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Report on Xenophobia, Radicalism and Hate Crime in Hungary in 2017

Table of Contents

[1. Changes in legislation affecting the interests of minorities in 2017 4](#_Toc517272085)

[Legislative amendments concerning the Roma population 4](#_Toc517272086)

[2. Law enforcement practices affecting minorities in 2017 6](#_Toc517272087)

[Discriminatory practices against the Roma 6](#_Toc517272088)

[Decisions of courts and state authorities regarding discrimination against the Roma and other minorities 9](#_Toc517272089)

[3. The position of immigrants in Hungary in 2017 12](#_Toc517272090)

[Legislative amendments concerning asylum-seekers 12](#_Toc517272091)

[Local self-government decrees on migration 14](#_Toc517272092)

[Discriminatory practices against asylum-seekers 16](#_Toc517272093)

[Decisions of courts and state authorities regarding discrimination against asylum-seekers 18](#_Toc517272094)

[Social support available for immigrants 19](#_Toc517272095)

[4. Manifestations of xenophobia and hate speech among the executive and legislative powers 22](#_Toc517272096)

[Rhetoric concerning migrants 22](#_Toc517272097)

[Rhetoric concerning anti-government protesters 24](#_Toc517272098)

[Rhetoric concerning the Roma 25](#_Toc517272099)

[Rhetoric concerning the Jewish community 26](#_Toc517272100)

[Rhetoric concerning the LGBTQ community 26](#_Toc517272101)

[5. Statements against xenophobia and radical nationalism among government representatives and prominent political activists 28](#_Toc517272102)

[6. The attitude of the Hungarian society towards immigrants, foreign nationals and various ethnic and religious minorities 29](#_Toc517272103)

[Prejudice against the Roma 29](#_Toc517272104)

[Antisemitism 29](#_Toc517272105)

[Xenophobia and prejudice against migrants 32](#_Toc517272106)

[Homophobia 34](#_Toc517272107)

[Islamophobia 36](#_Toc517272108)

[7. Radical nationalist groups and parties 37](#_Toc517272109)

[The Jobbik party 37](#_Toc517272110)

[Far-right organisations 42](#_Toc517272111)

[8. Public actions of extremists and radical nationalists, including among sports fans 48](#_Toc517272112)

[Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*, HVIM) 48](#_Toc517272113)

[Strength and Resolve (*Erő és Elszántság*, EE) 49](#_Toc517272114)

[Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*) 51](#_Toc517272115)

[Hungarian Self-Defence Movement *(Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, MÖM)* 51](#_Toc517272116)

[Identity Generation *(Identitás Generáció)* and Legion of Honour *(Becsület Légiója)* 52](#_Toc517272117)

[Extremist events among sports fans 53](#_Toc517272118)

[9. Hate crimes and incidents 54](#_Toc517272119)

[Hate crimes and incidents against the Roma 55](#_Toc517272120)

[Antisemitic hate crimes and incidents 57](#_Toc517272121)

[Hate crimes and incidents against members of the LGBTQ community 60](#_Toc517272122)

[Hate crimes and incidents against migrants 61](#_Toc517272123)

[Anti-Islamic hate crimes and incidents 62](#_Toc517272124)

[Hate crimes and incidents against anti-government protesters and NGOs 63](#_Toc517272125)

[10. Glorification of German National Socialism and collaborators of Nazi Germany 67](#_Toc517272126)

[11. Persecution of human rights activists 73](#_Toc517272127)

[Legislative decisions against NGOs 74](#_Toc517272128)

[Administrative measures and practices of the authorities against NGOs 76](#_Toc517272129)

[Communication campaigns and statements by the government against NGOs 76](#_Toc517272130)

[12. Conclusions 79](#_Toc517272131)

[13. Recommendations 84](#_Toc517272132)

1. Changes in legislation affecting the interests of minorities in 2017

The Hungarian government has mainly focused on discriminatory legislation against asylum-seekers in 2017, as is detailed in Chapter 3. However, the Roma were also referred to within Fidesz’s anti-immigration campaign, for example when Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said Miskolc[[1]](#footnote-1) does not need immigrants since “it already has experiences with them, yet those came from Hungary, or – to be exact – from the territory of Hungary.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Nevertheless, the general experience is, as the Roma mayor of Cserdi[[3]](#footnote-3) put it, that in today’s Hungary it is not the Roma who must be hated the most; “There is Soros, there are migrants and only then come to the Roma.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Legislative amendments concerning the Roma population

Considering that the main target of the government’s rhetoric and thus its legislative efforts were asylum-seekers, refugees, and illegal immigrants, no discriminatory legislation aiming at the Roma was approved at the national level in Hungary in 2017. There were, however, two legislative changes that aimed to facilitate the social inclusion of the Roma.

In June 2017, the Hungarian government decided to make the construction of the Roma Education and Cultural Centre in Budapest an investment of special importance, which is going to speed up the construction process.[[5]](#footnote-5) The Cultural Centre will house a theatre hall, where both musical and dance performance will be held. Moreover, the Centre will be home to permanent and thematic exhibitions, workshops, a professional studio, digital archive, a library, a radio studio and an editorial room. Minister for Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, said the institution would be a community space for the Roma and the non-Roma Hungarians to learn about Roma culture.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In November 2017, Budapest also decided to create a Roma Special College Council to help the development of Roma intellectuals. The Council can make recommendations and can advise the government on, for example, legislation affecting special colleges for the Roma, and it is involved in developing the Roma special college network.[[7]](#footnote-7) The organisation started operating in April 2018, and the deputy state secretary for social inclusion at the Ministry for Human Capacities said at the time that the Council would help maintain and improve one of the most important programmes in improving the lives of the Roma.

2. Law enforcement practices affecting minorities in 2017

The Hungarian law enforcement bodies’ discriminatory practices mainly affected refugees, asylum-seekers[[8]](#footnote-8), and the Roma in Hungary. The general experience regarding the decisions taken by courts and Hungarian authorities in cases involving Roma individuals and asylum-seekers is mixed. Antisemitism, although it is present in the general population, does not seem to affect law enforcement bodies. Authorities generally investigate anti-Semitic crimes thoroughly. In 2017, the neo-Nazi political activist Horst Mahler was apprehended by Hungarian police in Sopron, and he was then swiftly extradited to Germany.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In 2015, the social benefits system was transformed in Hungary. Consequently, most social benefits now have to be paid by local self-governments and not the state, and giving such benefits is not compulsory for them anymore except for one item from the list. This allowed some local self-governments (e.g., Miskolc, Sáta, Tiszavasvári) to decide on social benefits discriminatively, taking it away specifically from those who need it the most. One loophole that can be used to exempt the poorest from these benefits is to require the applicant to maintain an orderly living space. In a case in 2015, the Constitutional Court upheld local self-governments’ rights to implement regulation concerning “community coexistence.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Therefore, local authorities continue to have the necessary legal competences to discriminate against Roma populations.

Discriminatory practices against the Roma

The Hungarian Roma continue to face discrimination in a wide variety of areas such as housing, education and public health, which prompted the European Commission to launch infringement proceedings against Hungary for the on-going discrimination of the Roma in education.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This is especially visible in the education sector, where the government has been supporting the segregation of Roma pupils, albeit subtly. In 2017, the Hungarian government published a report assessing why Hungarian pupils’ PISA test scores had been so low in 2015. Information acquired by Hungarian media revealed that there was a proposal in the report to create boarding schools for “students with disadvantageous family backgrounds” (which are mainly Roma families). Although this recommendation did not make it into the final document,[[12]](#footnote-12) in 2017, then Minister of Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, voiced his support for the segregation of Roma children several times. For instance, in November 2017 he said at a meeting of the National Assembly’s cultural committee that a short period of segregation supported by the adequate pedagogical methods prepares students for integration. The European Commission’s report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies mentioned that Hungary has progressed considerably in terms of the early education of the Roma (for example by making it compulsory to take children to kindergarten), but adds that over 60 percent of Hungarian Roma children attend segregated schools (where most or all students are of Roma origin).[[13]](#footnote-13) The report claims that in most countries affected by segregation there is a lack of active anti-segregation measures.[[14]](#footnote-14) Although there is an Anti-Segregation Roundtable in Hungary, over the years a considerable number of experts left it for various reasons – including the government’s anti-NGO measures.[[15]](#footnote-15) In an open letter to Mr Balog, the two latest experts who resigned wrote: “we felt numerous times that our presence legitimised (what we believe to be) erroneous policy decisions.” A recently published study by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) confirmed that the Anti-Segregation Roundtable had achieved little results since its foundation in 2013. According to the MTA, the segregation index for Hungarian (mainly Roma) children in disadvantageous or extremely disadvantageous situations grew by over ten percentage points between 2008 and 2017.[[16]](#footnote-16) The European Commission’s report on Hungary published in November 2017 also emphasised the issue of the increasing segregation of Roma pupils and highlighted that the share of early school leavers is especially high among the Roma in the country.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Poverty among the Roma remains especially high in Hungary, although it is declining.[[18]](#footnote-18) The European Commission mentions the vast majority of the Hungarian Roma are employed in the (low-paying) Public Works Scheme, and their integration into the primary labour market remains highly limited.[[19]](#footnote-19) Another report adds that the rate of young Hungarian Roma without a job and outside of any formal education and training programmes is dangerously high.[[20]](#footnote-20) In this report, the European Commission highlights the lack of efforts to monitor and fight the discrimination against the Roma on the labour market and to manage the considerable difference between the employment rate of male and female Roma citizens.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Segregation is present in the Hungarian healthcare sector as well. According to a European Parliament report from 2017, there are numerous Hungarian hospitals with segregated and inadequate maternity wards, and Roma women are subject to racial and physical abuse when giving birth.[[22]](#footnote-22) The report adds that the rate of stillbirths among the Roma in Hungary is considerably higher than that among the majority of the population.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Discrimination against the Roma is also visible in local self-governments’ practices. For example, in Kisvárda a National Roma Methodological and Education Centre was built for HUF 700 million (approximately EUR 2.25 million), which was then given to local footballers and handball players to use, and allegedly the Roma are not even allowed to enter the building.[[24]](#footnote-24) It was also revealed that the local self-government in Kisvárda is willing to pay HUF 1.5 million (approximately EUR 4,800) to those living in social apartments if they are willing to move out, which lead to about 20–30, mostly Roma individuals leaving the town.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The destruction of the so-called “numbered streets” in Miskolc continued in March 2017, when authorities started to bulldoze 70–80 houses where mainly Roma families used to live. The former Fidesz-affiliated chairman of Miskolc’s law enforcement committee, György Hubay told Népszava that the same fate awaits all 231 houses on these streets. This process continued in March even though in January a court had officially confirmed the verdict of the Equal Treatment Authority (EBH) obliging the local self-government to stop the proceedings and write an action plan to find a solution to accommodate those who live in the numbered streets.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Despite the concerns of domestic and international organisations, the head of the Fidesz-affiliated Lungo Drom – which states it is fighting for creating the necessary conditions for the success of the Roma[[27]](#footnote-27) – Flórián Farkas claimed that the government has achieved significant results with its Roma policy. Namely, he stated, an increasing number of Roma students are earning a high school diploma and finish their university studies, there are fewer people at risk of poverty, and hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged Roma were able to start working once again.[[28]](#footnote-28) Then Minister for Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, also said that the developments in the life of the Roma have been more substantial than ever since the democratic transition under the two Orbán governments after 2010. Balog added that improving Roma lives is “more important than leaving it to the Roma alone, and such an important issue that it cannot succeed without the Roma.”[[29]](#footnote-29) It needs to be mentioned that the Roma Coordination Council has been operating since 2011 to help improve effectively the situation of the Hungarian Roma community.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Decisions of courts and state authorities regarding discrimination against the Roma and other minorities

There are numerous examples from previous years when courts did not take racist motivations into account when deciding on cases involving hate crimes committed against the Roma. In contrast, Roma perpetrators were convicted of inciting hatred against a community (Hungarians) more often.[[31]](#footnote-31) Our report in 2016 introduced a case in which Hungarians attacked a group of Roma with a clearly racist intent, who received a suspended sentence for their crime. In 2017, a second instance verdict was handed out in the case: the court found the accused guilty of causing grievous bodily injury and breach of peace.[[32]](#footnote-32) The court of the second instance did not find a racist intent either, even though the attackers allegedly shouted “you will die stinky gypsies!” before they started beating the victims.[[33]](#footnote-33) Regardless, the perpetrator only received a suspended sentence once again.[[34]](#footnote-34) An international investigation found it concerning that Hungarian regulations do not name racist intent as one form of foul motivation for an aggravated criminal act, which was confirmed by a group of researchers led by former Curia[[35]](#footnote-35) presiding judge József Belegi. The report also stated that there are few convictions for hate crimes in Hungarian judicial practice in general.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Nevertheless, there were cases in 2017 when the decisions of the courts and authorities condemned discriminatory practices against minorities. For example, three men who beat participants of the Budapest Pride parade in 2013 were convicted of assault, and the court stated that motive was the victims’ sexual and ethnic orientation. The decision, which sent two perpetrators to prison, was legally binding.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Last year’s report introduced the events in Tiszavasvári, where the Jobbik-affiliated local self-government struck a deal with the Legion of Honour (*Becsület Légiója*, BH) affiliated with the extremist mayor of the village of Érpatak, Mihály Zoltán Orosz.[[38]](#footnote-38) The deal was in effect between February and December 2016. The Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (ABJH) ruled that the so-called “strolls” conducted by the BH and supported by the local self-government harassed the local Roma population, and thus the self-government breached the Roma’s right for equal treatment. In 2017, the legally binding decision of a court confirmed the opinion of the Equal Treatment Authority (*Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság*, EBH). The court’s verdict stated that “the rule of law is not only about creating and maintaining some sort of legal order, but certain fundamental values, principles must also be built into this legal order, which needs to be upheld and enforced, and attempts at attacking the rule of law must be averted on the state and local levels as well.”*[[39]](#footnote-39)* In another case concerning the cooperation of vigilante groups and local self-governments, the Curia ruled that the self-government of Gyöngyöspata harassed the local Roma community by failing to implement measures against the members of the For a Better Future Citizens’ Defence Association (*Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület,* SzJPE), the Defence Force (*Véderő*, VE) and the Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*).[[40]](#footnote-40) Another case against local self-governments concerned Mezőkeresztes, where in July 2015 the mayor wrote in the self-government’s own journal that locals should not sell their properties to the Roma.

In 2017, the EBH ruled that the mayor of Mezőkeresztes harassed the Roma and thus breached equal treatment requirements. The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (*Társaság a Szabadságjogokért*, TASZ) welcomed the decision, which proves that the mayor’s opinion published in the local self-government’s journal does not enjoy the right to free speech as he represented the state in this situation, and the state must treat all citizens as equal.[[41]](#footnote-41) The Curia found a provision in Miskolc’s local self-government decree on community coexistence punishing those who live in an accommodation where the living space available to one individual is less than 6m2 to be unconstitutional. The regulation was certainly intended to punish the poor, mainly Roma inhabitants of the city.[[42]](#footnote-42) The Constitutional Court (AB) annulled numerous provisions that discriminate public workers and unnecessarily restrict their private sphere. The law on the Public Works Scheme allowed self-governments to grant opportunities to participate in the scheme if they keep their gardens in order. The AB found that *“there are no rational reasons for the legislator to introduce special provisions with their scope restricted specifically to public workers on how one should live their lives.”[[43]](#footnote-43)*

State bodies were also active in trying to convince the state and private actors to take action to guarantee equal rights to all citizens. In July 2017, Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, László Székely, told the Hungarian news wire agency MTI that “currently, the Hungarian state is not meeting its constitutional and international obligations concerning the quality of and access to education for vulnerable, seriously and multiply disadvantaged students.”Mr Székely warned then Minister for Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, to implement the necessary measures to remedy the problems he identified, including the clarification of definitions, creating an adequate number of study places for these students, and organising ways to allow disabled students to get to school.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Mr Székely also asked Zoltán Balog to assess child protection services and implement other systemic measures after he found that every third individual taken into child protection is taken from his or her family because of their financial situation (which affects the Roma disproportionately).[[45]](#footnote-45) The commissioner emphasised that the families will continue to live in poverty after their children are taken away, and the children will suffer from serious disadvantages in their adult life because of being torn away from their family.[[46]](#footnote-46)

The Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority dealt with a case involving a ticket conductor only asking to check the ticket of a Roma individual at a train station and disregarding others. The EBH found that the defendant checked the individual's ticket because of his or her Roma origin and skin colour.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Courts stepped up against segregation in schools as well. In 2017, the Curia ruled that the Kodály Zoltán Elementary School breached equal treatment requirements by launching segregated classes for Roma students. The verdict condemned the local self-government of Kaposvár as well as the Ministry of Human Capacities, which took over the school in January 2013 but upheld the illegal situation. The school was banned from starting any new classes from the 2017/2018 school year onwards, and thus the school will be closed after the current classes finish their studies.[[48]](#footnote-48)

3. The position of immigrants in Hungary in 2017

As mentioned earlier, in 2017 legislative changes mostly concerned the immigrants in Hungary.

Legislative amendments concerning asylum-seekers

Ever since the escalation of the migration crisis in 2015, the Hungarian government has implemented a series of legislative amendments restricting opportunities for asylum-seekers to submit their application, generally making it even tougher to receive international protection in Hungary, facilitating the detention of migrants and making integration tougher even for those who receive protection.[[49]](#footnote-49) [[50]](#footnote-50) Hungarian asylum regulation implemented in 2015 and 2016 already created an environment for migrants that made it extremely hard to access the territory of Hungary and the European Union through it. After July 2016, only 600–1000 applications could be submitted in Hungary even though on a monthly average 3500 people attempted to enter in the country, presumably to submit an application.[[51]](#footnote-51)

As it is explained in detail in Chapter 4, the government’s anti-immigration rhetoric revolves around the securitisation of the topic,[[52]](#footnote-52) which is used by the ruling Fidesz-KDNP coalition to claim a right to implement extraordinary measures outside of the frames of normal political processes to protect the Hungarian population. This rhetoric revolving around the terrorism-, crime-, culture- and even public health-related threats posed by immigration serves the purpose of winning the approval of the Hungarian population for increasingly stringent anti-immigration legislation. This is taking place even after having established a system making it extremely tough for individuals to submit asylum claims as well as seeing the number of asylum-seekers in the country falling sharply. Accordingly, in the absence of actual migrants in Hungarian territory or at the Southern border, the government turned its rhetoric towards civil society and the West, who are allegedly striving to settle immigrants in Europe and specifically Hungary.

