

# Introduction

On 1 July 2024, Hungary assumes the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time.

In 2011, during the first Hungarian Presidency, the European Union, albeit emerging from a global economic crisis that had had particularly severe consequences for Europe, but still brimming with ambition and strength, was preparing to show that it had learned the lessons of the crisis and overcame it through new economic governance rules. In 2024, during the second Hungarian Presidency, this political community with an uncertain self-image, overshadowed by Brexit and fraught with serious political and strategic dilemmas, will be making perhaps the most difficult institutional change in its history, at a time when solutions to political issues may have far-reaching implications.

It is probably pointless to compare the two Presidencies in terms of the difficulty of their tasks. While the international environment was more favourable in 2011, the novelty of the presidency responsibilities presented Hungary with a more difficult challenge. In 2024, we face the challenge with more experience, but under much more complex circumstances – the Russian–Ukrainian war, the threat in the Middle East, inflation, the worsening migration situation – this means that experience alone shall not suffice for a successful presidency. We will need creativity, innovation and increased confidence in our country to successfully overcome obstacles in the second half of 2024.

This publication was produced by the Europe Strategy Research Institute (EUSTRAT) of the Ludovika University of Public Service in Hungarian and English. The aim of this volume is to provide a comprehensive overview just before the start of the 2024 Hungarian Presidency, discussing the experiences of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency, the preparations for the 2024 Presidency, as well as its expected challenges and opportunities. The volume also seeks to present the most important policy areas and issues from a Hungarian perspective. Written in a scholarly yet accessible language, the book is an interesting and useful read for both experts and a non-professional readership. It clarifies the role of the rotating presidency in the functioning of the European Union and provides insight into the processes taking place in various policy areas, helping to understand the expected priorities and tasks of the Hungarian Presidency.

The volume consists of two main parts. The first part discusses the challenges, experiences and results of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency, the tasks and opportunities lying ahead for the 2024 Presidency, and outlines the political, policy, operational and institutional framework of the 2024 Hungarian Presidency. It covers the European Union's institutional and political context and the process of preparing for the presidency. The contributors to this part include active politicians, officials, diplomats and academics who played a prominent role in the realisation of the 2011 and 2024 Hungarian presidencies.

*Enikő Győri* recalls the circumstances, policy successes and challenges of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The former diplomat and current Member of the European Parliament led Hungary's first European Union Presidency in the first half of 2011 as a Secretary of State. Looking ahead to the 2024 Hungarian Presidency, Győri notes that the EU is in a worse state today, with greater challenges facing it than during the first Hungarian Presidency. Moreover, Hungary is in the crosshairs of European politics, rendering the task of the team leading the 2024 Presidency much more difficult.

*Ferenc Robák*, who was responsible for the operational implementation of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency, discusses the experiences of that period. He recounts the government's goals during the 2011 Presidency, factors influencing its successful implementation, including time constraints, budgetary issues and organisational challenges faced during the Presidency.

Next, *Ferenc Gazdag* evaluates the experiences of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency. According to the professor emeritus of the Ludovika University of Public Service, even amidst a change of government Hungary was capable of preparing for the technical implementation of the tasks, maintaining institutional consensus on various prevailing or pending policy issues during the 2011 Hungarian Presidency.

*Tibor Navracsics* examines the impact of institutional cycle changes on the Hungarian Presidency in 2024. He surveys how Member States holding the rotating presidency during the institutional cycle changes in the past decade had managed their rotating presidential tasks, analysing the experiences of the 2009 Swedish, 2014 Italian and 2019 Finnish Presidencies, drawing conclusions and lessons for the Hungarian Presidency.

*Balázs Molnár*, Deputy State Secretary, and a group of authors (*Zsuzsanna Farkas Cseh, Katalin Reinitz* and *László Sinka*) from the Ministry of European Union Affairs survey the policy challenges and opportunities before the 2024 Hungarian EU Presidency. They outline the seven policy priorities announced by the Hungarian Government that are to receive particular attention during the Hungarian Presidency.

*Zoltán Kovács*, Government Commissioner responsible for the preparation and implementation of the operational tasks of the Hungarian EU Presidency in the second half of 2024, will go on to present the operational tasks of the Hungarian Presidency in 2024 and the organisational aspects of the Hungarian Presidency.

