 Probably several thousands of billions of forints (<https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/feljebb-es-feljebb-barmi-aron-102713>, last seen: 31.10.2019). Four billion HUF (12 million euros) were allocated only for the interior design of the Prime Minister's study (<https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A16H1847.KOR&txtrefereer=00000001.txt>, last seen: 31.10.2019).

76 <https://www.parlament.hu/documents/10181/56582/Parlamenti+jog/0bf1e7bb-2654-5631-1068-481392d61552>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

“artistic image” to pre-1944 conditions. This intention is connected to the text of the Fundamental Law, which was also adopted at about the same time.⁷⁷

We have already quoted a few key sentences from the text of the Fundamental Law (e.g. the references to Saint Stephen, the historical constitution and the Holy Crown). Here we only point out the promise to ensure the “spiritual and intellectual renewal” of the country and the belief of the authors of the constitution “that our children and grandchildren will make Hungary great again with their talent, persistence, and moral strength”.⁷⁸ This also goes to show that NER plans for the long term and has a historical perspective: it tries to ensure that its symbols will remain significant for generations to come. “Our Fundamental Law [...] shall be an alliance among Hungarians of the past, present and future. It is a living framework which expresses the nation's will and the form in which we want to live”, the text continues. This explains the anachronistic historicism of the restored monuments combined with a 21st-century high-tech environment of the square and the clean modernist style of paving, lighting, and the new visitor centre of the Parliament.

Nevertheless, the neuralgic point of the reconstruction of Kossuth Square is the return to an earlier historical condition. According to the preamble, “[w]e date the restoration of our country's self-determination, lost on the nineteenth day of March 1944, from the second day of May 1990, when the first freely elected organ of popular representation was formed.”⁷⁹ We have seen that Orbán's symbolic politics centres on the idea of restoring and expanding *national sovereignty*: therefore, the Fundamental Law of NER simply excludes from the nation's past everything that happened in the 46 years during which the country was occupied by Germany (in WWII) and the Soviet Union. However, the real message of the square's restoration to its 1944 condition and conferring upon it a constitutional rank is the one also declared in the first sentence of the Declaration of National Cooperation: “At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, after forty-six years of occupation, dictatorship, and two ambiguous decades of transition, Hungary has regained its right to and capability of self-determination”.⁸⁰ Thus the constitutionalised new historical caesura is clearly 2010: the real target of the purging of public spaces in line with identity politics is the democratic change of 1989–1990; the Third Republic itself, with its diversity and competing political alternatives. This is why Mihály Károlyi's⁸¹ statue, erected in the Kádár era, but commemorating the important democratic traditions of the republic, has been removed from the square, together with “the Flame of the Revolution” (Mária Lugossy's “eternal flame”, erected in 1996 from public donations at the initiative of Árpád Göncz⁸²) and the monument of Imre Nagy, also inaugurated in 1996, and already mentioned above. It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the old-fashioned, empty historicism of the newly erected statues of an earlier period (the statues of Gyula Andrássy and István Tisza,⁸³ and János Horvai's Kossuth memorial) to the bad taste of the upstart Fidesz elites and to their nostalgia for the Horthy era: the fake pathos serves the (intellectually muddled) historical justification of Orbán's authoritarian regime in the spirit of national *grandeur*, while it also attempts to delete all traces of the liberal-democratic origins of Orbán and Fidesz.

The symbolic political confirmation of the 2010 caesura also includes two other public memorials closely related to the programme of the “Main Square of the Nation”: one of these is the Memorial of the German occupation, erected in nearby Szabadság Square in 2014 despite strong protests both in Hungary and abroad; the second is the memorial site of national cohesion opposite the Parliament, at the end of Alkotmány Street, which is to be inaugurated on the centenary of signing the Treaty of Trianon, on 4 June 2020.

It is well-known that the secret government resolution detailing the plans to unveil the Memorial of the German occupation in Szabadság Square on the 70th anniversary of the occupation (which began on 19 March 1944), on the eve of the 2014 elections, came to light before intended, and it triggered such heated protests that the government was forced to postpone the statue's inauguration and even changed its dedication in order to minimise damages: the monument is now called the Memorial of the victims of the German occupation. However, this only added fuel to the fire, as it conflated the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jewish and Roma victims of the Holocaust with other losses suffered by the Hungarians, and it fully attributed the genocide to the occupying German forces, even though the deportations had been organised by the

⁷⁷ <https://www.parlament.hu/irom39/02627/02627.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/cikk/a_nemzeti_egyuttmukodes_nyilatkozata, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁸¹ Prime Minister and later president after WWI.

⁸² First president after the system-change.

⁸³ Both the works of György Zala.

Hungarian authorities with the participation of about two hundred thousand Hungarian soldiers, policemen, gendarmes, and officials, and with the assistance of the majority of Hungarian society. Orbán's circles have certainly been surprised by the boycott of Jewish organisations, as the government intended to support the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian Holocaust with demonstrative gestures, by inviting applications for generous grants and by the billions of forints invested in the representative project of the House of Fates, which has since been abandoned.

We may assume that the original title and iconographic programme of the Memorial was not intended to deny the responsibility of the Hungarian state and Hungarian society (the government even acknowledged in general terms the role of the state's leaders in the Holocaust). The original purpose of the monument may have been to serve the doctrine of the national renewal of historic scale, begun in 2010. The statue is a paraphrase of the Millennial Memorial standing in Heroes' Square in Budapest: in the latter, Archangel Gabriel, standing at a height of 36 metres, raises the double cross of victorious Christianity in one hand and the Holy Crown of Hungary in the other to show the chiefs of the Hungarian tribes the way west into the Carpathian Basin, whereas the two sweeping colonnades behind his back with the statues of the most important Hungarian kings proclaim the thousand-year glory of the Hungarian state. In the new monument, Gabriel teeters with torn wings on the ruins of this glory, among broken columns: in an iconographically absurd manner, he has become a symbol of attacked, innocent but powerless – and thus pitiable – Hungary. His gentle face and fragile figure are about to be grabbed by the German imperial eagle which represents the brutal violence of technical civilisation.

The sweeping reference of the Memorial claims that thousand-year-old Hungarian statehood collapsed on the day of the German occupation. No matter how absurd this may seem, it is only this extreme symbol of national death that explains why Orbán insisted on erecting this monumental memorial of the fateful day in Szabadság Square: since 1945, the square has also been the site of the monument of the Soviet heroes who lost their lives during the liberation of Budapest, a monument that right-wing governments have repeatedly and unsuccessfully attempted to remove. The new statue has identical proportions and symmetries and was clearly conceived as a counterpart to the Soviet monument: since its inscription explicitly mentions the *occupation* of the country, it also reinterprets the soldiers' grave as the *monument of Soviet occupation*. Thus, the loss of national sovereignty included in the constitution becomes tangible – in the form of public statues – in Szabadság Square, in a manner that the symmetrical image of dual occupation contrasts the *essential sameness* of Nazis and Soviets with the truth of the innocent and overrun Hungarians. The site also acquires significance, as it is in the immediate vicinity of the Main Square of the Nation, which symbolises the new foundation of the country and the rebirth of the nation from its ashes and proclaims the confident belief in the future of a strong Hungary.

The other planned central monument, the Memorial of National Cohesion will be a monumental corridor opening under the pavement level of Alkotmány Street and sloping down to a depth of five metres. The corridor will be one hundred metres long and four metres wide, and its walls covered in grey marble will be inscribed with the names of all of the settlements of historical Hungary as recorded in 1913 (a total of 12,537 names).⁸⁴ At the deepest point of the monument an eternal flame will remind visitors of the eternal validity of the pre-WWII anti-Trianon slogan “No, not ever!” This representation of negative space or absence, formulated in the language of modern architecture and operating with the majestic effect created by its dimensions and the innumerable inscriptions, lends a futuristic, 21st-century form to the “new irredentism” developed by the Orbán regime: it keeps alive the idea of “Greater Hungary”, which remains an important identity-forming tradition for the right, while also renouncing the unsuccessful “politics of resentment” of traditional irredentism flourishing in the interwar period, together with its outdated linguistic policy and visual tastes.

84 More precisely: “Register of Place-names in the Countries of the Holy Crown of Hungary”.

CULTURE AND THE HUNGARIAN CHURCHES

The role of Hungarian churches and denominations in education and culture changed decisively after the second Orbán government came to power in 2010 and following the adoption of the Fundamental Law of Hungary and the Act CCVI of 2011 on the right to freedom of conscience and religion and the legal status of churches, denominations and religious communities.

Both the Fundamental Law and the law of 2011 state that, notwithstanding the separation of the state and the church, “the State and religious communities *may cooperate* to achieve community goals”,⁸⁵ and “[t]he State *shall provide specific privileges* to established churches with regard to their participation in the fulfilment of tasks that serve to achieve community goals”; furthermore, “[i]n accordance with the Fundamental Law, and with regard to the constitutional requirement to separate the operation of the State and the church, but *properly enforcing the principles of working together to their mutual benefit*”,⁸⁶ “[t]he State and religious communities [...] shall cooperate in promoting the public good. The State *may enter into agreements* with religious communities [...] to preserve historical and cultural values and maintain pedagogical instructive, educational, higher educational, [...] cultural and [...] public interest activities [...] taking into account [...] their ability to perform such tasks”, and it “*may enter into a general cooperation agreement*”, which may also be used to “support religious activities” (emphasis added).⁸⁷ [the authors' emphasis]

According to the above, the churches and denominations which are considered “established” by the political power,⁸⁸ i.e. politically or ideologically favoured by the government, may enter into cooperation agreements with the state, which may result in non-transparent and uncontrollable financial and other types of support provided from public resources, violating a fundamental principle of democracies, the total transparency of utilising public funds.

The Orbán government has involved the churches in its cultural war, while it has reduced culture and education to mere instruments of ideological retraining.

In Hungary an increasing number of children attend religious schools nowadays,⁸⁹ the main reason for which is that the government pays higher subsidies after pupils studying in religious schools than those studying in state schools. While there is only a small difference in subsidies between the two “sectors” regarding the highest sums, namely the teachers' salaries, the government subsidizes pupils of religious schools four times more than pupils of state schools concerning the operating costs.⁹⁰ Especially in small rural settlements, where there is only one school (if any), many of these schools have been transferred to the churches in the recent past (mostly to the Roman Catholic and Calvinist churches). This continuously reduces the possibility of equal opportunities, because the state does not ensure the existence of ideologically neutral schools in these settlements, while there are no sufficient funds available for parents insisting on ideologically neutral schools to send their children to a state school in a settlement which is 20-30 km away.⁹¹ Furthermore, children attending religious schools may be obliged to participate at the religious events and ceremonies of their school, in spite of their religion or beliefs.

At the same time, in state-run schools pupils must choose between taking up Bible studies or ethics, which enables certain educational institutions (especially in small settlements) to exert (hardly concealed) pressure on parents and pupils in order

⁸⁵ Fundamental Law, Article VII(4).

⁸⁶ Act CCVI of 2011, Preamble.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Chapter II, Section 9(1)-(2).

⁸⁸ List of registered churches: <https://egyhazi.emmi.gov.hu/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁸⁹ https://index.hu/belfold/2019/09/02/a_fidesz_alatt_ketszeresere_nott_az_egyhazi_iskolak_szama/, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹⁰ https://index.hu/gazdasag/2019/05/08/negyszer_tobb_penz_forras_egyhazi_iskolak_allami_koltsegvetes_tanulok diak_roma_cigany_szegregacio_elkulonites/, last seen: 31.10.2019.

<https://168ora.hu/itthon/valami-nagyon-eltorzult-negyszer-tobb-penz-ad-az-allam-az-egyhazi-iskolaknak-mint-a-sajatjainak-5029>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Kriszta Ercse, “Az állam által ösztönzött, egyház-asszisztált szegregáció mechanizmusa.” [The Mechanism of Segregation Promoted by the State and Assisted by the Church], in: József Balázs Fejes and Norbert Szűcs (eds), *Én vétkem: Helyzetkép az oktatási szegregációról*. [Through My Fault: A Snapshot of Segregation in Education] Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület, Szeged, 2018, 177–199.

⁹¹ See e.g. the case of a village in the Tisza region, the primary school of which has been given for maintenance to the catholic church: Anna Fejős – Ernő Kállai – Orsolya Keresztes-Takács – Dezső Máté, “Az iskolai teljesítmény és a helyi társadalmi viszonyok összefüggései Nagykőrűben.” [Connections between Performance in School and Local Social Relationships in Nagykőrű] *Regio*, 23/4, 2015, 153-192, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17355/rkkpt.v23i4.89>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

See the cases of villages where a large proportion of the population protested against the shifting of the primary school into religious maintenance: Kata Janecsó.

“Kettészakította Zsombót az egyházasított iskola.” [Zsombó has been Split by the School Turned into a Denominational School] Index, 2011.05.04.

https://index.hu/belfold/2011/05/04/az_iskola_egyhazi_fenntartasba_adasa_ellen_tiltakoznak_a_szulok_zsombon/https://index.hu/belfold/2011/05/04/az_iskola_egyhazi_fenntartasba_adasa_ellen_tiltakoznak_a_szulok_zsombon/, last seen: 31.10.2019.

to make Bible studies, no longer an elective subject, virtually compulsory for anyone. By doing so, these institutions exploit the dependent position of parents and pupils and influence their beliefs. Bible-studies teachers belong to the organisation of the church but receive their salaries from the state.

It is a strange and telling situation that teachers in religious schools have greater freedom, as in these educational institutions there are no compulsory state textbooks, unlike in state schools.

The church schools, financed by the state, provide higher-quality education, but they do not ensure places (or only in small numbers) to children coming from multiply disadvantaged backgrounds, thus church-run schools have a strong segregating effect. According to the latest data, the average proportion of Roma pupils in state schools reaches 15.16 percent, while in church schools this proportion is 10.17 percent.

Compared to public universities, the universities run by churches or denominations operate in incomparably better financial conditions, due to various forms of state support. The accreditation process of these universities is far more favourable and imposes less strict requirements than the accreditation of state universities. It may also happen, however, that the higher education institutions of churches not favoured by the government are not accredited or their accreditation process is made more difficult (see the cases of the John Wesley Theological College or the Sola Scriptura Theological College).

As far as the cultural support of churches is concerned, established churches receive several billions in subsidies every year, especially the Hungarian Catholic Church, the Reformed Church in Hungary, and recently the Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation, also close to the government (concerning the latter, the Deputy Prime Minister has recently said that it “has become a recognized church of the highest category”, even though such a legal category does not exist).

These churches and denominations receive subsidies partly as “support for programmes and investments for community purposes”, and partly for “the preservation of built church heritage and other investments”. In addition to these subsidies of several billion HUF, the state also provides further support, which also amounts to several billion HUF, and these funds are neither transparent nor traceable. An example of this is the sum of 15 billion HUF that the state allocated to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Szeged-Csanád, more precisely to the government's favourite bishop, László Kiss-Rigó: the money was used to build a football stadium with a capacity of 8,000, called Saint Gerard Forum; similarly, state expenditure was spent on a wellness centre for the Lakitelek Folk High School, an institution close to the government.

The churches favoured by the government also receive unpredictable support from foundations into which the state has diverted public funds through various means. It is telling that the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the leader of the Christian Democratic People's Party, has recently boasted that Hungary is the EU Member State that spends the greatest amount of money on the reconstruction of churches and/or building new ones. He also stressed that “nothing can replace the spiritual and moral service of the church”.⁹²

The role of churches in education and culture subsidized by the state is in line with the Orbán era's ideologic mission of “educating the nation”, the main objective of which is to create a new type of human being trained to be obedient and to respect authority, made incapable of independent thinking or forming opinions, and subject to the indisputable will of the state (power). By the religious reconquest of the school system, the government wants to enforce its own religious and moral views politically and legally. By manipulating religious sentiment subordinated to political goals, those in power intend to prove their own infallibility, their “superior” commitment and mission, the unquestionable legitimacy and justice of their acts, intentions, objectives, laws, and decrees. Religious sentiment is intended to become a factor in legitimising the state, while religious values appear as norms, and certain churches take up the role of a centralised moral authority in the pluralistic society functioning without a centralised moral authority.⁹³

⁹² <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/hirek/az-unioban-magyarorszag-kolti-a-legtobb-penz-templomok-megujitasara>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹³ György Gábor, “A kisajátított Isten országa: Szakrális politikai szimbólum – szimbolikus politikai szakralitás.” [The Country of the Appropriated God: Sacred Political Symbols – Symbolic Political Sacrality] *Magyar polip*. A posztkommunista maffiaállam. [Hungarian Octopus: The Post-Communist Mafia State] Noran, 2013, 297-345.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE POLICY ON PUBLIC EDUCATION BETWEEN 2010 AND 2019

The Fidesz-KDNP government inaugurated in 2010 radically transformed public education in a short period of time. Moreover, they did so without having informed citizens about the future government's plans before the elections.

While reviewing the education policy of the past decade, one can observe the following traits: extreme centralisation, autocratic and arbitrary management, the lack of social dialogue, reducing teachers' autonomy, work overload both for students and for teachers, increasing inequality and segregation, deteriorating performance, and an ambition for ideological influence.

TAKEOVER OF THE SCHOOLS OF THE MUNICIPALITIES AND THE EXTREME CENTRALISATION OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

After 2010, the schools that had been owned by local self-governments between 1990 and 2011 were renationalised in two steps and subjected to a government management system centralised to the extreme. Thus, municipalities lost the opportunity to have a substantial influence on local educational institutions and to make decisions regarding the development of the school network.

Along with the so called "renationalisation", a significant reduction of financial resources took place as well.⁹⁴ The difficulties were increased by the centralised and bureaucratic operation of the new organisation maintaining the schools. Regarding the consequences, an analysis states: "There are no new additions to the libraries, and the acquisition of the things needed by teachers for their everyday work is also highly problematic. The lack of equipment and instruments necessary for teaching has become an ordinary phenomenon in most schools."⁹⁵

As a result of the decision that merged every municipal school into one single state administered organisation – using János Kornai's term, into a bureaucratic hydrocephalus unparalleled all over the world⁹⁶ – every teacher working at these – now – state schools is employed by the same employer, therefore they have become more defenceless than before. At the time of signing their new contracts, the teachers were obliged to enter a new corporation, the National Teachers' Chamber, which had not even adopted its statutes by that time.

THE MAIN CHANGES IN THE REGULATION OF CONTENT

Before, educational institutions used to have a certain amount of autonomy regarding the content of the curriculum. In order to erase that, the 2nd Orbán government returned in 2012 to the framework curriculum regulation of seventies. According to a curriculum expert, this restoration involves that "the obligatory nature of the curriculum significantly blocks organisational innovation, especially in the fields of learning and teaching."⁹⁷

In 2016 a major wave of demonstrations was set into motion in the field of public education, which forced the government to make a few minor concessions. For example, a team was appointed to develop the new National Curriculum. In the plan submitted, the time frame that can be freely used by schools was increased from 10% to 20%. However, "the strongly centralised system and the 20% freedom in the regulation of the content margin (instead of the previous 10%) still do not allow the progressive elements of the plan's pedagogical attitude to be realised in practice," as another expert observed.⁹⁸

After 2014, textbooks were no longer free to choose, and the educational publishing houses not owned by the state were ousted from the textbook market. The financial burden of the families was reduced by the fact that nowadays more and

⁹⁴ István Polónyi, *Finanszírozási libikóka* [Financing Seesaw]. *Educatio*, 26/4 (2017): 603–624.

http://real.mtak.hu/80772/1/EDU_26.2017.4.8_Polonyi_Finanszirozasi_libikoka_u.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹⁵ Civil Képzési Platform. *Kockás könyv. Kiút az oktatási katasztrófából* [The Chequered Notebook: A Way out of the Catastrophe of Education]. Mogyoród: ROMI-SULI Könyvkiadó, Mogyoród, 2016: 27.

https://www.vmk.hu/_upload/editor/ped/VAN_KIUT_A4_80oldal_web.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹⁶ http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai2015_U-kanyar-8.oldal.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹⁷ Magdolna Chrappán, *Tantervi szabályozás és intézményi implementáció* [Curriculum Regulation and Institutional Implementation]. *Educatio*, 23/1 (2014): 35., https://epa.oszk.hu/01500/01551/00067/pdf/EPA01551_educatio_14_01_026-035.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

⁹⁸ Vilmos Vass, *Vélemény a Nemzeti Alaptanterv tervezetéről* [An Opinion about the Planned National Curriculum]. *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 2018/5-6: 14., http://folyoiratok.ofi.hu/sites/default/files/journals/upsz_2018_5_6_beliv_online.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

more students can get copies of free, state-published textbooks. At the same time, state-published textbooks developed at a forced rate and made immediately obligatory have been much criticised in respect of content, worldview, and quality, too. While the textbook market was occupied, the pedagogical program packages supporting competency improvement, which had been produced with the support of the European Union in the second half the 2000s, became unavailable on the internet. Consequently, the schools' opportunity to design and execute pedagogical plans adjusted to the unique features of their students was considerably reduced.

DETERIORATING RESULTS AND MAINTAINED MECHANISMS OF SEGREGATION

In the light of PISA tests results and other assessment information, the improvement of the public education institutions' results seems highly necessary, because the deterioration of their results after 2010 is clearly discernible. Reading the PISA data of 2015, an analyst pointed out that “the reading comprehension and scientific skills of Hungarian students at the age of 15 has dramatically deteriorated, showing the worst decrease among EU member states, whereas their mathematical competencies are stuck at the great achievement deterioration level measured in 2012 [...] In an international comparison, there have always been huge chasms between individual achievements behind the average results of Hungarian public education. In 2015, Hungary was one of the few European countries where the deterioration of results could be observed both in the upper and in the lower zone of achievements. Since [...] the results of the students with low scores deteriorated much more than those of students with high scores, the chasm between achievements within Hungarian public education increased further.”⁹⁹ Another author observes about reading comprehension skills that “17.6% of the Hungarian students did not reach the minimum level in 2009, and their proportion radically grew, reaching 27.5% by 2015.”¹⁰⁰ The next observation also calls the attention to serious problems: “strong selection mechanisms have become chronic in the Hungarian school system on the level of the entire system.

Of all the countries participating in the tests, Hungary featured the largest difference between the results of schools in each of the six tests carried out since 2000 (...).”¹⁰¹

Regarding equal opportunities and equity, public education performs badly, too. The primary argument of the Orbán government for the renationalisation of schools was reducing the inequality of opportunities with that decision. Controversially, however, no complex state strategies supporting the fulfilment of that aim have been developed in the past 9 years, while several measures have just the opposite effects. One of them was decreasing the age limit for compulsory education. The original proposal set the limit at 15 years of age, but, due to the protests, the final decision was 16. That decision as well as the reduction of the length of education at vocational schools from 4 to 3 years played a major role in the negative change in the proportion of early school-leavers, which, while decreasing in most countries of the European Union, has almost continuously grown in Hungary, from 10.8% in 2010 to 12.5% by 2017, exceeding the average in the EU by 1.8%.¹⁰²

It can also be assumed that a decrease in social mobility will result from the decision that only students who have passed a foreign language exam will be allowed to enter higher education from 2020.¹⁰³ Inequalities are enhanced by several mechanisms and practices of segregation separating Roma students from others during their education, too. This is hardly surprising, for the desegregation programs previously implemented with the support of the EU were terminated without any evaluation, and the network that had achieved significant results in the field of disseminating inclusive pedagogical practices was diminished. Concerning these issues, the communication practices of certain government members must be mentioned as well, since they have discouraged actions against segregation (for example a minister of education – among

99 Péter Radó, A csúfos PISA-bukás oka az oktatás minőségének súlyos romlása [The Reason for the Shameful PISA Failure Is the Severe Deterioration of the Quality of Education]. https://hvg.hu/itthon/20161206_PISA_2015_meredek_lejton_a_magyar_kozoktatasi_rado_peter, last seen: 31.10.2019.

100 György Fenyő D, A tantervi szabályozás dilemmái és lehetőségei az irodalomtanításban [Dilemmas and Opportunities in the Regulation of the Curriculum for Teaching Literature]. *Iskolakultúra*, 2018/7: 14–15. https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00011/00216/pdf/EPA00011_iskolakultura_2018_07_013-027.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

101 Julianna Hricsovinyi – Krisztián Józsa, Iskolaválasztás és szelekció. *Én véttem* [Choosing a School and Selection: Through My Fault], edited by Balázs Fejes and Norbert Szűcs. Szeged: Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület, 2018: 130., http://real.mtak.hu/86134/1/HJ_JK_2018_iskolavolasztas.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

102 <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/belfold-archivum/korai-iskolaelhagyas-romlottak-a-hazai-adatok-3891007/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

103 In 2017, the Parliamentary Commissioner of Fundamental Rights asked for the postponement of the above-mentioned rule's entry into force. The ombudsman observed that “in course of defining the new requirements, (...) the department (...) did not provide the period necessary for the preparation.” He added that the Ministry governing education “did not take care of creating the appropriate conditions for teaching foreign languages in schools.” Besides, he pointed out that implementing the above-mentioned requirement would result in “a controversial situation in respect of the students' right to education as well” due to the lack of the necessary conditions, also impairing the principle of equal opportunities. See <https://www.ajbh.hu/-/hianyzo-feltetelek-aggalyos-bevezetes-az-ombudsman-a-kozepfoku-nyelvizsga-megletehez-kotott-felsooktatasi-felveteliről?inheritedirect=true>, last seen 31.10.2019.

One week after closing our manuscript, Gergely Gulyás, Minister of the Chancellery announced the withdrawal of the law requiring official foreign language certificates for access to higher education, a law that generated a great amount of criticism and protest from students and experts.

other fields – supported the “loving segregation” of Roma students in a religious school, in an interview given in 2013). Moreover, court decisions prescribing the termination of segregation in certain cases are practically neglected by the central administration.¹⁰⁴

THE INCREASING PROPORTION OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AND ITS SEGREGATION ENHANCING EFFECT

Since 2010, education policy highly prefers religious schools. Renationalised municipality schools found themselves in a difficult situation due to the significant reduction of public funding. As a result, the position of religious schools, which had already received much more budgetary support, became even more favourable.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, social selection and segregation have increased to a large extent.¹⁰⁶

In parallel with the nationalisation of municipality schools, several educational institutions were handed over to churches, although some of them are in villages without any other school.¹⁰⁷ Before 2012, an important factor in this process was the ambition of local governments to prevent the deterioration of the working conditions in the schools of their villages and to eliminate the threat of closure.

According to the Act on Public Education, a school can only be taken over by the church if more than half of the parents vote for that. If the parents do not support the decision, the state must take care of providing a state-funded school for the children in a way that does not impose a disproportionate burden on them. State administration tends to solve this issue by providing buses for the children who need to commute. Many parents, especially the ones with children under the age of 10, however, do not find it a satisfactory solution. The question arises as to whether the right of free choice of school for the child, compatible with the beliefs of the parents, is not impaired in such cases.¹⁰⁸ Where the only school in the village has been handed over to the church, the practice of the above-mentioned right is also problematic because of the denominational pluralism generally typical in Hungarian settlements, since many people preferring religious education may also find it an uncomfortable constraint if their children need to attend a school managed by another denomination.

Governmental decisions giving advantage to religious schools play a great role in fact that “groups of parents with a better ability to enforce their interests sense the decline in the level of the conditions and services (legal and financial opportunities) of state-funded schools as well as the privileges of churches and of the religious schools maintained by them, so they tend to choose the latter as a more attractive alternative. Considering the selective educational policy of certain school maintainers, this results in institutionalised segregation.”¹⁰⁹

Because of the segregation practices in numerous schools, an infringement procedure was initiated against the government of Hungary. In response, the Hungarian government made a few measures presented as acts meant to reduce segregation. Yet observing the related decisions of educational policy while considering the complex system of interconnections between the selection and segregation procedures functioning in the Hungarian public education, and also taking into account that several economic and socio-political measures made since 2010 favour elite groups primarily, one can predict that the planned actions will not lead to substantial improvement.