The main legislative amendment affecting the asylum process came into effect on March 28, 2017. The law implemented changes to asylum policies when a “special emergency situation caused by mass immigration” (hereafter referred to as immigration emergency) was in force. The immigration emergency has been in force since September 2015,[[53]](#footnote-53) and most recently it was extended until September 2018.[[54]](#footnote-54) The requirements to extend this special legal situation by half a year have not been met since 2016,[[55]](#footnote-55) but the government keeps it in force regardless. The immigration emergency allows the police to examine anyone’s identification documents in Hungarian territory without any justification, but it also has serious implications for asylum applications. The changes also mean that the previous “8-kilometre rule,” which basically allowed Hungarian police to take any asylum-seeker caught within 8 kilometres from the Serbian-Hungarian border back to Serbia, was extended to the whole territory of Hungary.[[56]](#footnote-56) The March 28 amendment to the law on the right to asylum declares that when an immigration emergency is in force asylum applications can only be submitted in transit zones,[[57]](#footnote-57) where only five and, later, one applicant was allowed to enter every day.[[58]](#footnote-58) These provisions are valid for families (children are detained simply because their parents are) and people between the age of 14 and 18 not accompanied by an adult as well.[[59]](#footnote-59) Children under 14 are transported form the transit zone to the children’s home in Fót, but there are considerable issues with determining the age of applicants, including the implementation of sufficient legal remedies against the conclusions of police doctors. Asylum-seekers must remain in the transit zones until the final verdict on their case is announced, to which there is no legal remedy – although they can return to Serbia whenever they want to.[[60]](#footnote-60) The new law also creates an absurd situation: theoretically, even Ukrainian or Russian asylum-seekers entering the country from the direction of – for instance – Ukraine will be transported to the transit zones, which they can only leave towards Serbia, a place they may have never been to.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Seven civil society organisations criticised the law in a jointly written document.[[62]](#footnote-62) First of all, they complained that the legislation basically makes it impossible for asylum-seekers to be granted international protection. Second, the fact that almost all asylum-seekers are locked into the transit zones could have serious consequences for the individuals already under considerable stress, which could traumatise them even further. Third, the legislation is against EU regulations, as they disallow the detention of asylum-seekers solely on the basis that they submitted an asylum claim. Fourth, the legislation breaches Hungary’s international commitments by excluding asylum-seekers between the age of 14 and 18 from child protection. Fifth, the law does not allow civil society organisations to help asylum-seekers in transit zones with Hungarian classes or integration training, delaying the start of their path to integrate into Hungarian society.

By the end of the year, almost 500 asylum-seekers were held at the border, while Hungarian authorities only granted very limited opportunities for monitoring the situation in the transit zones.[[63]](#footnote-63) Hungarian authorities have apprehended around 22 000 asylum-seekers and took them back to Serbia without conducting a meaningful examination into whether they should be granted international protection.[[64]](#footnote-64)

The Hungarian Ministry of Interior also issued a decree aimed at improving the situation for those accommodated in refugee camps or the transit zones: it provides that those in refugee camps and the transit zones should receive three meals a day and children, expectant mothers and nurturing mothers should be given meals five times a day.[[65]](#footnote-65)

Local self-government decrees on migration

Some local self-governments also played their part in the government’s anti-immigration, anti-Soros campaign. Fidesz-affiliated mayors repeated the elements of the central party rhetoric to their local audiences, focusing on the alleged negative effects of the EU’s proposed quota system on Hungarian localities.[[66]](#footnote-66) The government’s rhetoric seems to be especially effective in Hungarian villages where the population has never met any immigrants and where people mainly inform themselves of pro-government media.[[67]](#footnote-67)

In December 2017, the chairman of the Alliance of Cities with County Rights (*Megyei Jogú Városok Szövetsége*, MJVSZ) Károly Szita declared that “the local self-governments do not want neither George Soros’s immigration organisation offices nor any migrants flooding Hungarian villages and cities.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Mr Szita said that he and his colleagues were growing increasingly concerned by “news from George Soros’s circles” and Brussels suggesting that the leadership of the EU would implement the mandatory refugee resettlement quotas, targeting mainly countries where there are no or only a few migrants.[[69]](#footnote-69) Mayor of Csepel, a district of Budapest, Lénárd Borbély (Fidesz-KDNP) said: Budapest’s district mayors would join Szita’s initiative because they did not want to hand apartments owned by the local self-government over to migrants instead of Hungarian families “like they do in Western European countries.”[[70]](#footnote-70) The MJVSZ’s meeting discussing the issue was held on January 12, 2018. At the end of this conference, Mr Szita asked all participants to issue a resolution condemning the “organisations of the Soros-network”.[[71]](#footnote-71) The move can be considered as part of the governing Fidesz party’s campaign ahead of the general elections in April 2018.

The anger generated by the anti-immigration campaign of the government and the government-organised media among some individuals is illustrated well by the events in Őcsény in September 2017: the owner of a boarding house in the village offered a chance for some refugees[[72]](#footnote-72) living in Hungary to have a vacation in Őcsény. Locals after having heard about the offer, at a meeting with the mayor and the pension owner did not even let the latter to explain his plans.[[73]](#footnote-73) Local villagers, in fact, pierced the tyres of the cars of both the boarding house owner and his son, an act Prime Minister Viktor Orbán found to be an adequate reaction.[[74]](#footnote-74) Although no local anti-immigration decrees were adopted in Őcsény, other local self-governments where refugees wanted to enjoy some of their free time were not as lenient. After having found out that a few refugees would go to the village of Esztergályhorváti, the local self-government adopted a decree stating that accommodation can only be provided to refugees if their compulsory vaccinations are in order.[[75]](#footnote-75) The Hungarian Helsinki Committee identified three fundamental flaws with the decree: (1) only the laws, and governmental decrees can place further obligations on individuals granted international protection by Hungary; (2) it is unconstitutional because it breaches the hierarchy of legal sources; and (3) it discriminates not only between Hungarian and foreign citizens but between foreign citizens as well considering that – for instance – tourists do not fall under the scope of the decree.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Ásotthalom Mayor László Toroczkai – then vice chairman of Jobbik – implemented another local government decree against Muslims and the “promotion” of homosexuality[[77]](#footnote-77) even though his previous one was annulled by the Constitutional Court in April 2017. The first of such decrees implemented in late 2016 banned practising the Muslim religion explicitly.[[78]](#footnote-78) The 2017 version provided that *“Covering facial features in public spaces or public buildings in a way that makes the individual unrecognisable to others constitutes anti-community behaviour.*” Toroczkai practically cut parts referring to Muslims and religion out of the text to hopefully make banning the burqa constitutional. However, the Government Office of Csongrád County said that only laws could restrict fundamental rights. Thus, the Office informed Toroczkai that the local self-government should annul the decree. The mayor announced that he would not comply, he would wait for a court decision instead.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Discriminatory practices against asylum-seekers

Regardless of the government’s efforts to make it both physically and legally impossible for asylum-seekers to submit their applications, the frequency of cases where international protection is granted to an applicant has increased since 2015, and in 2017, 1291 persons received refugee status or subsidiary protection.[[80]](#footnote-80) Despite the increase in the number of successful asylum applications, the number of applications submitted to Hungarian authorities fell to 3,115 in 2017 from 29,432 in 2016, and 177,135 in 2015.[[81]](#footnote-81) 44 per cent of the applicants in 2017 were Afghani, 26 per cent Iraqi, and 18 per cent came from Syria. The government claimed at the time the data was published that it refuses the EU mandatory quotas but is willing to grant international protection to whoever is eligible under the Geneva Convention.[[82]](#footnote-82)

The reason behind the increase in successful applications is that they can only be submitted in transit zones and generally women, families, and children enter the zones, individuals who are much more likely to be granted international protection. However, most applicants only receive subsidiary protection even in cases when they should be granted refugee status because it makes it harder for them to bring their families to the country, as those in the former category need to have a high income, comprehensive health insurance, and separate housing to be able to apply for family reunification.[[83]](#footnote-83)

Restrictions on asylum-seekers’ access to the asylum procedures meant that numerous people remained stranded in Serbia in poor conditions.[[84]](#footnote-84) The procedures for signing up to the waiting lists for entering the transit zones had also changed by 2017. Asylum-seekers now have to submit a so-called declaration of intent in Serbia, and they are then taken to transit camps there. They are only transported to the transit zones the day before they are allowed to enter them. Consequently, the territories in front of the transit zones have become empty, only a few tents stand in front of the transit zone in Röszke, while those awaiting to enter the one in Tompa spend the night before their entry in a building previously used to sell tax-free goods.[[85]](#footnote-85)

Several organisations pointed out that even those who get access to a transit zone find themselves in a difficult situation, especially if something makes them highly vulnerable. According to the Council of Europe, transit zones do not provide its dwellers with the necessary air of trust to come forward as victims of human trafficking, and it does not help either that Hungarian staff working in the zones do not know what procedures they need to follow to identify trafficking victims.[[86]](#footnote-86) The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) emphasised in a report that Hungarian authorities also have trouble identifying torture victims among asylum-seekers for instance, because there are no provisions, internal guidance or informal practices on how early identification should look like: the Hungarian government decree only provides that it should be assessed whether an asylum-seeker requires special treatment, but it does not mention “how”.[[87]](#footnote-87)

The Council of Europe report also included further criticism on Hungarian transit zones. It mentioned that asylum applicants are not given adequate information on their rights and the asylum procedure. Moreover, the organisation criticised mass expulsion committed by Hungarian authorities.[[88]](#footnote-88) The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi was also highly critical of the situation inside transit zones: he said Hungarian authorities “kept a lot of people locked into a small space” and emphasised that the prison-like conditions have an especially severe effect on children.[[89]](#footnote-89) Index.hu interviewed two families who returned from Serbia as well as HHC employees. They also raised serious concerns about transit zones: these include the lack of space to move around, over-crowdedness, insufficient food portions for babies and the lack of diapers, and mistreatment by officials.[[90]](#footnote-90) HHC’s Tímea Kovács mentioned to Index that the situation is especially severe for pregnant women as there is no prenatal care available in the zones, and there were cases when pregnant women were taken to the doctor “in handcuffs”. Kovács also highlighted that the asylum-application interviews with families take a long time, and the interviewees do not get anything to eat and drink.[[91]](#footnote-91) She added that interviewees do not even know that the presence of a lawyer must be requested and it is not automatic, which seems to confirm what the Council of Europe report criticised, namely that applicants are given no information about their rights and the procedure altogether. Index.hu asked the Immigration and Asylum Office (BMH) about these allegations, who denied that asylum-seekers are being treated unfairly.[[92]](#footnote-92)

The scandal that developed in 2016 concerning Hungarian authorities beating refugees[[93]](#footnote-93) continued in 2017 as well. In March 2017, the Swedish *Aftonbladet* reported from Belgrade that personnel defending the Hungarian border had started to beat asylum-seekers even more frequently while they are being taken back to Serbia.[[94]](#footnote-94) Both asylum-seekers returning from Hungary and the staff of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) claimed the injuries are caused by Hungarian border guards and their dogs. Although the Hungarian government rejected all allegations about the physical abuse of asylum-seekers, the Hungarian Office of the Prosecutor-General told the daily *Magyar Nemzet* in March 2017 that there had been 44 cases where legal complaints were filed against the Hungarian police for abuse committed on the Southern border and in two of these the accused policemen were found guilty and given a fine.[[95]](#footnote-95) Consequently, it is hard to believe the Hungarian government’s claims that these allegations are only aimed at discrediting Hungarian border protection efforts, as the existence of some extent of police abuse is proven by the two aforementioned verdicts.

One positive development for persons under international protection in Hungary is that due to the severe worker's shortage in the country it has become easier for them to find a job.[[96]](#footnote-96)

Decisions of courts and state authorities regarding discrimination against asylum-seekers

The situation for asylum-seekers is not easy with regard to the search for legal remedies to the decisions of the Immigration and Asylum Office (BMH). Since 2015, asylum-seekers can appeal the BMH’s decision, but the court adjudicating the appeal cannot force the Immigration Office to change its decision – only to reconsider the case. Even if courts declare that the BMH made an incorrect decision and the asylum-seekers should receive some form of international protection, the court itself cannot grant it. Thus, it often happens that the courts and the BMH “start playing ping-pong” with asylum-seekers – says Zsolt Zádori from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.[[97]](#footnote-97)

In April 2017, the BMH deported an Afghani asylum-seeker to Bulgaria, which he had left because he found conditions in Bulgarian refugee camps inhumane. After arriving in Hungary, the BMH concluded that he must return to Bulgaria under the provisions of the Dublin Treaty. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee turned to the UN Commission on Human Rights, who warned Hungary not to return the asylum-seeker to Bulgaria. Regardless, Hungarian authorities sent the Afghani back to the Balkan country.[[98]](#footnote-98)

One high-profile case concerning asylum-seekers was that of Ahmed H., a Syrian citizen who lived in Cyprus for years. Ahmed H. was charged with committing a terrorist act at the now infamous “Battle of Röszke,” where he – according to his statements – wanted to help his old parents cross the border. After having been convicted of “illegal border crossing as a participant in a mass demonstration with the aim of coercing a state organisation and committing a terrorist act by perpetrating a violent act against an individual” for ten years imprisonment, the verdict was annulled by a court of the second instance due to procedural and other errors.[[99]](#footnote-99) A retrial was ordered, and the verdict at first instance was handed out in March 2018: Ahmed H. was sentenced to seven years in prison, but this is not legally binding yet. The trial will continue at a court of the second instance.[[100]](#footnote-100)

Social support available for immigrants

There are many civic organisations providing aid and support for immigrants. However, as it will be dealt with in Chapter 11, many of these organisations have been the explicit targets of the government’s hateful propaganda. Therefore their situation has severely aggravated, and their everyday operation became extremely hard. Let’s look at the most important organisations in alphabetical order.

### Cordelia Foundation for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims

“The Cordelia Foundation was established in 1996 for providing support to asylum applicants, to persons granted international protection who arrived in Hungary and who had experienced trauma or torture. To achieve this goal, individual, group, family and pair therapy, verbal or non-verbal therapy is performed with the support of trained interpreters.”[[101]](#footnote-101) In 2017, one of the foundation’s projects was **“The psychosocial rehabilitation of vulnerable, traumatised foreigners” supported by** the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

### MENEDÉK[[102]](#footnote-102) – Hungarian Association for Migrants

“Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants has been helping the social integration of immigrants arriving to and departing from Hungary through a set of social, educational and cultural programs built on more than 20 years of experience. [They] provide support to migrants through individual and group counselling, language lessons, and various community programs to help them to get to know and understand the Hungarian culture and habits, to find a job and housing, and to find their way out of the administration maze. […] Menedék offers migrant-specific sensitisation training for professionals who are in contact with migrants during their work. […] The Association does not engage in direct political activity, it is independent of political parties and does not provide financial support to them. It does not run or support any candidates in parliamentary elections, and does not accept any party support.”[[103]](#footnote-103)

Two of their projects in 2017 were the one titled “Let’s Cooperate” and the other “Law, Activity & Community.” The former aims at giving a helping hand, using the methods of social work, to those who are under the protection of International Law in order to enable them to obtain the privileges that Hungarian citizens have and to lead a self-reliant life.[[104]](#footnote-104) The latter was launched in January. It is a new community project focusing on increasing the social activities of people coming from underdeveloped countries but living in Hungary. The psychical welfare of migrants is just as important with regards to their comfort in their new home as to provide them with necessities, such as accommodation or subsistence. It is indispensable for them to be familiar with local customs in order to become active members of the society. To achieve this, several programs are available to help with their collective and communal integration.[[105]](#footnote-105)

### MigHelp – Migrant’s Help Association of Hungary

“The association is a non-profit organisation founded by refugees and their supporters in Budapest. Its mission is supporting migrants living in Hungary, the promotion of their inclusion and enabling them to be employed. The objective of the project ‘Training alternatives in the hopes of marketable knowledge and jobs’ is to enhance job opportunities for third-country nationals using free educational programmes which provide programme participants with knowledge and skills to match labour market demands. Such as elderly-care training courses, B category driving courses, ECDL and MCSA computer training courses and basketry courses. The language of the courses in English. A certified diploma issued proves the completion of all courses.”[[106]](#footnote-106)

### Migration Aid

“Migration Aid is a volunteer civil initiative to help refugees arriving in Hungary to reach their assigned refugee camps or their travel onwards. [It] was originally established to help asylum-seekers arriving in Hungary reach their assigned refugee camps as soon as possible. Most of them went through Budapest and had no information on how to get to the camps, many had no food, water and were in bad health conditions. Since September 2015, asylum-seekers no longer cross Hungary, [therefore they] are trying to help them in other countries where they are stranded.”[[107]](#footnote-107)

### MigSzol – Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary

“[MigSzol is] an informal, independent group of Hungarians, immigrants and refugees that advocate the realisation of political and social rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Hungary. [The organisation] contribute to social change by campaigning against deportation and detention, by raising awareness of rights of refugees and asylum seekers […].” In their mission statement, they refer to the current situation in Hungary by saying: “We work for a Hungary where the label of ‘refugee’ or ‘immigrant’ is no longer needed, and we fight against the notion that people’s identities are determined by bureaucratic categories. Therefore, we do not receive financial aid from the European Union, from the Hungarian government, from any political party or company.”[[108]](#footnote-108)

### The Hungarian Helsinki Committee

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) was founded in 1989. The HHC “is a public benefit human rights organisation that protects human dignity through legal and public activities. [They] provide help to refugees, detainees and victims of law enforcement violence.” The organisation started to provide legal assistance in 1994. The HHC provides help to those whose human rights were violated by the state. The main areas of the organisation’s activity are the protection of the rule of law, protection of the rights of refugees, monitoring law enforcement activities, and the protection of the rights of detainees.[[109]](#footnote-109)

Although the organisation is one of the main targets of the government’s anti-immigration campaign, in June, they published a statement against the government’s anti-NGO actions saying: “We, civil society organisations, cherish our diversity but stand united in our goal to make Hungary a better, more livable place. […] **Hence, by using all opportunities afforded by law, we will continue to protest against the ‘foreign funded NGO’ law before all available domestic and international fora. We are here to stay and to continue our common work** as we must not abandon Hungarian society and the people who need and count on our support.[[110]](#footnote-110)

4. Manifestations of xenophobia and hate speech among the executive and legislative powers

Manifestations of xenophobia and hate speech among the executive and legislative powers mainly concentrated on migrants. Government propaganda made George Soros and the NGOs the scapegoats for the migration issue.

Rhetoric concerning migrants

The government’s rhetoric regarding asylum-seekers in 2017 followed exactly the same pattern as in 2015 and 2016. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán launched a harsh and massive anti-immigration campaign back in January 2015, right after the attack on the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Since then, migration has become the central topic for the Hungarian government that has been doing everything to keep the issue on the top of the political agenda.[[111]](#footnote-111) 2017 clearly showed that the government held onto this and to only this topic in the campaign for the national elections to be held in 2018. However, in 2017 the government had to solve the same problem which it successfully did in 2016: to talk about migrants in a country where there are practically no migrants.

The rhetoric of the government and members of the ruling party also has not changed much. The topic of migration, as already mentioned, has been framed in the context of security where migrants pose a security threat not only to the individual citizens but to the Hungarian state and nation, the European culture, Christianity and the whole Western world order. Another important element has been national sovereignty, meaning that the Hungarian government has to and does protect the Hungarian people from forced migration allegedly imposed by the European Union and behind it the mastermind, George Soros. As the campaign went on in full swing throughout the whole year, it is impossible to list all its instances. However, here are some illustrative examples.

