



# Weekly Briefing

**Hungary Political briefing:**  
**Hungarian Politics in 2018: Trends and Topics**  
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## Hungarian Politics in 2018: Trends and Topics

This monthly briefing focuses on the main trends of the Hungarian politics in 2018, whereby it partly relies on conclusions of former briefings, and it partly revisits and frames the recurring themes and topics of the Hungarian politics. In this briefing, special attention will be paid to the results and effects of the Parliamentary Election held in April 2018 on the Hungarian political landscape.

Table 1 (see later below the paragraph) contains data on the political support of the likely voters in Hungary. In this briefing, we mainly rely on this set of data, because this is usually the closest one to a possible outcome of the political elections. Figures in table 1 not only demonstrate that the political landscape is still being increasingly dominated by the Fidesz-KDNP, and the governing party could easily capitalize on the fragmentation of the political opposition parties during this year, but even after the elections, held in April, it could easily further increase its political support in the group of the likely voters. In October 2018, the support of the Fidesz-KDNP was by 10 percentage points higher than in January which is not only an achievement per se due to the extent of the improvement but the political support of the winning party usually drops after the elections and this case it didn't happen. The usual decrease in political support is usually traceable to the painful reforms and the tight fiscal policies in the first period of the elective period. However, the Hungarian government could start its reforms in a much more favorable world economic environment and this indicator must have contributed to improving opinion results.

	Fidesz-KDNP	MSZP	Jobbik	LMP	Együtt-Párbeszéd	DK
January, 2018	44	9	13	8	1	8
February, 2018	48	10	13	8	1	8
March, 2018	51	11	15	8	0	8
<b>April, 2018</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
May, 2018	54	9	19	6	0	5
June, 2018	52	9	18	6	0	5
July, 2018	52	9	17	5	-	6
August, 2018	54	9	17	5	-	7
September, 2018	55					
		8	18	5	-	8
October, 2018	55	10	17	4	0	8
Source: Nézőpont						

Only in the last two months, the Fidesz-KDNP has experienced a decline in its support among those who are eligible to vote. It must be also underlined this is another set of data – not shown in table 1. According to these figures, the political support of the Fidesz-KDNP in the entire population decreased from its peak – 42 percent in May 2018 – to 38 percent in October. And this perceptible change in support might already reflect the negative reactions on the crucial reforms in the public services, ministries, and other public institutions, the fiercely disputed attempts to reform the structure of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and several other political debates (the CEU debate, the Sargentini report etc. etc.)

As for the opposition parties, it can be argued, that the LMP has been the party in 2018, whose political support has significantly decreased in the first 10 months of the year. The drop from 8 percent in January to 4 percent in October reflects the uncertainty surrounding the party's future. The former minister-president candidate of the party, Mrs. Szél left the party and the parliamentary faction as well in October. Despite her results in the elections, problems began emerging immediately after the elections in April. The Ethics Committee of the Party condemned her for negotiating with other political parties without being authorized before and it banned her from party positions for three years. As a reaction, she resigned from her post as co-president of the party and fraction leader. The party infighting originates from her efforts to find allies among left-parties while her political competitors in the party clearly wanted to create a right-leaning party which was more willing to cooperate with the Jobbik. This dividing line also became clear when Mrs. Szél vote for the Sargentini-report's adoption while the party's leadership rejected the statements of the report.

The political support of the Jobbik, the biggest opposition party in Hungary could be strengthened during the year – 13 percent in January and 17 percent in October among the likely voters – however, the peak was in April (19 percent) which could not be repeated since then. The growing hesitation of supporters mainly goes back to the financial troubles and the debates surrounding the party after the elections.