DICTATORIAL MANAGEMENT

The field of public education – just like the entire Hungarian public administration – has been managed in a dictatorial style since 2010. One of its symptoms can be observed in the process of making significant parliamentary decisions: either they are not preceded by impact assessments and background calculations, or these documents are kept in secret, as it happened in the case of the Act on Public Education in 2011.¹¹⁰ The governmental style based on unilateral decisions is also expressed in having

¹⁰⁴ <https://168ora.hu/itthon/mar-senki-nem-kepes-hatekonyan-kepviselni-a-romakat-tobb-tizezer-fiatat-szorítottak-ki-az-iskolapadbol-170752>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁰⁵ This explains why it happens so often in state-funded schools that classrooms are painted, decorated, or equipped by parents, while there are no news of religious schools in need of such support.

¹⁰⁶ Péter Radó, Market reforms in the Hungarian school system: impact of changes in the ownership structure. NESET ad hoc question No. 2/2019.

¹⁰⁷ Between 2010 and 2015, the number of municipalities where there are only religious schools more than tripled: it grew from 38 to 137 (Gábor Tomasz, Erősödő egyházi jelenlét az oktatásban [An Increasing Presence of the Church in Education]. *Educatio*, 26/1 (2017): 94–112, http://real.mtak.hu/80973/1/EDU_2017.1.9_Tomasz_Erosodo_egyhazi_jelenlet_az_oktatásban_u.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019, and the number of students in religious primary schools increased from 5% in 2001 to 14.7% in 2016 (with respect to the total number of students). See <https://444.hu/2019/04/09/megharomszorozodott-az-egyhazi-fenntartasu-kozepiskolak-aranya-2010-ota>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁰⁸ Zoltán Szobot, Sok településen sírnak egy állami iskola után [In Many Villages People Cry for a State School]. *Hetek*, 6 September 2013., http://www.hetek.hu/belfold/201309/sok_telepulesen_sirnak_egy_allami_iskola_utan, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁰⁹ Kriszta Ercse, “Az állam által ösztönzött, egyház-asszisztált szegregáció mechanizmusa.” [The Mechanism of Segregation Supported by the State and Assisted by the Church] *Én vétkem: Helyzetkép az oktatási szegregációról* [Through My Fault: A Snapshot of Segregation in Education]. Edited by Balázs Fejes and Norbert Szűcs. Szeged: Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület, 2018: 196.

¹¹⁰ István Balla, A Hoffmann-terv titkos részei [The Secret Passages of the Hoffman Plan], <https://24.hu/belfold/2011/10/27/a-hoffmann-terv-titkos-reszei/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

abolished most of the forums established after 1990 that used to provide the framework for social dialogue,¹¹¹ and certain members of the government make it explicit more and more often that they do not need any dialogue about education.¹¹²

The analysis of the changes in public education as well as the discussions about education policy are greatly hindered by ceasing to publish the volumes of the Report on Hungarian Public Education – a series that used to give a fact-based overview of the field – since 2010, as well as weakening the institutional background of educational research. Studying changes in education has also become difficult because any research in the renationalised schools needs to be permitted by the above-mentioned state administration centre responsible for school maintenance.

Another symptom of the dictatorial and voluntarist style of management is that several decisions have been made in the past 9 years without the prerequisites and conditions for their implementation in place. For example, the paragraph in the Act on Public Educations making kindergarten attendance compulsory from the age of 3 had to enter into force a year late due to the lack of available places in kindergartens. Similarly, the absence of necessary conditions explains it, too, that many of the physical education lessons are held in classrooms, corridors, and staircases instead of proper gyms, since the weekly number of obligatory lessons was increased to five – a measure that also added to the burdens of already overloaded students.

It also indicates a management style based on arbitrary decisions that many of the changes are introduced so fast that the users' right to the predictable operation of the educational system is impaired. For instance, the students who started their studies in grammar schools in 2012 and had chosen these schools with the perspective of higher education had to face the situation already after the beginning of the schoolyear that the enrolment quotas to higher education institutions were quickly and radically reduced and many of the places previously free of tuition fees became very expensive, so the students' plans regarding their further studies unexpectedly turned unrealistic – which harmed the constitutional requirement of legal security.

It is important to note that the above-mentioned decisions fit into the general ambition of education policy permanently dominating the field since 2010; reducing the opportunities for studies in higher education and making many of the available places full-cost are just some of the elements. In the field of secondary education, the tendency to decrease the number of places in grammar schools and the government measures intending to drive students to vocational education are also worth mentioning.¹¹³

In the field of vocational education, ill-considered measures are best illustrated by the 2016 reorganisation of vocational education in secondary schools offering maturity exam, when the timeframe for teaching sciences was dramatically reduced by replacing the previously separate classes on chemistry, physics, etc. with a new subject called “sciences”, which was introduced without having any curriculum or textbooks developed for it. The proportion of general subjects was dramatically reduced in vocational schools as well, in parallel with the increase in the number of PE lessons. These changes are unfavourable with respect to finding employment in the job market and having a professional career, too, because it is more and more important also for people with secondary-level degrees to have received good quality education and training, to possess competitive skills, and to have obtained the general knowledge that allows high-level life-long learning.

THE USE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR IDEOLOGICALLY INFLUENCING THE COMING GENERATIONS

It can be said about the entire period since 2010 that political parties, local governments, and non-profit organisations specializing in education are not involved in preparing education policy decisions, and the administration of education does not make any effort to reach consensus. Even if the opportunity for the debate of certain legal plans is occasionally offered, the circumstances of these discussions have been heavily criticized.¹¹⁴

111 Iván Bajomi – Mihály Csákó, Fórumok és tiltakozó mozgalmak a közoktatásban [Forums and Protest Movements in Public Education]. *Educatio*, 26/4 (2017): 528–539., http://real.mtak.hu/80768/1/EDU_26.2017.4.2_Bajomi_Csako_Forumok_es_tiltakozomozgalmak_u.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Iván Bajomi, “Réactions suscitées par les mesures éducatives d’un régime de plus en plus autoritaire: Le cas de la Hongrie.” *Éducation et Sociétés*, № 39. (2017): 35–51.

112 One of the leaders of Fidesz said in an interview that the country should be purged of non-profit organisations that regularly interfere with “grand politics”. In the interview, the politician named two organisations in the field of education: the Association of Hungarian History Teachers and the “Tanítanék” movement, which grew out of the protest movements of 2016.

113 Ferenc Péntes, Szakmunkás-bizonyítvány diploma helyett? A szakképzési modellváltás legújabb fejleményeiről [A Vocational Diploma instead of a Degree? About the Latest Events Regarding the Change in the Vocational Training Model], <https://kozjavak.hu/szakmunkas-bizonyitvany-diploma-helyett-szakkepzesi-modellvaltas-legujabb-fejlemenyeiről>, last seen 31.10.2019. Concerning the rapid transformation of vocational education, it is worth mentioning that the Parliamentary Commissioner of Fundamental Rights observed in a Resolution that “the fundamental rights of the concerned students and the elementary requirements of legal certainty were harmed because the requirements for the vocational subjects of the maturity exam in 2017 entered into force with a significant delay.” See https://www.ajbh.hu/a-koltsegvetesi-szerv-ajbh-alapadatai/-/asset_publisher/moZN7y1Ew6S6/content/az-alapveto-jogok-biztosa-a-2017-es-szaktanulmany-elertsegi-lebonyolitasaval-kapcsolatos-visszassagokrol?inheritRedirect=false, last seen: 31.10.2019.

114 “I find it troubling that the authors remain incognito, the permanent professional and social discussion is absent, and the time provided for forming a judgement is alarmingly short.” – László Trencsényi, “Véleményem az átdolgozott Nemzeti alaptanterv 2018. augusztusi tervezetéről.” [My Opinion about the Plan for the Revised National Curriculum, August 2018] *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 2018/5–6: 13. <http://folyoiratok.ofi.hu/uj-pedagogiai-szemle/nat-tervezet-2018-szakmai-reflexiok>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

The renationalisation of schools included the centralisation of the school leaders' appointment. In numerous schools, the teachers and the parents protested, sometimes successfully, against the dismissal of headmasters who had been fulfilling their offices to the satisfaction of all. As a response, in 2019 the government deprived teachers and parents of their decades-old right to express their opinion about the applicants for the position of the headmaster in the form of voting. Due to the changes, the aspect of political loyalty started to outweigh the aspect of professional experience in the selection of school leaders.

Along with turning the procedure of appointing headmasters into a closed, bureaucratic process, the status of private students was also abolished. Previously, this rarely chosen status could be permitted by the headmaster. From 2020, the applicants need to appeal to the Education Authority for an "individual curriculum", and the permissions must be regularly revised, too. The official reason for the restriction of the rules is that numerous schools get rid of difficult students, usually coming from disadvantaged, often Roma families, by proclaiming them private students. Others, however, claim that the above-mentioned measure is meant to prevent families dissatisfied with the authoritarian operation of renationalised schools from applying for private student status for their own children, and, in cooperation with other parents, to establish study circles, which could mean an alternative with a more liberal spirit than state schools, yet cheaper than private schools.

While decision-making procedures have become more and more closed, government authorities have an increasing latitude for using the system of public education for ideological purposes. As one of the first decisions in education after the inauguration of the 2nd Orbán government in 2010, the commemoration of the Day of National Unity became compulsory in every school. The aim of memory policy thus integrated into the everyday operation of schools was a key element in the Christian national ideology meant to legitimise the authoritarian political system in Hungary between the two world wars. Besides, the chapter on teaching literature in the 2012 version of National Curriculum also included authors¹¹⁵ who were close to the Christian national ideology of that regime, some of whom were accused of war crimes, and who made their Anti-Semitic attitude explicit in their writing. The "Levente" movement, a school-based quasi-military formation, used to be an important element for government ambitions before World War II, and a similar program was launched in 2017 with the aim of teaching the use of firearms in schools and building shooting ranges for that purpose. At the same time, the National Basic Program for Education in Kindergartens was modified in a way that brought the components of national identity and Christian culture into the foreground. The only professional organisation active in the field of early childhood education that was allowed to give a preliminary opinion about the modification was the Kindergarten Teachers' Department of the National Teachers' Chamber. It is also remarkable that the modification neglected the large number of citizens in Hungary who are either not Christian or not religious at all.

Textbook publishing occupied by the government gives an excellent opportunity for ideological influence, too. Children have access only to textbooks and exercise books the approaches and views of which are adjusted to the ideology of the current political regime. This can be observed, among other things, in the discussion of the origin of the Hungarian language and people,¹¹⁶ the interpretation of the liberal and socialist views in the 19th century,¹¹⁷ and the topic of migration.¹¹⁸

Instead of modernising the curriculum, the pedagogical methods, and the evaluation, strengthening European identity, and changing educational paradigms, the Hungarian school system has taken a conservative turn, its efficiency rates and results are far below the previous level, and it is unable to serve either economic growth or social justice for the future. Besides, the representation of men as leading figures active in social life and of women as helpless creatures, mentally inferior to males and primarily active in the domestic scene, which reflects the views about female roles often voiced by members of the state administration in rule since 2010, also frequently appears in the texts and exercises of the new state-published textbooks and their supplements.¹¹⁹

115 József Nyíró, István Sinka, Dezső Szabó, Albert Wass, See *Magyar Közlöny*, 2012/66, last seen: 31.10.2019. Attachment to the 110/2012. (VI. 4.), https://ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/mk_nat_20121.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019. Government Order: National Curriculum – Hungarian language and literature – General knowledge content, 10 670–10 678.

116 László Honti. "Quo vadis, schola hungarica? Tények vagy blöffök képezik-e a tananyagot?" [Quo Vadis, Schola Hungarica? Is the Curriculum Based on Hoax or Facts?] *Magyar Tudomány* 176/2 (2015): 202–209. <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2015/02/11.htm>, last seen: 31.10.2019. The unilateral, unscientific approach can be matched with the prime minister's recent statement in which he claimed the Hungarian language to be related to Turkic languages. https://hvg.hu/kultura/20180905_elte_nyelvkuato_orban_viktor_kirgizisztan_turk_nyelv_magyar_nyelv, last seen: 31.10.2019. (See the chapter on History in this publication.)

117 See the detailed critique written by the Textbook Analysis Workshop of the Association of Hungarian History Teachers about the volume *OFI experimental textbooks, History 10* and the related digital curriculum and exercise book. https://tte.hu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/kritika_teljes_10_-tortenelem_vegl.pdf: 10–12. last seen: 31.10.2019.

118 Ádám Kolozsi, "Indokolg meg, miért van igaza Orbán Viktornak!" [Prove Why Viktor Orbán Is Right]. https://index.hu/tudomany/2016/09/06/a_baloldal_a_radikalizs_az_allami_torikonyv_szerint/, last seen: 31.10.2019.

119 Katalin Julianna Dinnyés, *Nemek ábrázolása az Oktatásutató és Fejlesztő Intézet gimnáziumi kísérleti és újgenerációs matematika tankönyveiben*. [Gender Representation in the New Generation of Grammar School Mathematics Textbook of the Institute of Education Research and Development]. http://www.jgypk.hu/tanszek/alkeszseseg/01_IntezetMenu/12Tehetseg/DinnyesKatalin_2018_06_15.pdf

Since its inauguration in 2010, the party governing Hungary at present radically changed the situation of higher education, its tasks, its available instruments (finances), and its working conditions (legal environment) as well as the means and methods of the sector management and (in case of state universities) of the maintainer control.

From the beginning, the government's attitude and the reasons for the changes were clearly demonstrated by the Kálmán Széll Plan developed in 2010 and adopted in 2011, which claims the following: "Sacrificing a large amount of public money, we maintain institutions that do not serve the interests of the economy since they do not contribute to the creation of values but to the increase of state debt. At a great cost, young people receive masses of university and college degrees that do not help them to enter the job market. Due to the lack of appropriate government measures, the structure of education is bad, and sciences and technological knowledge are underrepresented in higher education programs."¹²¹ Some of these charges are difficult to interpret, or they are based on dubious premises (in comparison to which requirements is the structure of education bad; how does that contribute to the increase of state debt; why should the entire higher education serve the interest of economy), while others are simply wrong, like the reference to the difficulties of finding employment.¹²² The government's attitude, imbued with complete distrust in higher education, was based on such risky statements. The brutal decrease of financial resources in 2012 was justified by the government claiming that the cost efficiency of higher education was not satisfactory, and they considered the assertion of quality aspects more and more as attempts to block progress. More of the relevant facts will be discussed later.

The government of education has tried to outline a strategy for higher education, partly due to its obligations to the European Union. Finally, a so-called strategic document under the title *Shifting Speed in Higher Education* was written by the autumn of 2014, then discussed and finally adopted by the government in 2016. This document, which can by no means be called coherent, first establishes that "...Hungarian higher education has become one of the most successful, most competitive sectors of our national economy" by 2014, but then returns to the formerly mentioned, groundless accusations, supplementing them with new ones: according to the text, higher education has grown lazy because "the institutions are in a situation without any actual competition or performance pressure, so their financial management is often prodigal, their administration is bureaucratic, several aspects of their management structure are out of date, moreover, the interests of their leaders, lecturers, and students do not always coincide."¹²³

The greatest problem with the higher education strategy is that in its background there is no deep analysis of the situation and no impact study which should serve as the basis for the action program. The approach to the issues is frequently one-sided, and the responses given to the questions do not make up a coherent system. In order to understand the events of the past 9 years, one more incident needs to be mentioned. In 2008, the present parties in government initiated a referendum for the abolition of tuition fees in higher education, and it succeeded. At that time, this initiative served their short-term political interest well, yet it became obvious after they seized power that the absence of tuition fees blocks the accomplishment of certain intentions of the government. Therefore, quite a few attempts could be observed in the last few years that aim at restoring tuition fees without the citizens noticing it (and they succeeded in case of several majors).

THE GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE MINIMISATION OF AUTONOMY

The first principle of the Magna Charta Universitatum establishes that "[t]he university is an autonomous institution [...] it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power." This principle does not prevail in Hungarian higher education, although the document was signed by the rectors of almost every notable Hungarian university.

The Higher Education Act (2011), which has been in force since 2011 (with numerous amendments), placed "the intellectual and spiritual renewal of the nation" in its centre, in contrast to the acts on higher education introduced in 1993 (by a

¹²⁰ The data in the chapter on Higher Education are quoted from the publication *A magyar felsőoktatás egy évtizede 2008–2017* [A Decade of Hungarian Higher Education] (Edited by Gergely Kovács and József Temesi József. BCE Nemzetközi Felsőoktatási Kutatások Központja, 2018), unless indicated otherwise.

¹²¹ Széll Kálmán terv. Összefogás az adósság ellen: 22. last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹²² The rate of unemployment among graduate youth was 3.1% in Hungary in 2011, which was half of the percentage for youth with a maturity exam, and less than one-fifth of the percentage for youth with a lower level of education. Thus, the success rate of graduates on the job market was very good, even in an international comparison. See *Education at a Glance 2013*. OECD indicators. OECD Publishing.

¹²³ <https://www.kormany.hu/download/d/90/30000/fels%C5%91oktat%C3%A1si%20konceptci%C3%B3.pdf>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

conservative government) and in 2005 (by socialists and liberals), which unanimously took the freedom of teaching, studying, and research as the principle for the regulation of higher education, keeping in mind the European value system. The text of the Higher Education Act does not even include the word autonomy. In the Fundamental Law of Hungary, which entered into force on 1 January 2012, replacing the previous Constitution, the following passage can be read: “Higher education institutions shall be autonomous in terms of the content and the methods of research and teaching; their organisation shall be regulated by an Act. The Government shall, within the framework of an Act, lay down the rules governing the management of public higher education institutions and shall supervise their management.” It is a question if the autonomy of research and teaching really means freedom, and how much the freedom of teaching, studying, and research can prevail along with the very low level of organisational and financial independence.

From the regime change to 2011, the state supervised the appointment of the universities' rectors only in a legal sense, by approving the decision of the institutions. Between 2011 and 2015, the senate could only give their opinion about candidates applying for the position of rector, and the ministry sometimes made a decision quite opposite to the local ranking. The first such case – later used as an example to be followed – was the appointment of the rector at the University of Debrecen in 2013. Instead of the candidate supported by a two-third majority of the university's senate, another candidate was appointed, who had lost the preliminary evaluative election. In 2015, the senate regained their right to elect the rector, but by that time the significance of the rector's position had considerably decreased due to the introduction of the chancellor system in 2014.

The chancellor is the university's other leader of the same rank as the rector. His scope of authority includes the operation of the university, i.e. everything that is not particularly academic, above all economic, financial, and management tasks. He is subject to the relevant minister, and he is not responsible to anybody at the university. He is obliged to cooperate with the rector and the senate, but the limits of their scopes of authority are not clearly defined, and there is no institutionalised mechanism to resolve possible conflicts, therefore the limits of the chancellor's power are formed in practice. Thus, the autonomy of teaching and research declared in the Fundamental Law of Hungary works in a rather strange way. On paper, the university has two heads, in practice, however, the questions of education and research also have economic and financial relevance, so the chancellor has an impact on the operation of the entire institution. When the chancellor entered the system, the organisational and operational regulation was rewritten in every institution, creating an extremely centralised management and financing structure in many institutions, where the local responsibility for each subfield does not work, and the chancellor decides over everything and bears responsibility for everything in theory. Accordingly, the number of university employees who are neither lecturers nor researchers surged¹²⁴ when the chancellors entered the system – after the previous reduction justified by reasons of economy – yet the decision-making process slowed down ridiculously.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB) has fulfilled an important role in the quality assurance of Hungarian higher education ever since it was established in 1993. Its scope of activity included the evaluation of institutions, the accreditation of education programs (creating and launching new majors, PhD programs), and the evaluation of applications for professorships. Its autonomy was legally guaranteed, so the MAB elected its own president. The Higher Education Act adopted in 2011 drastically changed this situation: 11 months before their mandate was over, the entire body of the MAB was dismissed, and the new president of the committee as well as half of its members were legally ordered to be chosen by the minister responsible for education. Besides, the minister could choose the members of the Board of Appeals and the Board of Financial Supervisors, too. Because of the changes, the ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) ordered obligatory monitoring for the MAB. Some of the crucial issues were the lacking guarantees of the resources necessary for the operation and the lack of the committee's independence. As a result of that decision, the legal regulation of the MAB's operation was minimally changed to the necessary extent, so the conflict with the ENQA was resolved in the spring of 2015. The MAB, however, never regained its former status in the system of Hungarian higher education. Since 2017, every application for launching a new program first needs to be submitted to the minister for preliminary approval, and the document can proceed to the MAB only after the permission is received.

Apart from accreditation requirements, a major resulting in a degree is regulated in Hungary by the government decree defining each major's curriculum development, qualification, and output requirements (KKK). Compared to the

¹²⁴ *A magyar felsőoktatás egy évtizede* [A Decade of Hungarian Higher Education]. 2008–2017: 87.

international context, this is an unusual procedure, but it was also in force before 2010, and universities considered it as a quality guarantee against the competition of newly launched higher education institutions. In 2015, the government terminated numerous programs as part of the timely revision of the KKKs. Some of these decisions were simply administrative corrections, some other programs, however, were judged to be uneconomical – quite opposite to the facts – and closed down, and these happened to be programs operated by social science workshops critical of the government. (One of these arbitrarily terminated programs was the Social Studies BA.) Then in 2016/17, the government used its power deriving from the situation outlined above in a different way. First the pro-government media started a volley of propaganda with charges reminiscent of witch trials against the centres of education and research specializing in gender studies, to the extent that it was discussed in the parliament whether workshops active in that field can be called scientific at all. Next year, the judgment was passed before any trial: the curriculum development, qualification, and output requirements for the Gender Studies MA was erased from the government decree, which means that nobody in Hungary can issue a degree in that field, not even in the form of full-cost education or at a private university. In the latter case, the principle of economy, which had been used as a disguise, was not mentioned any longer, and the decision-makers simply claimed that the content of such programs is not compatible with the government's view of society – in other words, they explicitly ignored academic freedom.

Regarding the structure of institutions, a large-scale integration was accomplished in Hungary in 2000, in harmony with the international trends. Then the state did not initiate changes until 2012; after that, however, it started to reorganise the institutional structure in a hyperactive style. This trend involves not only the finalisation and correction of previously started integration processes and the handling of real problems (although not always after thorough consideration, and often completely neglecting the opinion of those concerned), but also another tendency: the establishment of “favourite” institutions and providing exceptional opportunities for them. Such actions were the secession of the University of Physical Education from Semmelweis University (2014) and of the University of Veterinary Medicine from Szent István University (2016), which went against the former efforts for integration. Above all, the establishment of the National University of Public Service (NKE, 2012) and of the Pallasz Athéné University (2016) belong to this category. NKE, which was created by the integration of three former institutions or faculties (state administration, military, and police officer education), falls only partially under the Higher Education Act (for example it does not have a chancellor), and its operation is regulated by a separate law. Building its new campus consumes most of the money received from the EU for the development of higher education, which is an exceptionally large sum in terms of Hungarian higher education expenses, and above that, this investment causes serious damage to the environment, and its expansion harms other important institutions. All in all, the Hungarian state spends three or four times as much public money on a student at NKE as on an average student of Hungarian higher education.¹²⁵ The new institution has received a legally guaranteed monopoly in the field of political science, which was artificially separated from education in law, thus placing numerous programs of already existing law faculties into an impossible situation. Since the government withdrew state grants from studies in law everywhere, the only chance in higher education left for students interested in law but not able to afford high tuition fees is practically the NKE. The centralisation of these programs forecasts many major problems, including the fulfilment of positions in the central administration offices and the local governments in the disadvantaged regions of Hungary, since young people obtaining their degrees in the capital are not always willing to find employment in the countryside.

The other institution that receives an exceptional amount of support in comparison to the resources of Hungarian education in general is Pallasz Athéné University – which by now has been renamed as John von Neumann University – established by merging the colleges of Kecskemét and of Szolnok. The university is funded by the Hungarian National Bank through its Pallas Athéné Foundation, where 200 billion HUF were transferred from the Bank's foreign exchange gain in 2014, illegally withdrawing this huge amount from the scope of the central budget.¹²⁶

SHRINKING HIGHER EDUCATION, EXCLUDING SOME SOCIAL GROUPS

It is an explicit aim of the current government's policy on higher education to reduce the number of college and university students and to strengthen vocational trainings instead of programs issuing degrees. In Hungarian higher education, a great

¹²⁵ <https://oktatas.atlatszo.hu/2015/09/30/a-kozszolgalati-egyetem-privilegiumai-ii/>, last seen: 31.10.2019; <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/belfold-archivum/omlik-a-penz-a-kozszolgalati-egyetemnek-3863670/>, last seen: 31.10.2019. The second best supported university after the NKE was the University of Physical Education in 2015. https://hvg.hu/itthon/20151228_36_milliarddal_tomi_ki_a_kormany_Mocsai_e, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹²⁶ https://index.hu/aktak/az_mnb-alapitvanyok_botranya/, last seen: 31.10.2019.

expansion could be observed from the regime change until the end of the 2000s. The gross enrolment ratio, that is, the proportion of students receiving higher education in comparison to the total number of the age group between 18 and 23, did not really exceed 10% in the years before the regime change proportion of students receiving higher education in comparison to the total number of the age group between 18 and 23, did not really exceed 10% in the years before the regime change (the number can only be estimated due to the lack of precise statistical data), whereas it reached 65% in the top year of 2006, and it has been declining ever since. Higher education has lost its popularity since then, because a college or university degree does not mean such a huge step forward regarding social status as it used to twenty years ago. The former government also voiced the opinion that the number of people with degrees would be too high. At the same time, the average salary of people with degrees is steadily the double of those without a degree – which is an outstanding rate in comparison to the developed world – which clearly indicates that the proportion of people with degrees in the job market is not too high but actually too low. People with degrees tend to find a job sooner on average than people with a lower level of education.

While the proportion of higher education decreased anyway, the unambiguous break took place and the acceleration of decline started when Viktor Orbán announced the conception of a self-sustaining higher education in 2012. That would have meant that all students need to pay for all the costs of their studies with the support of a student loan system, except for a few programs defined by the government, where state grants would be provided. This led to a huge wave of protest, as a result of which the Prime Minister partially withdrew his suggestion. In three quarters of higher education, most of the students obtaining their first degree still do not have to pay for their tuition, only the state funded education was renamed as education with state grants. Yet 16 programs have been selected by the government where only full-cost studies were allowed according to the original vision. These programs covered about 25% of higher education according to student numbers in higher education in 2012, and included such crucial fields as studies in law or economy, which have an utmost significance from the point of view of educating the future economic and political elite. In response to the widespread protest against this plan, the government made the concession to provide grants for the students entering these majors with exceptionally high scores, which means about 10% of all the students in these programs. Since then, the rate of full-cost programs has been increased to 41. At the time of publishing the results of the 2019 entrance exams, an unexpected increase of tuition fees was also announced for several programs, sometimes tripling the cost to be paid.

Hungary has undertaken it as an EU 2020 target to have a 34% rate of people with degrees in the age group 30-34, which is a relatively modest objective in comparison to the general EU target, which is 40%. As a result of the former expansion in higher education, this mission has already been accomplished. Regarding the number of students entering higher education after 2012, however, even this moderate rate will definitely decline by the mid-2020s, for the gross enrolment ratio in Hungary is decreasing, in contrast to the world tendency: in 2009, it was 62% in Hungary, which was the same as the average of the 49 developed countries, slightly lagging behind the averages in the EU and in the OECD countries, whereas by 2015 it fell back to 51%, while the average in the EU reached 75%, and the other two reference groups are around 70%. According to numerous indicators, this decline reflects that people with weaker social statuses are driven out of higher education. For example, the proportion of disadvantaged and highly disadvantaged students entering higher education reached 10% in 2011, and it decreased to 2% by 2016.¹²⁷ Another important symptom is that most of the decrease in the number of students affects higher education institutions in the countryside, especially former colleges (now called universities of applied sciences).