Ambassador *Bálint Ódor*, Head of Hungary's Permanent Representation to the EU, will discuss the challenges of the 2024 Presidency from a Brussels perspective. A significant part of presidency tasks will have to be carried out in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, therefore, the 2024 Hungarian Presidency will have one major pillar in Hungary and one in Brussels.

*Boglárka Bólya*, the Ministerial Commissioner for Staff Training and Relations with Social Organisations for the 2024 Hungarian Presidency, will report on the preparations for the Hungarian Presidency from the perspective of staff training and bringing society on board. She will discuss in detail the preparation and training of staff involved in the implementation of the Hungarian Presidency, as well as the tasks related to awareness raising.

*Csaba Zalai*, former Deputy State Secretary for European Policy, reports on the preparation for the Presidency, including the selection and motivation of Presidency staff.

*Boglárka Koller*, Professor at Ludovika University of Public Service and Jean Monnet Professor, will discuss the links between national and European identity: have citizens come closer to Europe over the past 20 years, and have they developed a sense of European identity alongside their national identities?

The second part of the volume focuses on the most important policy areas and issues from a Hungarian perspective. The authors examine questions that are crucial for Hungary using a uniform analytical approach. The uniform analysis covers the historical development of policies, the emergence of policy issues among the priorities of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency and their outcomes, the current state of the policies, opportunities and challenges, the impact of the policy issues on economic and social development, and Hungary's interests in their future development. These studies each underwent blind peer review conducted by two professional reviewers, with the authors having finalised the manuscripts taking into account the reviewers' comments. The authors of the second part are Hungarian researchers specialised in different policy areas.

*Gábor Kutasi* and his colleagues, *Vivien Czecceli* and *Ádám Marton*, examine the competitiveness as well as the common commercial policy of the EU. Competitiveness is a major policy focus and expected priority of the 2024 Hungarian EU Presidency, closely linked with all other Presidency priorities. Researchers of Ludovika University of Public Service's Research Institute of Competitiveness and Economy give an overview of the priorities and results of the previous presidencies, as well as current European challenges such as the EU–China conflicts in the field of corporate subsidy, the use of Eastern Opening to offset decoupling, compliance with CO<sub>2</sub> quotas and innovation clusters.

Next, *Tünde Fűrész* and *Árpád József Mészáros*, from the Mária Kopp Institute for Demography and Families, analyse family policy as a response to the European demographic challenge. The authors emphasise the significance of family assistance, highly valued by Europeans, arguing that citizens prioritise the addressing of demographic challenges and population decline through support provided to families, over of the promotion of migration.

*Bernadett Petri* analyses the expected redesign of EU cohesion policy. The preparatory work concerning the post-2027 reform of the EU's cohesion policy is currently underway. The researcher of the Europe Strategy Research Institute suggests that the discourse on the future of cohesion is marked by the conflict between personal and territorial cohesion principles. The proposed plans increasingly create synergies between the rule of law conditionality mechanism and cohesion policy.

*Tamás Csiki Varga* examines the opportunities before the 2024 Hungarian EU Presidency in the framework of the European security and defence policy. The researcher of the Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies of Ludovika University of Public Service summarises the security and defence policy output of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency, highlighting similarities in the current preparation period and evaluating the security environment and European defence processes.

*Tibor Ördögh* presents the European Union's enlargement policy, focusing on the Balkan enlargement. Enlargement policy, in particular, the promotion of the Balkan enlargement, was a priority of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency and is expected to be a priority in 2024 as well. Thanks to the achievements of the 2011 Hungarian Presidency, Croatia successfully joined the European Union. However, in the field of enlargement, progress has been relatively slow over the past decade.

*Viktor Marsai*, Director of the Migration Research Institute, describes Hungary's migration policy. The Hungarian Government has been unequivocally committed to a migration-critical position in the European debate, intensified after 2015 and marked by the construction of physical and legal barriers, leading to serious conflicts with the European Union. However, attempts at illegal border crossings have remained high in recent years, therefore, it can be expected that the tackling of irregular migration and its external dimensions will be an important topic of the Hungarian Presidency.