In January 2017, PM Viktor Orbán delivered a speech at the swearing-in ceremony of the so-called “border hunters” and this speech illustrates very well the aforementioned elements of the government’s rhetoric concerning immigration. The Prime Minister started his speech by saying: “[y]ou today swore to defend the borders of Hungary, the security of Hungarian homes. With this act, you also defend Europe […].”[[112]](#footnote-112) He warned his audience that “terror attacks, riots, violence, crime, ethnic and cultural clashes are all warnings for us that those who come do not want to live our lives. They want to continue living their own lives, just on a European standard of living […].”[[113]](#footnote-113) [[114]](#footnote-114) Then he continued: “Nowhere do human rights prescribes national suicide. Moreover, since there are terrorists among the illegal migrants, innocent people have died in many European countries, paying for the weaknesses of their leaders. [...] The truth is, that illegal and unlimited migration threatens the safety of our everyday life, economy and culture at the same time.”[[115]](#footnote-115)

In February, in his address to the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Viktor Orbán said that he “find[s] it important to preserve the ethnic homogeneity [of Hungary].” Then he continued: “By now one can say such things. A few years ago one could be executed for such sentences, but today one can say it because life confirmed that too much mixing brings trouble.” Orbán also said that he is convinced that if “we manage to uphold the [country’s] ethnic homogeneity and its cultural uniformity, then Hungary will be upgraded as a place. Hungary will be the kind of place that will be able to show other, more developed countries what they lost.”[[116]](#footnote-116)

In May, in connection to the Manchester terror attack, Bence Tuzson, undersecretary in charge of government communications in the prime minister’s office gave an interview to the state-run radio. He emphasised that there is “close connection between immigration and terrorism.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

In October, Fidesz MEP and European People’s Party Deputy Chairman József Szájer compared refugees to zombies from Game of Thrones when he held a town hall forum in Eger[[118]](#footnote-118) He said the following: “[A]llow me to refer to ‘Game of Thrones’. The last season is about the conquest of the Army of the Dead, which seeks to overrun the world. This, of course, is a silly story, but the issue here is whether those who are in trouble and who have been fighting with each other can unite against the greater threat.”[[119]](#footnote-119)

In connection with the anti-immigration campaign, the main target of governmental hate speech was George Soros, the Hungarian-American billionaire. As in 2016, the government portrayed Mr. Soros as a machinator and conspirator, part of the “background power”, and has been accusing him of supporting, financing and organising migration to Europe in order to spread his utopic vision of a world free of all kinds of borders and sovereignty, and to destroy nation states so that the interests of global businesses would triumph over those of nations and people. In October, KDNP MP András Aradszki in his speech in Parliament went as far as comparing Soros to Satan. He, among others, said the following: “We see the great European attacks against families, in which Soros and his comrades want to destroy the independence and values of nation states to water down the Christian spirit of Europe with the forced settlement of tens of millions of migrants. But the fight against Satan is a Christian duty. Yes, I speak of an attack by Satan, who is also the angel of denial, because they are denying what they are preparing to do – even when it is completely obvious. They frantically try to prove that there is no quota, there is no compulsory settlement, and the Soros Plan does not exist.”[[120]](#footnote-120) In December, Csepel deputy mayor Attila Ábel compared Soros to Hitler and Stalin on Facebook by saying that “Adolf Hitler, Stalin and Soros share a very strong trait: they all imposed, impose their system on others without asking them.” When a commenter found this comparison too extreme, he replied: “Stalin killed many more people. Doesn’t that count? It’s possible that Soros easily has as many victims. The world is not addressing what it should be [addressing]. Africa and Asia’s problems cannot be resolved in Europe.”[[121]](#footnote-121)

The network of NGOs allegedly organised and financed by Soros was also a key element of the propaganda. For example, in June, Fidesz vice president Szilárd Németh the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Amnesty International to the Cosa Nostra in Italy. He said that Soros uses these “mafia networks” to import 1–1.5 million migrants to Europe.[[122]](#footnote-122)

The rhetoric against NGOs, as it will be described in detail in Chapter 11, was mainly based on fake news and aimed at stirring up the fear. For example, in July, Speaker of the National Assembly László Kövér warned that “[t]his Autumn an unconcealed coalition could form between the Hungarian opposition and the Soros-backed organisations so that the latter can stir up public sentiment before the elections with open attacks on democratic institutions and street riots.”[[123]](#footnote-123)

Rhetoric concerning anti-government protesters

In the last week of March, the government proposed a bill amending the law on higher education with the aim to make it impossible for the Central European University (CEU) to continue its operations as an institution of higher education in Budapest. On March 31, the prime minister in his usual Friday morning interview with the state-run radio talked about Central European University (CEU) as an institution operating irregularly.[[124]](#footnote-124) This was the start of the government’s attacks against CEU which has not settled since. The CEU, founded by George Soros in 1991, has been anathema to PM Orbán who considered the institution a flagship of George Soros’s “network”. On April 4th, the National Assembly adopted the bill, also known as Lex CEU, in a so called fast-track procedure. This emergency procedure, limited to four times per parliamentary session, precludes a detailed general discussion in Parliament. In response to the attack against CEU, huge protest marches were held in Budapest where protesters stood up not only for the university but for academic freedom in Hungary.[[125]](#footnote-125)

There were some cases when protesters became targets of violence, as it will be shown in detail in Chapter 10. It is important to mention that the government remained silent, and sometimes even fuelled tensions. In April, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán gave an interview to the state-run radio when, among other things, he talked about the demonstrations. The reporter told Orbán that she read on the internet that some well-known provocateurs were planning to disturb the Easter procession around the Basilica. Orbán’s reaction was the following: “Many people’s palms are itching. Even the palms of those who otherwise are peaceful and upright Christians.”[[126]](#footnote-126)

One cannot avoid thinking that it was a clear reference to what Zsolt Bayer, a Fidesz publicist known for his often profane, anti-Semitic articles, wrote in a blog post five days before. He made a threat of violence against the protesters: “We can confirm that within a very short deadline, we too will take to the streets in defence [of] all that is important and holy to us. And we will be angry. So for a little while you can still rage on the streets, you can try to intrude into Parliament, the ministries, Fidesz party headquarters, the President’s office, you can go up against the police or attack journalists – for the time being. But then not. Then you will experience what it means to be persecuted and threatened. I tell you: we too are very angry. Do you understand?”[[127]](#footnote-127)

Rhetoric concerning the Roma

Representatives of the Hungarian government made numerous humiliating comments about the Roma in 2017. At an event of the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK), Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the implementation of the basic wage is an “unimaginable” programme in Hungary because “Hungary’s ethnic composition is complicated. Thus it is not an easy question.”[[128]](#footnote-128) Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén later said that he could name a group of people who have never paid a single dime in taxes, but it would be absurd to say they should not have the right to vote.[[129]](#footnote-129) Zoltán Balog told the European regional committee of the World Health Organisation (WHO) that many Roma cannot “meet the ‘threshold’ to access the [healthcare] provision system because of their different lifestyles” which means that the Roma must be given a “sociocultural background” that “pushes them over the obstacles.”[[130]](#footnote-130) These statements show that despite rhetorical support for the equality of the Roma, the Orbán government considers the group a problem rather than a resource.

Rhetoric concerning the Jewish community

The Hungarian government has proclaimed many times since 2010 that it has zero tolerance towards antisemitism. Its stance did not change in 2017. Moreover, governmental officials, as well as the Prime Minister himself frequently listed illegal immigration as one of the sources of anti-Semitism and underlined their will to protect Hungarian Jews from it.

However, the government’s harsh campaign against the Hungarian-American billionaire philanthropist of Jewish descent, George Soros, was perceived by many as anti-Semitic. Government officials constantly denied this by saying “that the campaign is not about ancestry or identity of George Soros, but about what he does” [[131]](#footnote-131) We deal with the anti-Semitic side of the campaign in Chapter 8.

Rhetoric concerning the LGBTQ community

Since 2010, the ruling party has done everything to tailor the media map of Hungary. It included not only gaining complete control over the state television and radio station but also building a huge government-organised media market. As mentioned earlier, this pro-government media plays a great role in spreading government propaganda which often includes smear campaigns against the perceived enemies of the government. One of the targets of these smear campaigns was Gábor Vona, chairman of Jobbik, especially because the party had become the strongest opposition party. In this campaign, the government’s anti-LGBTQ rhetoric manifested itself in an indirect way. As part of the character assassination, governmental media outlets started accusing Vona of homosexuality already in 2016. It went so far that, in November 2016, the wife of Mr Vona wrote an open letter to the wife of PM Orbán in which she “as wife and mother” asked her to “stop [her] husband.”[[132]](#footnote-132) It apparently did not happen as in February 2017, the PM in his answer to Vona’s interpellation said the following: “I am not the one who likes to hide behind other men’s skirts.”[[133]](#footnote-133) [[134]](#footnote-134) This instance clearly shows what the prime minister thinks of homosexuality.

There were other instances and events that showed more clearly the stance of the ruling party on LGBTQ rights. In May, the secretary for churches, minorities, and civil affairs, Miklós Soltész in his address in Parliament called the LGBTQ abbreviation a “mindless craziness.”[[135]](#footnote-135)

In the same month, Budapest served as the site for the annual meeting of the World Congress of Families (WCF). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the WCF “serves as an umbrella for a massive network of interconnected organisations, all pushing for restrictions to LGBT rights under the guise of the defence of the ‘natural family’ – defined as heterosexual married couples with their biological children.”[[136]](#footnote-136) WCF has close connections also to the Russian far right, and the Congress strongly supported Russian anti-gay law. Government personalities not only participated in the event, but the Hungarian Government was actually organising and financially supporting it. The chief organiser of the event was Katalin Novák, undersecretary for family, youth, and international affairs. It was said that the organisers “picked Hungary as a way to show support for the government of strongman leader Viktor Orbán, whom WCF calls “the hero of pro-family and pro-life leaders.” [[137]](#footnote-137) [[138]](#footnote-138)

In November, the government’s youth policy organisation *Új Nemzedék* (New Generation) has banned an LGBTQ organisation from its premises and community space. In the letter justifying the decision, *Új Nemzedék* wrote that LGBTQ organisations are subject to the same treatment as political parties since they “conduct politics” by trying to have a say in public affairs that affect the lives of LGBTQ people.[[139]](#footnote-139)

In December, the Equal Treatment Authority stated that it is a sexual orientation-based unlawful discrimination that registered partners are not indicated as eligible for allowance on the website of the government’s family policy, and that the *Szivárványcsaládokért Alapítvány* (Foundation for Rainbow Families) is not on the list of family organisations. In December 2015, the Hungarian LGBT Alliance contacted the Ministry of Human Resources, which sustains the website mentioned above. Since their enquiry had been deemed to be futile, the *Háttér* Society, the largest and oldest currently operating LGBTQI organisation in Hungary which provides legal support for the LGBTQ community, filed a complaint at the Equal Treatment Authority. The Authority adjudicated that the unlawful conduct must be dissolved in 30 days.[[140]](#footnote-140)

5. Statements against xenophobia and radical nationalism among government representatives and prominent political activists

In 2017, as it can be clearly seen, government representatives had no intentions of standing up against xenophobia as they were the ones who incited it. There was one known example when a politician of the Fidesz-allied KDNP left the party because in her opinion the government’s treatment of refugees and shutdown of left-wing print daily Népszabadság are not in line with her Catholic values. Katalin Lukácsi, in an anti-government demonstration, said the following: “A lot has happened in the name of Christianity [...] the regime is neither Christian nor democratic.”

Politicians from the opposition parties have been trying to give voice to the indignation. However, their voice could hardly be heard, especially not in the countryside.

6. The attitude of the Hungarian society towards immigrants, foreign nationals and various ethnic and religious minorities

The Hungarian society can be described by an overall high-level rejection of “otherness”. The majority of the Hungarian public have traditionally had negative attitudes towards certain ethnic groups and foreigners. In this chapter, we discuss Hungarian public opinion about different minorities based on nationally representative surveys. According to a survey carried out at the end of 2017, 84 per cent of respondents would not give consent for a migrant to move into their neighbourhood. The rejection of Arabs (72 per cent) and blacks (63 per cent), who are associated with migrants, are also high and it increased considerably in the past few years. 72 per cent of the Hungarian population oppose a Roma, 56 per cent a homosexual, and 37 per cent a Jew moving into their neighbourhood.[[141]](#footnote-141)

Respondents were also asked to evaluate various minorities using a nine-point scale, where one meant that the respondent has extremely negative feelings about the given minority and nine that he/she has an extremely positive attitude. In 2017, migrants scored 2.7, Arabs 3.4, Roma 3.5, blacks 3.9, and Jews 4.9.

Prejudice against the Roma

Prejudice was always the strongest against the Roma, however, since the launch of the government’s anti-immigration campaign xenophobia took the lead. The prevalence of anti-Roma prejudice has been remarkably stable over the past two decades. According to one of the latest extensive polls conducted in 2011, 82 percent of the Hungarian population thought that “the problems of the Roma would be solved if they started to work at last,” 60 percent agreed with the statement that “the inclination to criminality is in the blood of Gypsies,” and 42 percent considered that “it is only right that there are still pubs, clubs and discos that Gypsies are not allowed to enter.”[[142]](#footnote-142) In a survey on antisemitism carried out using a nationally representative sample, there were also questions about anti-Roma sentiments. When respondents were asked to evaluate different ethnic minorities on a 1 to 9 scale, where one meant the most negative and nine the most positive attitude, Roma scored 3.5, the same as in 2016.[[143]](#footnote-143)

Antisemitism

At the end of 2017, the Hungarian polling institute Medián conducted a public opinion survey at the behest of the Action and Protection Foundation.[[144]](#footnote-144) According to its findings, 64 per cent of the population was not anti-Semitic, 10 per cent were moderately antisemitic, and 27 per cent were strongly anti-Semitic. Antisemitism grew significantly between 2006 and 2011. After that, it decreased a little bit and then stayed on that level. In 2013 and 2016, the proportion of moderate anti-Semites was between 18 and 13 per cent respectively, and that of extreme anti-Semites 20 per cent. For 2017, the data show a considerable increase in the proportion of extreme anti-Semites, again reaching the 2011 levels. However, the proportion of moderate anti-Semites is somewhat lower, ten compared to 14 per cent.[[145]](#footnote-145)

Figure 1: Proportion of antisemites in the Hungarian society, 2006–2017  
Source: Action and Protection Foundation, Medián

Looking at the content of anti-Semitic views, statements about the excessive influence of Jews,[[146]](#footnote-146) including the existence of a secret Jewish conspiracy,[[147]](#footnote-147) is higher than agreement with statements reflecting traditional Christian Judeophobia.[[148]](#footnote-148) Moreover, agreement with statements about Jewish influence has increased over the years. Statements connected to new antisemitism[[149]](#footnote-149) were also included in the survey. Forty-two percent of Hungarians agreed with the statement that “Jews living in Hungary are more loyal to Israel than to this country,” 41 percent believed that “Hungarian Jews would rather support Israel in a match between Hungary and Israel,” and 37 percent thought that “Israel is an aggressor and commits genocide against the Palestinians.”[[150]](#footnote-150)

Anti-Jewish attitudes are closely related to party preferences.[[151]](#footnote-151) [[152]](#footnote-152) Typically, anti-Semitism is exceptionally high among Jobbik supporters. 41 per cent of them are extremely and 15 per cent moderately anti-Semitic. These numbers rightly raise the question of whether there is any substantive change behind the rebranding strategy of Jobbik. Although in previous years, the ratio of ‘non-anti-Semites’ has been the same among the supporters of the governing Fidesz-KDNP and the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), data from 2017 show a considerable change. The ratio of anti-Semites is at five percentage points more among the latter. Moreover, the strength of anti-Semitism also changed. In 2016, among the supporters of Fidesz-KDNP, approximately one-third of anti-Semites had moderate and two-third strong anti-Semitic views, among the supporters of MSZP it was the other way around. In 2017, the structure stayed almost the same in the case of Fidesz-KDNP but turned upside down in the case of MSZP: “only” one-fifth of anti-Semites hold moderate, and four-fifth extreme anti-Semitic views.

Figure 2: Antisemitism and party choices, 2017  
Source: Action and Protection Foundation, Medián

Xenophobia and prejudice against migrants

Despite the low level of immigration (especially from culturally distant countries), xenophobia and anti-immigration sentiments are extremely strong in the Hungarian society. In the absence of relevant political discourse and concrete experience with migrant populations, social attitudes about immigration are shaped mainly by three factors: the fear of the unknown, the abstract image of the immigrants presented by the media, and most importantly, the extremely strong anti-immigrant campaign.

The European Social Survey[[153]](#footnote-153) asks respondents the extent to which they would allow different people to come to live in their country. They inquire about the following types of people: (1) of the same race or ethnic groups; (2) of a different race or ethnic group, and (3) from poorer countries outside Europe. Respondents could choose from four alternatives: (1) allow many, (2) allow some, (3) allow a few, and (4) allow none. As the following figure shows, almost half of Hungarians would allow none or just a few ethnic Hungarians to live in Hungary. However, this proportion is 87 per cent for people of a different race or ethnic group (with 48 per cent ‘of none’), and 94 per cent for people from poorer countries outside Europe (with 62 per cent ‘of none’). Important to note, that the last two groups are the main targets of the government’s anti-migrant propaganda.

The results are even more shocking when we take a look at the changes over the past five years. While the rejection of ethnic Hungarians stayed almost the same, that of the other two groups increased considerably. While in 2012, 28 per cent of Hungarians would allow no one from a different ethnic group to live in Hungary, their proportion increased to 33 by 2015 and 48 per cent by 2017. The respective proportions for migrants coming from poorer countries outside Europe were 38, 48, and 62 per cent.

Figure 3: Attitudes towards different sorts of migrants, 2012–2017 (%).  
Source: European Social Survey

When compared to other European countries, Hungary becomes an outlier. While Hungary is the highest with 62 per cent of Hungarians who would allow no one from a poorer country outside Europe, the Czech Republic follows it with “only” 32 and Estonia with 27 per cent. If we look at the sum of the categories “none” and “a few”, Hungary also takes the absolute lead. 94 per cent of Hungarians choose one of these categories, while the respective proportion in the Czech Republic is 77, in Estonia and Austria 65, and in Lithuania 61 per cent.

Figure 4: Attitudes towards migrants from poorer countries outside Europe, 2017  
Source: European Social Survey

Data clearly show that xenophobia was quite high even before the government’s anti-immigration propaganda started. This provided a superior basis for the campaign against migrants, which proved to be very effective in boosting xenophobia.

Homophobia

Unfortunately, there is no detailed survey about homophobia in Hungary. The European Social Survey’s core questionnaire[[154]](#footnote-154) has only one question to measure homophobia. Respondents use a five-point scale[[155]](#footnote-155) to show the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the following statement: “Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish.” Between 2002 and 2015 the proportion of those who disagreed with the statement was between 25 and 30 per cent and that of those who agreed with it between 40 and 45 per cent. These proportions have stayed more or less stable throughout the different ESS waves between 2002 and 2015. The situation deteriorated from 2015 to 2017 with 37 per cent disagreeing and 34 per cent agreeing with the statement, reaching an all-time low.

Figure 5: The extent of agreement with the statement: “Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish.” (%)  
Source: European Social Survey

In the final round of ESS, two additional questions were included. Respondents used a five-point scale[[156]](#footnote-156) to show the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the following statements: “If a close family member were a gay man or a lesbian, I would feel ashamed.” and “Gay male and lesbian couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples.” 40 per cent of the respondents would be ashamed if one of his/her close family members would be a member of the LGBT community. Almost 60 per cent of the respondents oppose equal rights for child-adoption.