The continuation of these negative tendencies is forecast by the decision in 2014 which prescribes a B2 level foreign language exam as a precondition of starting higher education studies from 2020. Undoubtedly, the foreign language skills of Hungarian university students and of people with degrees should be significantly improved, and it also seems reasonable that the appropriate place for learning at least the first foreign language should be the secondary school. Yet the efficiency of the current foreign language teaching practice in public education is extremely low. Therefore, the new requirement will mostly be met by those whose family can afford private tutors. In the past few years, 45% of the students entering higher education did not have the above-mentioned level of foreign language skills.¹²⁸ Whatever the expectations of the government of education regarding the motivational power of the new obligation are, it will surely lead to a further decrease in the number of students entering higher education, and the youth coming from weaker social and economic backgrounds will be forced out of higher education again.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *A közoktatás indikátorrendszere 2017* [The System of Indicators in Public Education]. Edited by Júlia Varga. MTA KRTK KTI, 2018.

¹²⁸ *A közoktatás indikátorrendszere 2017* [The System of Indicators in Public Education]. Edited by Júlia Varga. MTA KRTK KTI, 2018.

¹²⁹ A remark after closing the manuscript: In response to the widespread protest, the government announced the revocation of the language exam precondition on 07.11.2019.

The average education level of its population has a decisive impact on a country's economic performance. This is the reason why the whole strategy trying to increase the number of people participating in vocational trainings at the expense of students in higher education and not by involving unskilled people is wrong.

WEAK FUNDING, STRONG CONTROL

The nominal sum appropriated in the budget for the state support of higher education decreased more than 20% from 2009 to the lowest level in 2013.¹³⁰ In 2014, a bit of increase could be observed, and the level stabilised in the following two years (although still remaining nominally 10% below the previous level). In 2017, a notable increase of salaries, which could not be postponed any longer (and which still left lecturers' salaries under the real value of their income in 2008) induced a serious development, and that level can be considered permanent since then. The real value of this support is still remarkably lower than the support received in 2009. Even before 2010, the state funding of higher education did not reach the level of 1% of the GDP, considered to be normal in the developed world (2009: 0.85%), but it fell back to 0.56% by 2013, and the mild improvement since then only means that the level of support stabilised slightly above 0.6%. As an especially serious consequence of the meagre support and of the bad traditions within Hungarian higher education, the salary of lecturers in lower positions (assistant lecturers and senior lecturers) is conspicuously low, moreover, there are usually no financial conditions either for the research necessary for the progress in their career, nor for ranking them in higher salary categories. The guaranteed basic salary of assistant lecturers is 37% of the basic salary of professors – which is quite low in itself – staying far below the level of international standards. The gross salary of a university senior lecturer is about 277 000 HUF (840 EUR). Consequently, masses of young talents leave Hungary, the average age of higher education lecturers is growing, and there are occasional shortages of staff.¹³¹

The distribution of this low-level funding also reflects the political and ideological preferences of the government, quite independently of considerations regarding quality and fairness. Since 2014, the per capita support for students in not state-funded institutions of higher education (90% maintained by churches, 10% by foundations) exceeds that of students in state-funded institutions. In the meantime, the total number of students as well as the so-called state-grant (that is: free of tuition-fees) places in state-funded institutions of higher education decreased by 20% between 2009 and 2017 (primarily due to the losses of institutions in the countryside, especially in the case of former colleges), the relevant numbers in church-maintained institutions remained the same, whereas higher education maintained by foundations lost half of its students and 90% of its state-grant places.

The rate of appropriations that the ministry can decide about on a discretionary basis increased from 10% to 25% in comparison to the entire budgetary support. Most of that sum is the so-called “excellence support”, which is formally distributed on a basis of competitive applications; however, the circumstances and the way the call is made exclude any real competition from the onset, and it is easy to predict who the winners will be. A smaller part of that resource belongs to the Higher Education Restructuring Fund, which covers – among other expenses – the financial needs arising from the work force reduction coerced on institutions (severance pay, etc.).

The form of financial support has been transformed considerably. The previous complex system based on numerous normative elements has been replaced by a new one, in which there is only one normative component: support according to the number of students. This pushes institutions toward cheap mass education: the institution comes off badly if it employs a larger number of highly qualified lecturers, who, accordingly, belong to higher categories in the wage grid, and if the number of students in seminars and other contact classes does not exceed the limit above which it becomes impossible to work with students individually. It is not by accident that financial crises occurred in 2018 precisely at those university faculties which were reluctant to give up certain quality standards due to their traditions and structures.

This type of funding produces conspicuously low indicators in an international comparison and enhances a movement opposite to international tendencies regarding the state support of higher education, the rate of all higher education expenses in comparison to the GDP, and the rate of per capita state support for students in comparison to the GDP.¹³²

130 In comparison, it can be mentioned that the government spent annually as much on football stadiums in 2011–2014 as on the entire Hungarian higher education. (Interview with sport economist Mihály Muszbek by Ernő Kardos. <https://www.es.hu/cikk/2014-12-05/kardos-erno/82228230nem-epiteni-hanem-bontani-kene-a-stadionokat-magyarorszagon8221.html>), last seen 31.10.2019.)

131 A magyar felsőoktatás egy évtizede 2008–2017 [A Decade of Hungarian Higher Education]. 87, 89.

132 A magyar felsőoktatás egy évtizede 2008–2017 [A Decade of Hungarian Higher Education]. 96–97.

The anomalies in the calculation methodology of the government need also to be highlighted. Often all the income of institutions is labelled as support, including the money received from EU funds as well. The income received for core activities versus the sources for specific targets – which therefore cannot be freely used – are not separated clearly. This is the reason why some institutions' accounts at the Treasury have a positive balance while the conditions for their smooth everyday operation are not ensured.

INTERNATIONALISATION – WITHOUT EUROPE

Regarding the internationalisation of higher education, Hungary can boast of quite impressive data at first glance, even in an international comparison. Taking a closer look at the numbers, however, one can see that there are hardly any positive phenomena regarding our integration into the European Higher Education Area and the impact of the internationalisation on the quality of higher education.

The number of foreign students in Hungarian higher education was about 32 000 in 2017, which was 11.4% of all the students. Approximately half of them come from the Hungarian minorities of the surrounding countries. Another significant component of the total number is the Hungarian state stipend called *Stipendium Hungaricum*, which brought 5300 students in 2017 and already 7500 students in 2018 to Hungary.¹³³ In the framework of the Erasmus program, Hungary received about 4000 students annually between 2013 and 2015, while the Tempus Public Foundation (TKA) knows about 5-6000 Erasmus+ and CEEPUS visiting students in 2017 and 2018. Besides, a large number of foreign (mostly German and Norwegian) students study medicine and veterinary studies in Hungary.¹³⁴ The government strategy *Shifting Speed in Higher Education* sets the aim to have 40 000 foreign students in Hungary by 2023. It is visible, however, that most of the students with foreign citizenships coming to Hungary choose the country rather due to political reasons, not because of professional or quality considerations. These aspects in themselves can be approved, since both the participation in the education of Hungarian intellectuals living beyond the borders and the support offered to students arriving from developing countries through the *Stipendium Hungaricum* mean a good use of the free capacities of Hungarian higher education while slightly increasing its income. Yet all that does not mean that Hungarian universities would receive students who come here because of the quality education or that their presence and demands would increase the standards. On the contrary, some of them, especially students getting *Stipendium Hungaricum*, cause severe quality issues. Many of them are chosen for the stipend by their own countries' education authorities in connection to intergovernmental agreements, therefore these students do not come to Hungary on the basis of their own decisions and interests, and they often have to enter programs that are totally inadequate for their individual ambitions and the level of their knowledge. In many institutions, there is a great pressure on departments providing the education and organising the entrance exams to accept everybody for their programs because of the income that the future student brings. Those institutions that offer education in the fields of medicine and veterinary studies have used a market gap well, and the ambition to keep their position undoubtedly has motivational power regarding quality as well. Yet even that cannot be considered real internationalisation either, as the foreign students mostly study separated from their Hungarian peers.

A high proportion of foreign students and a real international character can be observed in case of a few minor institutions, primarily at CEU, where the rate of foreign students was 82.6% in 2017 even in programs giving Hungarian degrees (at least part of whom will hopefully stay in Hungary), at Andrásy University, at the University of Theatre and Film Arts, and the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. Apart from some very specific segments, the offer of the Hungarian higher education is not present in the European Higher Education Area. One of the main reasons for that situation is that none of the programs in foreign languages have been free of tuition fees since 2004, moreover, the fees are relatively high in international comparison. That takes away the chance from most of the Hungarian higher education in the international competition.

Hungarian students can do part of their studies abroad primarily through the Erasmus/Erasmus+ programs. The volume has been around 4500–5000 students travelling abroad in the past few years.¹³⁵ The EU 2020 target is that at least 20% of the students should have studied at least one semester abroad as a visiting student by the time they receive their degrees. The

¹³³ *Tempus Közalapítvány éves jelentése 2017* [Annual Report of Tempus Public Foundation, 2017]. https://tka.hu/docs/palyazatok/eves_jelentes_2017.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.
Tempus Közalapítvány éves jelentése 2018 [Annual Report of Tempus Public Foundation, 2018]. https://tka.hu/docs/palyazatok/ves_jelentes_2018.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹³⁴ Most of the approximately 9800 students participating in full-time, undivided training in Hungary in 2017 belong to that group. The two countries from which the largest numbers of students come are Germany and Norway, with about 4000 students in total.

¹³⁵ *Tempus Közalapítvány éves jelentése 2017* [Annual Report of Tempus Public Foundation, 2017]. https://tka.hu/docs/palyazatok/eves_jelentes_2017.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.
Tempus Közalapítvány éves jelentése 2018 [Annual Report of Tempus Public Foundation, 2018]. https://tka.hu/docs/palyazatok/ves_jelentes_2018.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

current government strategy plans to meet this target by 2023, but to accomplish it, the number of Hungarian students travelling abroad, which has been stagnating for the last six years, would need to be doubled. One of the likely reasons for the low number of students doing part of their studies abroad is the high cost of living there, which is not compensated enough by grants and other accessible resources.

There is a large number of Hungarian students who do their studies in higher education entirely at universities of foreign, primarily Western European countries. Total numbers are not really available, but the number of Hungarian students studying in the United Kingdom, for example, grew from 2000 to 4000 between 2008 and 2016. Apart from Great Britain, the main target countries are Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark. This mobility could result in a great import of knowledge if these people would seek employment in Hungary after they have received their degrees. Unfortunately, however, the situation is typically different, and both studying abroad and the migration of young people with degrees have become important factors in the loss of Hungary's intellectual capital. Since 2012 the Hungarian government has been experimenting with making the migration of young people with degrees more difficult by compelling students studying with a state grant to take the obligation of working in Hungary for the same number of years as the length of their tuition during the first twenty years of their career – or else they will have to refund the costs of their training after the twenty years are over. The first visible result of this measure was a significant increase in the number of people beginning their higher education studies abroad. The number of these students may not seem very large, but regarding quality, the loss is very sensitive: in a highly differentiated Hungarian public education, the great majority of students taking the maturity exam in secondary schools with the best output results often wish to study abroad. After all, this is the same problem as in the case of foreign students expected to come to Hungary: under the present circumstances, Hungarian higher education is unable to offer attractive enough study opportunities either for Hungarian or other European youth, although its intellectual capital and scientific prestige in several fields would enable it to do so.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

The Central European University is the most important institution which was established by the cultural philanthropic activity of George Soros in Post-Soviet Eastern Europe. Its basic costs are covered by the endowment founded by Soros. In 1991, it started its operation on a campus in Prague and on one in Budapest, and since 1995, Budapest has been its sole centre. The basis for the university's operation is the accreditation obtained in the US (New York State and Middle States) in 1993 and the Hungarian (and thus EU) accreditation connected to it in 2004. The language of teaching is English, and the university primarily offers MA and PhD programs in the fields of humanities and social sciences. It was established with the mission to build a bridge after the change of the political system for Central and Eastern European university students that allows them to study in an Anglo-Saxon system and to join the world of global academic discourses and networks. This mission was mostly accomplished: in the past 25 years, CEU with its approximately 1600 students, 200 own lecturers and a large number of visiting professors has become the most international educational and research centre in Hungary. In the past years, it has been ranked among the 100 best institutions in many fields, and it has proved to be the most successful university in Hungary regarding EU applications (ERC, Erasmus Mundus) as well. It is important to note that 25% of the students and half of the lecturers and the administrative staff are Hungarian, and with their help, CEU has built a strong cooperation with other universities and research centres in Hungary.

Why did such a successful university need to be forced out of Hungary?¹³⁶ After 2010, universities found themselves in the crosshairs of the Orbán government several times (see the chapter on higher education in this report). While state universities' budgets could be subjected to the strict political control of chancellors appointed by the central administration since 2011, the same method could not be applied in a private university. Besides, the more intense network CEU has built with the Hungarian world of universities and sciences, the more it irritated the people working on building autocracy. The wide international scientific cooperation embodied by CEU did not mean an advantage, either. It is a telling parallel that Collegium Budapest (established at the same time as the CEU, in 1992, at the initiative of the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin and with the support of 5 European countries and several private institutions, based on the model of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton) had to close down in 2011 as the first institutional victim of the second Orbán government,

136 See the detailed description of the Lex CEU scandal: Zsolt Enyedi, "Democratic Backsliding and Academic Freedom in Hungary." *Perspectives on Politics*, 16/4 (2018): 1067–1074.

because the government did not renew the cooperation with the international partners.¹³⁷ To fill the gap created by the termination of Collegium Budapest and to maintain its heritage, CEU established a smaller Institute for Advanced Study (CEU IAS), using CEU funds.

The principal reason for the offensive against the CEU was evidently its founder and main sponsor, George Soros. It is beyond the scope of this report to outline that mendacious and cynical campaign in which Viktor Orbán made Soros – slandered in mass media, in giant posters, and at “national consultations” – the number 1 public enemy of Hungary, setting the aim to drive him out of the country in 2017. The series of attacks made it clear that the most important institution founded by Soros, CEU, could not remain intact in that campaign either. The assault against the CEU was started in February 2017 by the main ideologist of the Orbán government, Mária Schmidt, who stigmatised the idea – introduced by Karl Popper – of the “open society” giving the name of Soros' foundation (the Open Society Foundation), and who described the new Central-Eastern European intellectuals graduating at CEU as the agents of the “Soros empire”, a “shadow power” replacing the Soviet “Eastern bloc”. Soon a coordinated press campaign supported by Orbán's radio speech accused CEU – consistently called “the Soros university” –, issuing both American and Hungarian degrees, of “fraud”.

In March 2017, the infamous law proposal known as Lex CEU, which was adopted by the parliament within a week with the aid of an accelerated procedure, introduced a new regulation for the operation of foreign universities in Hungary. This bound the issuing of further degrees in the program accredited in the US to a system of conditions with a very short, 9-month deadline meant to be impossible to keep for the CEU. It prescribed, among others, that foreign universities active in Hungary can only be accredited if they also have higher education programs in their “home country”. CEU was founded as an independent institution in Hungary – similarly to other American universities working in Europe – and the American and Hungarian accreditation had been enough to have its university status acknowledged. With great efforts, the CEU – in cooperation with Bard College in New York State – fulfilled the requirements of the new law by August 2017. Still, there was another criterium: the law bound the operation of the university to a signed interstate agreement, apart from the professional recognition. An agreement was negotiated in detail with the governor of New York State, Andrew Cuomo and prepared for signing by September 2017 in vain, as the Hungarian government prolonged the deadline for meeting the criteria set in Lex CEU.

The hamstring of the CEU has triggered an immense protest. The rector, Michael Ignatieff, fought a heroic battle to refute the slander of the government propaganda and to mobilise international solidarity. Reputable universities and academies, several thousand scientists, including Nobel Prize winners, American senators, and numerous politicians, as well as the relevant committees of the EU tried to convince Viktor Orbán to change his mind. There had been no precedent for such a restriction of academic freedom in the EU, so an infringement procedure was initiated against Hungary. The Lex CEU triggered one of the largest series of demonstrations in Hungary against the Orbán government, bringing sometimes as many as 80 000 people in the streets, while most of the Hungarian universities, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences declared their solidarity. The law is unconstitutional according to several acknowledged jurists (for example the former president of the Constitutional Court of Hungary), therefore a Constitutional Court proceeding was initiated, but the committee with a pro-government majority has still not been willing to put the question on its agenda up to this day. Representatives of the US diplomacy also tried to convince Orbán in vain. All that effort was not enough to make Viktor Orbán sign the interstate agreement required by the Lex CEU in 2018. (“You need time for a good decision,” he said cynically in an interview.) The agreement is still not signed.

Consequently, the CEU Board of Trustees was compelled to make the decision in 2018 to move the programs offering American degrees to Vienna. More precisely, a new university will be built in Vienna based on the offer of the city's local government and the accreditation obtained there, for a university cannot really “move”. Although certain components of the CEU's institution (for example the Open Society Archives, the CEU IAS and numerous PhD and research programs) remain in Budapest, the university itself with its diverse community of students and professors will disappear. Chasing away Central Europe's most significant international university from Hungary is a great loss and a shame for Hungarian culture.

¹³⁷ Regarding the Collegium Budapest, see: Gábor Klaniczay, “A New Kind of Academic Institution: The Institute for Advanced Study. International and Hungarian Experiences.” *Constraints and Driving Forces in Economic Systems: Studies in Honour of János Kornai*. Edited by Balázs Hámori and Miklós Rosta. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016: 87–105.

This chapter will present an overview of the Hungarian research policies and research management. After a brief summary of the antecedents, we will describe in greater detail the changes that took place under the Fidesz governments after 2010, and the situation emerging in the wake of the general elections of April 2018.¹³⁸

ANTECEDENTS

Following World War II, Hungary became part of the Soviet Union's sphere of interest. Until then, science policies corresponded to the general European practice, i.e. scientific work mostly relied on the research output of universities and a few smaller government-established institutes (e.g. the Balaton Limnological Institute or the Teleki Pál Institute, which mainly dealt with issues of Hungarian history and culture).

Soviet-type science policies became the norm after 1949. Hungary, similarly to the other countries in the Soviet sphere of influence, adopted the model of Soviet research institutes supervised by academies of sciences, created on the pattern of the pre-World War I German example of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft. In this model, research in natural sciences, which required the largest funds, was transferred from universities to institutes that could operate under greater confidentiality (such as the Central Research Institute for Physics).¹³⁹ Furthermore, those scholars who may have had “toxic influence” on students were removed from education, which also meant that the politically unreliable professors could still work in their fields, finding refuge in the Academy's institutes. The continuously expanding network of institutes of the Academy, which covered nearly all fields of science, had acquired its final structure by the 1960s.¹⁴⁰

Until the regime change in 1990, research proper was carried out in three types of institutions: a) research institutes of the Academy, b) universities and a select list of colleges ('Hochschulen'), and c) industrial research institutes, which focused mainly on applied research and technological development. Some of the universities were 'specialised universities', partly because faculties of medicine were forcibly divorced from traditional universities in the early 1950s, and partly because new institutions of higher education were established for specialized fields, mainly in industrial centres, such as the university for heavy industry in Miskolc, which met the demand for metallurgy in the region, or the university of chemical industry in Veszprém in the vicinity of a local nitrogen plant.

Academic qualifications were also centralised and placed under political supervision. The two-tier system of qualifications (Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences), introduced in imperial Russia on the recommendation of German scientists and revived by the Soviet Union after a short interruption, was also adopted in Hungary in 1950, replacing the PhD degree conferred by universities.¹⁴¹ The Scientific Qualification Committee was controlled in theory by the government, but in practice by the Communist Party, whose hegemony was unquestionable. Decisions were formally taken by the scientists who made up the Committee, but to earn a Candidate's degree applicants had to take exams in ideology and Russian language, which several conservative scholars refused to do, thus they did not even apply. Party secretaries also played a key part in promotions within the universities. Another example which sheds light on the functioning of party control is that even though members of the Academy decided whom to accept among their ranks, the party members, who were always in majority, received instructions from party headquarters on which candidates should be elected in line with party discipline.

By the 1980s, the strict ideological control had loosened significantly. Although there were exceptions, people with real scientific achievements held the appropriate positions, and had access to research projects and funding. There was also less administrative control regarding travel abroad. In the 1960s any visit or scholarship abroad required permission from the party and the Ministry of Interior (i.e. the KGB-like secret police), but by the 1980s scholars could travel almost freely for scientific purposes – with the exception of the most visible dissidents.

¹³⁸ For general sources, cf. <https://mta.hu/>; <https://mta.hu/english>; <https://www.es.hu/szerzo/51901/kenesei-istvan>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹³⁹ <https://www.kfki.hu/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴⁰ <https://mta.hu/hatteranyagok/a-magyar-tudomanyos-akademia-tortenete-105670>, last seen: 31.10.2019.; <https://mta.hu/english>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴¹ https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index.php?name=v_2_3, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Therefore, the swift transformation taking place in 1989/90 caused little disruption in scientific research: by this time few leadership positions had still been occupied by people who were placed there because of their party career. Party offices at universities and research centres were closed down without any hassle, as were the ideological (“Marxist-Leninist”) departments, whose courses used to form an obligatory part of the curriculum. Apart from this, there was no political cleansing, thus the regime change caused no disturbances in the scientific sector. However, due to Hungarian industrial companies dramatically losing ground, research institutes sponsored by ministries were closed down one after the other, and only a few have survived to the present day.

The President of MTA elected in 1985, historian Iván T. Berend, who belonged to the reform wing of the Communist Party, declined to be nominated anew in 1990. His successor was Domokos Kosáry, who had been repeatedly persecuted in the party-state era, but who had become a member of the Academy by 1982. (Berend later became a distinguished professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, USA, demonstrating the above point that leadership positions were held by scientists or scholars with significant achievements.)

The Higher Education Act of 1993, and the Academy Act of 1994 (both of which were drafted by the conservative government between 1990–94, the latter with significant contributions from President Kosáry) regulated the framework of research and scientific activities in line with European norms.¹⁴² The right to confer PhD degrees was returned to the universities, and the long-standing tradition of habilitation was also restored. After lengthy debates, the research institutes of MTA remained part of the Academy, although with a new organisational structure. This was regarded at the time as the most efficient solution since it was to cause the least disruption in research activities.

Due to the decline and the slow consolidation of the economy in the following years, research at the universities and MTA received less funding than necessary, and the cutbacks led to dismissals. After the merger of universities and the integration of doctoral programmes within universities on a disciplinary basis, the rationalisation of the Academy's research network also became increasingly urgent.

THE REORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH NETWORK OF THE HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (2011)

Until 2011, the MTA research network comprised 38 independent institutes of varying sizes, with staff numbers ranging from 30 to several hundred. Besides these, there were also about 100 university-based research groups financed by the MTA, which could apply for renewable funding for 5-year periods. This funding was in most cases used to cover the salaries of 3 to 10 researchers, as well as the acquisition and maintenance of the necessary equipment. The reorganisation took place in 2011, as a result of which units of varying sizes were merged into 10 research centres and 5 independent institutes. Various institutes located in outdated buildings were moved to the newly built Research Centre for Natural Sciences. The funding of university-based groups continued unchanged.

Due to the successful lobbying of President of MTA József Pálinkás, a new multi-tiered grant system was also introduced: special postdoctoral fellowships and a so-called “Momentum Programme” were launched, targeting researchers based in Hungary and likely to win prestigious international grants, or those outstanding researchers who were settled abroad but were willing to return to the country. The programme was meant as a first step towards successful ERC grant applications. When Pálinkás' mandate expired, on 1 January 2015 he became head of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH), which was newly established based on his plans, and took over the management of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA) programmes from MTA. Pálinkás allotted a higher budget to these programmes, and he also launched several new grants of excellence (postdoctoral and 'Frontline' grants). It seemed a small price to pay in return for all this that a number of institutes in the humanities and social sciences had to move out of their elegant historical buildings in the Castle District of Buda, which the government had resolved to take over, because in the meantime another modern headquarters was built for three large research centres in humanities and social sciences.

ATTACK ON INDEPENDENT ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS (2017)

A different chapter of this report deals with the erosion of the autonomy of higher education, which was achieved mainly through the introduction of the chancellor (i.e., finance tsar) system and the virtual abolition of normative financing. We only mention it here because the final stage of this process coincided with the assault on the remaining independent scientific institutions.

¹⁴² For the current situation, see: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1100204.TV>, last seen: 31.10.2019.
<https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=99400040.TV&celpara=&dbnum=1>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

The first attack was launched in February 2017 by Mária Schmidt, a devout critic of the Enlightenment and virtually the sole ideologue of the Orbán government, which provides her with institutional and financial support as well as special privileges. Schmidt criticised the Central European University (CEU) because of its promotion of liberalism and the ideas of open society, which Schmidt deeply disapproved of.¹⁴³ The next attack soon followed, this time in the guise of a legislative measure targeted in principle against foreign institutions of higher education operating in Hungary, but in fact against the CEU (see the chapter on the CEU). It should be noted that both the former and the current presidents of MTA, i.e. Professors Pálincás and Lovász stood by the CEU, and the general assembly of MTA adopted a statement of support in this issue.

Interestingly, the first salvo on the MTA was also delivered by the former historian Mária Schmidt in the weekly owned by her, about one year after the enactment of Lex CEU and a few days after the general elections.¹⁴⁴ As if Schmidt had understood and elaborated on the none too hidden message of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's last major speech before the 2018 elections: "After the elections we will naturally exert retribution: moral, political, and legal retribution alike."¹⁴⁵

Almost at the same time, a tabloid portal financed by bulk advertisement from the government's propaganda ministry launched an attack on President Pálincás, labelling him "anti-government" because of his statement supporting the CEU. Two months later Pálincás was relieved of his position after he declared that he was unable to cooperate with his new superior, Minister László Palkovics, as "he could not work in an environment where the minister wished to have a say in the evaluation of applications,"¹⁴⁶ in fact accusing the new minister of nepotism.

The process took a radical turn with a well-known event: at 10:36 on 12 June 2018, the Secretariat of MTA received an e-mail from the undersecretary of the new Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM), which in effect regrouped the budget of the research network from under the Academy's line to the Ministry's jurisdiction.¹⁴⁷ The MTA was entitled, as required by law, to express its opinion concerning the cuts planned in the budget act – but the deadline was 11:30 on the same day, that is, the MTA was allowed a total of 54 minutes to issue an opinion on being deprived of about two thirds of its budget for 2019. The government and Parliament resisted any amendment to the very end, and on 20 July they voted in favour of the cutbacks in the original form.¹⁴⁸

Thus, the ITM was to dispose of 28 billion HUF (~ 85 million €) of the 40 billion HUF that should have been received by MTA. In order to fathom its importance, we must understand the organisational structure and financial resources of the Academy and Hungarian research in general. The Innovation Fund managed by NKFIH provides c. HUF 80 billion/year mainly to enterprises. Neither universities nor the MTA research network perform very well in these fields, due partly to their institutional preference for fundamental research and partly to the low number of industrial contacts.

In principle, universities receive normative financing from the Ministry of Education, which fails to cover even the costs of education (salaries, building maintenance, utilities, etc.) in their entirety, especially in the case of experimental sciences. Previously there was normative financing available for research and institutional maintenance as well, which was simply discontinued and replaced partly by a grant system for individuals or teams, which had existed even before, and partly by the grant systems created from the EU's various cohesion funds, which left ample opportunities for ad hoc decisions. These were supplemented by occasional foreign grants and industrial contracts. The third major player was the MTA research network, whose core funding amounted to HUF 17 billion/year, with an additional HUF 3 billion/year allotted to university research groups. The remaining HUF 8 billion of the cutback was to cover the various postdoctoral, infrastructural, Momentum Programme, etc. grants.¹⁴⁹

The research conducted in the MTA research network is mostly, but not exclusively, fundamental research. Research projects have a 'bottom-up' character: the senior researchers heading the research groups suggest topics for the management of the institute, which decides about their viability and funding at strategic meetings. The core funding of the

¹⁴³ <https://budapestbeacon.com/fideszs-illiberal-democracy-may-eye-ceu-2017/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴⁴ <https://figyelo.hu/schmidt-maria-aki-a-ballib-korokban-adni-akar-magara-becsatlakozott-a-listazas-elleni-tiltakozok-koze>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴⁵ https://index.hu/belfold/2018/valasztas/2018/03/19/orban_elegtetel_media/, last seen: 31.10.2019.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSh000vsZkE>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴⁶ HVG, 4. July 2019, p. 66.