1. The financial problems of the party were covered by the Hungarian media intensely, when the Hungarian State Treasury informed the Jobbik, that the Treasury was to cut the state-support of those political fractions after 1<sup>st</sup> July which were penalized for violating the law on party-finances.
2. Not only financial issues, but infightings also prevailed within the party during 2018. First, immediately after the Parliamentary Elections, the party leader of the Jobbik (Mr. Vona) resigned from his post, then as we pointed out in our earlier briefings on political developments, the party

president candidate, Mr. Toroczkai, who did not receive the majority of the votes when running for the president position, was later expelled from the Jobbik, and created a new party. The newly established party (“Our Fatherland”) has only disintegrated the opposition forces, since it has most likely attracted Jobbik – and perhaps some Fidesz voters if any.

However, not only the Jobbik was hit by disintegration trends but other parties as well. When the Fidesz-KDNP recorded a landslide victory in the Hungarian parliamentary election April 8<sup>th</sup> – see the details in table 2 – this convincing victory was the third one in a row. How shocking this victory of the Fidesz-KDNP came to the opposition parties showed, that the entire leadership of the MSZP and the co-president of the LMP (Mr. Hadházy) resigned from their posts after the results became public. The prime minister candidate of the Együtt (Mr. Szigetvári) also announced that he would retreat from politics.

Table 2. Detailed data of the parliamentary elections in Hungary. April 2018

	Votes on country lists in percent	Number of votes on country lists	Number of Parliamentary seats based on region lists	Share in the Parliament in percent	Number of Parliamentary seats
Fidesz-KDNP	49.27	2 824 551	91	66.83	133
Jobbik	19.06	1 092 806	1	13.07	26
MSZP-Párbeszéd	11.91	682 701	8	10.05	20
LMP	7.06	404 429	1	4.02	8
DK	5.38	308 161	3	4.25	9
Independent Candidate	-	26 637	1	0.5	1
Együtt	0.66	37 563	1	0.5	1
MNOÖ*	-	-	-	0.5	1

Source: <http://www.valasztas.hu/ogy2018>  
 \* MNOÖ: The Self-Government of the German Minority in Hungary

Regarding the dominant topics of the Hungarian politics, the migration debate, the Sargentini report, and the CEU debate must be highlighted:

1. Before and after the Parliamentary Elections in April 2018, the Fidesz-KDNP has shaped the Hungarian political discourse by putting further emphasis on the migration debate and it has also enforced its standpoint in this aspect. Later in October, this strategy could be corroborated by opinion polls as well, since Fidesz-voters in the country-side valued the migration policy of the government the most, while Fidesz-supporters in the larger cities and Budapest attached greater importance to measures as for their income and living standards. In other words, the Fidesz-KDNP was able to find the messages that activated its supporters.
2. In principle, the Sargentini report and its adoption by the European Parliament could have been a good occasion to steer the Hungarian

political debate to topics that opposition parties could have capitalized more on, however, the Fidesz-KDNP adopted a resolution in the Hungarian Parliament that rejected the calumnies drafted in the Sargentini report and shifted the blame to those parties that did not support the resolution and or voted for the report's adaption. Clearly, this strategy allowed for the Fidesz-KDNP to profile itself as an anti-migration party again.

3. The CEU debate. The debate is still ongoing. In comparison to the former ones, the debate was more pushed by the opposition parties. As the case of the CEU vividly showed, discussions of legal and business nature can be easily turned into seemingly serious political disputes in Hungary and they can also be widened to other areas, such as academic freedom.

To sum it up, it can be argued that the Fidesz-KDNP overwhelmingly controls the political discourse along with its topics. As we could see in the data, the party has significantly strengthened its support among the likely voters during 2018, however, the support has slightly dropped in the entire population among those who are eligible to vote. This drop can be assessed as a reaction to the started reforms. Regarding the future political strategy, the political parties, in particular, the governing party must prepare for a different world economic environment, that might force the Hungarian government to implement new and likely painful policy measures. The adjustment to a new world economic environment not only requires economic policy measures implemented by the Hungarian government, or an adjusted foreign policy reflecting shifts in the world politics but also the communication and political strategies of the political parties must be amended and adjusted accordingly.