Figure 6: The extent of agreement with the statements: “If a close family member were a gay man or a lesbian, I would feel ashamed.” and “Gay male and lesbian couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples.” (%)  
Source: European Social Survey

Islamophobia

The anti-immigration campaign of Fidesz, as described previously in detail, follows extensive Islamophobic rhetoric. Muslims are portrayed as an existential, cultural, and religious threat to the very existence of the Hungarian nation. Although respondents were not asked particularly about Muslims in the research mentioned earlier, it is reasonable to assume that the high rejection rate of Arabs and migrants have a high correlation with that of Muslims. The Pew Research Center, in its Global Attitude Survey in the spring of 2017, found that 66 and 64 per cent of Hungarians, respectively, think that a large number of refugees and ISIS are a major threat to the country.[[157]](#footnote-157)

7. Radical nationalist groups and parties

The Jobbik party

Just like in previous years, the biggest and politically most significant actor of the radical right-wing scene in 2017 was the far-right party Jobbik, which was the second strongest political force behind the governing party Fidesz throughout the year. Besides its prominent position in national politics, Jobbik has a rather weak position in local politics. In 2017, the party had 18 mayors, 5 of whom headed middle-sized towns and 13 were mayors of villages. Also, there were eleven independent mayors across the country, 10 of whom were mayors of villages, whose candidacy was supported by Jobbik back in the campaign ahead of the local elections in 2014.

In 2017, the party continued and even accelerated its moderation process that started in 2013‑2014 in order to reposition the party as a nationalist, conservative people’s party. While earlier the party was known for its extremist positions, especially for harsh anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, anti-EU, and anti-US statements, since 2013 Jobbik has abandoned these topics step by step. However, the repositioning and rebranding strategy seems to be mainly a political marketing tool for the party. The main goal of the strategy is to make Jobbik more acceptable to disillusioned voters from the centre and the left-wing parts of the political spectrum and attract former left-wing voters who are disappointed with both the governing Fidesz and the discredited left-wing opposition parties. Even though Jobbik has increasingly focused on pragmatic issues (e.g., wage increase, state of the healthcare sector) and especially on corruption in recent years, the party’s positions have not significantly changed regarding social policy, social inclusion of the Roma, human rights including equal rights of LGBTQ people and foreign policy orientations. The party still favours exclusionary and discriminative practices in these issues, but they rather conceal them. At the same time, while the party’s messages have become softer at the national level and some topics and buzzwords have almost completely disappeared from the party’s mainstream communications (e.g., the term “Gipsy crime”, which used to be Jobbik’s main topic before 2011–2012), Jobbik has not changed at the local level. The party’s membership, core voter base, activists, and local representatives largely remained just as radical as they used to be and hold the same extremist beliefs and values as before. The token gestures of the party’s pragmatic leadership towards left-wing and liberal voters led to tensions within the party with those who wished to return to the party’s extremist path. The main example was the participation of the party’s leader Gábor Vona in a public discussion at the Spinoza Theatre in Budapest, which was considered a symbolic venue of the liberal Jewish intelligentsia by many within Jobbik.[[158]](#footnote-158)

### Jobbik’s support

Even though Jobbik’s moderation strategy was based on the consideration that the party has to broaden its voter base to centrist and left-wing voters in order to have a chance at winning the elections, the strategy did not bring any results until the end of 2017. Jobbik’s support varied throughout the year between 12 per cent and 9 per cent among the population that is eligible to vote and between 18 per cent and 14 per cent among the active voters with party preference.

Figure 7: The change in Jobbik's support throughout 2016 and 2017  
Source: Závecz Research Institute[[159]](#footnote-159)

### Jobbik’s stance on refugees and migrants

In 2015, when Hungary became a frontline country of migration while remaining a transit country, Jobbik took a very harsh anti-immigration stance. However, throughout 2016 the party increasingly diverted its focus onto other topics mainly because the governing party Fidesz’s radical position completely dominated the issue, and it left no space for Jobbik. This trend continued in 2017 as well. While Jobbik’s mainstream communications focused on other issues, especially corruption, the party seemed to outsource this issue to László Toroczkai, who besides being one of the most significant people in the Hungarian far-right scene, was one of the deputy presidents of the party since 2016 and, since 2013, the mayor of Ásotthalom, a municipality at Hungary’s Southern border to Serbia. Jobbik’s president Gábor Vona needed Toroczkai, who has dedicated almost all contents of its Facebook page[[160]](#footnote-160) to the fight against immigration in 2017, as a deputy president to represent Jobbik’s radical nature and keep the radical voters while the party manoeuvred towards the centre of the political spectrum. Toroczkai calls refugees “invaders”[[161]](#footnote-161) and fights them to keep Hungary a white, European, and Christian country.[[162]](#footnote-162) In November 2016, Toroczkai passed a local decree in Ásotthalom that prohibited any public activities related to homosexuality and Islam, including wearing Muslim clothing, the construction of mosques and the construction of any minarets in the town.[[163]](#footnote-163) However, the decree was later annulled by the Constitutional Court. After that, Toroczkai proposed that the government “regulate the [Muslim] issue through legal means as a self-defense reaction to the increasingly virulent migration and Islamisation process.”[[164]](#footnote-164)

Due to Fidesz’s harsh anti-immigration stance and its continuous efforts to keep the issue at the top of the political agenda, Jobbik linked the topic of migration to corruption and focused on the criticism of the government’s Residency Bond Programme in order not to have to compete with the government’s anti-immigration messages and policies. In May 2017, Jobbik submitted a draft constitutional amendment to the National Assembly titled “neither poor, nor rich; neither young nor old migrants”.[[165]](#footnote-165) In September, Jobbik launched a billboard campaign with three key messages of the party, among them one promising “we will shut the migrants out.”[[166]](#footnote-166)

Figure 8: Jobbik’s billboard campaign launched in September 2017. Source: alfahir.hu



### Jobbik’s stance on the Roma

In sharp contrast to its previous strategy, Jobbik mainly attempted to refrain from anti-Roma politics in 2017. However, for political strategical reasons, the topic was raised. At Jobbik’s traditional gathering on the 1st of May, the party’s chairman Vona said that Hungarian-Roma cohabitation remains one of the most important problems of Hungary, but it is impossible to talk about it in detail, “without getting lost in the blind alley of racism.” He also repeated the traditional far-right accusation according to which Roma families have children only to secure their living through child benefits.[[167]](#footnote-167) In contrast, in an interview in August, Vona denied that Jobbik has ever been a racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Gipsy party, and said he would be ready in the name of Jobbik to apologise to the Jewish and Roma communities for “wrong sentences” and the “derailed process.”[[168]](#footnote-168) However, the party has not removed the word “Gipsy crime” from its vocabulary. According to a text on Jobbik’s website, “Gipsy crime” refers to “criminal methods that can be connected to the gipsy minority […] which can only be managed specially due to their ethnic nature.” According to the website, this does not mean that all Roma are criminals, but the phenomenon “exists and spreads.”[[169]](#footnote-169) Even though Jobbik did not build its politics on this word in 2017, the term appeared from time to time in the communication of the party’s leaders. Party chairman Gábor Vona stated in an interview in 2017 that he believes “Gipsy crime” does exist.[[170]](#footnote-170) The most bizarre episode happened in November, when János Volner, the head of Jobbik’s parliamentary group posted a picture on his Facebook with the comment that he believes that the “politically correct media” manipulated the image and made the picture of a “Gipsy criminal” whiter.[[171]](#footnote-171) It was later revealed that the person in the picture was, in fact, a victim, and not a suspect[[172]](#footnote-172) – yet Volner did not delete his post. This case demonstrates that even Jobbik’s leading politicians have the same racist views as earlier and that they are ready to return to the party’s previous rhetoric if they believe it is politically profitable.

### Jobbik’s stance on the Jewish people

While earlier anti-Semitic messages along with anti-Gipsy narratives used to play a key role in Jobbik’s politics, the party has refrained from the topic in recent years. And what is more, Jobbik leaders have even made gestures towards the Jewish community to get rid of the stigma of anti-Semitism. In December 2016, party chairman Gábor Vona and party spokesman Ádám Mirkóczki sent a greeting letter to leading rabbis of the Hungarian Jewish community for Chanukah.[[173]](#footnote-173) Since then, the volume of anti-Semitic elements has considerably decreased in the rhetoric of Jobbik’s leaders. However, not all party members, especially at the local level kept themselves in line with the party’s moderation” strategy. Once again, László Toroczkai, who spread conspiracy theories about the Jews, discussing the existence of a “Jewish background power”, was a key example of those who expressed their anti-Semitic views in 2017. In a post on Facebook in October, he accused the World Jewish Congress (WJC) of interfering with democratic elections by cautioning in a press release against including the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in the new Austrian governing coalition.[[174]](#footnote-174) After the Israeli-V4 summit in November, Toroczkai discussed on his Facebook page how Israel “can officially control” the Visegrád countries. The news portal alfahir.hu, which is Jobbik’s unofficial news site, evaluated Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s statement about the necessary cooperation between the EU and Israel as “the complete submission” of Hungary.[[175]](#footnote-175) Toroczkai also believes that French President Emmanuel Macron is a puppet of the Rothschild family because he is certain that “without the backing of the Rothschilds” Macron could never have won the election.[[176]](#footnote-176) According to Toroczkai, the new Europe which Macron and, through him, the Rothschilds want to create by reforming the current structure of the EU and creating a two-speed union, which would completely ruin Central and Eastern Europe, will allegedly “only care about money, the power of banks and getting rid of nation-states”.[[177]](#footnote-177)

However, there were other cases of anti-Semitic hate speech within the rows of Jobbik. In November, for instance, anti-Semitic Facebook comments by the chair of Jobbik’s pensioner chapter were revealed. Following an internal investigation into the case, the person who had demanded that Jews should not be engaged with politics and should not hold high-level public positions was later excluded from the party.[[178]](#footnote-178)

While Jobbik members generally kept themselves to the re-positioning strategy, some isolated events did occur. For instance, in March 2017 Jobbik’s local branch in Budapest’s second district officially advertised a petition campaign against the Maccabi games, which they called the “Jewish Olympics,” being held in Hungary in 2019.[[179]](#footnote-179)

### Jobbik’s stance on the LGBTQ community

Even though Jobbik has traditionally been a very homophobic party with very harsh anti-LGBTQ positions, the rhetoric changed throughout 2017 within the framework of the repositioning strategy. While party chairman Gábor Vona called the Budapest Pride Parade a provocation in June 2017 and promised that Jobbik, once in government, would not allow such “anti-family” events to take place[[180]](#footnote-180), he completely changed his opinion by November 2017, when he said that he would not ban the gay pride parade as long as it does not harm others’ sensitivity.[[181]](#footnote-181) However, despite the more moderate position of the party leader on the Pride Parade, the party still objects to gay marriage and adoption by gay couples. Furthermore, Jobbik’s leading politicians still hold their even more homophobic ideas. In October 2017, Dóra Dúró, a key MP of Jobbik expressed her views on LGBTQ people on Facebook saying that she even objects to the registered partnership of gay couples which was introduced in Hungary in 2009. In addition, she would ban the Pride Parade and even the annual LGBTQ film festival, which she considers “homosexual propaganda.”[[182]](#footnote-182)

Far-right organisations

In 2017, the cooperation and network building among far-right organizations, which had started in 2016, continued at an accelerated speed, resulting in the formation of a new movement (Strength and Resolve, in Hungarian *Erő és Elszántság*, EE) by three pre-existing organisations. Since the decline of the Guard movement, 2017 was the first year when the far-right scene has appeared to undergo revitalisation. This development was mainly the consequence of two factors. Firstly, Jobbik’s repositioning strategy had created a vacuum on the far-right. In order to fill this ideological and power vacuum, far-right organisations changed their previous strategies, becoming more active and rearranging their relationships. Secondly, due to the emergence of the migration issue in the last few years, far-right organisations detected a new and trending narrative which helped them “repackage” their ideology.

Even though it is less significant, a third factor has also contributed to the deeper connections among the organisations. Knights Templar International (KTI), a Britain-based international far-right organisation under the alleged leadership of James Dowson[[183]](#footnote-183), has developed close relations with local far-right, paramilitary organisations in some Central and Eastern European countries, including Hungary, where it maintains a presence through its local representatives. KTI, which has established close cooperation with leading Hungarian far-right organisations and activists, provided them with the know-how of social media communication, organisation skills and even gave them some paramilitary equipment. KTI thus served as an important catalyst in the cooperation and activities of Hungarian far-right organisations.[[184]](#footnote-184)

Due to Jobbik’s pretended move into the political centre, far-right organisations, which used to be close to it and could have been considered the extremist wing of the party, have moved away from Jobbik and become increasingly critical of the party’s new approach, while remaining on good terms with certain extremist politicians in the party. Moreover, due to the governing party’s move into the opposite direction, namely from the centre to the right-wing extremist part of the political spectrum, Fidesz essentially ended up on the same platform as far-right organisations, at least regarding refugees and migration. However, Fidesz attempted to use far-right organisations and individuals to discredit Jobbik and legitimise its own position. The pro-government media has seemed to intentionally elevate certain far-right organisations and individuals by carrying interviews with them in order to amplify their anti-Jobbik messages.

### Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, HVIM)

In 2001, László Toroczkai, now mayor of Ásotthalom and deputy chair of Jobbik[[185]](#footnote-185), founded what was to become Hungary’s biggest and most significant far-right organisation: *Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom* (HVIM, Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement). Working in the “forefront of street activism,” the revisionist organisation’s goal is to work towards ‘Greater Hungary’, the territory that encompassed the kingdom of Hungary before the Trianon peace treaty of 1920.[[186]](#footnote-186) An anti-Semitic, racist, and chauvinistic group, HVIM used to have very close ties to Jobbik, but due to the party’s repositioning, the two organisations have distanced themselves from each other. However, the movement is on good terms with individual Jobbik politicians like Toroczkai. In 2015, HVIM had a membership of over 1000 according to Toroczkai himself, which has likely increased since.[[187]](#footnote-187) They are known for looking down on neighbouring states and having a presence in countries with a Hungarian population such as Serbia, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine. HVIM thus works to promote social cohesion amongst Hungarians, building and establishing links between small communities throughout the country. Continuing the trend we presented in the 2016 xenophobia report, HVIM remained very active in 2017 and engaged in close co-operation with other right-wing extremist organisations mainly in Hungary but also across Europe.

HVIM’s leaders

* László Toroczkai, honorary president
* György Gyula Zagyva, co-leader
* Gábor Barcsa-Turner, co-leader
* Béla Incze, vice president
* Botond Kónyi-Kiss, vice president
* Tamás Lipták, leader, Pest County
* Csaba Petró, leader, Miskolc
* Gergely Dobay, co-leader, Upper Hungary
* Bálint Tóth, spokesperson, Transylvania

### Army of Outlaws (Betyársereg)

László Toroczkaialso founded Betyársereg(Army of Outlaws) in 2008. Possibly the most violent far-right group, its members are known for having ties with the underworld.[[188]](#footnote-188) Essentially, it is a white supremacist, racist, and anti-Semitic group, that does not allow Roma or members of other minority groups to join. The Army of Outlaws operates as a sports group promoting health and physical well-being. However, its functions are of a security force nature. Often operating as a mercenary-like organisation, its services can be procured by those who are unsatisfied with the public system. Focused on Roma populations, they mostly operate in their neighbourhoods, going on marches intended to intimidate. Its current leader, Zsolt Tyirityán, had also been sent to prison earlier for gravely injuring a person in a racially motivated attack. In 2017, he was found guilty of denying the Holocaust and sentenced to a pecuniary punishment.[[189]](#footnote-189) Additionally, in 2016 the “army” was estimated to have around 400 members, according to Tyirityán.[[190]](#footnote-190) While the group used to be close to Jobbik and Gábor Vona, it is no longer on good terms with them due to Jobbik’s attempts at repositioning itself. In 2017, Tyirityán criticised Jobbik’s politics and Gábor Vona on various occasions in interviews given to pro-government media outlets like the weekly Figyelő, among others.[[191]](#footnote-191) That said, individual members of the party, such as Toroczkai and János Volner, are still in contact, attend events and train with the group. [[192]](#footnote-192)

### Strength and Resolve (Erő és Elszántság, EE)

On 8 July 2017, Strength and Resolve were formed in Vecsés. A pivotal moment in the arrangement of far-right organisations, EE’s formation was to fill the political and ideological vacuum left in the political scene in the wake of Jobbik’s repositioning. Originally, it was meant to be a joint group between the Army of Outlaws’ political faction, *Identitesz*, and the Érpatak Model National Network. Nonetheless, the latter had a falling out with the other groups and was replaced by Jobbik’s former local ally: The Towns National Alliance *(Városi Nemzeti Szövetség)* of Vecsés.

*Identitesz*, originally the Alliance of Conservative Students, also ceased its activities as its founders transferred to the board of EE. Their main focus was university students as they propagated chauvinistic and racist ideologies. Accordingly, the group’s founders and several of its members were part of Neo-Arrow Cross and Neo-Nazi groups[[193]](#footnote-193) and were known for their anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-gay sentiments, which essentially foreshadowed the group’s ideological orientation. Ethnic self-defence, the promotion of race consciousness and the “defence of Lebensraum,” are among its primary foci. In effect, the EE promotes unconditional obedience and the respect of power, authority and tradition, as well as communal and Christian values. EE’s logo also depicts the alliance between the feather and the war hammer which symbolise two of the founding organisations. The feather stands for *Identitesz* that in their view represent the intelligentsia of the far-right movement, and the war hammer stands for the Army of Outlaws who represent the fighters with physical strength.

Even though EE was originally formed as a movement with the aim of influencing public thought and not to directly influence politics, the founders envisaged a possible formation of a party from the beginning once the time is ripe. Strength and Resolve thus established 13 regional branches in 2017, with about 4-5 members each, in the following cities: Gyöngyös, Győr, Iregszemcse, Kecskemét, Kisvejke, Miskolc, Mosonudvar, Paks, Pécs, Szeged, Tatabánya, and Vecsés.[[194]](#footnote-194) Just like its founding members, EE also has good relations with other right-wing extremist organisations like HVIM, the Army of Outlaws, MÖM, and Knights Templar International.

EE’s leadership

* Zsolt Tyirityán, chair, leader of the Army of Outlaws.
* Balázs László, vice chair, ex-president of *Identitesz*, a member/sympathiser of the former Hungarist[[195]](#footnote-195) Pax Hungarica Movement (PHM)
* János Lantos, member of the board, the former vice chair of Pax Hungarica Movement, studying theology
* Barnabás Ábrahám, ex-member of PHM, former territorial leader of *Identitesz* in Budapest
* Márton Forgács, former deputy territorial leader of *Identitesz* in Budapest, a former member of the Hungarian National Guard
* Attila Szabó, former chair of Jobbik’s Vecsés branch, local representative, the clan leader of the Army of Outlaws in Vecsés
* Csaba Imrik, the chair of the Army of Outlaws in Budapest, five-time Hungarian champion and several time European champion in kempo.

### Hungarian Self-Defence Movement (Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, MÖM)

Founded in October 2014 by Attila László, MÖM established itself as the third largest organisation in Hungary by 2017.[[196]](#footnote-196) Originally called *For a Better Future Hungarian Self-Defence*, it was outlawed in a court in 2014.[[197]](#footnote-197) Currently, it is mainly present in the Eastern and South-Eastern regions of Hungary, MÖM is expected to have established itself in around 80‑90 settlements by the end of 2017. The group’s main focus is “fight[ing] against social injustices,” and protecting the “Lebensraum” and “living territory.” Essentially a Hungarist, revisionist, and chauvinistic group, it focuses on personal responsibilities to one’s community and its local activities. Despite being generally xenophobic and having anti-immigration orientations, the main target of MÖM’s activities has been the Roma community, labelled by the organisation’s leader, amongst other things, as worms and devils. Accordingly, the group organises activities such as paramilitary trainings, patrols and marches, in which they intimidate Roma communities and families in the name of restoring “public safety.” The group’s ultimate goal is to create “operational self-defence forces in settlements” through training camps for its members but also through cultural events (e.g., commemorations), charity actions and local patriotic events. MÖM is the only organisation in this list that still closely cooperates with Jobbik, not only because its founder is the president of Jobbik’s local branch in Végegyháza, but also due to the group’s active role in campaigning for Jobbik’s wage union in 2017. MÖM has close ties with HVIM, the Army of Outlaws and Knights Templar International.