¹⁴⁷ The literal translation in quasi-officialese reads: "The minister responsible for the government's science policy shall provide budgetary support from the budget heading of his ministry to ensure the necessary personnel and equipment for the activities supporting the research portfolio of the Academy's institutions as well as other specific research assignments."

¹⁴⁸ <https://mta.hu/english/international-press-conference-at-the-academy-109812>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁴⁹ <https://nkfi.gov.hu/about-the-office/about-the-office>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

institutes is not even sufficient to entirely cover the salary of tenured senior researchers, the maintenance of buildings, utilities, and infrastructural costs. New projects may be funded by national grants (OTKA), or to a lesser extent by the internal grants of MTA, in addition to international cooperations, of course. There are also large projects of national significance, such as the National Brain Programme, the National Water Programme, or the Language Technology Platform, in which large universities or sometimes companies also participate besides the research institutes.

The quality of research conducted in the MTA research network is demonstrably high. An important indicator of the scientific performance of a country is the number and total sum of successful ERC applications. Hungarian scientists perform well compared to the region: Hungarian research groups have won the greatest number of ERC grants of the EU-13, that is, the countries that joined the EU in or after 2004. (However, this falls significantly behind the performance of Western European countries of a similar size.) It is worth taking a look at the distribution of successful ERC grants within Hungary: about half of these went to the MTA research network, one third to the CEU, while all the other Hungarian research sites and universities received only 20 per cent of the successful grants.¹⁵⁰

The MTA is at the same time the public body of all academics with a PhD degree who are citizens of or work in Hungary: c. 17,000 scientists are listed in its 11 scientific sections, participating in professional dialogue and international exchange programmes, attending conferences, etc. HUF 12 billion/year of the MTA's budget serves to cover the costs of these activities as well as the honoraria of members and doctors of the Academy. The cutbacks did not affect these functions of the MTA, but as the research network was supervised by the public body, the two organisations coexisted in a more or less healthy symbiosis. The research network, which in addition to its HUF 17 billion/year core funding has obtained a further yearly c. 50 billion HUF mainly from Hungarian and international sources (Horizon 2020, ERC, OTKA), was supervised by a 15-member council elected by the general assembly of MTA, while the government also delegated 3 consulting members with no voting rights. The MTA submitted an annual report on the achievements of the research network to the government and a biennial report on the state of science in Hungary to Parliament and received no negative feedback on these reports in the first eight years of the Fidesz-KDNP government.

THE APPROPRIATION OF THE MTA RESEARCH NETWORK BY THE GOVERNMENT (2018-19)

In September 2018, Minister of ITM Palkovics presented his plans to the presidium of MTA, after lavishing praise on the MTA's research network but criticising it at the same time for performing poorly in the field of patents and innovation. Palkovics intended to divide the research network in three, transferring one part to universities, dedicating another to applied research, and keeping the third, which mainly comprised institutes of humanities and social sciences, under the supervision of MTA. In the meantime, the government attempted to win over the employees of research centres of natural science to its plans with rather obvious propaganda, claiming that the resources taken from social sciences would be redirected to natural science institutes. This manoeuvre brought an unexpected result: widespread solidarity emerged between scientists working in different fields. For example, the Hungarian Academy Staff Forum was formed in January 2019, which, among others, held votes and asked for the opinions of all employees working in the MTA research network concerning the intended reorganisation. Participation was high, and an overwhelming majority of the researchers and employees of the MTA research network consistently voted down the government's plans due to their haphazard character and blackmailing nature.

A government decree issued in October 2018 defined the minister's duties regarding research management, which included drawing up detailed plans and conducting surveys. The minister failed to complete several of these tasks and completed others after the appointed deadline. The former included the elaboration of the new research, development and innovation strategy as well as reviewing the operation of government-controlled research centres. At the same time, the minister agreed that the operation and the results of the research network should be evaluated by a joint parity committee whose president from the government side was the orientalist and classical philologist Miklós Maróth (with one of the vice presidents delegated by the MTA serving as his counterpart).

The committee gathered information from the institutes by January 2019 and issued a statement in April stating that the research network was an organisation with outstanding results. By this time, the minister had decided to manage the research network in a different manner. Firstly, beginning with January 2019, only the part of the funding necessary to cover

¹⁵⁰ <https://mta.hu/english/mtas-research-centres-and-institutes-106085>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

the employees' salaries was provided to the MTA office in monthly instalments, and the payments were promised to continue only until May of the same year, which was a thinly veiled threat to the general assembly of the MTA, which was to discuss the fate of the research network early May. Next, on 31 January 2019, the Ministry announced a so-called Thematic Excellence Programme (TEP) with a deadline of one month and a rather controversial selection of subjects, to which it allocated the 17 billion HUF of the MTA research network and a further 11 billion HUF. It was this total of 28 billion HUF for which the MTA research network, the universities, and the government-established so-called research centres¹⁵¹ (in fact disbursement agencies without expecting services in return) could apply: the research network for its core funding, the others for extra research funding.

The MTA research network prepared the applications but, in the end, decided to boycott the programme because they insisted on the funding prescribed by law, which they finally received, although in a reduced form, due to their resistance. The "Institute for the Study of Hungarian Identity", an organisation of doubtful scholarly reputation established by government decree¹⁵² early 2019, received the unexpected gift of 440 million HUF from the TEP in addition to its annual budget of 880 million HUF set forth in a decree. This decision was taken by an "evaluation committee" of four members, of whom the one responsible for social sciences and humanities was the now familiar Professor Miklós Maróth.¹⁵³

Meanwhile the ITM and the MTA agreed to review the reorganisation of the research network in two "joint" workgroups. The negotiations were promising, and reaching an agreement seemed close with the exception of a sole issue, which was the following: the MTA requested two-thirds representation in the Governing Board (GB), whereas the ITM wanted an equal number of members delegated by the MTA and the government, with a president appointed by consensus. Furthermore, MTA also insisted that radical changes (the establishment, merger, closing, etc. of institutes) should require a two-thirds majority, and that no change should be affected in the structure of the research network for at least a year.

In May, over 80 per cent of the general assembly of MTA voted in favour of keeping the research network under the supervision of MTA. In response, the government submitted a package of bills on the reorganisation of the research network under the new name Eötvös Loránd Research Network (ELKH). After a two-month parliamentary procedure, the package was adopted on 2 July, and signed into law by the President of Hungary on 12 July. The law did not contain any of the points considered important by MTA, neither the two-thirds majority necessary for restructuring, nor the one-year moratorium. The members of the Board were delegated by MTA and ITM in equal numbers, and in the absence of a consensus the Prime Minister could appoint the president, who had the full scope of authority of the Board. The law also prescribed the establishment of the National Science Policy Council, whose members were to be appointed by the Prime Minister based on the recommendations of the Minister of ITM, who also acted as president of the Council. The Council was to decide which research projects would be funded by the state.¹⁵⁴

The Board was established on 1 August, and its president based on "consensus" is now the same Miklós Maróth, who not only represented the government in his previous two functions, but who has also been the Prime Minister's "personal advisor in questions pertaining to science policy" since 1 April 2019. The Minister of ITM announced Maróth unilaterally as the candidate for president the day before he was to negotiate it with the President of MTA. The MTA delegates were also announced by the Minister before the MTA itself could issue a statement about this.

Summarizing the events of 2018/19, we may conclude that the MTA's 17 billion HUF annual core funding is a relatively small sum compared to its significant achievements, thus economic efficiency cannot have been the reason for the reorganisation. Nor could the reason have been the low number of patents or a low performance in innovation, since, on the one hand, the MTA research network focuses on fundamental research, and, on the other hand, the representatives of the current government have never raised this issue with the Academy or Parliament during their two four-year periods in power since 2010. And most importantly: using research results for the purposes of innovation is the task of enterprises, rather than research centres. It is the government, and not MTA, that can support this by creating the necessary

151 Since Fidesz came to power, so-called research centres established by or close to the government have proliferated in Hungary: National Policy Research Institute (2011), Research Institute for National Strategy (Retörki)(2012), Institute for Hungarian Language Strategy (2014), Migration Research Institute (2015), Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families (2018), etc. For institutions of "alternative history", see the next chapter. Some of these propaganda institutes have already been merged with other organisations.

152 <https://mki.gov.hu/hu>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

153 <https://nkfih.gov.hu/hivatalrol/hivatal-hirei/temateruleti-kivalosagi-program-2019>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

154 <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1400076.TV&celpara=&dbnum=1>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

ecosystem.¹⁵⁵ Another argument against 'resetting' the MTA research network in the direction of innovation is that the government wishes to establish a separate network of research institutes for this very purpose.¹⁵⁶

The research network previously supervised by the Academy was effectively placed under government control, due not only to the one-sided composition of the National Science Policy Council, but also because the most important position, that of the President of the ELKH Governing Board, is held by a person who is without doubt the prime minister's man.¹⁵⁷ As a result, although not even the representatives of the government knew what they wanted to do with the research network early in the process, and the ITM's control over the budget of the research network only indicated that they wished to replicate the university chancellor system adapted to the MTA, now it has become clear that they simply intend to deprive one of the last autonomous organisations of its freedom. By placing Hungary's most extensive research network under government control, the academic freedom has been seriously violated in Hungary.¹⁵⁸

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE

In every age, historians have approached the past in the light of their own views and opinions, and their assessment of historical events has also been defined by the interests and the religious, cultural, or political convictions of their closer or wider communities or those of their sponsors. The work of historians became a scholarly discipline due to the fact that, in spite of the above factors, they strived to be "objective", examined their sources and the statements of facts critically, tried to reconstruct debated elements of the past in detail, and the modern historical scholarship has relied on the assistance of related fields (geography, economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, etc.) for its interpretations. Even though this has not eliminated the above-mentioned factors influencing value judgments, historical scholarship is nevertheless able to exercise significant control when it criticises and corrects the absurd, misleading, or distorted claims of "public history" – prevalent in everyday life and strongly influenced by the mass media and political movements – or the ideological interpretations of history by political parties.

20th-century totalitarianism added a new dimension to the above: total party control of the institutional system of historical studies. The ruling party used the authority of history to aid the dominant ideology in rewriting the past according to its own tastes, teaching it in schools and using it to determine the script of state-organized cultural events, anniversaries, and commemorations, as well as the criteria of censorship. The way in which the politics of remembrance exercised by Fidesz has tried to use history for political purposes since 2010 evokes the science policy of totalitarian systems in several respects.¹⁵⁹

State-funded historical remembrance politics was a favoured ideological instrument of the first Fidesz government in power between 1998 and 2002. Viktor Orbán and his supporters, who transformed the previously left-wing and radically liberal party into a national-Christian-conservative one in order to secure electoral victory, tried to make use of two periods of Hungarian history. The first of these was the representative endorsement of the symbols of the Hungarian state foundation and of the cult of Saint Stephen, for which the millennial celebrations provided a good opportunity: the Holy Crown and other royal insignia were ceremoniously transferred from the National Museum to the House of the Parliament, and more than fifty new statues were raised throughout the country representing the holy king who symbolised the alliance of the state and the church.

The other historical theme was militant anticommunism, used to discredit the party's two main political rivals, the socialists and the liberals: the socialists were stigmatised as the "successors of the communists", who only "pretended" to have turned democrats, while the liberal politicians of SzDSz were claimed to be the privileged, new-leftist offspring of communist parents. In order to support the historians representing its views, the Fidesz government founded two historical institutes to reinforce these claims, led by Orbán's main ideological advisor, Mária Schmidt: the Institute of the Twentieth Century in 1999, and the Institute of the Twenty-First Century in 2001. After this, the House of Terror Museum opened its gates, also with Schmidt at the helm, as an overture to the 2002 election campaign. Using high-standard display techniques and waxworks-like sceneries targeted at the largest general public, this exhibition equates the Holocaust, which claimed

155 https://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/MTA_strategiai_koncepcio/koncepcio_1_8.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

156 Which is called the Bay Zoltán National Applied Research Network, see: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A19H1446.KOR×hift=ffffff4&xtreferer=00000001.TXT>, last seen: 31.10.2019.¹⁵⁹ For a more detailed overview, see János Rainer, "Discourses of Contemporary History after 1989: A Fragmented Report." *East Central Europe*, 44 (2017): 216–248.

157 <https://24.hu/belfold/2019/08/02/maroth-miklos-orban-mta-palkovics-interju/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

158 Remark from December 2019: Since the establishment of the Eötvös Loránd Research Network last summer its management has shown barely any sign of activity and no increase of its budget in line with the promises before has been in evidence.

159 For a more detailed overview, see János Rainer, "Discourses of Contemporary History after 1989: A Fragmented Report." *East Central Europe*, 44 (2017): 216–248.

half a million victims in Hungary, with the cruelties committed by the communist secret service, and even suggests that the latter was more devastating. In addition, it blurs the boundary between the Stalinist dictatorship of the early fifties and the somewhat more liberal late socialism of the Kádár era that replaced it in the sixties. Moreover, the displayed photos of communist and secret service leaders singled out as the “culprits” responsible for the sins of the past tend to include those who may be identified as the “ancestors” of liberal democratic politicians.

When Fidesz finally won a two-thirds majority in 2010 after their defeat in the 2002 and 2006 elections, the party set out to rewrite history and utilise it through government decisions with renewed vigour. The attitude of the politicians is well illustrated by what Sándor Lezsák, the Fidesz-affiliated Vice President of Parliament said about a public monument in 2016. According to Lezsák, “after several decades of calumny and falsification of history”, it was high time “to speak up, to turn our prudent, authentic words and thoughts into deeds by the power of this historic two-thirds majority.”¹⁶⁰

The two main themes of the remembrance politics of the first Fidesz government, glorifying the origins of the thousand-year-old Hungarian state and exposing the sins of communism, were retained, interpreted on a wider scale, and complemented by new aspects.

As far as the medieval origins are concerned, in 2011 the theory endowing the Holy Crown with a legal personality, dating back to the years before 1945, was included in the constitution rewritten as the “Fundamental Law”, and the word “republic” was removed from the official name of Hungary. Nevertheless, the attention of politics increasingly focused on pagan ancestors instead of Saint Stephen. The issue of Hungarian prehistory and the origin of the Hungarians is a neuralgic debated point of Hungarian national identity. A significant part of the Hungarian public is appalled by the linguistic proofs of the relatedness of Finno-Ugric languages, accepted by scholars since the 18th century. Instead of this, they are more attracted to the medieval myth of the relatedness of warlike Huns and Magyars and the idea of the Scythian-Turkic origin of Hungarians. After 2010, the Jobbik party, the far-right opposition of Fidesz, tried to outbid the remembrance politics of Fidesz in this respect, demanding the establishment of an institute of prehistory that would correct the “distortions” committed by “official” historical research. It soon turned out that they were banging on open doors, as Fidesz – like in so many other areas – positioned itself even farther right and appropriated this demand. The Turkic kinship has been celebrated at the biennial “Hungarian tribal assembly” of the ethnocentric-pagan subculture called Kurultáj with the participation of Kazakh and other Central Asian traditionalists since 2008. In 2010, the main patron of this event became Sándor Lezsák, the newly appointed Fidesz-affiliated Vice President of Parliament. In 2012, Viktor Orbán inaugurated a huge monument in Ópusztaszer (the legendary site of the national assembly of pagan Hungarians), which depicted the Turul, the mythical bird of the Árpád dynasty (which in the interwar period was the symbol of irredentist far-right movements). In 2017, the Fidesz government established a new scientific institute to address these questions: the László Gyula Institute, which dealt with the same issues as the Academy's Early Hungarian History Research Group, i.e. the archaeological questions of Hungarian prehistory. The institute had hardly come into being when in 2018 it merged with the new government-controlled scientific centre endowed with significant funding, the Institute for the Research of Hungarian Identity. Oncologist Miklós Kásler, the newly appointed minister of “human resources” was one of the founding fathers of this institute.¹⁶¹ In the past decade, Kásler has repeatedly expressed his opinions – e.g. as the host of a show broadcasted on national television – on the problems of prehistory in the spirit of “alternative history”. For example, he tried to argue against the Finno-Ugric language relatedness with genetic tests. Recently he has expressed his hope that the newly established institute would “put the old Turkic – Finno-Ugric debate to rest” once and for all. In other words, a representative of the government indicated what final results he expected from the new research institute which is planned to have 101 employees. At the “World Nomad Games”, a gathering of Turkic peoples held in Kyrgyzstan in September 2018, Viktor Orbán said (without even waiting for the desired result, and causing great consternation among linguists) that “the Hungarian language is related to Turkic languages”. It is worth adding that Fidesz sustains this pagan cult besides promoting a pious Catholic and Christian aura, the historical and political aspects of which are outside the scope of the present report.¹⁶²

Whereas the political manipulation of Hungarian prehistory may seem a somewhat exotic turn, the anti-communist reinterpretation of 20th-century Hungarian history is directly linked to the ideology and politics of Fidesz. At the time of the first Fidesz government and in the following 8 years that Fidesz spent in opposition, the “communist” label primarily served

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.retorki.hu/hirek/2016/08/01/teleki-palra-emlekeztek-balatonboglaron>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁶¹ As it has already been mentioned, the Orbán governments have no separate ministries of culture or of science, as these are merely parts of the Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI), the ministry also responsible for education, sports, social policy, and healthcare.

¹⁶² On this, see the chapter of this report on Symbolic politics.

to propagate the calling to account for past sins that had not taken place after the regime change, and to discredit the Socialist Party, the old elite that remained close to power. After 2010 this negative connotation was extended to include all left-wing parties, which, according to Fidesz's rhetoric, has always represented an "anti-national" stance and mostly served foreign interests. At this point, this view echoed the commonplace argument of the Horthy era that the Treaty of Trianon, the dismembering of historical Hungary, was due to the betrayal of the left and/or the freemasons. The "commie" label was replaced by the use of the term "soclibs" or "libs". The notorious announcement of "illiberal" democracy in 2014 retrospectively condemned the manifestations and the historical representatives of left-wing, liberal, and "progressive" thought as far back as 1968 and even the Enlightenment.

The most significant debate broke out concerning the assessment of the 1956 revolution. The reburial of Imre Nagy and his associates in 1989 was one of the most important events that led to the regime change. However, conservative governments soon found the central role played by reform communist Imre Nagy inconvenient. Instead of Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs, the official commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the revolution (organized by Mária Schmidt using billions of forints) celebrated the myth of the "Pest kids" fighting in the streets. In 2019, the statue of Imre Nagy was moved from the vicinity of the Parliament outside the former party headquarters.

Another point of controversy in 20th-century Hungarian history is the discrimination against Hungarian Jews in the Horthy era, the question of "anti-Jewish laws", and the part played by the Hungarian state in the deportation of the Jews. In connection to this, Fidesz has taken the conventional stance of denying responsibility, although they distanced themselves from the revival of anti-Semitism: in their view, the German occupation of 19 March 1944 was solely to blame for the deportations, and the Hungarian authorities who took part in these events were innocent. The looming monument raised in Szabadság Square in 2014, dedicated to the "victims of the German occupation" of 1944, serves to reinforce this interpretation, blurring the boundary between the hundreds of thousands of Jews deported to death camps with the cooperation of the Hungarian authorities with the incomparably lower number of non-Jewish victims. Not even the widespread criticism and the blockade-like protests could change the government's view, and the monument promoting a false vision was erected overnight. It is an important circumstance, however, that the monument has not been inaugurated to the present day.

The ambiguities regarding the interpretation of the Holocaust are also reflected in the debate over the opening of the House of Fates museum, which would commemorate the victims and the rescuers. The main reason for the debate, which has been going on since 2014, was that the government entrusted the direction of the project to the director general of the House of Terror museum, Mária Schmidt, a staunch representative of the responsibility-denying remembrance policy. After the protestations of Hungarian and international Jewish organisations, Schmidt has recently been relieved of directing this project, but the professional and political debate has not abated.

Of course, the continuous evolution of various historical interpretations connected to different political views is not something that should be condemned. However, the new monuments and celebrations that influence public opinion, the replaced statues, the renamed streets, and especially the new state-commissioned textbooks that have been made compulsory teaching materials promote the official view of history using the means of power. From the point of view of scholarly research, it is an even more significant problem if according to the ideological intentions of the ruling party the state tries to interfere with professional historical research, expecting "scholarly" interpretations that echo and reinforce its intentions as a result.

We have seen in the case of prehistory that the government wishes to achieve its goals through establishing new research institutes depending on direct government control and funding, and unrelated to Academy research institutes or universities. After 2010, a reorganisation on an even larger scale took place in the case of institutes researching modern history. A new institute was added to the group formed around the House of Terror in 2011: the Institute for the Research of Communism. The National Heritage Institute created in 2013 deals primarily with the part of remembrance policy intended for the general public: taking care of the "national memorial sites" in cemeteries. The Committee of National Remembrance was established in the same year, and its "role under the law is to preserve the legal record of communist dictatorship, exploring the operation of power in the communist dictatorship, and to cooperate with the prosecutors in the detection of the circle of perpetrators of imprescriptible crimes committed during the communist dictatorship".

In addition to the above, the Research Institute for the History of Regime Change was established in 2013, and its role has become more prominent recently in connection with the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the regime change

of 1989. Current official public commemorations attempt to depict Viktor Orbán as a militant central figure of the regime change; in fact, 26-year-old Orbán entered the world of politics with his speech given on the occasion of the reburial of Imre Nagy and his companions, in which he “bravely” called on the Soviet troops to leave the country – which they had already begun at the time.

Of all the historical institutes overseen by the government, it was the establishment of the Veritas Research Institute for History in 2013 that caused the greatest outrage among historians. The reason for this may have been the provocative name of the institute, which seemed to evoke the accusations made by “public history” and by the strongly right-wing “alternative” view of history that “professional historians” were biased towards the “old regime” and therefore they “suppressed the truth”. Furthermore, the director of the institute, Sándor Szakály, was also known for his provocative statements: he called the deportation of the Transcarpathian Jews and sending them to their certain death to Kamianets-Podilskiyi in 1941 a mere “alien policing procedure”, and he claimed that the introduction in 1921 of the first Hungarian anti-Semitic law, the “*numerus clausus*”, cannot be considered “disenfranchisement”, but only a “restriction of rights”.

It must be noted that the historical institutes established by the government – in line with their ideological goals – do not devote their financial resources (which are significantly higher than those of university departments and Academy research institutes) to the traditional efforts of historians (editing sources, writing monographs and articles, and working on research projects connected to the larger framework of international historical research), but to reach the general public. They attempt to achieve decisive influence in the world of “public history” through a series of popularising lectures, newspaper articles, TV programmes, anniversary celebrations, exhibitions, and conferences attended by politicians. As the above-cited Sándor Lezsák put it at the opening of the fifth “Day of Ancestors” in 2019: “We must reconquer the past”.

After the third victory of Fidesz at the 2018 elections, the process of appropriating the academic institutional system escalated further. In the past year the research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) – including the Institute of History, which represents the elite of Hungarian historical research – were separated from the MTA through parliamentary legislation, against the express will of the MTA's general assembly,¹⁶³ and a governing body in which representatives of the government are in majority was appointed to oversee the newly established network of research institutes, the president of which body, classical philologist Miklós Maróth, is the personal advisor of Viktor Orbán on scientific issues.

The other major scandal of 2019 was the symbolic closing of the “institute for the research of the history of 1956”, which had been established in 1991 with the consensus of several parties and with both state and private funding. Due to its criticism of the one-sided views of right-wing remembrance politics, which strived to erase reform Marxists and workers' councils from the history of 1956, the activity of the 1956 Institute (which gathered and processed a great variety of documents) was considered undesirable by the government. The institute lost its state funding at the time of the first Fidesz government between 1998 and 2002, got it back from the socialist-liberal government between 2002 and 2010, then Fidesz deprived it of its funding again in 2010, and demoted it to being a division of Széchényi Library, reducing the number of its staff to half. In spite of this, the institute's employees took an active part in the debates focusing on the 60th anniversary of the revolution celebrated in 2016, and exposed an embarrassing mistake made by Mária Schmidt, who was intent on building up the “myth of the Pest kids”. The retribution of the authorities was swift: in summer 2019 the staff learned from a government decree that what remained of their institute would be merged within the space of a month into the Veritas Research Institute for History, i.e. into the institute under the strictest government control, without any kind of justification. The employees of the 1956 Institute chose unemployment instead.

The closing of the Lukács Archives that functionated in the one-time flat of the world-famous Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács is a loss that does not belong to the field of historiography in a disciplinary sense. However, it belongs here because it exemplifies again the tendency of rewriting history, erasing persons and facts that do not befit the taste of the actual power. Consequently, Hungarian scholarship lost a workshop that had a high international reputation and that was frequented by guest researchers from all over the world.

In this situation the ca. one hundred researchers of the Institute of History, which was torn out of the organisation of MTA and placed under government control beginning with 1 September 2019, wait for the developments with anxiety and apprehension.

ARTS

As noted earlier, one of the general features of the cultural field since 2010 has been the lack of a comprehensive state policy in culture. There is no independent, responsible Ministry, and a Deputy State Secretary within the Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI) is responsible for the huge field of arts, public education, and public collections. The role of informal positions has increased extraordinarily, and the field is (also) controlled by the Prime Minister's oligarchs and confidants competing against each other. Several State Secretaries have replaced one another in the field, all of whom have proved to be weightless, failing to present and implement an autonomous conception.

As in cultural policy, the practice of placing identity politics and symbolic politics above any other profession-based policies prevails in art policy, too. This policy uses any means that seems apt to hold the voters of the Orbán regime together. To fulfil this aim, the Prime Minister expects his subordinates to pursue incoherent art policies consisting of contradictory elements that can be flexibly adjusted to his current political objectives at any time.

The dispersal of the financial resources for culture was a deliberate decision by the Prime Minister: some of the money remained at EMMI, the formal master of the field, whereas other resources were delegated to the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (ITM). But there are other institutions dispensing money, for example the Hungarian Academy of Arts (MMA), the National Cultural Fund of Hungary (NKA), the Hungarian National Film Fund (MNF), the House of Terror Museum, and numerous newly established institutions of literature, fine arts, or “research”.¹⁶⁴ For getting a position from which money can be distributed, one does not need to be a party member, it is enough to have an anti-liberal commitment and a personal loyalty to the leader. State secretaries quickly succeed one another, while members of the informal, personal network can keep their influential positions.

The political strategy of supporting the concept of a “cultural nation” reaching over borders, in contrast to “political community”, prevails in art policy, too. While the political project of “civil Hungary” was on the agenda (during the first Orbán regime, between 1998 and 2002), the government aimed at gaining the support of conservative intellectuals. In the meantime, however, Orbán realised that culture can only help to acquire positions but not votes, so the favour of conservative intellectuals has lost its importance for him.

The new Orbán regime is trying to get rid of those intellectuals who used to dominate the “civic” period of Fidesz. Old conservatives are replaced by young radicals currently enjoying the confidence of the Prime Minister. The new director of the Petőfi Museum of Literature (PIM) – who claims to be 120% devoted to Orbán – can participate in the financing of culture with an increased budget through the institution he manages. From time to time, Orbán purges the set of people governing the cultural sector, alienating intellectuals originally supporting him to the extent that the term “pro-Fidesz intellectuals” has become an oxymoron by now.

HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS

In 1992, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) established the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Arts (SZIMA) as an associated institution of MTA to include eminent representatives of literature and arts. Simultaneously, 22 Hungarian artists established an association called the Hungarian Academy of Arts (MMA). What could not really be guessed at that time but became clear later, political polarisation triumphed in the field of arts as well. MMA preferred right-wing artists, whereas SZIMA only selected its members on the basis of the artistic quality of their achievement. In 2011, the Orbán government declared MMA a public body, then elevated it into the Fundamental Law of Hungary. It also gave MMA money and buildings reconstructed at the cost of billions, trying to shape it to be an institution of the same rank as MTA. The explicit aim of redirecting resources and supports to MMA was partly to replace the art elite insisting on its autonomy, and partly to construct a new cultural canon compatible with Fidesz and the System of National Cooperation (NER) and opposite to the already existing cultural, literary, and art canon.

Ordinary and corresponding members of MMA – who are not elected on the basis of artistic criteria but by the “public

¹⁶⁴ For example: Institute of the Twenty-first Century, Veritas Institute, Research Institute and Archives for the History of Regime Change (Retörki), Institute for Hungarian Studies, etc. see the previous chapter on History and the Politics of Remembrance.

acclamation” of those already in the academy, through their direct and secret votes – receive monthly salaries, which are planned to reach the salaries of MTA members soon (455 000 and 354 000 HUF, respectively). Besides, MMA also has awards: grand award, honorary award,¹⁶⁵ and gold medal, as well as a quarterly magazine, *Magyar Művészet*,¹⁶⁶ with no available information regarding its costs and its circulation.

In the beginning, MMA was recruiting members: they were trying to attract members who were not stigmatised either as NER-compatible or as anti-governmental. These actions aimed at creating and enhancing legitimacy, not without results. Nowadays, many resigned and apathetic artists as well as ones with serious financial difficulties wish to join MMA due to the nine years of right-wing cultural reign, joined by several young, ambitious artists who do not care about the beginnings. The aim of the regime with this is to pay for the services of their own supporters, to build its clientele, and to gain the approval of neutral artists, buying their silence.

MMA is represented in every decision, committee, and board in the field of culture and arts, usually providing one third of the body's members. Another third is usually delegated by the government, resulting in a two-third majority loyal to the government in every decisive body due to the servile pro-government operation of MMA.

MMA also has a research institute¹⁶⁷ – while MTA has none any longer – which performs no actual work. Mostly, there are one-day gatherings called conferences where politicians, political celebrities, and other lecturers with a ceremonial function give ten-minute speeches, usually in front of an unnecessarily large number of the institute's employees. At anniversaries, so-called “memorial conferences” are organised, followed by the publication of booklets. Subjects of the current cultural life are not mentioned at these events, so it is hardly surprising that they do not attract any audiences (“Vanished Peasant Life and Literature”, “Cécile Tormay Memorial Conference”, “Charity Day for Subcarpathia”). An enormous amount of public money – inconceivable for traditional research centres – is spent on these events and on other meetings organised by MMA. The institution also gives social compensation for its superannuated members, for example by arranging hardly attended exhibitions and publishing catalogues for second-rank fine artists who think themselves to have been unduly neglected.

Nobody controls the accomplishment of the tasks defined in the MMA's statute (“guarding the freedom of Hungarian art life”, etc.¹⁶⁸), and the decisions about various calls for applications completely lack transparency, too. There is an abundance of calls: last time 186 million HUF (about 570 000 EUR) was distributed to 363 applicants, “civil and other organisations” – each receiving a sum between 300 000 HUF and 1 million HUF per capita – for organising art colonies, summer camps, debating societies, in other words, such events that would require a significant experience from the curators to judge.

The annual government support of MMA was 6.7 billion HUF in 2018, and its budget is 9.4 billion HUF in 2019. (In comparison: the total of the budgetary cultural expenses was 383.7 billion HUF in 2017.)

MMA has not succeeded in gaining a real cultural significance, but by its activities always adjusted to governmental will, it highly contributes to demolishing the chances for a quality culture, the destruction of artistic autonomy, the distortion of the professional value system, and the corruption of cultural life.

NATIONAL CULTURAL FUND

In 1993, the Antall government established an independent organisation based on Western models to finance culture: the National Cultural Fund (NKA). This organisation – through its independent professional boards – distributed the money received from the so-called cultural contribution to the applicants. Later, when the cultural contribution was terminated, NKA received the income from gambling, therefore it was independent of budgetary debates and political lobbies. Part of the money was “ministerial frame”, which could be distributed by the Minister. This frame was 15% of the total sum in the beginning, later it was increased to 25%, and the Orbán regime raised it to 50%. In other words, ministerial autocracy triumphed in the distribution.

¹⁶⁵ It is memorable that this award was received in 2016 by Gábor Pap, the esoteric “historian of prehistory” known for Holocaust-denial, who developed a theory about the sacredness of the Pilis region. <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/kulturgrund/csorog-a-tragyale-a-nyakunkba-3941705/>. HVG. 2 June 2016: p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.magyar-muveszet.hu/>, last seen: 2019.10.31.

¹⁶⁷ MMA Art Theory and Methodology Research Institute.

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.mma.hu/az-akademiarol>, last seen: 2019.10.31.

The first Orbán government (1998–2002) abolished the independence of the NKA, subjecting it to the Ministry. In 2006, the socialist-liberal government returned the NKA's independence. Since 2010, however, the President of the NKA has no longer been an independent actor in the cultural field, but the position is always fulfilled by the actual Minister.¹⁶⁹ By introducing the MMA into every board evaluating the applications, the second Orbán government ensured its own two-third majority, and the third Orbán government merged the NKA into the Ministry in the organisational sense, too. Since the NKA is the only – meagre and unsatisfactory – resource for numerous non-governmental organisations, it is a serious problem that the dates and conditions (e.g. the available sums) of the calls for applications cannot be predicted, the decision process is not transparent, therefore the applicants cannot make plans. The distribution of the ministerial frame is based on political preferences, often supporting business events if they support the propaganda aims of the government. The NKA does not have a transparent, fixed, independent conception for financing culture. Independent members of the boards have had enough of the fight with windmills and finally resigned from their positions in the NKA's boards.

The Orbán system put an end to the history of the autonomous and organisationally independent NKA.

THEATRE

Since 2010, one of the greatest victims of culture has been theatre. Most of the theatres in Hungary are maintained by city self-governments, so the problems started when Fidesz won in numerous cities at the local elections in 2006. The managers of the theatres in countryside cities were soon replaced by their “own” people, which meant the end for several workshops in the countryside.

After the change of the government in 2010, the wave of appointments continued in the capital. Applications for managerial positions are evaluated by a professional board in the first round, and the opinion based on their votes is taken into account by the leader of the local government. As part of the “general takeover” after 2010, Fidesz filled these boards with majorities loyal to the government. In 2011, the city mayor István Tarlós declared the extreme right application written by István Csurka¹⁷⁰ and György Dörner¹⁷¹ as the winner of the call for applications for the position of the manager at New Theatre, openly claiming the argument that “the right wing also needs a theatre”. Public opinion and intellectuals in Hungary were outraged by his decision and foreign artists protested against it, too.¹⁷² (Soon after, Csurka died, then extreme right “Goy Motorcyclists” participated at the opening ceremony of the theatre, and after a decline regarding quality, the institution finally lost all professional interest. In spite of that, Tarlós appointed Dörner out of a dozen applicants as manager five years later again.)

The other great scandal was related to replacing the leader of the National Theatre. The theatre had been managed since 2008 by the extraordinarily popular director, Róbert Alföldi, acknowledged in Hungary and abroad as well. Until 2013, the end of his position, he was able to meet the expectations of both the professional community and the audience, and he made the National Theatre an outstanding institution, although his work was surrounded by scandals reaching the parliament after the inauguration of the second Orbán government in 2010. His unconventional directions were regularly attacked by the right-wing media, the extreme right organised homophobic and anti-Semitic demonstrations against him, and he was physically attacked, too. The new candidate – Attila Vidnyánszky – chosen by Fidesz to replace Alföldi won his position at a mock call for applications with the support of a board set up for that very purpose. Having been appointed, Vidnyánszky cancelled the entire former repertoire of the theatre, and he tried to fill the program with his own, many-years-old former work directed in other theatres. He is serving his second period and receives the triple of the state support of the previous period (which is 2 billion HUF now),¹⁷³ still, the number of sold tickets is only 40% of the earlier results, and the income thus produced is reduced to its half. The manager explains his financial failure by claiming that the theatre's mission is to provide youth with free opportunities to go the theatre. The defect in that argumentation is that it is up to the manager to which performances the audience is admitted for free, and he tends to choose those that do not attract paying audiences due to their low professional level.

¹⁶⁹ <http://www.nka.hu/rolunk/nka>, last seen: 2019.10.31.

¹⁷⁰ István Csurka (1934–2012) Hungarian writer and politician, and, until his death, the President of the extreme right anti-Semitic Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) established by him in 1993.

¹⁷¹ György Dörner (1953–) actor, theatre manager, who claims himself to be a “national radical” in politics and a supporter of MIÉP.

¹⁷² “This decision by Tarlós had an international feedback: Menzel announced that he would not direct again in the New Theatre, and the conductor Christoph von Dohnányi informed the Hungarian State Opera that he did not wish to perform in a city where ‘the city mayor entrusts a theatre's management to two well-known extreme right anti-Semites.’” https://index.hu/kultur/2011/10/22/ezren_tuntetnek_dorner_kinevezese_ellen/, last seen: 2019.10.31.

¹⁷³ https://index.hu/gazdasag/2019/07/07/2_milliard_allami_tamogatas_utan_150_millio-veszteseket_termelt_a_nemzeti_szinhez/, last seen: 2019.10.31.

CORPORATE TAX (TAO)

In 2009, a law entered into force, according to which companies could use the corporate tax paid by them for supporting organisations of performing arts. Thus, theatres could collect a sum equal to 80% of their income from selling tickets, which significantly increased their budget. The negative impact of the new regulation was that maintainers – the state and local governments – almost immediately reduced their support, which means that TAO has become essential in the maintenance of permanent work. The artistic and aesthetic consequence of the TAO law was that some theatres made their repertoires more popular in order to increase the income from selling tickets.

In 2010, one of the first measures of the Orbán government was to expand TAO to include sports as well, and they put firms – especially large state companies – under pressure to give more TAO to sports organisations, which meant a disadvantage for theatres. Later further modifications made TAO spent on sports even easier (e.g. raising the financial limit, simplification of bureaucracy, etc.).

As TAO could be planned and calculated, it became an important component of the budget in numerous independent and private theatres. The social network of theatres is usually not very developed, so many of them invited middlemen who connected them with companies for growing commission fees. This mode of operation was very different from the original intention of the law. There were several examples of fraud as well: some theatres joined foreign partners to receive enormous amounts of TAO. It is important to note, however, that these groups and their TAO income could have been filtered out with appropriate control.

At the end of 2018, the government cancelled cultural TAO – with retroactive effect – and provided further advantages for sports TAO. One of the reasons for the measure must have been the purpose to discipline certain actors of the theatre sector – some stone theatres and numerous independent and private companies – and another was the dilettantism of the Ministry. About 37 billion HUF remained in the cultural and theatre budget of the Ministry, and they promised to “fairly” distribute it among the theatre companies who did not cheat about TAO. It turned out, however, that there was no system whatsoever for the distribution: the Ministry simply gave large amounts to appropriate partners, whereas minor sums could be applied for in a trumped-up, non-transparent system with complicated bureaucracy and ideological-political innuendos. The results were disastrous: the situation of independent and private theatres became more threatened and controlled by the state, while the theatres maintained by local governments – as part of a political chess game – remained underfinanced.

THE SITUATION OF INDEPENDENT THEATRE GROUPS

Independent organisations of the performing arts are categorised as such on a financial, and not on an aesthetic basis. A performing art organisation or a formation joining forces for one project or several projects is “independent” if it is not maintained by the state or a local government, therefore its existence is dependent solely on its own income and the smaller or larger sums won at state calls for applications. The category includes several hundred groups, mostly non-profit organisations, which are entitled to apply for very modest sums in comparison to the budgets of stone theatres, in the case of fulfilling certain legal conditions.¹⁷⁴

There are two main resources available for the independent groups:

1. Registered, many years or decades old organisations can apply for the so-called operating aid annually issued by the EMMI after a long and bureaucratic procedure and received only in the middle of the given year (!) at best. This sum is somewhere between 3 and 30 million HUF, which, supplementing the group's own income, serves as the basis of permanent work. The entire allocation for theatre and dance organisations and the hosting theatres cooperating with them has been 773 million HUF for years (in comparison, it is worth recalling that the National Theatre receives almost triple of that sum annually as a guaranteed state support).
2. There are project-based calls for applications by the NKA (and lately by MMA as well), where organisations can win sums ranging from a few hundred thousand to 1-2 million HUF. These modest sums might promote creating new performances or putting old ones on stage.

Many aspects of this system are problematic, but the main issue is that the above-mentioned 37 billion HUF “released” after the modification of the TAO law is used in the system in a non-transparent way, although calculations suggest that

¹⁷⁴ In contrast to stone theatres, independent companies do not maintain a stage of their own, to reduce their costs.

adding 1-2 billion HUF to the already provided support would be enough to normalise the operation of the entire field. Yet the actual practice is that the same cake must be cut up into smaller and smaller slices, which involves that 1) the number of groups receiving relatively large support must be reduced, if they want to allow new groups to enter the scene, 2) there is no space for improvement, 3) and there is no opportunity to launch new groups.

In contrast to the structure of stone theatres, which have a permanent company, stage, repertoire, and – most important of all – a guaranteed annual support from the state / local government, independent groups include a great variety of teams based on diverse models of operation. Most of them are theatre groups located in Budapest, but there are also the leading companies of contemporary dance and of theatre in education. While the performance policy of stone theatres is (quite correctly) not controlled by anyone and anything, independent groups need to prove year by year that they are part of the Hungarian-speaking world of theatre. Although the legislation would allow a call for applications for three years, ensuring a predictable mode of operation making calculation, planning, and at least moderately long-run cooperation possible, this has never occurred in practice.

The phrase “independent theatre” (along with its suspicious predecessors like “alternative” or “underground” theatre) is a great source of confusion, especially nowadays, due to the activity of the above-mentioned groups who defined themselves as independent although they did not accomplish anything apart from receiving tax money during the decade of TAO business. The governmental policy's willingness to find scapegoats can be observed in this field, too: the Ministry keeps the names of the organisations abusing the opportunities offered by the badly structured TAO system in secret, or only hints at them, yet the boundary between swindlers and serious groups is blurred when it comes to speaking about “independent” groups. As a result of the cultural policy of the last decade, the most renowned artists of the Hungarian independent theatre already work out of Hungary.

The Alliance of Independent Performing Artists (FESZ), the umbrella organisation including most of the independent groups, reactivated in 2011, consists of almost 90 members at the moment, being the greatest association with professional and trade union activities in the sector. The concerns of the independent groups are voiced by FESZ – but it is a question how much they are heard. What is happening around FESZ is a miniature model of Hungarian cultural policy directed, on the one hand, by ideas conceived on the spur of the moment, and, on the other, by rigid ideological prescriptions.

The communication between the cultural government and FESZ is a work process that requires a lot of patience, for experiences of success and failure co-exist. Just one example: the strict criteria system for evaluating the annual operation aid application available for registered groups was written by FESZ in 2015 at the request of the Ministry, yet they cannot convince the Ministry to adjust the call to the needs of the sector that is quickly changing by definition. Choosing members for the board of trustees is an especially sensitive topic. The board has three members, two of whom were suggested by FESZ between 2015 and 2018, and only one in 2019. Moreover, the other two members delegated by the Ministry were stone theatre managers, who hardly know the field of independent theatre.

Loosening the rigid rules of the call would also be important because the independent sector is a significant segment of theatre art in Hungary, although the pro-government public intellectuals try to suggest the opposite. They represent Hungarian theatre for the international world: the permanent financial uncertainty has compelled these groups partly to find creative solutions to problems, partly to establish and develop their international network. The lack of finances also has serious aesthetic consequences: there are hardly any independent productions designed for the big stage with expensive scenery and many characters, while the number of performances played in a studio space with the minimum of scenery in front of an audience of 50-60 people and reflecting on their physical closeness has increased.

Hungarian theatre is basically a field free of politics, which partly results from Hungarian traditions of theatre, and partly is due to the state calls for applications (and to the often politically loyal jury members judging applications). In other words, few performances reflect (dare to reflect) on strictly current social and political phenomena and issues. At the same time, independent theatre necessarily has an “anti-government” attitude, although not all of the groups define themselves in opposition to the centrally forced Christian-conservative value system – they simply want to make theatre about topics they feel truly interested in. There is hardly any real innovation, any radical or experimental approach (and the few examples rather belong to the category of contemporary dance, which receives even less support from the state budget as they are out of the scope of political interest).

As it is clear from what is written above: the independent groups are just as “dependent” as anybody else in Hungarian cultural life (or even more so), as not even the basic forms of private or community funding have come into existence in

Hungary, especially in the field of performing arts.

The rest of this section gives a brief chronological overview of the relationship between the independent organisations of performing arts and the government reigning since 2010, which has never been without tensions and looks like a static war prolonged due to occasional ceasefires. The 2008 act on performing arts regulated the state support available for independent groups by guaranteeing them 10% of the entire state support given to theatres, orchestras, and dance groups maintained by local governments.

After the change of government in 2010, this sum was reduced to 8% in 2011, and the relevant passage of the act has only stated since 2012 that the Ministry's budget must provide the resource for the calls for applications, without specifying the percentage. (In 2011, the advisory board appointed for 3 years a year before was replaced by the Minister without any preliminary information or negotiation, placing new, politically loyal candidates into the positions.) Returning to the numbers: the Ministry can freely decide about the size of the sum available for the call. Besides, the law had laid down the deadlines for making the calls and the decisions, yet it did not prevent the government from transferring the significantly reduced sums of operation aid for 2012 only in May 2013 (!) due to various forms of freezing. The delay caused irreversible damage: groups ceased to exist, and artists left their careers.

In the course of the few years mentioned above, the nominal value of the amount available for independent theatres remained approximately the same, but its real value declined permanently and drastically, because more and more organisations apply for the same resource.

The curators in the board evaluating the applications for operation aid are appointed by the Minister, who has approved the suggestions of FESZ in the past few years. The curators can only make suggestions for the support, which can be overwritten by the current Secretary of State and the Minister – the last time it happened was in 2015, when Péter Hoppál Cultural Secretary modified the numbers for some companies, as the law allowed him to do so. Just one example: the Court Chamber Theatre of Magyarkanizsa, which performs low-level irredentist plays, did not receive any money according to the board's original decision, while the Secretary of State presented them with 5 million HUF (the source of the money seems quite obvious: the support of the Jurányi Incubator House, probably the most important hosting theatre of independent groups, was reduced by precisely the same amount).

The present form of the support of independent groups is unpredictable, and the structure which allows them to receive their money with significant delay (if they get it at all) is out of date. The Ministry does not acknowledge the requests articulated or transmitted by the FESZ with a stubborn professionalism, treating hosting theatres as tolerated scenes, although these institutions should receive an outstanding support as the groups performing in them occasionally or regularly could give a new impetus to the entire sector. The often-voiced slogan that stone theatres and independent groups should cooperate sometimes works (e.g. cooperation between the Béla Pintér Company and the Katona József Theatre), but more often it does not: the two entirely different modes of operation naturally designate and preserve very different ways for the two types of theatre. Moreover, cultural policy has made them enemies, rather than allies: stone theatres do not stand by the independent groups, partly because all of them need to compete for the same financial resources, partly because they are afraid of retribution without confessing it. It is typical that the truly courageous voices, who mean solidarity in earnest and do not treat it for a simple motto, usually belong to artists like Árpád Schilling or Róbert Alföldi, who have many performances abroad, and who are therefore independent of the mercy of the dispensers of Hungarian sources.

As already mentioned, cancelling the TAO support in 2018 has an inconceivable impact, as it had grown to be the most important and guaranteed source of income in addition to state and local government supports. As indicated, no one knows who will decide and based on which criteria about the extra support from the Ministry meant to compensate for the erased income, but the data available so far are not encouraging: political loyalty seems to be worth more than professional quality.¹⁷⁵ Thus, certain theatres receive many times more than their due share on the basis of their income from sold tickets, while others receive significantly less.

Patric Gaspard, the President of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) established by George Soros announced in the summer of 2019 that they would donate 360 million HUF to Summa Artium, an organisation supporting arts, in order “to

realise those projects of art and culture that otherwise could not hope to receive state funds under the current circumstances in Hungary.” In a normally functioning country, everybody would enthusiastically welcome the extra financial resource, yet the pro-government media continued their narrative regarding the evil plan of George Soros, and some of the independent groups, who would need every penny, do not dare to apply: they are afraid that the cultural government will consider this amount of money, which is close to the allocation for the operation aid, as a provocation, and the usual call for applications regarding the operation aid will not be made at all in 2020 as a result. Moreover, if the money received from OSF exceeds 7.2 million HUF per year, the non-profit organisation has to report itself as a civil organisation supported from abroad, which puts it into a disadvantageous position.¹⁷⁶

MUSIC

There are complex tendencies in Hungarian music life. The costs of maintaining classical music institutions are high, productions are expensive, and private sponsorship is undeveloped,¹⁷⁷ therefore the dependency on the state is more substantial in this field than in the case of literature or fine arts. Strong financial dependency, the lack of transparency in the system of calls for applications, and highly personal decision-making procedures force the participants to develop political loyalty and to lobby. The government is not reluctant to sponsor music, there are significant amounts spent on the support of classical music. The classical music life in Budapest still represents a high quality in an international context as well. Certainly, the state prefers loyalty in the field of music, too, favouring artists arbitrarily, and there are also leaders appointed on political grounds with controversial work. At the same time, however, the destruction and takeover experienced elsewhere has not become typical in music life, which might be explained by the fact that most of the classical music genres are not very apt for direct political instrumentalization.

THE STATE SUPPORT OF SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRAS

The relatively high state support of symphonic orchestras always triggered dissatisfaction and rivalry in the art field, especially because the system and culture of private sponsorship in this field is still in an embryonic phase in Hungary, and there is hardly any orchestra or rather art institution, group, or company in general that would not receive all of its income (apart from sold tickets) exclusively from the state or from the local governments (also financed by the state).

In Hungary, the number of symphonic orchestras is large in comparison to the size of the audience.¹⁷⁸ At the moment, there are 16 symphonic orchestras – 9 in Budapest and 7 in the countryside – that receive state support.¹⁷⁹ Among these, 3 orchestras in the capital receive highly outstanding support: the Hungarian National Philharmonic Orchestra and the Budapest Festival Orchestra both receive about 1.2 billion HUF annual support, whereas the orchestra of the Opera gets its share from the institution's budget supported with several billion HUF a year. This situation is generally accepted. The support of 12 ensembles falls between 140 and 280 million HUF annually, most of them being above 200 million HUF. There are two main reasons for the current intense debate regarding the financial support of orchestras. One is related to the termination of TAO supports, which caused an avalanche of changes in this field, too. The government promised to compensate the orchestras for the income thus lost, by a ministerial decision based on a newly created scoring system and the suggestions of a so-called Music Board appointed by the minister and “refreshed” for this particular occasion. There were three circumstances, however, that triggered outrage among orchestras. First, they hardly had any influence on setting the criteria. Second, two of the Music Board's present four members are leaders of concerned symphonic orchestras themselves, which obviously means incompatibility. The third issue is that the amount of the support also depends on a preliminary categorization ranking orchestras as “national”, “distinguished”, or “applicant”, but the criteria for this ranking are rather obscure.

The news that the government was going to further increase the support of the Concerto Budapest orchestra – an otherwise high-standard ensemble performing diverse and exciting programs – triggered a similar uproar, since Concerto Budapest

¹⁷⁶ According to the Law on the Transparency of Organisations Supported from Abroad (2017), which is against EU legislation.

¹⁷⁷ Private sponsorship, which started to develop from the 1990s, was set back by the introduction of the TAO system.

¹⁷⁸ Some say that there are too many symphonic orchestras in Hungary in proportion to its size. In comparison, in France, which has a 7 times bigger population and almost 3 times more GDP, there are 22 state-sponsored symphonic orchestras.

¹⁷⁹ Apart from professional orchestras, “there are further 15 orchestras belonging to the half-official, so-called regional category in a non-qualified status.” See Péter Popa, “Helyzetjelentés a szimfonikus zenekarokról.” [Report on the Situation of Symphonic Orchestras] *ZeneKar* 26/2. https://zene-kar.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/zenekar2_sz_web.pdf, last seen: 31.10.2019.

orchestra – an otherwise high-standard ensemble performing diverse and exciting programs – triggered a similar uproar, since Concerto Budapest had already received a large amount of support, and the planned significant increase would allow a substantial addition to the number of orchestra members as well as raising their salaries, which is of key importance for preventing the growing emigration of musicians due to the level of salaries.¹⁸⁰ This decision is attributed by many to the good political connections of the musical manager, András Keller.

Arbitrariness manifests not only in the distribution of resources but also in appointing leaders. For example, Hungarian music life lost a lot by the professionally unreasonable decision that the position of the musical conductor of the National Philharmonic Orchestra is not filled by Péter Eötvös, a world-famous composer supported by the entire ensemble, but a properly prepared but tremendously less significant conductor due to the Prime Minister's appointment neglecting every official procedure.

It is worth mentioning that the cultural government is doing a good job in two important aspects of countryside orchestras and, in general, of music life in the countryside: both the concert halls (approximately 60) in the countryside and the pianos (about 3000 in concert halls and music schools) are maintained properly, and the latter have been renewed in the past few years.

However, music education in primary and secondary schools is completely outdated pedagogically, its level is extremely low, “and the training of teachers is unresolved. Consequently, primary and secondary school students are unmotivated and uninterested in music classes, they do not like singing and other musical activities in class. Classical music is unapproachable for most of the youth and they have a negative self-image regarding their musical talent.”¹⁸¹

MUSIC SUPPORT BY THE NATIONAL CULTURAL FUND (NKA)

The only institutional resource for a great variety of musical activities is NKA. Lately, this has been supplemented by certain calls for applications by the Hungarian Academy of Arts, but their total volume is only secondary in comparison to the opportunities offered by the NKA, which is financed with a striking parsimony. It is favourable that five of the six members in the Music Board are acknowledged representatives of music life, although experts without loyalty to the government have abandoned the body by now. It is rather alarming, however, that an increasing part of the available amount – after the initial 15%, it is now 50% – belongs to the so-called ministerial frame, which is distributed without any professional control. This “development” is contrary to the mission of NKA itself, as it was established in 1993 with the very intention to distribute cultural support (or most of it) not on the basis of decisions made by officials but by committees of competent and concerned professionals. Another – not new – problem is that the boards can hardly resist the temptation to give some money to most of the reasonable applicants, which, accompanied with the decreasing amount to be distributed – results in really small grants that are synonymous with the failure of the supported projects (also because there is only a very restricted number of other sources available). This system seems to be getting further and further from its declared mission to support outstanding projects to a satisfactory degree.

Another serious problem, probably not independent of political intentions, is the withering support for magazines – not only in the field of music – which resulted in either the termination of numerous magazines or their forced removal to online sites. This phenomenon can be observed all over the world, but in certain cases the crisis seems to have been created artificially. One of these cases is the end of the magazine *Muzsika*, which is an irretrievable loss primarily as a forum of music criticism, but it was also a very diverse and balanced monthly paper of great quality about music.