*Ákos Péter Mernyei* analyses the EU's energy policy, providing a brief overview of the history of energy policy and presenting the results achieved by Hungary during its 2011 EU Presidency. Mernyei also identifies the challenges that Europe must address, either at the Member State or Community level, to ensure the necessary energy security, competitiveness and international political leeway for its citizens.

Next, *Bettina Tóth* discusses the tendencies of climate policy development, addressing the challenges and opportunities in the European context. Based on the changes that had taken place in the international context following 2020, climate policy gained prominence with the European Green Deal. Considering that the effects of climate change appear in different ways in areas affected by it, the researcher of the Europe Strategy Research Institute believes that a holistic approach must be taken, requiring an individual approach to each field. Hungary must also consider this perspective.

*Mária Réti* studies the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, recounting the past reforms of the CAP, as well as Hungary's contribution to the CAP reform process during its 2011 Presidency. The Head of the Department of Agrarian Law at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Law also sheds light on current challenges and tasks emerging in this policy area, underlining the importance of considering Hungarian CAP interests.

*Tamás Pálvölgyi* and *Gyula Reich* examine global, European and Hungarian water policies. Affiliates of Ludovika University of Public Service, Faculty of Water Sciences review the history of water policy as a public policy within the framework of the United Nations, the EU and Hungary. They explore the prevailing strategic situation in this field, the driving forces, challenges and opportunities of water policies. The authors propose priorities for Hungary's international role in water diplomacy, summarised in six points.

*Viktor György Oroszi* presents the establishment, implementation and current challenges of the EU Danube Region Strategy. The adoption of the EU Danube Strategy in 2011 was a key achievement of Hungary's 2011 EU Presidency. In the current geopolitical situation, European stability and enlargement are of paramount importance, and the Danube Strategy can serve as an essential framework for further development.

*Katalin Gombos* analyses intra-state cooperation in the field of internal and judicial affairs. According to the Head of the Department of European Public and Private Law at Ludovika University of Public Service, remarkable achievements can be witnessed in civil judicial cooperation. The EU has successfully fostered judicial cooperation in criminal matters, customs and police collaboration, although greater differences in opinions exist among Member States when it comes to the issues of border control, refugee and immigration policy.

*László Gábor Lovász* discusses the challenges of EU social policy within the context of human rights, in particular, exploring the potential impacts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (bio)technological singularity by 2030. Equality of opportunity, social mobility, sustainability and stability may be undermined when biotechnological interventions, robotics, artificial intelligence, migration policies, and family policy goals and interventions are not brought together into a comprehensive framework.

*Réka Zsuzsánna Máthé* analyses the changes in the European Union's sanction policy. The study provides a comprehensive picture of the major developments that had taken place in the framework of the EU's restrictive measures over the past 45 years. The effectiveness and success of EU sanctions depend on various factors, and while they often fail to achieve the intended foreign policy goals, the EU increasingly applies them.

*Aron James Miszlivetz* studies the impact of conflicts in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood on the European Union's enlargement policy. In the past decade since the first Hungarian Presidency, security challenges at the border have become more complex and unpredictable, in areas such as migration and hybrid warfare, negatively influencing the accession of new members to the European Union.

*Vivien Kalas* explores the effects of treaty amendments on European integration, with a specific focus on whether Hungary could benefit from such an amendment process. Although substantive progress is unlikely during the Hungarian Presidency due to the institutional cycle change, the topic will remain relevant in the political discourse.

*Ákos Bence Gát* analyses the EU rule of law policy, reviewing how the rule of law has become a central element of the EU's institutional and political jargon. As one of the Member States in the crosshairs of the EU's rule of law process, Hungary is directly affected by the future development of this policy, but at the same time it would be in the interest of not only Hungary but also the entire European Union to radically reform rule of law policy.

Finally, *Balázs Tárnok* presents the EU's Roma strategy. The adoption of the EU's first Roma strategy framework 13 years ago was one of the major successes of Hungary's 2011 EU Presidency. The situation of the Roma is of paramount importance to Hungary, with the inclusion and integration of the Roma population being of crucial economic interest to the country.

*Tibor Navracsics and Balázs Tárnok*  
editors