### Identity Generation (Identitás Generáció)

Identity Generation is the Hungarian branch of the pan-European Identity Generation movement founded in 2014. A youth movement, the group is known for its anti-immigration agenda and its fight against liberal values and political correctness. A European group, it believes in the preservation of the European identity, culture, and Christianity. Therefore, unlike the groups above, Identity Generation does not advocate for Greater Hungary but rather promote a unified European identity. Despite attempts to gather recruits in Hungary through events that united members of the group from other parts of Europe, it remains relatively small. Moreover, even though they organise a few events like demonstrations and street actions, the group is mainly active online and is deeply embedded in the pan-European identitarian movement.

### Legion of Honour (Becsület Légiója) and Party of Order and Justice (Rend és Igazságosság Pártja)

Legion of Honour is defined and highly limited by its founder Mihály Zoltán Orosz’s actions and character. Orosz, mayor of Érpatak[[198]](#footnote-198), a small township in northeast Hungary. Orosz’s activities, despite his avowed anti-Gipsyism, antisemitism, anti-liberalism and homophobia, remain insignificant on the national level. His ties to the Army of Outlaws and *Identitesz* were severed when they established EE without him. His official party Order and Justice (RIA) was thus left to work alone, and despite attempts to build a relationship with Jobbik, he was unsuccessful largely due to his poor ties with László Toroczkai and Gábor Vona. In fact, Vona had previously made a cooperation agreement with him in 2016 to regulate the local Tiszavasvári Roma community, but did not renew it, and distanced himself from him in 2017. Orosz is also known for criticising the Fidesz government with allegations of corruption. Since EE was formed, Orosz has been trying to improve his party’s image through activities in local politics, press conferences, and town halls in the North-Eastern region of Hungary.

### Members of the international far right

Throughout the last few years, Hungary became a hub for international far-right activists who prefer it over other countries as their base.[[199]](#footnote-199) While the majority of those individuals did not involve themselves in Hungarian matters nor did they link themselves to local organisations, their ideologies often align with the organisations’ and the current Hungarian government. Among the most prominent activists who resided or frequently visited Hungary are the owner of Arktos Media Publisher and the editor of AltRight.com, Daniel Friberg, Tor Westman, AltRight.com’s technical director and Arktos’s head of marketing, American-Hungarian Melissa Mészáros, Altright.com’s co-editor and a vlogger, and Matt(hew) Forney, an AltRight.com writer and blogger, the founder of Counter-Currents Publishing Group Michael Polignano, Friberg’s former business associate John Morgan, French vlogger Willem Nassau, American Paul Ramsey (RamZPaul), Swedes Erik Almquist and Patrick Brinkmann, French-Hungarian Ferenc Almássy (originally Lavallou), and Austrian Holocaust denier Gerd Honsik. Hungary’s appeal can be many-fold, be it the country’s accessible geographic location made better by the affordable living standards, or the current government’s ideologies that provide the far-right activists and apologists with the conservative environments they desire.

However, Hungary’s appeal or the authorities’ approach might have changed in 2017, because some of the most significant activists have allegedly left the country. For instance, Daniel Friberg is said to have left Budapest for unknown reasons. Also, two leading British far-right figures, Jim Dowson and Nick Griffin, leaders of the Knights Templar International (KTI) far-right organisation, who used to be very active in Hungary in 2016 promoting their ideologies in the CEE region and working with some of the groups above, were unexpectedly banned from Hungary in May 2017. Even though the reasons for the ban have mainly remained unclear, the authorities aimed to stop the flow of extremists from the West to Eastern Europe and their penetration in Hungary.[[200]](#footnote-200) However, KTI, which maintains a social media network that spreads nativist, traditionalist, pro-life, and Islamophobic views across the UK, the US and the CEE region, is still active in Hungary mainly through the organisation’s Hungarian Grand Prior Imre Téglásy. Furthermore, KTI cooperates closely with the Army of Outlaws, EE, MÖM and HVIM. An interesting event in 2017 was the case of Horst Mahler, a German neo-Nazi, who was sentenced to jail in Germany for Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic incitement, but upon a court ruling could leave prison because of serious illness. When he was ordered to return to prison in late 2016, he fled to Hungary where he claimed political asylum in a personal video message to PM Orbán. However, Hungarian authorities detained him in May, and a court ordered his extradition to Germany in June.[[201]](#footnote-201)

8. Public actions of extremists and radical nationalists, including among sports fans

Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*, HVIM)

HVIM, while having previously been proponents of Hungarist and chauvinistic ideologies that made them averse to foreigners, they changed their activities after the 2015 refugee crisis. Since then, the group has cooperated on different occasions with its Slovak counterparts in protests against the inflow of migrants. In 2017, HVIM took the opportunity to improve its foreign relations on the “Day of Honour” memorial event[[202]](#footnote-202) (for detailed presentation see Chapter 10), and again in November at an international far-right meeting attended by various groups from Bulgaria, France, the Netherlands, Norway, and Russia amongst others, and organised by the German neo-Nazi Die Rechte. The latter event was awash with anti-Semitic, white supremacist, and neo-Nazi banners and paraphernalia. In the second half of 2017, the group also improved its relationship with the Army of Outlaws, *Identitesz*, and MÖM.

That said, most of their activities have been local and member-focused. This included events such as trips, sports, camps, meetings, and charities for their members. The biggest of these events was a camp held first for the Transylvanian groups, and a festival-like internal gathering called the “Hungarian Island”, which included cultural programmes, sports, and presentations. In fact, HVIM’s co-chair Gábor Barcsa-Turner leads a paramilitary unit called Wolves which offered martial art and airsoft training at certain camps to the members of HVIM. The trainers included Zsolt Dér, a war veteran from the Yugoslav Wars and a former employee of Tamás Sneider, then deputy chairman of Jobbik.

HVIM also organised local events to recruit new members, amongst which were, for the first time, the Armies’ Trip series.[[203]](#footnote-203) This series of thematic hiking trips were organised in cooperation with countless other groups, for example, the Army of Outlaws and EE. Each trip’s theme was connected to events and persons related to Hungarian history, many times from the interwar period. The “Day of Honour”, a clearly neo-Nazi event, is one of the most important events in the Hungarian far-right scene and was attended by groups from around Europe. The Trianon march,[[204]](#footnote-204) united over 1500 people in March 2017 and had leading far-right figures as speakers, amongst whom was László Toroczkai, then the deputy chairman of Jobbik. In June, HVIM also organised the 10th Hungarian Island[[205]](#footnote-205) event which was a cultural festival in Slovakia that united music and ideological discussions.

Figure 9: Trianon march in 2017. Source: pest.hvim.hu[[206]](#footnote-206)



Another important HVIM activity in 2017 was its campaign for the innocence of two of its members who were arrested in Transylvania by Romanian authorities on accounts of terrorism. The group also organised demonstrations for the “Day of Transylvanian Freedom” to support the Hungarian minority of the region. They also organised an event in cooperation with the Fidesz-affiliated local councillor in Székesfehérvár who is in charge of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. Their advocacy for Hungarians abroad further extended to those in Ukraine when the language laws were being discussed. HVIM also protested the Catalonian independence, advocating for Spanish unity as they do for the Hungarian one. The group organised demonstrations on several other occasions throughout the year including a counter-demonstration to the Budapest Pride Parade in July, and against the statue of Gyula Horn in October.

Strength and Resolve (*Erő és Elszántság*, EE)

After its formation in mid-2017, EE focused on increasing its popularity and strengthening its foundation in order to eventually register as a political party to be able to participate in the general elections.[[207]](#footnote-207) To gain this popularity, they organised a nation-wide tour consisting of town hall meetings and establishing regional branches, and in November they united everyone in their first all-chairs meeting.[[208]](#footnote-208) They also launched the Patriot Knowledge Development Programme *(Patrióta Ismeretfejlesztési Program)*[[209]](#footnote-209) in October as a way to teach members their ideology and provide them with information about public affairs.

In its campaign to increase its reach, EE also started building relationships with national and international groups by sending representatives to various European cities. Members visited Belgium, Great Britain, and Germany throughout the year. They also built good relations with the Knights Templar International’s (KTI) Nick Griffin and James Dawson. EE is also on good terms with HVIM, MÖM along with its founding group the Army of Outlaws with whom EE organises many events.

EE was also active in larger demonstrations and events intending to boost its public presence and improving its capabilities. Despite numerous bumps in the road, including Facebook closing the group’s page and OTP bank closing their account,[[210]](#footnote-210) they were able to organise events. They organised an anti-immigration event titled Defend Europe 1686 at Buda Castle, which drew members of HVIM, MÖM, and the Army of Outlaws. They also collaborated with HVIM in protesting the Court of Justice of the European Union’s decision on the binding quota which was unfavourable for Hungary. Finally, at EE’s event commemorating the uprising on 23 October 1956, János Lantos gave a speech, in which he targeted human rights activists comparing them to former State Defence Authority (ÁVH) agents.

Figure 10: Defend Europe 1686 demonstration. Source: betyarsereg.hu



EE’s founding group, *Identitesz* organised a major conference in March 2017 entitled “Stop Operation Soros”, which was attended not only by almost all prominent members of the Hungarian far-right scene but also by some international “heavyweights”.[[211]](#footnote-211) Security at the conference was provided by MÖM, and besides the representatives of *Identitesz*, HVIM, and the KTI’s Hungarian Grand Prior Imre Téglásy, the speeches were held by foreign presenters such as the vice chair of the Italian neo-fascist party Forza Nuova, the former chair of the far-right British National Party and a leading figure of KTI Nick Griffin, a representative of the Macedonian Stop Operation Soros Movement, and an MP affiliated with the Kotleba-led ĽSNS. Daniel Friberg, James Dowson, Mihály Zoltán Orosz, and Edda Budaházy sat in the audience. At the end of his speech, vice-president of HVIM Béla Incze quoted the leader of the Arrow Cross Party Ferenc Szálasi by using the term “the will of the nation’s interest”, which was used by Szálasi during his trial in 1946. According to Incze, Szálasi was the last responsible person in Hungary who separated personal and national interest.[[212]](#footnote-212)

Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*)

Unlike in previous years, the Army of Outlaws was not as actively intimidating communities, only on two occasions were such activities reported in 2017. The group, however, concentrated its efforts in organising demonstrations, charity events, and networking. It played a significant role in the organisation of the aforementioned “Day of Honour” demonstration and joined anti-George Soros, anti-CEU, and anti-human rights watchdog protests. They also provided security at events organised by other groups such as the inauguration of the Horthy statue in May (for a detailed description see Chapter 10).[[213]](#footnote-213) Moreover, they held various sporting and training events throughout 2017.

To extend their reach, the Army of Outlaws also started new local “clans” in Borsod, Győr, and Dunaújváros. They furthered their connections through the EE’s national tour and sent its members to Transylvania on several occasions. Similar to EE, the group is on good terms with HVIM and MÖM and has KTI as a strong ally.

Hungarian Self-Defence Movement *(Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom, MÖM)*

Since MÖM’s goal is to create an operational self-defence force, they organise charity events and fundraisers to fund activities such as their training camps and local community events such as cleaning of public spaces. The group’s main activity is to go on intimidating marches in Roma communities under the guise of “healthcare marches.” In 2017, their marches extended beyond their usual Great Plains and southern regions to Budapest, Orosháza, Miskolc, Mogyoród, Pécs, and Törökszentmiklós.

Similar to the previous groups, MÖM organised a national tour by the name “Recruitment Campaign” in which town hall events were organised, new local branches were formed, and recruits joined the group. They also started a donation collection to finance their events and the expansion. The group organises camps where the members go through leadership, ideological, and martial arts training.[[214]](#footnote-214) Their Youth Camp and Hungarian Self-Defence Days held in Zagyvarékas are the group’s biggest yearly events where partner organisations such as the Army of Outlaws and KTI attended, and over 100 new members took their loyalty oaths in 2017. MÖM thus maintains close ties with both national and international groups. It has also been known not only for having good relations with KTI but for also providing James Dowson with members to guard him and getting financial support from his group.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Identity Generation *(Identitás Generáció)* and Legion of Honour *(Becsület Légiója)*

Both groups had very limited activities throughout 2017. Identity Generation was more active in 2017 than in previous years. However, it still got a low turnout at its events. Its biggest one, the anti-immigration and EU-critical “Day of Freedom” event, meant to recall the reconquest of Buda from the Ottomans and to gather new recruits[[216]](#footnote-216), had a turnout of as low as a couple of dozen participants on September 2nd despite the attendance of Austrian, Czech, Polish, Slovenian, German and Italian members of the Identitarian movement.[[217]](#footnote-217) Other activities of the group that included mainly symbolic actions such as hanging a banner over a square or on a mosque in Budapest with anti-immigration and anti-Muslim message raised little attention.[[218]](#footnote-218) Besides anti-immigration actions, the group also organised a small action against the Gay Pride March in Budapest.

Figure 11: “Islamisation kills – Say yes to the Eastern border fence” – an action of the Identity Generation group. Source: Identitás Generáció



The Legion of Honour was also, as previously mentioned, quite inactive due to its leader’s unpopularity among other groups. Orosz, however, held events, press conferences, and town hall meetings in the North-Eastern region of Hungary throughout the second part of 2017 in order to improve his image and probably to prepare his party to run in the local elections to be held in Autumn 2019.

Extremist events among sports fans

Hate speech against minorities is a common occurrence among Hungarian sports fans, especially among hard-core football fans. In our previous reports, we mentioned the biggest Hungarian far-right football fan group, the Ultras Liberi, which promotes aggressive fan culture and far-right ideology including Nazi symbols on its Facebook page.[[219]](#footnote-219)

In Hungarian football stadiums, the most common hate speech offences are targeted against the Jews and the Roma, but from time to time also black players get into the crosshairs. The most significant cases are linked to a conflict between the management and the fans of the club Újpest. In order to put pressure on the management, fans decided to consciously break the rules during matches to provoke fines against the management by the national football association. In Summer 2017, Újpest fans continuously chanted anti-Semitic, anti-Gipsy, homophobic and sexist phrases in a series of matches. At a match in July, for instance, 250 phrases were counted all together, and also “Sieg Heil” chants, and Nazi salutes occurred.[[220]](#footnote-220)

In October, a black player of the club Videoton was harassed by the fans by making monkey noises at two matches.[[221]](#footnote-221) All the offences mentioned above resulted in fines by the Hungarian Football Association.

However, such offences occur not only in football stadiums. Anti-Gipsy and homophobic phrases are common things among basketball fans as well. Anti-black language has also been used increasingly because more clubs employ foreign black players. In April, a match made headlines where fans of the team Zalaegerszeg chanted openly racist and anti-black phrases and made monkey noises when only black players of the team of Körmend were on the field.[[222]](#footnote-222)

A new phenomenon in 2017 was the emergence of the movement “Sports fans for animals”, a community, which originated in the sports fan subculture and mainly organised itself on Facebook. Even though the group has existed since 2016, they made their breakthrough in June 2017, when they organised a demonstration in the village called Nagycserkesz[[223]](#footnote-223), where previously the case of a dog that had died after being treated cruelly by its master made headlines across the country. Because the dog’s master was a Roma person, some demonstrators chanted anti-Gipsy phrases, but it then stopped after the organisers had declared this behaviour undesirable.[[224]](#footnote-224) While the group organised more gatherings later the year, the anti-Gipsy behaviour among demonstrators decreased.

9. Hate crimes and incidents

Hungarian criminal law identifies two forms of hate crimes: violent offences committed against a member of a group and incitement of hatred against a community. In the case of the latter, a very important modification came into effect in October 2016. The Criminal Code was modified and separated two different forms of this behaviour: the incitement of hate and that of violence. Although previous directives of the European Union declared the importance of differentiating between the two, the juridical practice in Hungary had not separated them, and this practice impeded judgements in most of these cases.

In the case of other types of crime, it is considered an aggravating circumstance if they were committed with a racist motivation. In that case, the court has to hand down a more serious sentence.[[225]](#footnote-225) In addition, the Civil Code addresses the crime of the public denial of the crimes of National Socialism (and also those of Communism), as well as the distribution, public use, and public exhibition of symbols of totalitarianism (such as the swastika, the insignia of the SS, the arrow cross, but also the five-pointed red star, or the hammer and sickle) in a way offending the dignity of the victims of totalitarian regimes and their right to sanctity or when it is capable of breaching public peace in any way.[[226]](#footnote-226)

In addition, in March 2014 a new Civil Code came into effect penalizing hate speech, stating that “any member of a community shall be entitled to enforce his personality rights in the event of any false and malicious statement made in front of the wider public for being part of the Hungarian nation or of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, which is recognized as an essential part of his personality, manifested in a conduct constituting a serious violation in an attempt to damage that community’s reputation, by bringing action within a thirty-day preclusive period” including the obligation to pay restitution.[[227]](#footnote-227) Moreover, the Fourth Amendment of the Hungarian Constitution declares that the right to free speech is restrained by the dignity of communities and created the possibility for members of the violated communities to turn to the legal system to enforce their claims.[[228]](#footnote-228)

It is impossible to give a full account of all the hate speech and incitement to religious and ethnic hatred. Firstly, government and, in most of the cases, any other statistics are unavailable on these crimes[[229]](#footnote-229). Secondly, such hate crimes and incidents largely remain unreported.[[230]](#footnote-230) And thirdly, internet – including social media – is used extensively to spread prejudiced views, and the comprehensive monitoring of the internet goes beyond our capacity.

There are also factors that foster latency due to the mismatch between the legal framework and its implementation. The Working Group Against Hate Crime *(Gyűlölet Elleni Munkacsoport, GYEM)*[[231]](#footnote-231) in its Report to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the United Nations Human Rights Committee listed several components of this problem. In Hungary, although the legal framework would make it possible for the authorities to effectively tackle hate crimes, the implementation of respective laws leaves much to be desired. According to the report, the most typical systematic failures are the following: (1) regular under-classification of hate crimes; (2) regular failure on the part of the police to undertake law-enforcement measures, and (3) failures of the authorities to take investigative steps. These problems result in the extremely low number of procedures. According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Interior, only 194 offences were registered between 2012 and 2016.[[232]](#footnote-232) Therefore, it needs to be emphasised that due to all the reasons mentioned above the exact numbers of hate crimes and incidents are only partly available for Hungary.[[233]](#footnote-233)

Hate crimes and incidents against the Roma

In February, two young Roma women posted on Facebook that they were prohibited from crossing through a popular night life area, *Gozsdu Udvar* (Gozsdu Passage) in Budapest unless escorted by a security guard. After they asked the guards whether they had been accompanied because of their Roma origin, the guards consulted their supervisor, a Roma himself, and he informed the women that he had been instructed not to allow Roma people to walk across the passage without an escort. Two and a half days later Gozsdu Passage released a statement denying the allegations and questioning the women’s credibility. After the revelation, more and more people started to come forward with similar allegations. Both the EBH and Hungarian police launched an investigation into the case.[[234]](#footnote-234)

After winning the national selection, Joci Pápai, a Hungarian singer, rapper and guitarist of Romani descent represented Hungary in the Eurovision Song Contest 2017. Many anti-Gipsy comments appeared on Facebook and in various comment arenas. In May, the extremely pro-government tabloid, Ripost was published with the front-page reading: “Go Gipsy! We have our fingers crossed for you, Joci!”