HUNGARIAN STATE OPERA

The chaos that can be observed in the operation of the Opera is connected primarily to the practice of political appointments. The current director general, Szilveszter Ókovács, is considered to have been appointed for political reasons and proved to be inapt for his position. He started large-scale reconstruction works and additions to the buildings while being unable to guarantee the satisfactory daily operation of the institution.¹⁸² The atmosphere at the Opera is full of anxiety because voicing any criticism might easily result in losing one's job. The costs of the reconstruction are growing by tens of

¹⁸⁰ <https://zene-kar.hu/2018/11/19/disszonancia-a-zenei-kozeletben/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁸¹ Márta Janurik, Az ének-zene oktatás megújulásának lehetőségei [Opportunities for the Renewal of Singing and Music Education]. https://mersz.hu/dokumentum/matud__224, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁸² Examples for grand-scale endeavours are the opera and ballet company's expensive journey to New York last year, construction work on the huge new technical building, or the complete reconstruction of the Opera House itself – while daily work keeps stalling, staff is informed about their duties at the last minute, and payments are often delayed for months.

billion HUF among dubious conditions, and the government decided to pledge another 9 billion HUF just for the workshop building. The deadline has been postponed as well, in the case of the main building, to ten months later: now it is promised to be ready by the autumn of 2021. Ókovács tries to ensure his position by being exceedingly loyal to the government: when he was attacked from the right for putting on stage the world-famous musical Billy Eliot, referring to “homosexual propaganda” “spoiling the youth”, he quickly took 15 already announced performances off the program.

In spite of the chaotic direction, there are also high-quality productions at the Opera. The controversial operation of the institution is well illustrated by the fact that it gives space to sophisticated contemporary music – for example an opera in Hungarian language is to be written by Péter Eötvös at the request of the Opera – while also serving the legitimacy needs of the present political regime by having a “Christian Season” in 2020.

A counter-example to the Opera can be the Palace of Arts (MŰPA), which is led by another person appointed for political reasons, Csaba Káel, a personal good friend of the Prime Minister. Still, the work here is high-level and diverse, and no political intentions can be observed in the program policy. Besides, the financial and administrative work is done with complete discipline.¹⁸³ The concert hall of the Music Academy also operates in order, offering a somewhat conservative but high-quality program, which fits the institution's traditions and the attributes of the space as well.

POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music is financed primarily through two channels, both of which are managed by NKA but on different grounds. This year, one could apply for the NKA's own pop music program in various categories with a budget close to 300 million HUF. Besides, the NKA distributes 70% of the money gained from copyright fees by the ARTISJUS copyright office¹⁸⁴ (30% is obligatorily spent on social benefits). This is a significant sum that tends to exceed 2 billion HUF nowadays, and it is shared between the fields of popular and classical music. One can apply for these sums, handing in works in the case of creative grants.

Even laypeople notice the excessive support of certain politically favoured “superstars.” The companies of Zoltán Mága, a Roma violinist, have received several billion HUF of state support over the course of the years, and gets the Budapest Sports Arena, the site of his annual concert, from the government for free, because the concert has been qualified as a National Event. Ákos Kovács, the pop singer known for his statements supporting Viktor Orbán also received a lot of state support without having to make any applications. Besides, he is also entrusted with composing the signals of national radio channels or the music played in the House of Terror, which ensures a significant and constant copyright income for him.

LITERATURE

TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

One of the symptomatic phenomena of the literary policy of the past years is the story of the national writer training centre, the Talent Development in the Carpathian Basin Ltd. (KMTG), established at the end of 2015. The Forward Garrison Writers' Academy (the educational institution maintained by the KMTG) was an individual project of János Dénes Orbán,¹⁸⁵ which he established without any negotiations with professional organisations, discussing his plan only with Géza Szócs, a former Secretary of State and an advisor to the Prime Minister.¹⁸⁶ The starting capital of 150 million HUF already provoked a huge outrage, as it was a sum much bigger than what all the other actors in the field had ever seen. Yet KMTG signed a support contract on 22 December 2016 not only with EMMI but also with the Hungarian National Asset Management Inc. about another 300 million HUF. Thus, the state support for KMTG in 2016 reached 700 million HUF.

In 2017, the KMTG already received 400 million HUF instead of 150. This amount was more than four times as much as the

¹⁸³ This is due to the excellent art manager, Imre Kiss, the founding manager of MŰPA, who defined its organisational and operational structure. The system developed by him has remained intact in the past years and it has been working efficiently.

¹⁸⁴ Its precise status is: copyright office association.

¹⁸⁵ „János Dénes Orbán, or OJD as he is known in Hungary, a poet, preferred Latin to computer science. But Orbán has far more ambitious plans. He would like to develop, with active government assistance, a new literary elite loyal to the ideals of the illiberal state.” In: <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/07/26/an-open-argument-between-fidesz-loyalists-on-cultural-policy/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁸⁶ About the nominees of the government in the literary field see András Stumpf, *Diktatúra vagy tiszta káosz? A kultúrharc kulisszái mögé nézünk [Dictatorship or Sheer Chaos? Let's Have a Glimpse at the Backstage of the Cultural Warfare]*, <https://www.valaszonline.hu/2019/01/28/szakacs-arpad-kulturharc-prohle-ojd/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.; Péter Urfi, *A szolgalelkűség művészete - Orbán János Dénes példamutató hozzáállásáról [The Art of Servility – János Dénes Orbán's Exemplary Attitude]*, <https://magyararancs.hu/publicisztika/a-szolgalelkuseg-muveszete-97951>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

annual budgetary support of the largest Hungarian organisation of writers, the Hungarian Writers' Association. In 2017, the total annual allocation of the literary board of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary (NKA) financed by the income from lottery was 370.7 million HUF, offering the resource for which all the Hungarian writers' organisations, magazines, publishing houses, and writers could apply.

By 2018 an even more substantial amount, 1.4 billion HUF were received by the Talent Development in the Carpathian Basin Ltd. to support the Forward Garrison Writers' Academy.¹⁸⁷ In comparison: only the National Theatre got more money at that time (2 billion HUF). This sum is so out of proportion to the aims and especially to the actual, documented activity of the organisation that the suspicion arises that it might have been spent without control on objectives different from the ones publicly declared.

KMTG launched a book series and a magazine, János Dénes Orbán got a television program in the Duna Television, and one of the lecturers at KMTG, Szilárd Demeter (who is also a writer of the Prime Minister's speeches), became the director of the Petőfi Museum of Literature (PIM), still, the story of KMTG is not truly one of sheer success. The lecturers at the Writers' Academy do not include any prestigious names, the reputation of the book series is meagre, and the Academy's magazine does not attract readers. It is typical that their call for applications in 2017, which was widely advertised in the media and offered huge financial awards, did not attract enough applicants to allow the jury to award the prizes, so they tried to forget about it as soon as possible.

ELŐRETOLT HELYŐRSÉG MAGAZINE

The official magazine of the KMTG, the magazine *Előretolt Helyőrség* (meaning Forward Garrison) was launched in November 2017 as the weekend supplement of 17 dailies published in cities in the countryside, with a budget of 82 million HUF, in approximately 260 000 copies. It is typical that its publisher, Mediaworks, originally estimated the costs to be 169 million HUF, but finally did it for 25 million HUF more, which was accepted by the KMTG. In the beginning, the editor in chief of the literary supplement was Szilárd Demeter, the future manager of PIM. At present, the position is filled by János Szentmártoni, the President of the Hungarian Writers' Association and a member in the supervisory board of KMTG.

Not much after *Előretolt Helyőrség*, the official magazine of the Forward Garrison Writers' Academy was launched as a weekly literary supplement of papers published by Lőrinc Mészáros¹⁸⁸ company, Mediaworks, rumour had it that similar papers under the same title were to be published in numerous regions beyond the borders, too. Since then, this plan has been realised in Vojvodina, Transylvania, and the Sub-Carpathian region. In Slovakia, however, the plan is still blocked by the resistance of some of the local writers.

PETŐFI MUSEUM OF LITERATURE / PETŐFI LITERARY AGENCY

After Gergely Pröhle, who had been a target of a series of articles in the magazine *Magyar Idők*,¹⁸⁹ the employer of János Dénes Orbán, had to leave his position by the decision of the newly appointed Minister, Miklós Kásler,¹⁹⁰ there was much guessing about the future leader of PIM. Many people thought that the extreme right Mihály Takaró,¹⁹¹ a person close to Kásler, might be the likely candidate, but the name of Gábor Horváth-Lugossy, a lawyer, a business partner of Árpád Szakács, and a journalist of *Magyar Idők*, was also mentioned. Finally, they did not get the leader's position in PIM. (Takaró was asked to rewrite the national curriculum, and Horváth-Lugossy became the head of the newly established Institute for Hungarian Studies.) Instead of them, Szilárd Demeter¹⁹² landed the job. He came from the KMTG and the Századvég Foundation, which functions as a think tank for the government. Demeter, who used to be the office manager of László Tőkés,¹⁹³ then wrote speeches for Orbán and was a colleague of Árpád Habony,¹⁹⁴ first became the temporarily appointed and then the permanent manager of the museum.

¹⁸⁷ <https://magyarnemzet.hu/archivum/kulturgrund/erovel-tolt-helyorseg-14-milliardot-kap-a-kormanykozei-iroszalon-3868558/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁸⁸ <https://theorangefiles.hu/lorinc-meszaros/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁸⁹ <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/08/02/an-attack-on-academic-freedom-with-government-assistance/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.; <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/gergely-prohle/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹⁰ <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2018/06/07/the-custodian-of-the-survival-of-the-hungarian-nation-miklos-kasler/>; <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2019/08/27/miklos-kasler-the-wacky-head-of-the-national-cultural-fund/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹¹ <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2019/07/22/mihaly-takaro-in-slovakia-far-right-drivel-about-hungarian-uniqeness/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹² <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2019/02/25/the-petofi-literary-museum-has-a-new-director-general/>; <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2019/05/11/new-plans-for-a-national-literature/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A1szl%C3%B3_T%C5%91k%C3%A9s, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹⁴ Orbán's friend and adviser, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2013/03/04/orbans-chief-adviser-arpad-habony-and-his-encounter-with-the-law/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Introducing himself to his new colleagues, he made it clear that he considered himself a resolute devotee of Orbán, and his conception for development, which was leaked later, stated the following: PIM “must participate in political life, and it must take a stand in favour of European and Hungarian values.” According to his plan, the museum needs to become a “power centre,” whatever this means. His good connections with the Prime Minister's Office were proved right at the beginning: while the budget of PIM was 2.9 billion HUF in 2019, in 2020 it will be 6.1 billion HUF. At the same time there is a visible ambition to integrate PIM into the network of right-wing cultural institutions. As the manager said: PIM could be “the last step before becoming a member of the Hungarian Academy of Arts.”

The plan regarding the Petőfi Literary Agency to be established in the “literary power centre” is articulated less clearly. In the spring of 2019, a cooperation agreement was signed at a meeting in Széphalom, where only writers living in the neighbouring countries were allowed to participate. The document declares that “it is important to present the unity of the entire Hungarian literature to Europe and to the whole world.” Besides, the writers signing it “emphasise” that “the most important component in living literature” is the reader. “Therefore, we think that the work of the Petőfi Literary Agency is filling a gap, so we will support it in bringing the works of contemporary Hungarian literature to more and more Hungarian readers in a wide circle.”¹⁹⁵

There is not much else to be known about the Petőfi Literary Agency, for the leaders of the Petőfi Museum of Literature have not initiated any negotiations about it with the professional associations in Hungary.

LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS

After the fall of state socialism, the newly established non-profit organisations of literature played an important role, as they did not belong to the hierarchy of the state institutions and mostly operated on the basis of public money obtained through calls for applications. These organisations defined themselves as the alternatives of the Hungarian Writers' Association, which was founded in the 1950s, and is a conservative, often nationalist institution that enjoys the government's support. The most significant of these new organisations were the József Attila Circle, an association established at the time of the regime change and working on the representation and promotion of young writers, launching the career of several significant authors, and the Hungarian Society of Writers, Critics, and Literary Translators [Szépirok Társasága], which has among its members such notable writers as Péter Nádas, György Dragomán, or Péter Esterházy, who deceased in 2016. These two organisations committed to democratic culture resolutely protested against the cultural policy of the Orbán government, and especially against its discriminative, outdated, and nationalist rhetoric and its canon favouring intellectuals who had pro-Nazi sentiments between the two world wars. The state support of these organisations – just like that of numerous other cultural organisations and institutions in opposition to the government – has been reduced so drastically during the Orbán government that it has led to the termination of the József Attila Circle.

All in all, the same tendency can be observed in literary life as in other fields of culture: the government is trying to erase institutions with great traditions, significant activity, and international network, but not loyal to the government, by radically decreasing their support and by targeting them in media campaigns. In parallel, new institutions are established, which have maximum loyalty to the government and budgets irrationally out of proportion, but which prove to be unable to join the international networks of culture. Their rhetoric is often dominated by extreme nationalist phrases, but at the same time, they hardly have any actual activity. Intellectuals committed to democracy in the field of humanities and arts watch these phenomena from a distance, with many of them declaring that they are unwilling to participate in the work of these institutions or to receive money from them. It is a question, though, how many people will feel compelled – and how soon – to make compromises because of the already scarce and still diminishing opportunities of democratic, open-minded culture.

FINE ARTS

NO RESOURCE AND NO SPACE

The Fundamental Law,¹⁹⁶ which replaced the Constitution in 2011, protects the freedom of “artistic creation” in Hungary. Truly enough, anybody is free to produce and display any piece of art. There is no open censorship, and hardly any artwork has been removed from art exhibition halls for political reasons – the few cases were mostly due to the fears of the

¹⁹⁵ <https://contextus.hu/demeter-szilard-petofi-irodalmi-muzeum-ugynokseg/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

¹⁹⁶ The Fundamental Law of Hungary in English: <https://www.kormany.hu/download/e/02/00000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf>

institutions' managers. There is, however, indirect censorship, political selection built into the structure, and self-censorship, for there are practically no institutional guarantees of artistic freedom left by now.¹⁹⁷

In the field of fine arts, no restrictive, field-specific measures have been implemented. Yet everything that took place in the system of public institutions in the fields of culture and art,¹⁹⁸ along with the distortions affecting media and publicity, has had an impact on the opportunities of fine arts and artistic freedom, as well. In the former fields, the greatest problems are the construction of a highly hierarchical structure, the redirecting of resources, the abolition of professionally based decision-making and autonomy, and the political control practised through the leaders, while in the latter, the main issue is the dramatic narrowing down of independent, free media space.

Contemporary fine arts are a specific, sensitive, and complicated system. Whatever the spectator sees on the walls of galleries, *kunsthalls*, and museums, derives from the interactions between institutional and individual actors, the sphere of public and private institutions, professional views, and the art market, which is influenced by the independent cultural media, too. In Hungary, artistic reproduction has become the most problematic, almost impossible mission.

New art can be produced, and a new generation can enter the field of art only if

1. there is finance for the creation of artwork,
2. there is an opportunity for cooperation with public institutions,
3. new pieces of art can be put on display, so that they can enter the international scene,
4. art is made available for the wider audience, as well through the discourse of the national media.

At present, none of the above conditions is fulfilled.

1. Art support based on public money is controlled by politics: the independence of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary (NKA)¹⁹⁹ has been erased by 2016, for it is now part of the Ministry of Human Resources (EMMI). Its decisions are defined by the opinion of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts (MMA)²⁰⁰. MMA itself also issues creative art grants, but these are boycotted by most of the professional artists.
2. Contemporary fine arts work with numerous kinds of media, and creating the artwork is often a complex procedure involving many actors. Nowadays it is practically impossible to find partners for the creation of large-scale, rather complex pieces of art based on research. Independent workshops (artist run spaces, progressive art organisations) are hardly able to survive. The system of large public institutions backed out of contemporary art. Besides, the largest traditional exhibition hall of contemporary art, Múcsarnok is boycotted by progressive professional artists, as a protest against the measure that subjected it to MMA. Finally, OFF-Biennale Budapest Association, the organiser of the greatest independent international art program in Hungary is afflicted by the discriminative act controlling civil organisations.²⁰¹
3. Exhibition halls and museums have suffered losses, too: the contemporary system of public institutions lacks finances, while the top organisations are managed by people chosen on a political basis. Consequently, there are hardly any great contemporary exhibitions in Hungary, and current critical art practically does not appear in national institutions. International relations are frozen, and public institutions have lost their former network. The institutions out of the capital (except for MODEM in Debrecen) are not even in the position to think of anything like that, for they lost their professional and financial independence years ago, and they have been integrated into large institutions, due to which they lost their profile, as well.²⁰²
4. There is no vision of a possible art career: artists are stuck on level of small, independent galleries and commercial galleries. This results in the emigration of artists and curators.²⁰³ Artwork and art places continue to exist in a permanently diminishing "bubble" without the chance of having any wider effect, as they cannot access national media. Contemporary critical art has been marginalised, and the mission of political selection hidden in the structure has been completed.

197 State of Artistic Freedom 2019. Whose narratives count? / A Freemuse jelentése. 84. – <https://freemuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/saf-2019-online.pdf>

198 "A kulturális szféra helyzete Magyarországon" [The Situation of Cultural Sphere in Hungary], *Beszélő*, 13 July 2013.

199 Regarding NKA, see the beginning of this chapter.

200 Regarding MMA, see the beginning of this chapter.

201 The OFF again became a "civil organisation supported from abroad" (7 July 2018). <https://www.facebook.com/1589298637955941/photos/a.1591823857703419/2128502347368898/?type=3&theater>

202 The Watchdog project of the Human Platform monitored and documented all the measures of the Orbán government in the fields of culture, education, and research, including the structural changes in the institutions of fine arts, until 2014. http://humanplatform.hu/watchdog/terulet/kepzo_muveszet/

203 <https://www.spikeartmagazine.com/en/articles/many-artists-have-left-country>

Since 2012, the field has been protesting and demonstrating against the superposition of MMA and the annexation of art institutions. By now, however, artists seem to have been exhausted. If alternative systems cannot be maintained, the entire field might completely disappear.

FILM ART AND FILM INDUSTRY

In the context of this report, it is important to highlight that film art, just like other fields of culture, is made available for the public through certain institutions integrated into society. Yet artists are not so exposed to these institutions in numerous fields as they are in the case of films. Professional artwork can be produced within the frame of the private sphere, and artistic independence might be maintained. In the case of film, however, it is essential that film is not simply a form of art but probably the biggest branch of the entertainment industry. Of course, avant-garde initiatives may exist in this field, too, but most of the films are produced by the entertainment industry.

The film industry is in need of support all over Europe, because it has a competitive disadvantage in comparison to the film industry in the USA, where film industry production is mostly based on return and profit. In the European Union, however, every country has its own system of support, while member states have created a common fund with its supplementing institutions. The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2007²⁰⁴ defines the content of the film policy and the activity of the related institutions (film funds), emphasizing that the latter should “include the entire spectrum and value chain of film, as a cultural and economic branch.”²⁰⁵ National film productions funded by the state are organised along the specific values related to the local concept of national film, at the same time also counting on some kind of return apart from the assertion of the mentioned values. The criteria for success consist of commercial data as well as aspects of “quality” like awards at local and international festivals, reviews, etc.

In the Kádár period (from the beginning of the 1960s) Hungary had a significant film industry with substantial international success.

After 1989, when the regime change took place, it was obvious that the film industry deserved state support. By April 1991, the Foundation of Motion Pictures was established. One of its first aims was the following: “As the primary institution for state sponsorship, it should promote the production and dissemination of Hungarian films in every genre, especially in the case of valuable works of art, through democratic boards issuing sums received from the central budget to applying workshops, groups of artists, and individual applicants.”²⁰⁶

Thus, the financing of films was mixed, as films were of course produced not only with the help of central support, and furthermore, central resources were available in other ways, too. Still, both the Foundation of Motion Pictures and its successor, the Public Foundation of Motion Pictures (MMKK) were professional and social organisations. However, the Foundation was often on the verge of bankruptcy due to the meagre resources, the diversity of its functions, and the unsettled accounting of different subventions. Promoting artists was a controversial task, too, for the Foundation was usually unable to cover the entire cost of the production in the majority of cases.

In 2011, MMKK was terminated by a government decree,²⁰⁷ and its responsibilities were taken over by the Hungarian National Film Fund Non-profit Ltd., also established by government decree.²⁰⁸ The new body was not founded as a professional and social organisation but as a state-owned company managed by Andy Vajna, former Hollywood film producer and government commissioner for the film industry.²⁰⁹ Andy Vajna was appointed by the Prime Minister as the government commissioner responsible for the renewal of the Hungarian film industry, and his work was not controlled by

204 The CM/Rec(2009)7 Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to the member states regarding national film policies and the diversity of cultural expressions: <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/2010/europa-tanacs>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

205 Tamás Joó, International Producer Skills. Financing Films and Film Policy. DLA dissertation written at the Doctoral School of the University of Theatre and Film Arts. Supervisor: Dr. Lóránt Stóhr, Associate Professor. 2016.

206 http://www.filmvilag.hu/xista_frame.php?cikk_id=4132, last seen: 31.10.2019.

207 This was decided by the 1202/2011. (21 June) Government Decree: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A11H1202.KOR&txtreferer=A0600065.TV>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

208 368/2011. (31 December) Government Decree on the implementation of the Act on Public Finances: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100368.kor>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

209 Andy Vajna, an American businessman of Hungarian descent, was a film producer and the owner of casinos, restaurants, and diamond shops, as well as the government commissioner of the Hungarian film industry from 2011 to his death in January 2019. Vajna worked in a close symbiosis with the Orbán regime: he got a state concession for operating casinos, then he bought the second largest commercial television in Hungary at the request of the government, and he was ranked as the 14th richest and 5th most influential person in 2018. Regarding Vajna's activities in Hollywood, see: <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/08/04/andy-vajna-in-hollywood/>, last seen 31.10.2019. About Andy Vajna's investment into casinos and state concession, see <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/08/05/andy-vajna-in-budapest/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

any of the ministries but he was subjected directly to the government. The leading positions at the Hungarian National Film Fund were no longer filled based on the result of a social dialogue with the ones concerned, or on the basis of a professional consensus, but an otherwise capable, pragmatic team was arbitrarily chosen. After a year or two of preparations, the institution stabilised its operations and making efficient use of a bigger budget than before, they managed to boost the production of especially feature films relatively soon, relying on a more or less transparent system of applications. Most of the film makers in Hungary accepted the new framework. The most famous opponent of the system was, however, the world-famous Hungarian film director, Béla Tarr, who lately gave an interview to the Hungarian magazine *Magyar Narancs* (MN).

"MN: Many people see the two Oscar Awards and the Golden and Silver Bear Awards as the success of Vajna's system.

TB: Even if this was true, these results would still not legitimise the current anti-democratic system, just as the Rubik Cube did not legitimise Kádár's regime. These films are personal successes produced by talented people, who know what compromises they had to make. But each award is exclusively their success, and not that of the system. Culture cannot be centrally directed."²¹⁰

Vajna had two tasks: he needed to establish a new, reasonable system for financing films and to promote and develop the Hungarian film industry by attracting international productions to Hungary.

The Hungarian National Film Fund managed by Vajna distributed state support centrally, almost exclusively on the basis of the scripts they received. Still, the often-criticised system performed better than what the professionals in the field had expected. During Vajna's time, no propaganda films were produced, and the selection of films did not reflect any direct political influence of the government but preserved the diversity of Hungarian film production.

Still, the most questionable point in the new system established after 2011 was the government commissioner himself: Andy Vajna's personal influence. He was able to use it for the promotion of Hungary's film industry capacity, but that also raised the suspicion that the development and use of that capacity further strengthened the influence of American films.

According to the records of the National Film Office of the National Media and Communication Authority, annually more than 100 billion HUF have been spent on the film industry in Hungary in the past three years, with 84% of that sum being invested from abroad (average value): 125.4 billion HUF in 2016, 108.2 billion HUF in 2017, and 110.1 billion HUF in 2018. In 2017, 285 films were produced in Hungary – 245 of which were Hungarian films, 4 were co-productions, and 84 were foreign films. In 2018, 333 films were registered in Hungary, and 30 more Hungarian films were produced than the previous year. Contract work in the film industry also increased: in 2015 and 2016 only 50 foreign films were produced in Hungary in contrast to 64 in 2017.

The financial highlights of the films produced in Hungary in 2018 were *Terminator 6*, featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Linda Hamilton, with its 16.9 billion HUF budget, and *Red Sparrow*, featuring Jennifer Lawrence, with a budget of 11.3 billion HUF. Since the tax benefits were raised by the government from 25% to 30% last year, foreign crews will probably return to Hungary this year as well.

American films also lead in Hungarian cinemas: according to the total number of spectators, most of the tickets were sold to Hungarian customers last year for the films *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*.²¹¹ Total numbers for Hungarian films are much lower.²¹² The most popular Hungarian film of the past few years was *A Kind of America 3*, a comedy by Gábor Herendi, which has been watched by 350 000 people in a year and a half. Oscar-winning *Son of Saul* by László Nemes-Jeles debuted four years ago, since then, approximately 270 000 people have seen it, while his new film, *Sunset* was watched by about 50 000 spectators during the past year.²¹³ In art cinemas, 7 out of 12 of the most popular films were Hungarian.

To sum up, it can be said that the film support system centralised from above after 2011 has been operating relatively efficiently in the past years. At the same time, it also needs to be considered that this structure removed a cultural branch with a significant budgetary support from under professional and social control. It is also a question whether this film

²¹⁰ <https://magyarnarancs.hu/mikrofilm/tudom-ma-is-a-nevet-121834>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²¹¹ <https://www.filmteker.hu/hirek/sosem-talalod-ki-melyik-10-filmre-valtottak-a-legtobb-jegyvet-a-magyarok-2018-ban>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²¹² <https://mnf.hu/hu/hirek/a-fimalap-altal-tamogatott-filmek-nezozsamai>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²¹³ <https://www.filmteker.hu/hirek/tobb-mint-egy-millio-nezoje-volt-a-magyar-filmeknek-2018-ban>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

policy and institutional structure fulfil the spirit of the Recommendation by the Council of Europe.²¹⁴ A clearly negative answer to this question is given by Tamás Joó:

“In practice [...], the policy and the operation of MNF Ltd.,²¹⁵ which represents American and private interests far more effectively than national ones, often seem to explicitly contradict the Recommendation. According to the Recommendation, it is a professional principle that the indicator for the national film policy's efficiency is the coherence between the elements of the value chain. The principle is defined by the weakest link in the chain: if the professional training or the scripts are wrong, it would be useless to invest in the production. If there is no market research, nor statistics, not even good films will be able to perform well etc.”²¹⁶

Finally, it must be mentioned that this short chapter evaluates the structure of a system that is currently being terminated. It is still a question how the resources and positions in the film industry will be redistributed after Andy Vajna's death.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ <http://www.nefmi.gov.hu/kultura/2010/europa-tanacs>, last seen 31.10.2019.

²¹⁵ Hungarian National Film Fund.

²¹⁶ Tamás Joó, *ibid.*

²¹⁷ https://index.hu/kultur/cinematrix/2019/10/14/filmalap_uj_vezerigazgato_lecsereltek_a_teljes_dontobizottsagot/, last seen 31.10.2019.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY OF MUSEUMS

Possibly the most important change since 2010 in the field of museums has been the dissolution of the ministry responsible for culture, therefore museums – similarly to heritage preservation or archaeology – have been left without a real master. In the meantime, particular interests dominate the field, and the actors occupying stronger political positions and having more power – in other words: standing closer to the Prime Minister – have access to financial resources, and, in numerous cases, could even influence legal regulation.²¹⁸

As a result of the political transformation of the field, the power of the professional representatives of public collections – museums, archives, and libraries – as well as of heritage preservation and archaeology has been reduced to the minimum. The 2013 Act on Museums removed the requirement of a field-specific degree from among the criteria for the appointment of museum executives. Thus, the law has opened space for the unhampered realization of various claims of power representation and of touristic and business goals as against professional points of view of research and heritage protection. The previous application system has lost its meaning, the executives are usually politically loyal people ready to implement top centralized decisions.

