

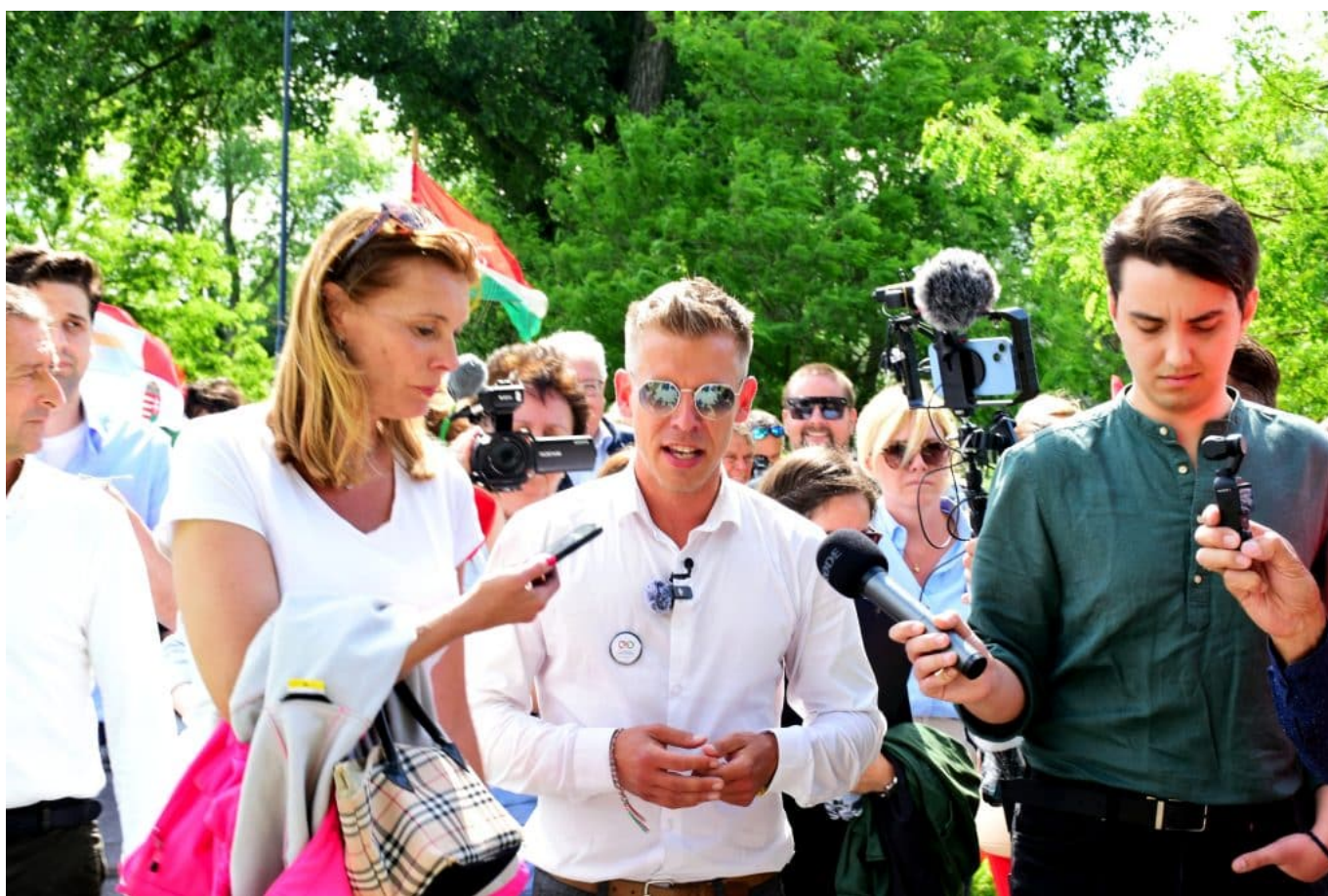
What Péter Magyar means for Ukraine

Hungary's elections could impact Ukraine's EU future, end years of diplomatic obstruction, and open a new chapter in bilateral relations – as long as both sides overcome deep-rooted tensions.



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The opposition TISZA party won the Hungarian parliamentary elections by a landslide on 12 April 2026. Led by Péter Magyar, a former member of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party who later turned to opposition, TISZA won 141 of the 199 seats in Hungary's parliament, thereby securing a constitutional majority. In the Hungarian political system, a constitutional majority empowers the government to change any law, rule or institution. Magyar, as the new prime minister, now has both the opportunity and the power to

fundamentally change the country, including its foreign policy. He intends to dismantle the corruption networks of the Orbán system and restore functional democratic institutions, including their checks and balances.

Péter Magyar has nominated a skilled diplomat and veteran foreign policy expert, Dr Anita Orbán (unrelated to Viktor Orbán) to be Minister of Foreign Affairs. She will also serve as Deputy Prime Minister. Anita Orbán is a committed Trans-Atlanticist who intends to [realign Hungary's foreign policy towards the West](#) and end the Russia-friendly policy orientation of the outgoing government.

What to expect in bilateral Hungary-Ukraine relations

Péter Magyar intends to conduct a foreign policy that is fundamentally different from that of Viktor Orbán. The key priority of the Magyar government is to mend relations with the European Union, thereby regaining access to the EU funds (approximately €17 billion) which was suspended in 2022 due to concerns about the rule of law in the country. Budapest has no time to waste, as more than half the money could be lost if no significant reform is implemented before 31 August. The primary objective of normalising EU relations defines all other aspects of foreign policy, including ties with Ukraine.