Figure 12: “Front page of the pro-government tabloid, Ripost reading “In Hussar clothing on the stage of Europe. Go Gipsy! We have our fingers crossed for you, Joci!”. Source: balramagyar.hu



In June, far-right extremists, the Érpatak Model National Network, *Identitesz,* and the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement, started to organise a festival in Vecsés, a town of 20,600 inhabitants in the Budapest metropolitan area, to be held on 7–8 July. They advertised the event as a “revolt against liberalism”. In their video spot, future participants named different reasons why they join the event. For example, a skinhead man expressed the following: “I will go to Vecsés because I do not want a Gipsy to represent Hungary in the Eurovision Song Contest with Gipsy music. I want to defend Hungarian culture, and I want to save national identity. At least I want to demand those rights that are allowed for the Jews in Israel.”

There were legal decisions concerning the Roma. In February, the Curia, Hungary’s highest court announced a verdict against the Heves County Police claiming that they had not only harassed Roma inhabitants in Gyöngyöspata when they had failed to dissolve the demonstration of radical right-wing extremists in 2011, but that they had also violated their right for equal treatment by continuously fining them for minor offences, such as riding a bicycle without a bell or walking on the road. However, a few hours after the verdict was announced, the Curia issued a statement claiming that the presiding judge had mistakenly issued the wrong verdict. “According to the statement, although the Curia ‘found that the police had harassed the members of the Roma community in the matter of the patrolling and the demonstration,’ ‘forbade the police from committing further legal violations,’ and ‘upheld the first-level decision obliging the police to fulfil their responsibilities, the explanation read aloud by the presiding judge ‘mistakenly maintained that the Curia had found the police guilty of harassment in the practice of punishing misdemeanours and of direct discrimination’ which ‘contradicts the actual ruling’.” The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (*Társaság a Szabadságjogokért*, TASZ) which brought the case to the court issued its own statement: “We cannot understand the decision that goes contrary to the explanation, and we are awaiting the written explanation. At present, it is not possible to know on what grounds the Curia rejected – contrary to its earlier statements – our legal petition.”[[235]](#footnote-235)

In October, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg ruled against the Hungarian state in the case of a Roma man who was severely beaten in 2010 by police who then attempted to cover it up. “According to the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (*Társaság a Szabadságjogokért*, TASZ) which represented the man at the ECHR:

* the Roma man spent 12 hours in forced interrogation at a police station while police tried to get him to confess to a crime
* Six police and two security guards beat and humiliated him, allegedly saying, ‘We don’t care if you die, at least there will be one less Gipsy.’
* Several hours after leaving the police station, the man went to the hospital where it was found he had sustained injuries to his skull, nose, shoulder, hips, arms, hands and thighs.”

“The ECHR decision ‘found that the government was unable to deny during the investigation that the victim’s injuries had not occurred while in police custody. Furthermore, according to the Strasbourg court, the investigation by Hungarian authorities was not effective and did not examine whether the abuse had racist intent.’”[[236]](#footnote-236)

Anti-Semitic hate crimes and incidents

Anti-Semitic cases are discussed based on three sources. Primarily, the monitoring activity of Action and Protection Foundation (*Tett és Védelem Alapítvány*, TEV).[[237]](#footnote-237) [[238]](#footnote-238) Their monitoring system is largely based on press monitoring. Therefore, their figures chiefly reflect hate crimes and incidents that became public and received media attention. Secondly, data from the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and thirdly our monitoring activity throughout the year.

Action and Protection Foundation registered 37 anti-Semitic hate crimes and incidents in 2017, including no attacks or threats. However, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee reported a physical assault that happened in December, when the victim was hit on the back and head by two offenders who he acquainted with in a local bar. Before the accident, they discussed differences in the feelings towards Roma and Jews and seriously quarrelled. Action and Protection Foundation reported thirteen cases of vandalism. The remaining 24 cases were categorised as hate speech. The vandalism included an attack against Holocaust memorials, Jewish cemeteries, some of them described in detail in the next chapter, and anti-Semitic graffiti on various surfaces.

Hate speech included various types of acts. In the public sphere, *Sajtóklub* (Press Club), a political discussion program on Echo TV, the regular guests of the program were Zsolt Bayer, already mentioned several times for his racist and anti-Semitic hate speech, and István Lovas, András Bencsik, and Gergely Huth. The program was a regular scene of anti-Semitic hate speech, including anti-Semitism masked as anti-Israeli criticism. Hate speech included many instances of Holocaust denial and Holocaust trivialization, which we also present in detail in the next chapter. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee however reported a case that happened in February when a Jewish family, especially the young children had been continuously verbally harassed by the neighbours.

Anti-Semitic hate speech occurred many times in demonstrations especially when far-right people showed up at anti-government protests. However, being a genuine far-right protester was not a prerequisite for some people to be anti-Semitic. There is a public debate has been going on about the planned shoreline track for a mobile dam on Budapest’s Római beach. On the one side there are environmentalists and green civil activist, and according to a survey the majority of Budapest citizens too, whose aim is to preserve the last-remaining section of natural beach on the Danube in Budapest. While on the other side there are mainly tenants and owners, previously having their houses built on a well-known floodplain, who want to prevent flood to secure their properties. Supporters of the mobile damn founded an organisation, called the Association for the Római beach *(Római-partért Egyesület)*. In September, the Association wrote a Facebook post with the pictures of the main figures from the opponents’ side. The post read the following: “A group of Jewish intellectuals want to lock into a ghetto those living in the 70 acres on the shore. […] They want to treat those living there the same way as if they forgot what happened to their relatives in the 40s.”[[239]](#footnote-239)

We have already mentioned that in the government’s propaganda campaign George Soros has been used as the scapegoat for the migration issue. The rhetoric used against Mr Soros resembles the narrative of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that accuse Jews of attempting to rule the world, controlling global financial institutions, subjugating economic and political leaders and acting secretly. There has been intense debate whether the campaign against George Soros is anti-Semitic or not. In May 2017, however, the campaign’s antisemitism became apparent, when the state-sponsored, extremely pro-government M1 television station, aired in its evening news a lengthy report on George Soros calling him an “evil multibillionaire Zionist-American.”

In June, the president of Mazsihisz, an umbrella organisation of Jewish communities, András Heiser, in an open letter to PM Orbán wrote the following: “[…] Although the campaign is not openly anti-Semitic, it is indeed suitable to incite uncontrolled anti-Semitic and other hatred. […]” What especially made Mr Heisler write this letter and ask the prime minister to remove the posters from the streets and end the campaign was the anti-Semitic slurs written on some of the placates.[[240]](#footnote-240) Eventually, in July the government removed the posters but not at all for their controversial meaning. “According to an influential Fidesz politician quoted by ATV [a television station], Prime Minister Viktor Orbán decided it would be better if spectators and participants of the 2017 FINA World Swimming Championships, beginning late this week, weren’t confronted with the widespread signs and billboards.”[[241]](#footnote-241)

Figure 13: “Filthy Jew” written on a Soros poster. Source: Facebook



In December, Fidesz MP János Pócs posted a picture of a slaughtered pig on Facebook. The following text was written on the dead body of the animal: “THIS WAS THE SOROS.” In Hungarian, if one says that someone is the soros, it means that it’s his or her turn. Of course, the other meaning of the text is that the pig is [George] Soros. The text under the picture read: “The residents of Jászivány sent us this picture that was taken in their Transylvanian sister city. There’s one less pig there now…:) Enjoy your meal!”

Figure 14: The slaughtered pig with the text of double meaning. Source: Facebook



Hate crimes and incidents against members of the LGBTQ community

In February, Atlasz, an LMBT Sports Association wanted to rent one lane in a swimming pool to hold training. Their order had been confirmed, but when they sent the required information for the contract, and the swimming pool realised the association’s profile, they denied their request of using their facilities. Atlasz submitted a complaint to the Equal Treatment Authority (EBH).[[242]](#footnote-242) In August, the Authority agreed that Atlasz had been a victim of unlawful discrimination, finding that the swimming pool “violated the equal treatment requirement against the association, in connection with the sexual orientation and gender identity of the association’s members.” In addition to banning the pool from such an unlawful behaviour in the future, the EBH fined the swimming pool to HUF 1 million (approximately EUR 3,200).[[243]](#footnote-243) [[244]](#footnote-244)

In April, the news site Origo and the tabloid Ripost, two flagships of the government’s propaganda machine published articles how Gulyás, a well-known anti-government protester, “immediately ran” to a known gay dating site after he was released from pre-trial detention. Gulyás filed an action against the two media outlets, and in September, the Court ruled in its first-instance verdict that the publishers must pay a sum of HUF 4.3 million (approximately EUR 13,500) in compensation for publishing these defamatory articles. The verdict also obligated the media outlets to remove the offending articles from their websites.[[245]](#footnote-245)

Earlier we mentioned that in June extremist groups started to use a video spot to advertise their event to be held in Vecsés at the beginning of July. One of the men said the following: “I will go to Vecsés because I believe it is not a coincidence that God created Adam and Eve, and not Adam and Steve. We have had enough of the aggressive faggot propaganda.”

On 30 June, the Budapest Pride Week officially began, and it gave the opportunity to the pro-government media to deal with the issue. In an article in the homophobic, heavily subsidised government publication, *Pesti Srácok,* the author called LGBTQ people “freaks”. He wrote the following: “‘The majority looks upon these people with pity, perhaps loathing or fear […] and not with swooning respect or yellow envy.” ‘They are ugly, evil, deformed with perverse desires’ and society shoves them aside to maintain the desirable life strategies, identity for the normal members of society. […] Perhaps the Nazis went too far, but ‘the existence of marginalised communities is not justified. They don’t have to exist. Single people, gays, Down Syndrome idiots, cannibals, religious fundamentalists, and militant animal rights activists don’t need to exist.’”[[246]](#footnote-246)

In July, perpetrators of racist-homophobic attacks were found guilty and received a prison sentence in a legally binding verdict.[[247]](#footnote-247) Three Roma men, “well-known in Hungary for their educational work in the Roma community, were heading home from the Budapest Pride march when they met a group of 20-30 protesters dressed in black, marching in a military formation. The group forced the three men to stop, shouted “You are faggots! You are gipsies!” at them and beat them up. […] The assault ended when police arrived at the scene. However, they did not apprehend any of the perpetrators, nor did they check their identity.”[[248]](#footnote-248) The victims were represented by Háttér Society.

Hate crimes and incidents against migrants

Due to the physical and legal closure of Hungary, there are practically no migrants in the country, at least none that could be seen in public spaces. Yet, there were hate incidents against people thought to be migrants.[[249]](#footnote-249)

For example, in May an employee, of a pizza shop in downtown Budapest, thinking that one of his customers was a tourist, talked to him in English. In turn, the customer called him a “filthy migrant” and kept yelling that Hungary belongs to the Hungarians and that he is not a tourist in his own country. He also called the waiter “a cockroach.” When a young woman asked the man to stop insulting the waiter, he hit the woman on the head, knocked her glasses off, and called her a stupid woman whose brain is filled with urine. Later MP Szilárd Németh, National Security Committee Deputy Chairman and Fidesz Vice President when asked about the incident, said that the whole thing had nothing to do with the government’s hateful propaganda. He called the act a “damned provocation” and expressed his belief that “anything can happen since George Soros set foot in this country, and his provocateurs do what he tells them to do.”[[250]](#footnote-250)

In November, in Kömlő, a village in Northern Hungary with a population of 1,900, panic broke out when residents thought that people coming to the cemetery on All Saint’s Day[[251]](#footnote-251) are migrants because they wore headscarves. Many people called the Mayor’s Office for help.[[252]](#footnote-252)

Anti-Islamic hate crimes and incidents

In this part, we would like to differentiate between anti-Islamic hate crimes and incidents, and those against migrants. Our report has clearly shown that Islamophobia is an integral part of the government’s anti-immigration campaign. However, the proportion of Muslims living in Hungary is around 0.4 per cent, that is 30,000–40,000 people. Therefore, “[a]nti-Islam incidents are almost exclusively taking place in discursive forms in the arenas of EU, national, and regional politics, societal discourses and the media. This non-physical form of incidents is hardly surprising given the almost complete lack of (visually identifiable) Muslims or mosques or other physical Islamic institutions in the country. In general, the increasingly hostile, essentialising and fearmongering tone of discourses surrounding the immigration and integration of Muslims, EU resettlement quotas and global events linked to Islamic terrorism have been dominating domestic discourses and brought about the consolidation of highly negative if not openly hostile general attitudes towards Islam, Muslims, refugees, and migrants.”[[253]](#footnote-253)

However, Muslims claim that their situation has completely changed since the anti-immigration campaign had begun. They also reported harassments and insults in the streets and other public places, especially when wearing a headscarf.[[254]](#footnote-254) Others are afraid because of their darker skin colour.[[255]](#footnote-255)

In February, several media outlets shared the fact that the Hungarian Islam Community has bought an estate in Budapest and moved its headquarters to a newly opened mosque, which would also function as a cultural centre. Residents in the area resented that they were not informed about the new institution. However, in May, the MP of the area Kristóf Szatmáry, taking advantage of the outcry, initiated the setting up of public surveillance cameras. The pro-government and far-right media published several prejudiced and fearmongering articles in connection to the new mosque and community centre.[[256]](#footnote-256)

In September, PM Orbán talked about “Islamic world offence” in the National Assembly. The Hungarian Muslim Defence League made an official statement condemning what the prime minister had said.

In October, as we already mentioned, a protest of some activists of the Hungarian Generation Identity took place. They placed an eight-meter-long banner on the top of the Buda Tunnel, reading “Islamisation kills.” According to the chairman of the movement, “Islamisation starts with a single mosque.”[[257]](#footnote-257)

In October, Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of the Christian Democratic Party (KDNP) Zsolt Semjén held a town hall forum on the National Consultation and the so-called Soros Plan in Zalaegerszeg, a city in Western Hungary. After the usual mantra on migration, George Soros and the EU, he also talked about Islam, saying that “[w]here Islam appears, Sharia must be introduced even among non-Muslims.” “He recalled an occasion when a ‘[Budapest] Pride man’ attacked him, namely how could the government oppose immigration when multiculturalism is great. Semjén claimed that he answered, ‘just try to hold a Pride there, you will be the first to be beheaded, we Christians will be at the end of the queue.’”[[258]](#footnote-258) He also gave an interview to Magyar Nemzet, a conservative Hungarian daily after the forum. He said the following: “If we want to protect women from rape and a woman to be able to live as a woman, wear a miniskirt, go without a headscarf and live freely as a women, then the most important thing is to stop migration don’t let it be that because of Islam we should live in the shadow of Sharia and its threat”[[259]](#footnote-259)

In November, Fidesz politician and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Gergely Gulyás told in a television program on the far-right Echo TV, that “there will be no mosques in Hungary.” He made this statement after the host of the program, Zsolt Bayer, a well-known hate-filled racist journalist, said that “troubles are coming with mosques”. Gulyás added: “We have to make it clear that in the current situation this [having mosques] would have negative consequences on our security. We are sorry for those who are the losers of this, but we cannot change our mind, because it is not just the question of the freedom of religion, but the question of the security of a whole country.”

Hate crimes and incidents against anti-government protesters and NGOs

As the law on hate crimes uses an open-ended list of protected groups, in Hungary practically a member of any kind of a group can be considered as a possible victim of hate crimes.

After the adoption of the Lex CEU[[260]](#footnote-260) in April and the Lex NGO[[261]](#footnote-261) in June, mass demonstrations took place. In April, people in support of the university and also as a symbol of their anti-government sentiments started to wear CEU buttons that read “I stand with CEU”. Some of the protesters were violently attacked on the street for their opinion. For example, a man reported the following: “We were just getting ready to leave when two big guys attacked us because of my CEU button. Our buddy (who is about 195 cm tall) was tossed among the tables and chairs. They tore off my button, and my jacket, bag and sweater. Meanwhile, they were yelling that they’d beat us up and that they wouldn’t tolerate their enemies – provocateurs and liberals – among them.”[[262]](#footnote-262)

A week later another man was attacked while walking home from the “We won’t stay silent” demonstration. His attackers made it clear that he was receiving the punishment for attending the protest, and as he was not Hungarian they shouted at him that he is “protesting against the Hungarians”. After treatment at the hospital, the attacked man wished to file a complaint of “a crime committed against a member of a group.” However, according to him, the police report did not at all resembled his recounting of the events and did not contain the complaint of a crime committed against a member of a group that he had wished to make.[[263]](#footnote-263)

In April, at one of the demonstrations, a group of skinheads and football hooligans appeared but were soon removed by the police. Later they organised a counter-demonstration advertising it with the following slogan: “Let’s retake the streets, so Hungary and Budapest can again belong to Hungarians.” Finally, there were only some hundreds of people who participated in the event.

In May, a handful of NGO leaders appeared at a parliamentary hearing to silently protest against the pending anti-NGO bill.

Figure 15: NGOs are protesting against the anti-NGO bill. Source: 444.hu[[264]](#footnote-264)



When asked about the demonstration, Zsolt Bayer, a journalist known for his fearmongering, racist, anti-Semitic articles said the following: “If people like this show up in the parliament building again and disrupt their work, then they need to be thrown out like shitting cats. If they need to be pulled out through their snot and blood, then they should be pulled out through their snot and blood […] Their faces should be beaten to smithereens if need be.”[[265]](#footnote-265)

In October, László Földi, a former operation director at Hungary’s foreign spy agency and the chief security adviser to Budapest’s mayor, in the pro-government Echo TV made claims that “George Soros’ civil organisations” are involved in an elaborate human smuggling operation. Then he continued: “There is a war going on. These people are collaborators, war criminals, traitors, and so on. This is an entirely different conceptual system. In times of war, human smugglers are not simply human smugglers; they are essentially saboteurs who have no legal status. In other words, they can be freely liquidated. That’s what the war laws prescribe: spies and saboteurs are not taken to courts, they are immediately eliminated.”[[266]](#footnote-266) Following this, the mayor’s office told Földi to refrain from making statements concerning migration, which made him quit his job. After being released from his obligations, he gave an interview to the pro-government propaganda outlet, Magyar Idők (Hungarian Times) talking about “the global economy controlled by small groups of people through banks, shares in companies, and corporations”, processes and tools used by the NGOs as “forbidden and unlawful”, and about the “fault line between those countries which accept a multicultural society and those which prefer the nation-state.”[[267]](#footnote-267) In December, the Media Council of the National Media and Communications Authority fined Echo TV HUF 500,000 (around EUR 1700) for this program and ordered the removal of the content from the television’s website, as the Council found the program to be hate-mongering.[[268]](#footnote-268)

Not only protesters but also ordinary people could be the victims of such abuse and assault. In November, two women, alleged pro-government activists attacked a 65-year-old blind man on his doorstep. The women introduced themselves by saying that they brought informative material about George Soros and wanted to know whether he had filled out the government national consultation “questionnaire”. When the man gave the answer above, they started to pull the blind man’s hair and left ear, while shouting about migrants and the border fence, and calling him ungrateful and a “Soros-servant”.[[269]](#footnote-269)

10. Glorification of German National Socialism and collaborators of Nazi Germany

Just as in previous years, the glorification of German National Socialism and its collaborators in the mainstream media and the decisions made by the authorities was practically absent in Hungary in 2017. However, extreme hate groups following neo-Nazi ideology exist in Hungary, as presented in detail in Chapter 8.