An important consequence of the destruction of the state museum system based on a responsible ministry is the harm done to the professional basis and the transparency of decisions related to museums. Up to 2013, the museums in the countryside were organised into county networks, which usually meant that the museum in the county town had a central function, and the museums in towns and villages were not independent institutions in the legal, financial, or HR sense. The county self-government maintained the local museums, but did not interfere directly with their work. In 2013 these county organisations were abolished, and the public collections were subjected to towns. The state seized the ownership of collections and of properties, except for the properties in county towns. The institutions were directly subjected to the maintaining towns. Mayors can appoint professionals on a political basis, and it is up to their individual taste what exhibitions they wish to have, moreover, they can even close down the local museum. Referring to property development goals, they can justify closing parts of an exhibition (e.g. the section representing the houses and everyday life of Finno-Ugric people in the open-air museum of Zalaegerszeg²¹⁹). In the meantime, the government establishes new museums every now and then, partly for ideological purposes (the Trianon Museum was founded in Várpalota in 2002, during the reign of the first Orbán government, whereas the Mindszenty Centre²²⁰ is still being built), partly according to the hobbies of influential party members (the Hunting Museum opened in 2013), without consulting professionals or relying on their opinions. In several small towns, the local museums have been integrated with the library and the cultural centre or other cultural institutions. Obviously, all this has toppled the balance of a museum's three functions (preservation, scientific research, and dissemination of cultural and scientific knowledge) in favour of the latter, often performed at a remarkably low level. This decreasing level is also indicated – among other signs – by the fake scientific views gaining space in some of the countryside museums. In the countryside museums, which can hardly survive, almost no research is done any more. Cultural policy forces the constantly decreasing number of professionals to sacrifice research and actual museological work at the altar of public education. The lack of finances is present not only at the level of material expenses. Newly graduating professionals – historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, and art historians – are reluctant to accept jobs in museums, for the salaries in these institutions are on the poverty line.

The oldest and often largest parts of museum collections are archaeological collections. The professionals taking care of these collections and augmenting them are in the same situation as the museologists described above. Both their income

218 The Act on Museums in 2013 (<https://mkogy.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1300160.TV>, last seen: 31.10.2019) authorised the Minister of Human Resources to transfer items in public collections from one museum to the other (see later the case of the Esterházy treasures).

219 "Elenyésző emlékeink. Magyar féreg a finnugor fában" [Our Perishing Memories: Hungarian Worm in the Finno-Ugric Tree], www.nyest.hu/renhirek/magyar-fereg-a-finnugor-faban, last seen: 31.10.2019.

220 The costs of building the Mindszenty Museum in Zalaegerszeg reached almost 5.5 billion HUF. <https://tervlap.hu/cikk-nezet/kozel-55-milliard-forintbol-epul-a-mindszenty-muzeum-zalaegerszegen>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

and their motivation levels are low, while most of them spend most of the year in hard conditions in the field, working at excavations preceding large investment projects. As museums can employ a very restricted number of archaeologists and assistants, the per capita workload is unreasonably high, therefore these experts usually do not have any time left for publishing, doing research, or participating in trainings. The legal regulation of archaeological excavations is changed practically every year, so even ministry officers preparing the modifications are almost unable to track the changes. All that results in a constant professional and existential uncertainty. Regarding professional work and the preparation of excavations, archaeological activity is made difficult with incredible bureaucratic obligations. Moreover, the protection net of heritage protection has practically ceased to exist as the investors' interests often enjoy a greater priority – even when they are illegal – than the aspects of heritage protection, which causes huge damage to archaeological sites. It is quite telling that archaeology – unlike other fields of museology – is subjected to the Prime Minister's Office, and not to a ministry responsible for culture among other tasks.

The deteriorating situation of the museums in the capital is even more spectacular than that of the museums in the countryside. Neglecting professional and scientific aspects, the Hungarian National Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts have been integrated, in spite of their largely different scopes of collection and modes of operation. Another typically ad hoc measure without any planning is the practice of separating certain sections of collections from their original institution and translocating them to other museums. Among critical professionals, such a case has given the nickname “Lex Fertőd” to the 2013 Act on Museums.²²¹ It gave the opportunity to remove the treasures once collected by the Esterházy Family from the Museum of Applied Arts and transfer them to Fertőd, to a former castle of the family, although the museum lacks the professional background necessary for the objects' protection and preservation. Such decisions have been integrated into national culture policy due to informal deals of property development and tourism companies lobbying in the background. The removal of the Museum of Natural History from Budapest to the countryside was also decided by a few people in the governing elite, without asking those actually concerned.

A case study: the Museum of Natural History

The Hungarian Natural History Museum²²² was established in 1802. It consists of 5 large collections containing almost 10 million objects, and it is a member of the European Synthesys⁺ project.²²³ In 1991, the Hungarian government decided to move the various collections of the museum, previously stored at various sites to one place, the former building of the Ludovica Military Academy. In 2012, the Orbán government issued a decree²²⁴ that the National University of Public Service aiming to educate civil servants is to be located in the building of the former military academy. This decision lacking any professional reasons unambiguously belongs to the realm of symbolic politics. At that time, new exhibition halls, up-to-date storage rooms, laboratories, and working offices had already been in use by the majority of the collections in the reconstructed building for more than a decade. In December 2018, the government issued a decree²²⁵ that the ministry should work out a detailed professional plan within 3 months regarding the translocation of the Museum of Natural History to the countryside. The minister in charge, László Palkovics, announced²²⁶ that the city of Debrecen will be the new home of the museum.

Professional and non-governmental organizations strongly oppose this unjustified decision of the government. According to a survey of the museum staff's council, none of the respondents agreed with removing the museum 200 km away from the capital, to the eastern corner of the country, and only 10% of the employers would be willing to continue their work in Debrecen. Losing the experts would involve a dramatic decrease in the professional level of handling the collection as well as in the related research.²²⁷ Experts have also emphasized that some parts of the collection cannot be transferred without causing fatal damage to some of the objects.²²⁸ The general assembly of the Academy issued a resolution,²²⁹ civilians launched a petition and run two Facebook pages²³⁰ asking for professional measures, and to raise public awareness.

221 <https://artportal.hu/magazin/lex-fertod-i-a-torvenyalkotok-mutargy-es-muzeumkepe/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

222 <http://www.nhms.hu/en/rolunk/kuldetes>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

223 <https://www.synthesys.info/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

224 1158/2012. (V. 18.) Government decree. A „Nemzeti Köszolgálati Egyetem elhelyezése a Ludovika Campusban” elnevezésű állami beruházás egyes kérdéseiről, *Magyar Közlöny*, 2012. május 18.p. 9895; <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/MK12060.pdf>

225 1703/2018. (XII. 17.) Government Decree “Az Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma fenntartásában működő, egyes országos közgyűjtemények vidéki elhelyezéséről és az általuk nyújtott vidéki szolgáltatások fejlesztéséről”. *Magyar Közlöny* 2018. dec.17. p. 35096. <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/index.php?menuindex=200&pageindex=kozltart&ev=2018&szam=201>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

226 <http://www.atv.hu/video/video-20181210-palkovics-laszlo> last seen: 31.10.2019.

227 “Established centres of research formed by national collections call for skilled curatorial and taxonomic staff to maintain suitable standards of collections care that is based on expertise that has been built up by institutions over many years. Such established centres of research also form an important part in citizen science activities and public engagement in science, again based on the expertise and stability that has been built up over the years.” CETAF (Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities) statement.

228 János Podani, On the Current Status of the Botanical Department of the Hungarian Natural History Museum (abstract in English) *Magyar Tudomány* 2018/179: 566-574

229 <https://mta.hu/kozgyules2018/akademiai-allasfoglalas-a-magyar-termeszettudomanyi-muzeumrol-108714>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

230 <https://www.facebook.com/magyartermeszettudomanyi.muzeummegmenteseert/>; Maradjon Budapesten a Természetudományi Múzeum, last seen:31.10.2019.

INVESTMENTS

The financing of museums looks chaotic in the entire system of the distribution bound to individuals and lacking transparency. The amount reserved for maintaining museums has not increased for several years, moreover, a significant reduction of capital can be observed in certain areas. Most of the state money spent in the field does not serve the running and development of cultural activities but covers new constructions. The government has initiated – and also plans – major constructions meant to give new museum buildings to Budapest. The program was launched several years ago, but none of the institutions have opened yet at their new location, although they have long been closed at the old ones among uncertain conditions (e. g. Museum of Ethnography, Hungarian Technical and Transportation Museum, Museum of Applied Arts). There is a threat that the new buildings will not be owned by the museums, which will only be defenceless tenants in their new “homes”, and that high rents can endanger professional work. The place of the construction work is the City Park, which was the first public park in Europe and which fulfils the same function up to the present day. Environment activists protested against the transformation of the area, which would dramatically reduce the number of full-grown trees and thus the green coverage in the park. One of the purposes of concentrating all the museums in one place is to establish a significant and popular centre for tourism, which might result in a great profit for the above-mentioned construction industry and tourism lobbies. For these groups, the income from constructions and tourism is more important than the scientific and heritage preservation activity of the museums.

Along with the removal of museums, the National Széchényi Library also has to move out of the Buda Castle, and the – already only former – Research Institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences had to leave the buildings in the castle district of Buda, as well.²³¹ Expelling culture and sciences from this area takes place within the framework of symbolic national politics. Museums are among the victims of that policy.

ACQUISITION

It is worth devoting a section to the anomalies in the field of museum acquisitions, which are also related to the exclusion of the public. The government is very economical in guaranteeing the acquisition framework of state museums in the budgetary act – but far more generous when it buys artworks that can be well used for political purposes. The most striking example was the case of the so-called Seuso treasure: the government proudly announced that, as a result of secret negotiations, it “retrieved” the set of late antique findings of inestimable value once presumably excavated in Hungary then smuggled abroad, for the possession of which two other countries also had their claims. Referring to national interest, the government paid about 28 million EUR to a British fence, who had been unable to sell the debated artwork for several years, although the question of proprietary rights is still unsettled: the Hungarian state has been unable to prove its right in front of an international court for numerous decades. The documents about the suspicious business have been classified for thirty years. The financial background of these transactions is just as suspicious as in the case of several other expensive artwork purchases. The Hungarian National Bank launched its “Value Repository Program” in 2013 with a budget of about 100 million EUR and an aim similar to the explanation of returning the Seuso treasure to Hungary: “to retrieve for Hungary as much valuable Hungarian or foreign artwork as possible.” The 34 already purchased pieces of art include European classics (Titian, van Dyck, Renoir) as well as Hungarian artwork like Christ in front of Pilate by Munkácsy or major works by László Moholy-Nagy. What makes the entire program dubious is the source of the money, since it comes from a type of income of the Hungarian National Bank that should belong to Hungary's central budget. The committee which makes decisions about the Value Repository Program is a private board working without the control of any autonomous professional organisation.

NATIONAL SZÉCHÉNYI LIBRARY²³²

The core activity of the national library established by Ferenc Széchényi in 1802 is collecting and preserving the documents of written Hungarian cultural heritage. Its library stock consists of about 14 million items – due to the decree on legal deposit obligation – with special collections (Manuscripts, Maps, Early Printed Books, Music Collection, Theatre History Collection, Posters, Small Prints, Reproduced Graphics, Photos, Audio-visual Documents, Oral History Archive) with millions of further documents.

²³¹ Regarding the takeover of the research institutes of the Academy, see the chapter on MTA.

²³² Sources used for the description of the library's situation:

<https://444.hu/2019/05/14/kikoltoztetik-az-oroszagos-szechenyi-konyvtarat-a-budavari-palotabol>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

<https://168ora.hu/itthon/megeositettek-valoban-elkoltozik-a-budai-varbol-az-oroszagos-szechenyi-konyvtar-168151>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

<https://blog.atlatszo.hu/2018/09/szuksegtelen-beszerzesek-remiszto-galadsagok-kifakadt-a-szechenyi-konyvtar-vezetoje/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

<http://www.oszk.hu/hirek/az-atlatszo-nem-kozolte-az-oroszagos-szechenyi-konyvtar-allasfoglalat>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

The national library's official acquisition budget has been 0 (zero) HUF since 2006. Even the nominal value of its annual budget has been decreasing for about 6 years. Its utility debt has reached 700 million HUF by now, and it received the last compensation for its deficit at the end of 2016.

Being underfinanced, the Széchényi National Library (OSZK) cannot provide its employees either the legally guaranteed salaries or benefits. Since 2008, employees have not even received the obligatory annual salary raise prescribed by the wage grid of public servants. Instead of the increase according to a higher age and professional degrees, three quarters of the grid are filled with the guaranteed minimum wage. The library is only able to cover the legally guaranteed obligatory increase of basic salary every three years by withdrawing even the former meagre benefits from its employees. Thus, their gross income does not increase even when their salary is increased. According to the Curia, this procedure is illegal, yet not only OSZK but other institutions employing public-sector employees are also compelled to apply it because of underfunding.

According to a government decree in 2017, the storage facility issues of OSZK (also considering the needs arising from the annual acquisition) should be resolved by a so-called archival storage to be built in Piliscsaba. Yet this construction still has not been started, although its final deadline is the end of 2023.

The storage issues of OSZK could only be resolved by constructing a new, up-to-date national library that can meet the requirements of the 21st century and the strict rules of collection preservation. This would need the planning and realisation of an investment of about 50-70-100 billion HUF. The removal of the library's collection would take at least 10 years counted from the decision at minimum. Instead of building a new library, the government thinks about a removal. Removing the library from the Buda Castle is part of symbolic politics. The cultural and scientific institutions (National Dance Theatre, MTA research institutes) are forced to move out of the Castle and the castle district while the buildings thus emptied host government institutions. The governmental brainstorming about the library's removal (placing it in a military barrack out of use or constructing a new building for it) as well as the search for the cheapest possible solution, the permanent postponement of the decision, and underfunding all make the situation of the library more difficult, hindering efficient work there.

The development of the national library, the process of digital and IT developments relies on financial resources independent from the core activities, working on the basis of programs and projects – not without problems and with limited results.

The planning and construction of a national library system and of an integral catalogue and platform are also in progress, involving a limited capacity of material and human resources. The number of employees cannot be increased because of the wage bill issues, especially as the library cannot employ new qualified professionals for the salaries accepted by employees who have been working here for numerous years (or decades), especially in the fields of IT and finances, or even in the field of library services, because there are not enough professionals with degrees.

Ensuring the operation of the national library at a 21st century level is the responsibility of the government (more precisely, of the parliament, as in case of every national institution). It should be.

PROTECTION OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS ²³³

2001: To reduce bureaucracy, the first Orbán government merged the National Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments with numerous other offices (most notable - and with no antecedent - was the integration of archaeology and artwork protection), establishing the National Office of Cultural Heritage (Kulturális Örökségvédelmi Hivatal, KÖH). This hydrocephalus, a complete professional failure, erased even the very name of the protection of historical monuments, and what has no name will slowly cease to exist.

The departments for the protection of historic monuments, outsourced in 2011 from the KÖH to the county government offices (the centralised local authorities of the government), lost their power to supervise and issue permissions for the reconstruction of protected historic buildings in 2012, and as a much weaker authority, they could only give a professional

233 Sources used for this chapter: "Ha mindez így marad, akkor ez ennek a 140 éves történetnek a vége." ["If it stays like that, then it will be the end of a 140 years old story."] BUKSZ conversation: Gábor Klaniczay's interview with Pál Lővei about the dissolution of the National Office of Cultural Heritage. *BUKSZ Budapesti Könyvszemle* 24. 3–4. (2012) 254–268.

Pál Lővei, "Halotti beszéd." [Funeral Oration] *Élet és Irodalom*. LXI. 34. (25 August 2017) 8.

Ernő Marosi, "Die restaurierte Geschichte: Denkmalpflege, Museumstätigkeit und Rekonstruktion in Ungarn seit 1990." *Geschichte bauen. Architektonische Rekonstruktion und Nationenbildung vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute*. Böhlau, Köln: Arnold Bartetzky unter Mitarbeit von Madlen Benthin, 2017. 291–322.

Ernő Marosi, A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia és a műemlékvédelem [The Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the protection of historic buildings]. *Magyar Tudomány* 180. 10. (2019) 1560–1568.

opinion concerning planned constructions. By 2013, the dissection of their activity was completed by delegating the tasks of the body of first instance to districts, while the second instance level was taken over by the counties. (By now, there is only one second instance level authority left in Budapest.) In the 21 offices created on the ruins of the one-time national organisation there is no chance left for the protection of historic monuments on the basis of homogeneous principles, as it could be expected by professionals as well as by ordinary citizens. The offices take care of 15 different fields in addition to the protection of historic monuments: e.g. public health and child custody services, protection of agricultural plants, etc. – office managers are not trained in any of these fields, so they only execute political will, neglecting professional aspects.

In September 2012, KÖH was abolished out of the blue, on the basis of the motion by three Members of the Parliament on the pretext of an archaeological excavation deemed too long and expensive on which, at that time there was no authority involved any longer, (information on intentions of closing down the office had already been available in 2011). Its tasks, employees, administrative units, and equipment were distributed among three different ministries and departments subjected to them. 1) The Heritage Protection Department was established at the Ministry of Interior to act as authority. 2) National registration and research tasks were delegated first to the Government Office of Budapest, then to the Lechner Lajos Knowledge Centre (which is an Ltd.!). 3) The newly established Forster Gyula National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management was responsible for the international network and cases of world heritage sites, as well as for the management of the 140-year-old art relic collections of the Office. Since 2010, the governmental “umbrella” organisation for the protection of historic buildings has been changing permanently, too: first it was the Ministry of Human Resources, then the Ministry of Interior, and, since 2014, it has been the Prime Minister's Office.

At the end of 2016, the Forster Centre was abolished, too, and some of its employees, as well as the art relic collections, were taken over by the Prime Minister's Office. Before that, the headquarters for the protection of historic monuments was forced to move out from the historic monument located in the Castle district of Buda, where it had been residing since 1970. The collections were closed down: a special library of more than 60 000 volumes including periodicals, unmatched in the entire Carpathian basin; the design archive of historic monuments with its more than 700 linear metre of preliminary surveying, planning, and research documentation (50 000 items) and another 120 000 blueprints and drawings; the photo archive including half a million pictures, ranging from glass negatives to digital photographs; and the document archive, which contains the entire history of the institutionalised protection of historic monuments since its beginnings in 1872. These collections also include all the documents until 1919-1922 related to the monuments in the entire area of Hungary before World War I – by preserving and processing these documents and making them available for researchers arriving from beyond the borders, the institution for the protection of monuments has contributed to the scientific cooperation of the countries in the Carpathian Basin in the past three decades, deserving the unambiguous acknowledgement of all the professionals concerned (the professional reconstruction of monuments beyond the borders on the basis of these documents is a Hungarian national interest, as well!). The everyday use of these collections forms the basis for research, professional planning, and authority procedures – which is also a legal commitment. In spite of this, the collections have been closed for more than three years, and there have been no new acquisitions to them; they may be reopened in early 2020 in a storehouse in the suburbs.²³⁴

Since 2012, highly experienced professionals are constantly leaving the organisations for the protection of historic monuments. In 2017, many of them, right before retirement and/or having many decades of employment in the field of the protection of historic monuments and, in certain cases, academic degrees, were dismissed from the Prime Minister's Office.

At the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, the collections related to protected monuments and the employees working with them, as well as the researchers still employed, were transferred to the Hungarian Academy of Arts (MMA) under the name Hungarian Architecture Museum and Documentation Centre for the Protection of Historic Monuments. Ever since then, there is a complete lack of professional strategy regarding the tasks of the institution, which also employs heritage researchers, apart from preserving the collections.

After the parliamentary elections in 2018, the position of the Deputy State Secretary responsible for the protection of historic monuments remained unfilled. Consequently, that department suffered the greatest losses in the autumn, at the time of the reduction of staff in the Prime Minister's Office: 90% of its employees were dismissed, and the department for the protection of historic monuments was abolished. Nowadays, the cultural protection of historic monuments is only

234 In December 2019, after the compilation of this report, the historic collections have been opened for experts.

represented by a sub department, which is part of the construction sector, covering the entire country, with only five employees for the topic of historic monuments.

The process is well indicated by the quick succession of leaders, and their complete absence by now – the last professional leader of KÖH resigned before the abolition of the institution in 2012. The incompetence of the management is complete, both in the ministry and in the Prime Minister's Office. “Popular” ideas pop up about a radical reduction of historic monuments; the aim declared in October 2018 was to reduce the number of monuments protected at varying levels from 13 5000 to 3000 (!).

The events related to world heritage sites in 2018–2019 are spectacular indicators of the situation. As a result of staff reduction at the Prime Minister's Office at the end of 2018, there was no civil servant left even to notice the deadline for the response to the questions received from UNESCO. Removing the protection of historic monuments from the authority processes resulted in a situation in Buda Castle and in the City Park, as well as regarding the construction of skyscrapers, which means that Budapest will probably be listed as a site in danger by 2020. As a consequence of a governmental measure in Hungary, which was completely unexpected, beyond any deadline, and entirely meaningless – deeming a professional approach harmful – the nomination of the Danubian Limes for a world heritage site failed, although it had been prepared with the cooperation of four countries for several years with exemplary collaborative work and with very favourable professional reception.

Although the humanities faculties at three universities (Eötvös Loránd University, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, and Károli Gáspár Reformed University) make efforts to offer specialisations in the protection of historic monuments to their students in art history, their endeavours are much hindered by the lack of a professional “background institution”.

The abolition of the KÖH in 2012 meant the termination of the only central institution for the protection of historic monuments in Hungary that had continuously existed since 1872. The professional organisation of the protection of historic monuments has been completely destroyed since 2010, and professional decisions cannot go against the political will. Losing the very nomination “protection of historic monuments” finally led to the strong restrictions of actual protection of historic buildings and to its termination by now: there is no national protection, stock-taking, and scientifically based registration any longer; on a national level, there are only a few individual restoration and reconstruction projects, which professionally cannot be conceived as restoration of historic monuments, and the costs of which are disproportionately high. As a result of mostly ad hoc, inconsiderate, and often chaotic decisions and reorganisations lacking any concept, the national protection of historic monuments has practically ceased in Hungary.

THE MEDIA POLICY OF THE ORBÁN REGIME

After the overwhelming victory of Fidesz at the parliamentary elections in 2010, promising “more than just a change of government”, the pro-government takeover of the media market started immediately and continued at a record speed in the following months. It included the placing of media financed by public money under total control, the boosting of media companies close to the government with the national (public) resources, and the ousting of opposition media outlets. Just like in the political system, the aim was to create a central field of power in the media market as well, and, by now, market movements – placements of advertisements, creation of new media outlets, destruction or buying up old ones – are all governed from one single centre directly or indirectly, so there is practically no significant change in the media market without the approval of the governing parties.

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE MEDIA MARKET

Both in 1998 and 2010, Fidesz considered it one of its most important tasks to completely occupy the state-funded media – radio, television, and news agency – to politically purge the staff quickly, and to ensure the direct control of state media. Part of the privately-owned media not loyal to the regime was bought up, whereas other companies have been forced out of the market by political means (withdrawing broadcasting licences, reducing the number of frequencies, interventions by the authorities) or economic ones (withdrawal of state advertisements, scaring away private advertisers, etc.). The direct interference of the regime distorts the market to an extent that would be unimaginable in a country based on the rule of law. The government uses a wide range of means to give competitive advantage to its own media, most important of which is the enormous amount of state advertisements almost exclusively channelled to pro-government media outlets. The Orbán system does not prohibit the operation of opposition media directly, by any explicit ban, but its ambition to make their existence impossible by economic or legal means is unambiguous.

FROM PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA TO STATE PROPAGANDA CHANNEL

In 2010, the media funded by public money lost its public service character and became the means of overt government propaganda. It does not meet any requirement of public service, its information-sharing activity is one-sided, biased, and partial, important news is often hushed up, while the distortion of news and the misinformation of the audience are regular. In state media, not only do political programmes serve the interest of the people in power, but cultural and educational programs are also produced according to the expectations of the ones in power, featuring almost exclusively artists, scientists, and public figures who support the government's policy. The current pro-government media serves the expectations of the government even more obediently than the media during the Kádár regime. The state media receives

235 Sources used in this chapter:

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Attila Bátorfy, “Öt év után nőtt a magyar reklámpiac.” [The Hungarian Advertisement Market Has Grown After 5 Years] http://kreativ.hu/cikk/ot_ev_utan_nott_a_magyar_reklampiac, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Attila Bátorfy, “Rengeteg pénzt termel a Fidesz-közeli médiabirodalom.” [The Media Empire Close to Fidesz Makes an Enormous Amount of Money] http://kreativ.hu/media/cikk/rengeteg_penz_termel_a_fidesz_kozeli_mediabirodalom, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Attila Bátorfy, Ágnes Urbán, “Állami reklámköltség 2006-2018.” [State Expenditure on Advertisements] <https://mertek.atlatszo.hu/allami-reklamkoltes-2006-2018/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Victor Klemperer, *A Harmadik Birodalom nyelve* [The Language of the Third Reich]. Budapest: Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont, 1984.

Gábor Wessely, “Miért beteg a vidéki sajtó? – Egy újságíró számadása.” [Why is the Press Sick in the Countryside? A Journalist's Account] <https://magyarnarancs.hu/kismagyarorszag/miert-beteg-a-videki-sajto-egy-ujsgiro-szamadasa-89185>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

“Mindent beborít a Fidesz-közeli média.” [Everything is Covered by Media Close to the Fidesz] <https://mertek.atlatszo.hu/mindent-beborit-a-fidesz-kozeli-media/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

“Milliárdokat termelő ötlettel állt elő Lázár.” [Lázár Has Introduced an Idea Making Billions] https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20140211_Lazar_reklamado_tevek_bonusz, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Ferenc M. László, “Jelentős fordulat előtt áll a Simicska médiabirodalom.” [Simicska's Media Empire is on the Brink of Significant Change] https://hvg.hu/kkv/20140513_Jelentos_fordulat_elott_all_Simicskamedia, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Gábor Polyák, “A médiarendszer problémái.” [Problems in the Media System] <https://europatarsasag.hu/hu/blog/mediarendszer-problemai>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

“Mária országa – A Médiatanács újraindítja a rádiós piacot.” [Mary's Country: The Media Council Rewrites the Radio Market] <https://mertek.eu/2013/09/18/maria-orszaga-a-mediatanacs-ujraindija-a-radios-piacot/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

Mária Vásárhelyi, “Médiamonopóly.” [Media Monopoly] *Magyar Polip* 2. Budapest: Noran-Libro, 2014: 413–434.

