

POLAND, HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA: EUROPEAN COMEBACK WANTED

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The European Union project has been recently challenged by international situations for which member states would have to stand all together, politically reflecting the values and ideals the European construction is supposed to be based on, in order to fulfill their role as a global player. Unfortunately, they have not always been able to appear as unity to the international community, as the ongoing inability to cooperate for the sake of refugees' rights tragically shows every day. One reason for this are the discrepancies between European governments' political stands and the apparently nearly impossibility to find a consensus or an internal arrangement regarding important political topics. Particularly, in the central Europe region, the Polish, Hungarian and Slovakian governments showed in the last months a rather questionable political shift towards right-wing authoritarian populist attitudes and policies.

Governments of the Visegrad group are, as in other countries in Europe, politically and electorally put under pressure by the extreme right. The legislative election in Slovakia on March 5th, 2016 resulted in the populist self-defined social democrat Robert Fico to keep his first place, while two extreme right, respectively nationalist and neo-Nazi, parties entered the Parliament with more than 8% of the votes. In Poland conservative and nationalistic party PiS has been democratically elected in October 2015 and now rules Poland with an absolute majority. In Hungary, the sovereigntist conservative Viktor Orban has been leading the country for 6 years. Populist parties came into power thanks to xenophobic, nationalistic and Eurosceptical discourses around the migration question.

From a strictly electoral perspective, all three governments are democratic. Nevertheless, their anti-liberal, conservative and authoritarian attitudes raise severe doubts about their commitment to and respect for the democratic system. Whether on the questions of public morality, like in Poland where the already barely existing women and LGBTIQ rights are being challenged, economies, like in Slovakia where the government shows a really authoritative attitude, or politics, like in Hungary where the xenophobic rhetoric of Orban is backed up by an assumed democratic-authoritarian leading style.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the Rule of Law is being flouted. The Polish government put at risk the principles of separation of powers by taking over the media and the constitutional control by passing a law that makes it impossible for the Constitutional Court to work. Despite low terrorist threat in Poland, new anti-terrorist laws are being passed that allow police and secret services to invigilate and gather information about citizens without the court order.

The European Council reacted by opening a procedure to check and secure the Rule of Law in Poland. The political shifts happening for a few years in the central European region are now threatening the political union between EU member states, while the concerned countries considerably benefit from European investments into their public sector.

The clear mutual advantages of a political and economic Union – while still waiting for a social one – will finally be put under high pressure by these populist, nationalist and conservative governments that ultimately encourage the comeback of nationalists all over Europe and the weakening of the project for a common future. FYEG calls for the creation of a real European political space including:

- FYEG calls for enforcing EU sanctions against member states that undermine basic democratic principles
- FYEG calls the EU Court of Justice as the highest level of jurisdiction in the EU to take action against all new laws in Poland, Hungary and Slovakia (or other EU members) that contradict democracy, freedom of the press and civil or human rights
- the Europeanisation of political debate at the European level, not allowing national governments to set the agenda. We propose a New Convention on the Future of Europe.
- the creation and support to diffusion of European media and watchdogs
- the federalisation of political parties Supporting political and civic movements opposing authoritarian and anti-democratic changes in the region. Countering the xenophobic and nationalistic narrative with a story of European solidarity and positive examples of support coming from the EU.

The state of play in the European Union requires an urgent reaction from EU authorities and member states, reminding partners of the principles the European construction was built on and committing to come back to the table to find common solutions to common challenges without stepping back to old national reflexes. The calling for a Constitutional Process at the European level, or a new European Convention, cannot be avoided anymore if the EU wants to survive as an integration project that overcomes old nation-state dynamics.

The absence of such reactions would only lead to the further legitimization of selfish attitudes from national governments, ultimately unraveling the political Union that we have been trying to develop in the last decades.



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EUROPEAN GREENS