The most significant event related to glorification of German National Socialism and/or its collaborators in Hungary is traditionally the commemoration on 11 February 1945, when German regular armies, Waffen SS troops, Hungarian regular armies and militants of the Hungarian Nazi-collaborator Arrow Cross Party, accompanied by civilians “attempted to break through Soviet lines encircling the city and escape to the wooded hills to the north-west. Most were captured, killed, or wounded by the Soviet army. Two days later the city surrendered.”[[270]](#footnote-270) The “Outbreak Day” or “Day of Honour” is held every year on (or around) February 11, and it is a major event of the Hungarian far-right scene, which also draws neo-Nazi participants from across Europe. In 2017, the commemoration event was held in a central part of Budapest, and it was joined by German, Italian, Greek, and Polish participants. The main organisers were HVIM, the Army of Outlaws, *Identitesz*, Skins4Skins Hungary, Hungaria Skins, Hungarian Hammerskins and Blood and Honour Hungary.[[271]](#footnote-271) Other fringe Hungarian neo-Nazi groups such as the Varese Skins and D.O.R.A., Örs Skins Legion, War and Cultural History Association and Southern Breakout also took part in the event.

Figure 16: Teaser of the “Day of Honour” event in 2017 with the logos of the organisers. Source: HVIM



The leading activist of the German neo-Nazi movement Der III. Weg, Matthias Fischer ended his speech with the farewell of the leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross Party Ferenc Szálasi in the Hungarian language: Kitartás! (“persistence”). In his speech, the leader of the Army of Outlaws Zsolt Tyirityán talked about the importance of fighting for “living space” and the racial and national consciousness. At the end of the speech, Tyirityán praised the Waffen SS with the following words: “Recognition and respect for the Waffen SS! Glory to the Waffen SS!” Besides the event in the capital, a swastika flag was applied on an electricity pole in a village called Tök in Pest county.[[272]](#footnote-272)

Figure 17: Day of Honour demonstration. Source: nepszava.hu



The leader of the Army of Outlaws Tyirityán expressed his admiration for Nazism and the Waffen SS at some other occasions during 2017 as well. In November, the leader of MÖM Attila László published on Facebook a picture, which shows him and his close ally and friend Tyirityán wearing a T-shirt depicting leading officers of the Waffen SS and the text “White Power”.[[273]](#footnote-273) On the following day, Tyirityán published on the website of the Army of Outlaws a short text in which he again praises the Waffen SS and also two original promotion videos about the Waffen SS.[[274]](#footnote-274)

Figure 18: Leader of MÖM (l) and that of the Army of Outlaws (r) wearing a T-shirt with officers of the Waffen SS and the text “White Power”. Source: Facebook



Tyirityán’s actions mentioned above are typical cases for the Hungarian judiciary. In 2017, three persons were convicted by the courts of denying the Holocaust, i.e., publicly denying the crimes committed by the national socialist regime.[[275]](#footnote-275) In one case, the punishment was 300 hundred hours of public work[[276]](#footnote-276) and in two cases financial penalties. One of the cases that ended with a financial penalty was the case of Zsolt Tyirityán, who had to pay a fine of HUF 500,000 (around EUR 1700)[[277]](#footnote-277).

Besides some very visible examples of Holocaust denial committed by far-right public figures, the phenomenon is also widespread on social media. Be it in discussion fora beneath articles on news sites or Facebook, Holocaust denial or relativisation along with other forms of anti-Semitic (and anti-Gipsy) hate speech appears in online discussions in Hungary regularly. Action and Protection Foundation took legal actions in many cases concerning these phenomena in 2017.

Also, survey data show that Holocaust denial is present in the Hungarian society. A survey that was carried out by the pollster institute Medián at the end of 2017 revealed that 8 to 17 per cent of the Hungarian population deny the Holocaust[[278]](#footnote-278), while 22 per cent of the respondents relativise it.[[279]](#footnote-279) These rates increased significantly from 2006 to 2014 while remaining more or less stable since then.[[280]](#footnote-280)

Vandalism of memorials related to the Holocaust happened two times in Hungary in 2017. In February, the memorial of the “Life March” in Budapest was damaged by white painting. One of the marble plaques was completely overpainted while others only partially damaged.[[281]](#footnote-281)

Figure 19: Vandalism of the “Life March” memorial in Budapest. Source: akibic.hu



In August, the memorial commemorating the Jewish victims of forced labour during WWII was damaged in the town of Sopron at the Hungarian-Austrian border.[[282]](#footnote-282)

Figure 20: Vandalism of the memorial to the Jewish victims of forced labour during WWII. Source: kisalfold.hu



Even though the government and the authorities did not glorify National Socialism and government officials and politicians of Fidesz use every opportunity to condemn anti-Semitism and Nazism, in some cases, however, they have failed to distance themselves from Nazi collaborators in recent years. These cases included naming organisations and public places after these people or erecting memorials relativising Hungary’s role in the crimes committed against its own Jewish, Roma and other minority population during WWII. In our previous report on events in 2016, we wrote about the efforts of the Action and Protection Foundation to legally oblige local governments to change the names of streets named after Hungarian Nazi collaborators such as Bálint Hóman and József Nyírő. Another case in this regard was the planned unveiling of a statue erected in honour of the wartime racist politician and convicted anti-Semite György Donáth by Fidesz deputy chairmen Gergely Gulyás and former prime minister Péter Boross. Due to protests, the unveiling of the statue did not take place.[[283]](#footnote-283)

In 2017, a major topic of similar nature was the erection of statues honouring Miklós Horthy, Hungary’s regent and effective leader from 1920 until October 1944. Horthy’s historical assessment is very controversial because of the discriminatory legislation against the Jews including the three “anti-Jewish acts” in emulation of Germany's Nuremberg Laws that passed under his leadership. In 2015, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán clearly rejected supporting the erection of any statues of Horthy stating that “the government cannot support the erection of statues of politicians, who cooperated with those who oppressed Hungarians and who collaborated with foreign powers repressing Hungary, irrespective of any other potential merits of the respective persons”.[[284]](#footnote-284) However, by 2017 the concerns of Viktor Orbán seems to have disappeared. In June, PM Orbán called Horthy an “exceptional statesman”, who, along with other leading politicians of the interwar period, had a significant role in re-establishing the country after the collapse following WWI, and whose assessment cannot be overshadowed even by Hungary’s “grim role” in WWII.[[285]](#footnote-285) This statement came just a few days after a Horthy statue had been unveiled in Budapest, which sparked heavy criticism. Among the speakers were the head of the World Association of Hungarians and a Protestant pastor Lóránt Hegedűs Jr., who is infamous for his right-wing extremist, chauvinistic, anti-Semitic and anti-Gipsy views.[[286]](#footnote-286) However, this was not the first case in 2017 that a Horthy statue was erected. In May, another Horthy statue was unveiled on private property in Káloz after the Fidesz-led local government of Perkáta, a village which was originally chosen as the location of the statue, had withdrawn the permit due to heavy criticism of the local citizens. The unveiling ceremony was organised by far-right organisations and individuals including the New Hungarian Guard. HVIM was represented by a speaker, and also the Army of Outlaws participated in the event.[[287]](#footnote-287)

Figure 21: Unveiling the Horthy statue in Káloz. Source: alfahir.hu



11. Persecution of human rights activists

The Hungarian government has been waging a campaign against human rights NGOs since 2013. The government’s war on NGOs fits into the pattern of anti-democratic developments in Hungary and, in many aspects, resembles the Kremlin’s measures in Russia. The main objective of the government is to silence independent and critical voices. Since 2013, the campaign against NGOs has consisted of various measures and waves including legal and administrative steps, criminal investigations and communication campaigns.[[288]](#footnote-288) The goal of the actions against NGOs is to discredit the organisations, intimidate them and hamper their operation.

While in the first wave of the campaign, the targets were mainly watchdogs, human rights and transparency NGOs which criticised the government’s policies in various fields. Since 2015, within the framework of the government’s anti-immigration campaign, those NGOs that have become the primary targets of the government are the ones that either receive support from the Open Society Foundations or, provide support for asylum-seekers.

Since 2016, the government has built its anti-immigration narrative increasingly on conspiracy theories about the alleged influence of George Soros and a “well-constructed system” linked to him, largely due to the absence of actual refugees and migrants in Hungary. The fight against George Soros and his alleged network was set to become the main issue of the government’s campaign ahead of the general elections in April 2018. Thus, as a preparation, this topic dominated the government’s communications already in 2017. According to the government’s narrative, George Soros, through his organisations and without the public knowing, is spending endless amounts of money to support illegal immigration. He maintains a regular network consisting of its media, hundreds of people, and its university, which are all in fact lobbying organisations that operate in the guise of civil society. According to PM Orbán, the fight against Soros and his network is fighting for the “independent national existence” of Hungary against “the dictates of Brussels or other political and financial centres”.[[289]](#footnote-289) According to the governing party, “Soros-organisations have been attacking the Hungarian government’s measures for the past two years. They aim to destroy border protection and enforce the free access of immigrants. They are openly inciting for the violation of the Hungarian laws. Hungary must protect itself.”[[290]](#footnote-290)

While intimidating and threatening statements from the government and the governing parties continued and even increased in 2017, the government also resorted to legal measures against human rights and watchdog NGOs, probably spurred on by Donald Trump’s election. The tone was set by PM Orbán in December 2016, when he announced in an interview that 2017 would be the “Year of Revolt” when governments will finally start to “drive out” Soros and the powers symbolised by him from their countries.[[291]](#footnote-291) In January 2017, the same message was echoed by vice president of Fidesz and vice-chairman of the National Assembly’s national security committee Szilárd Németh, who stated that “the Soros empire’s fake civil organisations are maintained so that global capital and the world of political correctness can be imposed on national governments. These organisations have to be rolled back by every means, and I think they have to be swept out of here.” He added that the “international possibility” to do that had just emerged with the election of Mr Trump.[[292]](#footnote-292)

Legislative decisions against NGOs

On June 13, the National Assembly passed the Bill on the Transparency of Organizations Receiving Support from Abroad (the “Lex NGO”), which requires NGOs that receive foreign funding of over HUF 7.2 million (app. EUR 23,000) per year to register as foreign-funded organizations and to publish their “foreign-funded” status on their websites and in all their publications. While the law officially aimed at providing transparency and combating money laundering and financing of terrorism, transparency rules for NGOs that required all NGOs to submit annual financial reports detailing their funding by source and the way it was spent had existed before. The theoretical aims were also undermined by the fact that sports, religious and national minority associations were exempt from the rule. Furthermore, EU funds that were not distributed through state institutions are also considered foreign funding.

The bill was met with heavy criticism by a wide range of international stakeholders. Among others, the following persons and institutions expressed their objection to the law: Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights; the Council of Europe Expert Council on NGO Law; UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders and on the promotion and protection the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the European Parliament; the Venice Commission; the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum; Civil Society Europe; Front Line Defenders; Open Society Foundations; the International Federation for Human Rights; the European Association for the Defence of Human Rights; Amnesty International; Reporters without Borders and Human Rights Watch.[[293]](#footnote-293)

In its final opinion on the law, the Venice Commission (VC) stated that the bill causes “disproportionate and unnecessary interference with the freedoms of association and expression, right to privacy, and the prohibition of discrimination.” Furthermore, the VC called upon the government not stigmatise nongovernmental organisations or restrict their activities under the pretext of preventing unauthorised foreign influence in politics, money laundering, and financing of terrorism. They stated that the exceptions from the regulation decreased the credibility of the government’s position. Additionally, including information about financing from abroad in all the publications of an organisation was deemed “unnecessary and disproportionate in a democratic society” by the VC.[[294]](#footnote-294)

In July, the European Commission (EC) launched an infringement procedure against Hungary over the NGO Law. According to the EC, the bill does not comply with EU law because the former interferes unduly with fundamental rights, especially the right to freedom of association and it raises concerns about the respect of the right to protection of private life and personal data. Furthermore, the EC argued that the law could impede NGOs in collecting donations and restricting their ability to perform their tasks. In additions, in EC’s opinion the law, through the many requirements, creates “an administrative and reputational burden for these organisations”.[[295]](#footnote-295)

In June and July, several NGOs including Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (*Társaság a Szabadságjogokért*, TASZ), the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC), K-Monitor, and the Ökotárs Foundation announced that they would not register as an “organisation receiving support from abroad” under the NGO Law. On August, 23 NGOs submitted a joint constitutional complaint to the Constitutional Court (CC) to challenge the law. However, the CC had not made any decisions by the end of 2017.

After the submission of the draft bill to the National Assembly in April, the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information stated in its opinion that information on NGO funding by economic actors, by the Government and by political parties just like the funding of religious organisations could also be made public.[[296]](#footnote-296)

### Local legislative decisions against NGOs

Besides the legal measures at the national level, the campaign against NGOs was also extended to the local level. In December, the city assembly of Pécs dominated by Fidesz passed a resolution that called on residents, businesses, and organisations not to sell, rent or “provide a place for Soros’s campaign centre.”[[297]](#footnote-297) The statement reasoned that that the Open Society Foundations “wants to influence our lives, decisions and choices” to help a force ascend to power that would bring in hundreds of thousands of migrants who would “Islamise” the country and the continent. The concrete case that prompted Mayor Zsolt Páva to submit the proposal was that the NGO With the Strength of Humanity (WSH) received a grant from the Open Society Foundations (OSF) to support community building in the region.[[298]](#footnote-298) Although a landlord previously having committed to leasing office space for the NGO backtracked on his decision, the NGO managed to find another place later.[[299]](#footnote-299)

Other Fidesz-affiliated mayors followed the example of Pécs, albeit only in 2018. The local assembly of Szekszárd passed a resolution condemning the so-called Soros-plan.[[300]](#footnote-300) In Debrecen, local councilmen approved a resolution stating that the city stands against the Soros plan,” mandatory EU quotas and the operation of “offices organising immigration.[[301]](#footnote-301) The local assembly of Kaposvár approved a similar resolution and asked the government to “step up against the Soros-plan with legal tools if needed.” The wave of anti-Soros resolutions continued afterwards as well, which can be considered a part of the Hungarian general election campaign in 2018.

Administrative measures and practices of the authorities against NGOs

In October, government officials including PM Orbán announced that with the support of national security services the government would investigate the influence of the “Soros network” in Hungary and Brussels so that the Hungarian people find out “what is actually happening, who is seeking to influence their lives, and why and how they are doing it”. PM Orbán also added that Hungarians who cooperate with the “Soros network” have to be identified.[[302]](#footnote-302)

During the year, state institutions terminated long-standing cooperation agreements with some NGOs. In October, the HHC reported that all their agreements to systematically monitor and document the enforcement of human rights in immigration and police detention facilities and penitentiary institutions were terminated by the Immigration and Asylum Office, the National Police Headquarters, and the National Penitentiary Headquarters respectively. Among others, agreements with the HHC, the Central Regional Office of UNHCR, the Hungarian Red Cross, the Speak Out Association were terminated. In November, Minister of Interior Sandor Pinter stated his ministry and the authorities under its supervision do not maintain cooperation agreements with NGOs that openly refused to comply with the NGO law. The youth organisation of the Christian Democratic Party announced that it would report NGOs that refused to register as foreign-funded organisations to the Budapest Prosecutor’s Office.[[303]](#footnote-303)

Communication campaigns and statements by the government against NGOs

Even though the Lex NGO was the central piece of the government’s anti-Soros and anti-immigration campaign in 2017, a wide range of other measures were implemented as well.

In April, a “national consultation”[[304]](#footnote-304) titled “Let’s stop Brussels” was launched. The highly biased questionnaire included two questions on NGOs as follows:

* Question 3: “By now it has become clear that, in addition to the smugglers, certain international organisations encourage the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Activities assisting illegal immigration such as human smuggling and the popularisation of illegal immigration must be punished. (b) Let us accept that there are international organisations which, without any consequences, urge the circumvention of Hungarian laws.”
* Question 4: “More and more foreign-supported organisations operate in Hungary with the aim of interfering in the internal affairs of our country in an opaque manner. These organisations could jeopardise our independence. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Require them to register, revealing on which country’s or organisation’s authority they act and the objectives of their activities. (b) Allow them to continue their risky activities without any supervision.”[[305]](#footnote-305)

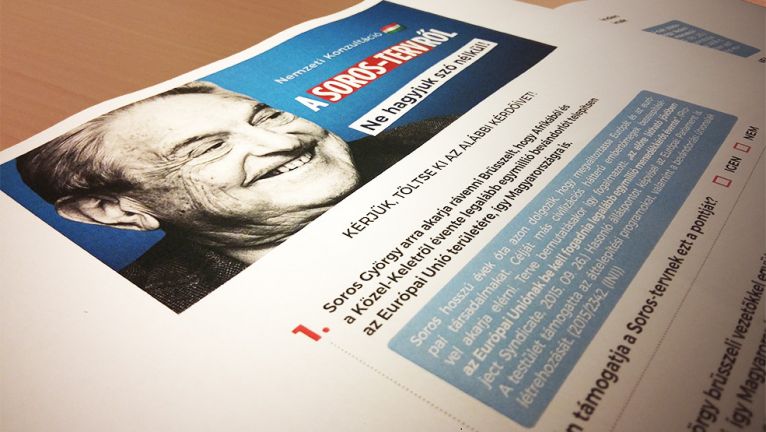
Figure 22: “Let’s stop Brussels!” / National Consultation 2017”   
Source: hungarianspectrum.org



As part of the “Let’s stop Brussels!” national consultation campaign, the government launched a television advertisement in April 2017 that specifically targeted one of the key NGOs, the HHC, saying that “an organisation financed by George Soros is launching lawsuits against our homeland in support of Brussels”.[[306]](#footnote-306)

In September, a new “national consultation” was started, this time on the alleged “Soros plan.” The biased questionnaire included one question explicitly naming two NGOs, the HHC and Amnesty International Hungary in a negative context. The questions went as follows: “Q5. George Soros would also like to see migrants receive lighter sentences for the crimes they commit. - George Soros, with significant amounts of funding, supports numerous organisations that assist immigrants and defend immigrants who have committed unlawful acts. One example, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, about the prohibited crossing of the border argued that “the application of strict legal consequences about unlawful entry may be considered concerning.” Another Soros-funded organisation, Amnesty International, demanded numerous times that Ahmed H is set free, the man who was sentenced for attacking with stones Hungarian policemen defending the border. Amnesty would even have the Hungarian state pay compensation. Do you support this point of the Soros plan? Yes/No”.[[307]](#footnote-307)

Figure 23: National consultation on the Soros plan. Source: abouthungary.hu



Besides the two major national consultation campaigns that included messages against NGOs, verbal attacks, intimidating and threatening statements, and accusations against NGOs were frequently made by a government official and Fidesz politicians during the entire year. Since Fidesz built its political strategy ahead of the general elections in April 2018 on the campaign against George Soros and his alleged “network”, which, according to the government’s conspiracy theory, included Hungarian NGOs, there was hardly any statement, interview, press release and other communication activity of Fidesz politicians and government officials that would not make reference to George Soros or independent and critical NGOs in an extremely negative context.