Mária Vásárhelyi, “A posztkommunista maffiaállam médiapolitikája.” [Media Policy in the Post-communist Mafia State] *Mozgó Világ*, 2019/2.

huge support from the state – more than 83.2 billion HUF (260 million EUR) per year – while commercial televisions have budgets of approximately 20 billion HUF (64 million EUR) per year, although they have much larger viewing rates. Besides, the state media also receives another few billions from the Media Council almost every year. In 2017, the value of state advertisements was 10 billion HUF (data for 2018 are not available yet). The distribution of public money is not in harmony with the relevant regulations of the European Commission.²³⁶

The state media launches one thematic channel after the other – based on non-transparent conditions and using further public money. Among these, the most popular one is the sports channel, which buys the rights to broadcast certain international sporting events for billions of HUF. This gives the opportunity for showing 2-3-minute long government propaganda and anti-migrant news in the breaks before, during, and after the sports programs, thus reaching an audience that would never watch state news television otherwise.²³⁷

ERROR IN THE MACHINE

2015 will be presumably remembered as a turning point in the history of the Hungarian press. From 2010 on, the seizing of positions and the ousting of other participants from the media market was continuous, so by 2015, the government has created its information monopoly, leaving only minor gaps. Of course, all that did not happen in a 20th-century, overt style but in the style of 21st-century hybrid regimes, preserving the facade of democracy. Not the entire market was taken over: a few media outlets have been left alive to serve an audience, who will obviously never be devoted to the NER (System of National Cooperation), but the opportunities of these companies have been seriously restricted by various means, for example, they can sell their advertising spaces only through Fidesz. The primary ambition of the government propaganda is to keep their own audience permanently in a state of agitation and to gain undecided people by success propaganda, on the one hand, and by fear mongering, on the other. To achieve this, the audience not too interested or completely uninterested in politics needs to be covered in a cloud of propaganda, so wherever one looks, one cannot see anything else but propaganda. This is why nearly 80 % of the news media market needed to be obtained.²³⁸

This media empire, built with meticulous care, was blown up by Lajos Simicska, Viktor Orbán's former schoolmate and friend, the treasurer of Fidesz, when he publicly broke up with his boss on 6 February 2015 under scandalous circumstances. Between 1998 and 2015 no change could take place in the growing media empire of Fidesz without Simicska's consent. In fact, he was the omnipotent ruler of this empire. For Orbán, only the results counted, but presumably, he did not interfere with the ways Simicska achieved them. After the repeated two-third triumph at the elections of 2014, however, Orbán could have presumed that Simicska gained too great power in media and economy, so he wanted to end the concentration of control over the expanding empire in only one hand, one which could be less and less controlled by him. He decided to break the exclusive power of his former ally by sharing media ownership among diverse people who are personally and financially exclusively dependent on him. The scandal that broke out on 6 February had probably been preceded by lengthy negotiations behind the scenes. Simicska apparently did not wish to resign from his previous position of unrestrained influence. That could have been the reason for the breakup. In any case, the leading journalists and editors at the media outlets owned by Simicska resigned one after the other after 6 February, and the empire, constructed over more than a decade – using almost exclusively public money – fell apart. The media outlets that remained in Simicska's field of interest, which once used to be the flagships of the Fidesz media empire – *Hír TV* (cable television), *Magyar Nemzet* (daily newspaper), *Heti Válasz* (weekly newspaper), *Lánchíd Rádió*, and *Class FM* (radio), and the free daily paper, *Metropol* – as well as the outdoor billboard companies, changed their positions and started to function like real media. From one day to the other, they turned from the apologists of the central power into its critics. In parallel with that, however, state advertisements that had provided most of the companies' income disappeared from these media platforms, and the advertisements of the intimidated multinational and private companies also became scarce. It became evident in a short time that Simicska would have to maintain the remnants of his empire from his own fortune.

REVISING THE PLANS

Just a few weeks after the war between Orbán and Simicska broke out, the Prime Minister made it clear that the building of a new pro-government media empire is the task of the oligarchs financed by the party from public money. Surveying the

²³⁶ Because of that, Mérték Média Monitor, Klubrádió, and former MEP Benedek Jávor initiated a proceeding at the Committee in 2016: <https://mertek.eu/2018/12/20/az-allami-media-finanszirozasa-tiltott-allami-tamogatas/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²³⁷ <https://mertek.eu/2018/12/20/az-allami-media-finanszirozasa-tiltott-allami-tamogatas/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²³⁸ See <https://mertek.eu/2019/04/25/mindent-beborit-a-fidesz-kozeli-media/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

changes in the media market in the past two years, it seems that the environment of the Prime Minister gave out precise guidelines and personalised orders to each oligarch regarding their expected participation in obtaining the most important positions in the media market. The means of power used in the course of building the new media empire show great diversity, ranging from founding new media outlets through buying up already existing ones to destroying old ones. Printed and online newspapers, as well as online portals, have been founded one after the other: *888.hu* (online portal), *Lokál* (free daily newspaper), *Magyar Idők* (daily newspaper), *Ripost* (printed and online weekly paper), etc. As a party mission, the oligarchs who gained their fortune from public money, due to public tenders and European Union support, started to buy up media products that had significant public influence. TV2 (a national landline TV channel) and county daily newspapers were the greatest acquisitions. Whatever could not be bought or adjusted to their profile, was destroyed. That was the fate of *Népszabadság*, the most widely read and highest quality daily newspaper, as well. By the eve of the parliamentary elections in 2018, the media empire of Fidesz was reconstructed in its full pride, financed by public money once again. Thus, new market actors do not take any risks when investing their money into media market products because the guaranteed state advertisement orders cover the maintenance costs of media companies otherwise mostly operating with a negative balance.²³⁹

Since the Fidesz–KDNP coalition won the elections again by a two-third majority, Lajos Simicska must have felt – not without grounds – that he had spent his own money now on the remnants of the media he still owned practically in vain. It became clear that it was hopeless to unsettle the ones in power by traditional means – plurality of the public sphere, news critical of the government, unveiling abuses of power – so he decided to come to an agreement with the government and to sell the remnants of his media empire to his former fellow oligarchs. Thus, all the media outlets connected to Simicska returned to the government's media portfolio within a few months, and after a thorough political purge, they all started to operate flawlessly in propaganda mode again. After that, the media empire of Fidesz did not only cover most of the media market, but it was also full of superfluous doubles, which needed rationalisation. Presumably, partly because of that, partly learning from the incident with Simicska, Orbán decided to compel his oligarchs to hand over all of their media companies to the newly established Central European Media and Press Foundation (KESMA) for free (!). The Foundation established in 2018 owns almost 500 media products by now, including 18 county daily newspapers; every channel of the state television (Hungarian Television); *Origo*, the second-largest internet portal; TV2, the national commercial channel with the second largest viewing figures; the daily newspapers *Magyar Nemzet* and *Magyar Idők*; the cable television channels *Hír TV* and *Echo TV* (the latter stopped broadcasting in the meantime); the Prime Minister's favourite newspaper, the sports daily *Nemzeti Sport*; the national commercial radio channel, *Retro*, with the largest listening figures; numerous minor local papers and lifestyle magazines; and, of course, all the media products established after the Simicska affair, including the free daily *Lokál*, issued in several hundred thousand copies, and the tabloid paper *Ripost*, specialised in fake news campaigns. Since such a huge media conglomerate is obviously unconstitutional and against the rules of the Competition Act concerning media ownership and incompatibility, the Prime Minister qualified the Foundation as being of “national strategic significance” with one stroke of the pen, so that the Hungarian Competition Authority could not examine its incompatibility. The mere fact that former owners could be ordered to hand over all their media to the Foundation proves beyond doubt that these oligarchs did not invest their own money into the companies but used public money and income received from advertisers to buy and run the propaganda newspapers/media owned by them. All in all, by 2019 there is only one mostly independent national television channel left, and there is no independent national radio at all. There is no completely independent national daily newspaper either, since it is well-known that the government-critical *Népszava* can be present in the market only with Orbán's permission and the financial support of the government, which means that the Prime Minister can remove it from the scene with one stroke of his pen – and the editors know that, too. The only field that government²⁴⁰ propaganda cannot dominate, in spite of its efforts, is online media. Still, the once greatest internet portal is now part of the pro-government media empire, while the second most popular portal is owned by a previous MP of the governing party, although this does not seem to be reflected in its content yet.

BLOCKING INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Independent media have been blocked in the past years by various financial and legal means. In the media market, not only “public money lost its public character” but the market also lost its market character.²⁴¹ The most important measure has

²³⁹ <https://mertek.eu/2019/01/22/az-allami-reklamkoltes-mint-tiltott-allami-tamogatas/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²⁴⁰ <https://444.hu/2019/01/08/puch-laszlo-ha-nincs-allami-hirdetes-nincs-nepszava-se>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

²⁴¹ When the Hungarian National Bank used 260 billion HUF to establish foundations, the money lost its “public money character” according to the official argumentation. <https://g7.hu/kozelet/20180424/a-magyar-hatosag-nem-adja-fel-ujra-leelvele-hogy-az-mnb-alapitvanyok-milliardjai-elvesztettek-kozvagyon-jelleguket/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

been channelling state advertisement orders to media close to the government, and to encourage private companies to also spend their advertising budget at pro-government media. State advertisements cost many billion HUF a year, most of which all land at media owned by oligarchs close to the government, and also, it is not by accident that multinational companies and most of the Hungarian firms also tend to spend the majority of their money assigned for advertising at pro-government media. The government achieves this effect, which contradicts economic rationality, by offering various investment and tax benefits on the one hand, and by changing the legal environment and threatening with sanctions, on the other. Nowadays, in Hungary, the direction of money spent on advertising is determined not by market concerns but by political ones. Beyond that, however, the government also uses even more brutal means to bring independent media into an impossible situation. In the case of the electronic media, the most obvious means is the distribution/withdrawal of frequency licences on a political basis – since they are state monopoly – but fines and supports, as well as the adjustment of legal regulations to political aims, are efficient methods, too. These were used in getting rid of *Metropol* (free daily newspaper) and *Népszabadság* (the largest left-wing daily newspaper) or Simicska's advertising pillars.

Some other media companies, which seem to be independent, are kept alive directly or indirectly by the governing parties using either state advertisements or front men, as if on respiration machines. According to the unanimous statements of their staff, the content produced there is not influenced directly by the power centre, but the respiration machine can be switched off at any moment.

By the end of 2018, 90% of the outdoor billboard spaces were owned by oligarchs close to Fidesz, so one can expect, at the next election, to have all the streets and squares covered in pro-government propaganda encouraging people to participate at the “democratic elections.”

RESTRICTION OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BY AUTOCRATIC MEANS

The greatest enemy of corrupt, oppressive systems is the transparency of the operations of the power holders, and the most important weapon against the public sphere is the classification of information and the legal restriction of the freedom of information. Since 2010, the Orbán government acted immediately whenever facts revealing the corrupt functioning of the central power became public. Its actions, however, did not aim at removing corruption but at restricting the access to information of public interest again and again. In the past seven years, the range of data of public interest has been narrowed down continuously, the possibility for anonymous and repeated data request has been terminated, the price to be paid for public interest data requests has been extraordinarily raised, reports prepared by external experts have been protected by copyright, and the range of preparatory, therefore classified materials has been defined totally arbitrarily. Besides, every document is preliminarily classified, well before the public could gain any real information from it about the operation of public power. One of the most important purposes of the act on administrative courts adopted at the end of 2018 was to make public interest data requests impossible. Before that, courts usually decided in favour of the one requesting the data, and they obliged state institutions to make public interest data available.

TABLOID AND PROPAGANDA

The newly created media empire has two pillars regarding content: uncritically ramming government propaganda and tabloidization of the news. The common denominator of tabloid and propaganda is that they both abandon the traditional ethos of journalism. The deliberate ambition of the governing party which directly or indirectly influences the majority of the media market is to oust trustworthy, reliable, valuable media from the public space and to fill their space with worthless, superficial, oversimplified, ready-made tabloid news based on fears, lies, and half-truths. The most important purpose behind the tabloidization of media is the efficient distribution of government propaganda, as the tabloid is the catalyst of political propaganda. The communication policy of government parties uses the meanest methods of political propaganda for the sake of successful brainwashing: from the permanent repetition of simple, emotionally manipulative messages through the use of blind group technique, the construction of enemy images, character assassination, ad hominem attacks, and the production of alternative realities, to the careful mixing of truths and lies.

In this report we have attempted to sum up the severe damage that the elimination of the rule of law and of the system of checks and balances and the construction of an authoritarian regime have caused in the field of culture (understood in a broad sense to include education, science, arts, cultural heritage, and the media) in Hungary.

We have shown that underfinancing, extreme centralisation, the abolition of professional autonomies, and the subordination of culture to short-term political goals and to the specific interest of the clientele have led to severe losses in this sphere. These losses are manifold and not always quantifiable.

It may be expressed in numbers that the results of Hungarian students have plummeted in every respect according to the latest Pisa survey.²⁴² Numbers may also prove that the proportion of school dropouts increased in Hungary between 2009 and 2018, while it decreased in other Member States in the same period. However, at the moment we cannot estimate, let alone quantify, the consequences of introducing far-right authors and ideas into school curricula or of including religious propaganda in the uniform textbooks forced on schools by the state.

We may express in numbers the budget and the EU funding that the new Minister of Innovation and Technology will dispose of – the same minister who took over by force the previously autonomous research network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences despite the protests of the latter. But it cannot be predicted at this point how a technocratic and narrow-minded minister who neglects basic sciences and solely focuses on the development of applied sciences will transform the system and the direction of scientific research, the composition of research staff, etc. It was also this minister who was responsible for the removal of the CEU from Budapest. It is impossible to express in numbers what the loss of the CEU means for Hungarian scientific and academic life.

We know that the government directly or indirectly controls almost 80 % of the media. But how could we measure in numbers the loss of the highest-quality and most popular Hungarian newspaper, which the government bought by proxy only to close it? It is also difficult to express in numbers how public media systematically falsifies the news, concealing important facts and not inviting opposition politicians into the studios of the public media.

What number could express the losses caused by the fact that the protection of monuments has simply ceased to exist in Hungary? Or that the country's largest library can hardly sustain its activities due to underfinancing and the irresponsibility of the government? Or that important museums (e.g. the Museum of Ethnography, the Museum of Transport, the Museum of Applied Arts) have been closed for a long time due to gigantic government projects (moving government offices into Buda Castle, the creation of a museum quarter in the City Park), or that the Natural History Museum is gravely endangered by the unprofessional decision to move it to another location?

We cannot express in numbers the loss that outstanding independent theatre companies have ceased their operation because of the unpredictable system of applications and late payments, or that the government prevents artists who criticize the system from performing in rural community centres. Excellent artists are forced to leave Hungary to be able to work freely and make a living, because in Hungary they are regarded as enemies due to their political beliefs, thus they do not receive jobs, invitations or commissions either in the public or in the private sector.

Research has shown that xenophobia has assumed frightening proportions in Hungary today. It is incalculable what further dehumanising effects the “war” propaganda pouring forth from the occupied media and the billboards omnipresent in public spaces, the school materials imbued with a retrograde ideology, and the squares populated by statues and symbols of the interwar period will have on human relationships and on the everyday behaviour of people. Although it wears the mask of Christianity and surrounds itself with the props of democracy, through its radical antihumanism, its denying elementary human solidarity to those in need, whether Hungarians or refugees, its ethnic-national exclusivism, and its anti-Enlightenment stance, the Orbán regime has turned its back on Europe, on the values of universal culture and civilisation, and on progress.

In the ten years since 2010, the activities of the Hungarian government in the areas of generating and transmitting knowledge, creating culture and preserving the cultural heritage have set the country back by decades. Autonomous

242 <https://www.vg.hu/kozelet/pisa-felmeres-lesujtoak-magyar-diakok-eredmenyei-685847/>, last seen: 31.10.2019.

cultural institutions and the professionals they employ have suffered huge losses, have exhausted themselves in upholding resistance, and have little energy left.

The present overview of the developments in Hungary may have a significance larger than itself: it may serve as a cautionary tale of the long-term consequences that can be expected when populism becomes the governing force in a country, dismantling the system of checks and balances, and using cultural institutions to serve its own political goals.



The core of our report presenting the dismantling of culture, education, science and the media in Hungary was completed by autumn 2019, and the editing process ended on 31 October. However, significant events occurred in the last two months of 2019, as well: in November and December, the government continued to pursue its policy of further extending state control. The methods are the same: at first, rumours about radically centralising, discriminative measures are leaked, then, depending on the strength of the reactions, the measures are relaxed somewhat, but they still result in a worse situation than the previous conditions.

The decree on the implementation of the law on public education adopted in the summer was published in the *Official Gazette* on 21 November 2019. The decree abolished the flexible system of starting compulsory education which took into account the school maturity of individual children, and made it compulsory to enrol all children aged six from 2020 onwards. Whereas before, nursery school teachers and parents could decide whether the child was ready to go to school, the new law centralised the assessment of school maturity. Psychologists, parents and professional organisations signed a petition protesting against these provisions. The Commissioner for Fundamental Rights launched an investigation, and requested that EMMI postpone the introduction of the new procedural arrangement for determining the compulsory school age in order to preserve legal certainty and to protect children's rights. The regulation did not change in essence, and the Parliament prolonged the deadline for the submission of applications for an exemption from compulsory enrolment by only 2 weeks.

The new law on vocational education, which came into force on 28 November, excluded 32,000 teachers from the system of public education by depriving them of their public servant status. The government tries to compensate vocational instructors for the loss of the security ensured earlier by their public servant status with a salary raise. Those affected by the law were not asked for their opinion beforehand, and the opportunity for a “consultation” was only offered after the bill had been submitted to the Parliament. Late November and early December, trade unions, students and parents organised several protests “against low teachers' salaries, the workload of both teachers and students, compulsory enrolment from the age of six, and the change in the status of vocational instructors.”²⁴³

At the municipal elections held on 13 October 2019, the opposition scored victories all over the country, and Budapest is now led by an opposition mayor. Following this serious defeat, the Orbán government drew the conclusion that it must come down even harder on the independent intellectual circles largely concentrated in Budapest. The government used a sexual harassment case in one of the best art theatres in Budapest as an excuse to deal yet another blow to artistic autonomy.²⁴⁴

Early December, the draft of an “omnibus bill” amending legislation on cultural institutions was leaked,²⁴⁵ which was met with consternation especially by theatre professionals and audiences. The bill “would have practically abolished the National Cultural Fund, would have made ministerial consent a prerequisite for appointing the directors of theatres²⁴⁶ maintained by local governments, and would have abolished the operating support of independent theatres.” Due to heated protests, the most controversial elements were deleted from the text of the bill,²⁴⁷ but the law passed on 11 December in an expedited procedure²⁴⁸ still contains a high number of measures that threaten the cultural sector.

The aim of the law is to “strengthen the national culture”. As interpreted by the law, national culture “guarantees the preservation of national identity, which contributes to the survival, wellbeing and growth of the nation with the help of traditions, cultural symbols and collective memory.” This phrasing combines an outdated, 19th-century view of culture with the limitations of a modern instrumental policy. The law, “in order to strengthen the national culture, defines cultural strategic institutions”, i.e. privileged cultural institutions which receive special treatment from the government and conclude with it individual funding agreements for the period of five years.²⁴⁹ The leaders of these institutions (all of whom are loyal to the government) and the President of MMA will form the so-called National Cultural Council, which will have an – as yet vaguely defined – role in elaborating the government's cultural policy.²⁵⁰ With the addition of this new institution to EMMI, NKA and MMA, the political management of the cultural sphere will become even less transparent and predictable than before, not to mention serious conflicts of interests.²⁵¹

It is a severe threat to theatres maintained by local governments that the state will only provide them with operational support if local governments expressly request joint management from the state, to which the government responds favourably. In such cases, individual agreements concluded by the state and the local government will set out the rules of joint operation, the distribution of funding and the manner of appointing the management.

The law also contains provisions regarding new tax benefits (involving the corporate tax) on investments, renovation and maintenance costs related to properties under monument protection. Private individuals, including homeowners in protected buildings that significantly contribute to the urban landscape, are excluded from among the beneficiaries. On the other hand, properties owned by companies receiving tax benefits include, for example, castles owned, renovated and run

by family members of the Prime Minister or oligarchs who have made a fortune through public procurements, and who have already benefited from significant tax breaks.

Another important news in early December was that the government wanted to extend state control over publishing, as well.²⁵² The National Széchényi Library, supervised in the past few months by ministerial commissioner Szilárd Demeter,²⁵³ who considers himself a “committed follower of Orbán”, issued a guide on submitting copies of publications as legal deposit; this reveals that publishers will be expected to submit data the disclosure of which will breach business confidentiality or violate the data protection laws.

In 2019, several developments occurred in the process of rewriting the National Curriculum (NAT), which has been going on for years. Earlier, in 2018, a panel of experts published a draft of the new National Curriculum, which was disputed by many, but was considered more up-to-date than the 2012 curriculum. However, the government presumably did not find the planned curriculum sufficiently Christian, patriotic or nationalistic,²⁵⁴ therefore the leader of EMMI appointed Mihály Takaró, a literary historian from the far right, to rewrite the National Curriculum. As a result, six experts working on the curriculum for Hungarian language and literature protested by leaving the group responsible for preparatory work.²⁵⁵

On 19 December, the Minister heading the Prime Minister's Office announced that a new National Curriculum will not be issued.²⁵⁶ After the announcement was met with criticism, EMMI contradicted the Minister. According to their statement, the new version of NAT will become effective from 2020, and it will contain essential conceptual changes which will also allow “the preparation of framework curricula more modern and up-to-date than all preceding ones”.²⁵⁷

In mid-December, the government broke its own rules when distributing the billions intended as bonuses for performing arts organisations. The call for applications was initially published in order to compensate for the abolition of the corporate tax support, thus only those organisations were supposed to apply which had received corporate tax support before. However, the winning applications were submitted by a number of organisations and private individuals who did not meet this or the rest of the requirements, and had never been involved with the performing arts.²⁵⁸ Thus, due to the non-transparent and wholly arbitrary distribution of the resources, the situation of actual performing artists has become even more uncertain and unpredictable.

All of the above shows that the Hungarian government continues to abolish cultural autonomies and cultural diversity, to appropriate financial resources and to exclude independent intellectuals. Hungary, more precisely the Hungarian Prime Minister and his government, not only turned their backs on Europe, but they are increasingly distancing themselves from European values.

243 https://eduline.hu/kozoktatas/20191128_Tobbnapos_tiltakozas_kezdodik_ma_az_oktatast_erinto_valtozasok_ellen, last seen: 18.12.2019.

244 https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/13/arts/hungary-theater-orban.html?fbclid=IwAR24heJ6J2rTrhJuxCK8vU_DnNdOIPv0VW_Egyo9_hBGBUPjbcmaRYrwxu0; Máté Kocsis, leader of the parliamentary group of Fidesz, justified the submission of the bill as follows:

“Gothar-style harassing theatres demand money from the government while blocking insight into their affairs, and, at times, conceal criminal acts for years. It is undisputable that the state can no longer support their operation in these conditions, therefore the parliamentary groups of the governing parties will adopt the legislative package on the financing of cultural activities.” See: <https://444.hu/2019/12/06/a-kormanypartok-a-gothar-ugyre-hivatkozva-szavazzak-meg-az-egesz-magyar-kultur-at-felforgato-torvenysomagot>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

245 See: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-vs-B_zBtWLL6_JoNSfj628XLAcJ9f-L/edit, last seen: 18.12.2019.

246 See: https://24.hu/kultura/2019/12/09/kulturalis-torvenyjavaslat-szin hazak-nemzeti-kulturalis-tanacs/?fbclid=IwAR0VbDM8h5qLSyV48LKXpKjZh8AgJdiYAnSFCE-eWS2G12LIRVMAa_sBg7s, last seen: 18.12.2019.

247 See: <https://444.hu/2019/12/14/demeter-szilard-elismerte-hogy-a-felaborodas-miatt-maradt-ki-a-kulturalis-torvenybol-az-nka-beszantasa>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

248 *Official Gazette* 2019/208 (18 December 2019), p. 9518 ff. See: <https://magyarkozlony.hu/>

249 Paragraph 4 of the bill names 17 such institutions.

250 The present form of the law on culture does not contain the plans for establishing the Hungarian National Cultural Centre, which “would have been a kind of strategy-forming cultural concern comprising the National Széchényi Library, KELLO Library Supply Non-profit Ltd., the Petőfi Museum of Literature (PIM) and its affiliated institutions, the Petőfi Literary Agency Non-profit Ltd., the National Talent Development Non-profit Ltd., the Hungarian Creative Arts Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd., the Hungarian Writers' Association and the Tamás Cseh Archive, under the leadership of (Szilárd) Demeter.”

https://index.hu/kultur/2019/12/09/semjen_zsolt_torvenymodositas_nemzeti_kulturalis_tanacs/, last seen: 18.12.2019.

251 According to Adrienn Zubek, co-president of the Association of Independent Performing Artists, “As regards the council, we only know that an important institution would be selected in every field. The council would consist of the leaders of these, led by the minister, and it would decide about individual applications. This is an amateur concept, to put it mildly, because this is simply not how culture works, not to mention the conflicts of interests, as the members would be incumbent leaders of institutions.” See: <https://24.hu/kultura/2019/12/04/kormany-kulturalis-torvenyjavaslata-fuggetlen-szin hazak-nemzeti-kulturalis-alap/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

252 https://hvg.hu/itthon/20191206_A_konyvkiadast_is_allami_ellenorzes_ala_vonnak, last accessed on 18 December 2019.

The text of the decree can be found at http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=215467.371465, last seen: 18.12.2019.

253 <https://24.hu/kultura/2019/06/06/demeter-szilard-petofi-irodalmi-muzeum-orban-viktor-kulturharc/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

254 <https://merce.hu/2019/09/25/takaro-mihaly-miatt-hagytak-ott-a-nemzeti-alapanterv-kidolgozasat-a-szakertok/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

255 <https://merce.hu/2019/09/25/takaro-mihaly-miatt-hagytak-ott-a-nemzeti-alapanterv-kidolgozasat-a-szakertok/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

256 <https://merce.hu/2019/12/19/feleslegesen-dobott-ki-az-allam-tobb-milliard-forintot-az-uj-nemzeti-alapantervre/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

257 <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/emberi-eroforrasok-miniszteriuma/oktatasert-felelos-allamtitkarsag/hirek/lenyeges-koncepcionalis-valtozasok-a-nemzeti-alapantervben>, last seen: 18.12.2019.

258 <https://g7.hu/kozelet/20191216/fideszes-kepviselo-szemelyi-edzo-es-uj-sagaris-is-kapott-a-szin hazaknak-szant-allami-milliardokbol/>, last seen: 18.12.2019.;

https://index.hu/kultur/2019/12/15/kultur-tao_tamogatas_eloado-muveszeti_tao_palyazat_egyseges_magyar_izraelita_hitkozseg_nemzeti_szin haz/?token=cd0369fd4038123b5762ba15bd774dde, last seen: 18.12.2019.

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GLOSSARY

- CEU Central European University
ELKH Eötvös Loránd Kutatási Hálózat; Eötvös Loránd Research Network
EMMI Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma; Ministry of Human Resources
FESZ Független Előadó-művészeti Szövetség; The Alliance of Independent Performing Artists
Fidesz–KDNP Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség – Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt; Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance – Christian Democratic People's Party
ITM Innovációs és Technológiai Minisztérium; Ministry of Innovation and Technology
KESMA Közép-Európai Sajtó és Médiaalapítvány; Central European Media and Press Foundation
KKK képzési és kimeneti követelmények; curriculum development, qualification, and output requirements
KMTG Kárpát-medencei Tehetséggondozó; Talent Development in the Carpathian Basin
KÖH Kulturális Örökségvédelmi Hivatal; National Office of Cultural Heritage
MAB Magyar Felsőoktatási Akkreditációs Bizottság; Hungarian Accreditation Committee
MIÉP Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja; Hungarian Justice and Life Party
MMA Magyar Művészeti Akadémia; Hungarian Academy of Arts
MMKK Magyar Mozgóképek Közalapítvány; Public Foundation of Motion Pictures
MNF Magyar Nemzeti Filmalap; Hungarian National Film Fund
MTA Magyar Tudományos Akadémia; Hungarian Academy of Sciences
MŰPA Művészetek Palotája; Palace of Arts
NENYI Nemzeti Együttműködés Nyilatkozata; Declaration of National Cooperation (2010)
NER Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere; System of National Cooperation
NFKIH Nemzeti Kutatási, Fejlesztési és Innovációs Hivatal; National Research, Development and Innovation Office
NKA Nemzeti Kulturális Alap; National Cultural Fund
NKE Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem; National University of Public Service
OFI Oktatókutatató és Fejlesztő Intézet; Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development
OHA Oktatói Hálózat; Hungarian Network of Academics
OSF Nyílt Társadalom Alapítvány; Open Society Foundations
OSZK Országos Széchényi Könyvtár; National Széchényi Library
OTKA Országos Tudományos Kutatási Alapprogramok; Hungarian Scientific Research Fund
PIM Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum; Petőfi Museum of Literature
RETÖRKI Rendszerváltás Történetét Kutató Intézet és Archívum; Research Institute and Archives for the History of Regime Change
SZIMA Széchenyi Irodalmi és Művészeti Akadémia; Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Arts
Tanítanék mozgalom; Tanítanék movement
TAO Társasági osztalékadó; Corporate tax
TEP Thematic Excellence Programme
TKA Tempus Közalapítvány; Tempus Public Foundation
Történelemtanárok Egylete; Association of Hungarian History Teachers





HUNGARY TURNS ITS BACK ON EUROPE

DISMANTLING
CULTURE, EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND THE MEDIA
IN HUNGARY
2010-2019