Most important for Ukraine, Hungary will no longer block Ukraine's EU integration process for the sake of serving Moscow's interests. Both Péter Magyar and Anita Orbán have noted several times that Budapest remains opposed to any expedited, "fast track" EU-accession process for Kyiv. However, as there is no consensus on this within the EU, this restriction has little practical significance. It is not yet known how Magyar views the idea of a "reversed enlargement". The new government will not be formed until 9 May, however, and more information will be available on the detail of certain foreign policy issues at that time.

Based on the speeches and communiques of the incoming TISZA government, Budapest will no longer obstruct Ukraine's financial aid from the EU. The crucially important €90 billion loan was unblocked by the outgoing Orbán administration, and Magyar will certainly uphold this commitment in line with his pro-EU foreign policy.

With regard to military assistance, the Magyar government will not provide Ukraine with weapons or allow the direct transit of arms shipments from Hungary to Ukraine, for domestic political reasons. At the same time, the transit of western arms shipments through Hungary to either Slovakia or Poland, and then on to Ukraine, or through Romania will continue uninterrupted.

The Magyar government intends to decisively reduce Hungary's dependence on Moscow. This applies particularly to energy resources. Magyar will strive to find alternative supply routes for imports of hydrocarbons. However, he does not plan to completely break with Russia-originated energy resources,

but wants Russia to compete, thereby achieving price reductions. He also intends to rebalance bilateral relations with Moscow and to end the subservient policies of the outgoing government, calling the new approach “pragmatic”. Meanwhile, in line with its pro-EU foreign policy, the new Hungarian leadership is highly likely to cooperate with EU sanctions on Russia.

The position of the Magyar administration on the European Peace Facility (EPF) is not yet clear. EU member states that have provided Ukraine with arms could have been compensated through the EPF, had Viktor Orbán not blocked this for four years. While the incoming government has not said anything about this issue, maintaining the veto would harm several EU member states and therefore be against its core policy objective of normalising relations between Budapest and Brussels.

Minority rights in focus

The Magyar government will strongly focus on protecting the minority rights of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries, including Ukraine. Before the full-scale invasion, approximately 130,000 ethnic Hungarians were living in Ukraine’s Zakarpattya oblast’, concentrated in areas close to the border. While the current number is hard to discern, Hungarian demographers [estimate that 80–90,000](#) remain in Ukraine, but probably even less.

Ukraine’s education law, adopted in 2017, and a new language law placed additional restrictions on the rights of the ethnic Hungarian minority to use its mother tongue, compared to the 2012 language law. These laws have become important sources of bilateral tension and the subject of constant, often tense negotiations. As part of the EU accession process, Ukraine amended those parts of the education law that Budapest perceived the most problematic in December 2023.

Shortly after, in January 2024, Budapest unilaterally presented [a new, 11-point list of demands](#) related to minority rights. Hungary insisted on full implementation of this list in exchange for unblocking the opening of the EU accession clusters between Brussels and Kyiv. While technical compromises were elaborated on most issues, some of the points would have required Ukraine to modify its constitution, which was clearly unrealistic, particularly with the martial law in place. By showing no willingness to compromise on these points, the Orbán government used the issue of minority rights as a pretext to block Ukraine’s EU-accession process.

While the Magyar government will no longer block the opening of the EU accession clusters, Budapest will remain adamant on protecting the rights of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine. However, as the key objective of Budapest is to reinvigorate and normalise its own ties with the EU, it is highly likely that bilateral Hungarian-Ukrainian negotiations will be much more constructive than before. The surprise visit

of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi to Zakarpattia on 9 April, only three days before the Hungarian elections, and his [meeting with representatives of the Hungarian minority](#) indicate that Kyiv is also looking forward to opening a new page in bilateral relations.

The road ahead will unquestionably be long and bumpy. Bilateral tensions accumulated over the past decade cannot be undone in a few months. However, closer relations with the European Union will serve as a Leitmotif for both Budapest and Kyiv, and this could well serve as a tool for building neighbourly relations.

Recommendations

- ▶ Both Kyiv and Budapest must remain aware of external, most likely Russian efforts to spoil the bilateral détente process. As in the Viktor Orbán era, it is in Moscow's essential interests to spoil Budapest-Kyiv relations, thereby generating tensions within the EU and NATO. Russia has a rich inventory of false flag operations and hybrid attacks that it can draw on.
- ▶ On minority rights, the 11-point list can serve as a basis for final compromise, as technical compromises have already been reached on most issues. However, both sides need to make concessions on the most politicised matters.
- ▶ To start rebuilding a mutually positive image between the two nations, the successful integration stories of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary, as well as the commitment of the ethnic Hungarian soldiers serving in the Ukrainian army, can serve as cornerstones. As of mid-April 2026, between 600 and 800 ethnic Hungarian soldiers were fighting in the ranks of the Ukrainian armed forces and more than 100 had been killed in action.
- ▶ There is immense economic and social potential to improve cross-border infrastructure, partially by using EU funds. Opening new border-crossing points in Zakarpattia and modernising existing ones – most importantly, the infamously bad Záhony-Chop station – would foster bilateral and transit trade, as well as tourism and people-to-people contacts.

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