Some NGOs responded to the attacks of government officials, Fidesz politicians and pro-government media outlets by filing lawsuits against the attackers for damaging the respective organisation’s good reputation. In a June case, Hungary’s highest court, the Curia ruled that Fidesz must publicly apologise, pay HUF 1 million to the HHC for impugning its good reputation, and called on Fidesz to abstain from similar violations of law. The party paid the penalty. However, it did not apologise. Thus, the HHC requested a court order, upon which Fidesz issued a public apology at the beginning of December.[[308]](#footnote-308)

12. Conclusions

In general, the Hungarian government has mainly focused on asylum-seekers in terms of discriminatory legislation. The Hungarian government’s rhetoric and legislative measures in 2017 focused on immigration policies, and hence no laws discriminating against the Roma were implemented in the year in question. On the local level, municipalities implemented decrees negatively affecting refugees, Muslim citizens and the LGBTQ community. Ásotthalom Mayor László Toroczkai and the local council re-enacted the controversial decree banning clothing covering people’s face and “homosexual propaganda”.

The major piece of legislation concerning asylum procedures implemented at the national level further restricted opportunities for asylum applicants to be granted international protection. The new, frequently criticised law stating that all asylum-seekers over the age of 14 and families must remain in the transit zones until their procedure is concluded only applies in situations when a “special emergency situation caused by mass immigration.” This special legal state has been in force since September 2015 even though the conditions for it have not been met since spring 2016.

Courts are adjudicating cases related to asylum applications fairly in general, but since they cannot force the Immigration and Asylum Office (BMH) to change their decision, only to restart the process, asylum-seekers are often being thrown back and forth between the two sides (even if a court said explicitly that an applicant should be granted international protection).

There are several civil organisations providing aid and support for immigrants. Since many of them are explicit targets of the government’s hateful propaganda, their situation has aggravated, and their everyday operation became extremely hard.

The Roma continue to face discrimination in multiple areas of life, including education, work and public health. International organisations (for example the EU) have criticised the Hungarian government for the situation of the Roma, although in some areas they also saw progress. Hungarian courts and authorities have made decisions and statements against practices that discriminate the Roma.

Manifestations of xenophobia and hate speech among the executive and legislative powers mainly concentrated on migrants. The government carried on with the same patterns as in 2016. Immigration was portrayed as a threat not only to the individual citizens but to the Hungarian state and nation, the European culture, Christianity and the whole Western world order. The propaganda also found the scapegoats in George Soros and the NGOs. When in the Spring, massive protests started, the hate propaganda also turned against the protesters.

Although the non-existent migrants and immigration remained in the focus of government propaganda, representatives of the Hungarian government made numerous humiliating comments about the Roma in 2017. In these comments, they mostly portrayed Roma as a burden to the Hungarian society.

The governments’ stance on the LGBTQ community was made clear when homosexuality appeared as an accusation in the smear campaign against Jobbik chairman, Gábor Vona. In 2017, the annual meeting of the World Congress of Families, an organisation well-known for its militant anti-LGBTQ position took place in Budapest. The government not only took part in the organisation of the event but also financially supported it.

Prejudice was always the strongest against the Roma, however, since the launch of the government’s anti-immigration campaign xenophobia took the lead. The rejection of Arabs (72 per cent) and blacks (63 per cent), who are associated with migrants, are also high and it increased considerably in the past few years. 72 per cent of the Hungarian population oppose a Roma, 56 per cent a homosexual, and 37 per cent a Jew moving into their neighbourhood. According to a survey carried out at the end of 2017, 64 per cent of the population was not anti-Semitic, 10 per cent were moderately antisemitic, and 27 per cent were strongly anti-Semitic.

Despite the low level of immigration, xenophobia, and anti-immigration sentiments have always been strong in the Hungarian society. However, the government aggressive anti-immigration propaganda affected these attitudes. In 2017, 87 per cent of Hungarians would allow none or just a few non-Hungarian and 94 per cent answered the same in case of people from poor countries outside Europe.

Homophobia has also increased between 2015 and 2017. While in 2015, 24 per cent disagreed with the statement that “gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish”, in 2017 it was 37 per cent.

The government uses extensive Islamophobic rhetoric in its anti-immigration propaganda. The Pew Research Center, in its Global Attitude Survey in the spring of 2017, found that 66 per cent of Hungarians think that a large number of refugees and 64 per cent of them that ISIS is a major threat to the country.

The radical nationalist scene has become more divided than in previous years. In contrast to the situation some years ago, when the far-right Jobbik party worked closely together and had a cooperation agreement with the major right-wing extremist organisations, in 2017, they distanced themselves from each other. The reason was the acceleration of Jobbik’s repositioning strategy that aimed at moving the party from the far-right end to the centre of the political spectrum. Even though Jobbik has followed this approach since late 2013/2014, the process has reached a critical level since late 2016. Since then, party leader Gábor Vona has made decisions regarding the party’s political and communications strategy that earned heavy criticism from leading far-right figures including the radical members of his own party. Jobbik, which entered a fierce battle with Fidesz ahead of the general elections in April 2018, was neither able nor ready to compete with the government regarding anti-migration positions. Thus, the party turned towards moderate and especially left-leaning voters by returning its communication, distancing from racist, anti-Semitic and nationalist positions, and focusing on corruption related to the government. However, radical positions still appeared in Jobbik’s communication, especially related to the activities of the party’s then deputy chair, László Toroczkai, who has been one of the most influential far-right activists and since 2013 also the mayor of Ásotthalom, a village on the Hungarian-Serbian border.

Parallel to Jobbik’s efforts to seemingly moderate the party’s image, far-right organisations remained on the same ideological platform and increasingly distanced themselves from Jobbik and even criticised Gábor Vona and his strategy publicly, mainly in pro-government media outlets, which happily gave them platforms to discredit Jobbik. For this reason, pro-government media even seemed to elevate certain far-right organisations to amplify their anti-Jobbik messages intentionally. The political and ideological vacuum left by Jobbik’s repositioning led to the formation of the new far-right movement Strength and Resolve (EE) in July 2017.

At the same time, far-right organisations practically shared the same platform with the governing party Fidesz regarding anti-immigration positions and rhetoric due to Fidesz’s further move from the right-wing to the radical right-wing position in the political sphere.

The year saw a continuation of the cooperation and network building among far-right organisations begun in 2016. Since the decline of the Guard movement, 2017 was the first year when the far-right scene has appeared to undergo revitalisation. In addition to criticism of the shift to the centre represented by Vona, the organisations have continued to maintain a close relationship with Jobbik’s certain radical politicians.

Activities of the individual organisations have not changed much compared to 2016. The main events of the scene remained the Day of Honour in February, the Trianon march in June and internal gatherings, festivals and camps, at which members and supporters of the organisation received ideological and paramilitary training. Some organisations focused on recruiting new members, founding new local branches and strengthening their structure to extend their scope of action and fill the political vacuum left by Jobbik’s move towards the political centre. Regarding ideology, most of the organisations focused on anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments while at the same time sticking to racist, anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, chauvinistic and partly neo-Nazi ideas as well. Even though some organisations organised demonstrations against immigration, they were not able to attract a big audience. The outreach of the organisations, and that of the whole scene generally, has remained approximately the same, which is most probably related to the fact that the governing Fidesz party dominates the anti-immigration platform, which does not leave much space for the right-wing extremist organisations.

Due to the lack of official statistics, the magnitude of hate crimes and incidents cannot be estimated. In our report, we dealt with hate instances against the “usual” groups, such as Roma, Jews, and migrants. In the case of migrants, the situation is scary. Due to the physical and legal closure of Hungary, there are practically no migrants in the country, at least no one people could meet in the street or public spaces. There were hate incidents against people thought to be migrants. We separately dealt with anti-Islamic hate crimes, as well as those targeting anti-government protesters and NGOs. Most of the cases these acts motivated by hate fell under the category of hate speech, however, in the case of all groups other types, such as discrimination, physical assault also occurred.

Just as in previous years, the glorification of German National Socialism and/or its collaborators in the mainstream media and the decisions made by the authorities were practically absent in Hungary in 2017.

The most significant event related to the glorification of German National Socialism and/or its collaborators in Hungary is traditionally the commemoration on 11 February 1945, when German and Hungarian regular armies and paramilitary troops accompanied by civilians “attempted to break through Soviet lines encircling the city. The “Outbreak Day” or “Day of Honour”, which was organised in 2017 by HVIM, the Army of Outlaws, *Identitesz* and four neo-Nazi skinhead groups drew neo-Nazi participants from Hungary and across Europe. At the event, many Nazi and Hungarist symbols appeared, and Nazi and Hungarist individuals and organisations were glorified.

Besides some very visible examples of Holocaust denial committed by far-right public figures, the phenomenon is widespread on social media too. Holocaust denial or relativisation along with other forms of anti-Semitic (and anti-Gipsy), hate speech appears in online discussions in Hungary regularly. Action and Protection Foundation took legal actions in many cases concerning these phenomena in 2017.

Also, survey data show that Holocaust denial is present in the Hungarian society. According to Medián’s 2017 data, 8 to 17 percent of the Hungarian population deny the Holocaust[[309]](#footnote-309), while 22 percent of the respondents relativise it.[[310]](#footnote-310) Vandalism of memorials related to the Holocaust happened two times in Hungary in 2017.

Even though the government and the authorities did not glorify National Socialism and government officials and politicians of Fidesz use every opportunity to condemn antisemitism and Nazism, in some cases in recent years, however, they have failed to distance themselves from Nazi collaborators. These cases included naming organisations and public places after these people or erecting memorials relativising Hungary’s role in the crimes committed against its own Jewish, Roma and other minority population during WWII. In 2017, a major topic of similar nature was the erection of statues honouring Miklós Horthy, Hungary’s regent and effective leader from 1920 until October 1944, a period during which the discriminatory legislation against the Jews in emulation of Germany's Nuremberg Laws was passed. In 2017, three statues of Horthy were erected across the country, mainly upon the initiative of far-right organisations. However, in June, PM Orbán called Horthy an “exceptional statesman”, who, along with other leading politicians of the interwar period, had a significant role in re-establishing the country after the collapse following WWI, and whose assessment cannot be overshadowed even by Hungary’s “grim role” in WWII.

The Hungarian government has been waging a campaign against human rights NGOs since 2013, which fits into the pattern of anti-democratic developments. The goal of the actions against NGOs is to discredit the organisations, intimidate them and hamper their operation. Since 2015, the government’s campaign mainly targets NGOs, which on the one hand, receive support from the Open Society Foundations or, on the other hand, provide support for asylum-seekers. The anti-NGO campaign fits into the framework of the government’s anti-immigration campaign, which, in the absence of actual refugees and migrants in Hungary, has been built on conspiracy theories about the alleged influence of George Soros and a “well-constructed system” linked to him. In preparation for the general elections in April 2018, the topic dominated the government’s communications in 2017.

Verbal attacks, intimidating and threatening statements, and accusations against NGOs were frequently made by a government official and Fidesz politicians during the entire year. Also, two waves of “national consultations”[[311]](#footnote-311), one entitled “Let’s stop Brussels” and the other one on the alleged “Soros plan” took place with some specific “questions” about the “foreign-funded” NGOs that allegedly encourage illegal migration.

Besides the omnipresent verbal attacks on NGOs, the government and Fidesz also used legal and administrative measures against the respective NGOs. In the second half of the year, government officials including PM Orbán announced to involve the national security services in the investigations into the influence of the “Soros network”, and state institutions terminated their long-standing cooperation agreements with NGOs, which received financial support from abroad.

Receiving foreign funds became the major reason to go against NGOs for the government. On June 13, the National Assembly passed the Bill on the Transparency of Organizations Receiving Support from Abroad (the “Lex NGO”), which requires NGOs that receive foreign funding of over HUF 7.2 million (app. EUR 23,000) per year to register as foreign-funded organizations and to publish their “foreign-funded” status on their websites and in all their publications. The bill was met with heavy criticism by a wide range of countries and international stakeholders including the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights defenders, the European Parliament; the Venice Commission and various highly renowned international NGOs. In July, the European Commission (EC) launched an infringement procedure against Hungary over the NGO Law. Several Hungarian NGOs announced that they would not register as an “organisation receiving support from abroad” under the NGO Law and submitted a joint complaint to the Constitutional Court to challenge the law. However, the case was pending at the CC by the end of 2017.

13. Recommendations

* Hungarian government should stop inciting fear of and hatred against refugees and migrants, using ambiguous rhetoric regarding the Roma, and inciting hatred against civil society organisations and their members. It should also cease the campaigns against George Soros who has traditionally been the central figure of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories of the Hungarian far-right. Thus, the campaign against George Soros is clearly capable of inciting anti-Semitic sentiments among those who are receptive to such argumentation.
* The Hungarian government shall stop using legal, administrative and communications measures to criminalise, intimidate, stigmatise and limit the scope of action and the existence of human rights defenders. These methods are a clear violation of human rights principles and go against the norms of both Hungary and the EU. Also, the government’s efforts to silence civil society is another attempt to dismantle pluralist, liberal democracy in Hungary.
* Abolishment of all administrative and legislative provisions that limit the rights and scope of action of human rights defenders. Provide more financial support for NGOs fighting discrimination and hate crimes and promoting human rights.
* “Establishing a national mechanism for protecting human rights defenders, in consultation with civil society organisations.”[[312]](#footnote-312)
* “Mainstream human rights into the institutional and policy framework, including by adopting a national action plan on human rights with clear and specific goals and indicators, taking into account recommendations by International and European human rights mechanisms.”[[313]](#footnote-313)
* The international community shall “intensify efforts to empower and support human rights defenders and civil society organisations” in Hungary.[[314]](#footnote-314)
* Human rights defenders shall strengthen their direct connection to citizens and non-state organisations to be strongly anchored in the society and strengthen financial independence from public actors.
* Government officials, Fidesz politicians, and pro-government media outlets shall stop propagating and legitimising far-right ideas, intentionally elevating certain far-right organisations and individuals and adopting and implementing policy positions stemming originally from far-right actors.
* Generally, incumbent political actors have to change their approach to the far-right, which has been based on actual political interests instead of principles. The result of the ongoing approach is that the norms providing long-term protection against radicalisation and extremist ideologies have not become more entrenched in the society.
* State institutions have to work independently from the government and must not act as the implementing agencies of the government’s will.
* Strengthen the role, powers, independence and capacity of independent state institutions (e.g., Ombudsman, Prosecution) to defend human rights, and combat discrimination and hate crimes.
* “Establish an independent body to safeguard the independence of the judiciary and to supervise the appointment, promotion and regulation of the profession by international human rights standards. Judges should be ensured tenure in order to exercise their functions independently.”[[315]](#footnote-315)
* National security agencies have to work without political interference and influence and under the scrutiny of the public. Intelligence agencies have to return to their previous practice, which is also widespread in the EU, that they publish a summary of their annual activities to the public so that their working principles, foci and their assessment of the situation in terms of extremism and radicalism can be known by the public and not only by the members of the respective committee of the National Assembly.
* Media (and especially the public media) shall refrain from reporting in a way that might incite hatred and increase the level of fear of particular groups or people based on certain characteristics.
* Politically less biased reporting in the Hungarian public media, balanced representation of political and social groups in the media authority and controlling bodies of the public media.
* A more active role for law enforcement bodies and the judiciary in combating and convicting hate crimes.
* The introduction of effective measures by law enforcement bodies to combat officers’ discriminative practices (e.g., stronger education measures, ethical code, scrutiny of actions, recommendations for actions).
* Additional resources should be allocated to sensitivity training for public officials, including police officers and social and family service providers to combat prejudices, discrimination and racism towards minority groups. Obviously, every separate form of racism and ethnic discrimination is unique: without a deep understanding of the situation of the minority group, it is very hard to act constructively. The trust of the Roma community towards public officials could be enhanced by hiring Roma employees.
* Political support for initiatives to develop critical thinking, the level of participation in public life and cooperation skills for both the young and the general population.
* Introduction of anti-discrimination measures in the education agenda and teacher training.
* Local politics must focus on the cooperation of local actors, organising communities, sustainable, realistic and practically doable urban development policies, and means of the toolkit of symbolic politics aimed at strengthening a common identity and the sense of belonging and community among the citizens of a locality.
* Empowerment of disadvantaged groups (especially Roma) so that they are aware of their rights and the possibilities to act so they can represent their interest in the public.
* Initiatives to enhance group and personal relations among members of minority and majority groups (e.g., Roma and non-Roma, refugees and Hungarian residents): According to the intergroup contact theory, under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. Hatred incited by political actors for political purposes is based mainly on fears of the unknown strangers. The lack of contact provides fertile ground for alienation from and prejudice and hostility towards the out-group. In order to enhance intergroup and interpersonal relations and, thus, trust and understanding, initiatives that involve members of minority and majority groups (e.g., sports activities) are required.

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146. Such statements in the survey included the following: “Intellectuals of Jewish origin keep media and culture under their influence” (acceptance rate in 2017: 36%), and “Jewish influence is too broad today in Hungary” (acceptance rate in 2017: 37%). [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. “There is a secret Jewish conspiracy that determines political and economic processes.” (acceptance rate in 2017: 37%). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. “The crucifixion of Jesus is the unpardonable sin of the Jews” (acceptance rate in 2017: 31%); “The sufferings of the Jews were God’s punishment” (acceptance rate in 2017: 20%). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. The use of double standards towards the State of Israel, demonizing its acts as well as questioning the country’s raison d’être. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. For more on new antisemitism see: Ildikó Barna (2017): *Hungary*. In Ildikó Barna and Anikó Félix (eds.): *Modern Antisemitism in the Visegrád Countries*, Budapest: Tom Lantos Institute, pp. 49–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Fidesz (*Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség*, Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance) and its partner (rather satellite), the KDNP (*Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt,* Christian Democratic People’s Party) form a national conservative alliance currently in power in Hungary. The support of the alliance was stable in 2017, ranging from 31 to 40 percent. Jobbik *(Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary) is a far-right, radical party. Support in 2017: 10–14 percent. MSZP *(Magyar Szocialista Párt*, Hungarian Socialist Party) is a social-democratic party. Support in 2017: 7–9 percent. DK (*Demokratikus Koalíció*, Democratic Coalition) is a centre-left political party. Support in 2017: 3–5 percent. LMP *(Lehet Más a Politika*, Politics Can Be Different) is a green-liberal political party. Support in 2017: 3–5 percent. For more on the popularity of Jobbik see Chapter 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
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153. The European Social Survey was established in 2001. Starting in 2002, the survey has been held every two years in many European countries. The surveys are conducted in nationally representative samples following very strict methodologies. The last round was carried out in 2016–2017 in 23 European countries, including Hungary. The website of ESS: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. The core questionnaire consists of the questions that are asked in every round of ESS. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. For the analysis, we combined categories of “agree strongly” and “agree”, as well as categories of “disagree strongly” and “disagree”. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
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213. ““A Betyársereg a Horthy-szobor avatáson – a DK-sok sehol!’, *betyarsereg.hu*, 20 May 2017, http://betyarsereg.hu/a-betyarsereg-a-horthy-szobor-avatason-a-dk-sok-sehol/. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
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215. “KTI Annual Report for 2016”, *Knights Templar International*, 30 June 2017, https://knightstemplarinternational.com/crusader-magazine/kti-annual-report-2016/. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
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312. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17048&LangID=E> [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17048&LangID=E> [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17048&LangID=E> [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17048&LangID=E> [↑](#footnote-ref-315)