



European Parliament
FORMER MEMBERS
ASSOCIATION



FMA VISIT TO HUNGARY

23-25 OCTOBER 2024

Profile of speakers

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WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER

Mr Vilmos Szabó

Political State Secretary for Minority Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office (2002-2004)

Born on July 17, 1952, in Sarud, Hungary, this individual is married and a father of three. He earned a Master's degree in History and German from Lajos Kossuth University in Debrecen between 1970 and 1975, becoming proficient in both languages. His professional journey began as an assistant professor at the Budapest University of Technology from 1976 to 1988. He was actively involved with the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) from 1982 to 1989 and co-founded the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) in 1989, serving as its executive leader in Budapest's 11th district until 1994. His political career included significant roles such as Secretary of International Affairs for the HSP, President of the HSP in Budapest's 11th district, and a member of both the local government and Budapest's government assembly. He served in the Hungarian Parliament from 1998 to 2014, where he was Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee and held various positions related to foreign affairs and minority issues. Additionally, he was Deputy Leader of the HSP parliamentary group and President of the Mihály Táncsics Foundation. After retiring in 2018, he became a Coordinator and Senior Advisor at McDaniel College in Budapest in 2020.



THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

H.E. János BÓKA

Minister responsible for European Union Affairs

He received his law degree from the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Szeged in 2001. Between 2005 and 2006, he studied in a Master's programme at the Vrije Universiteiten in Brussels. In 2013, he received his PhD degree from the University of Szeged. Between 2001 and 2003, he worked as an assistant professor at the Department of International and European Law at the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Between 2003 and 2004, he worked in the Hungarian Information Office. From 2009, he worked as an assistant professor, and between 2011 and 2016 as an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Szeged. Between 2014 and 2015, he worked as a senior adviser at the Civil Chamber of the Curia. Between 2015 and 2019, he was associate professor at the Ludovika University of Public Service, and between 2016 and 2017, Deputy Dean. Between 2017 and 2018, he was Director of the Hungarian Academy of Justice at the National Office for the Judiciary. Between 2018 and 2020, he was State Secretary for European Union and International Justice Cooperation at the Ministry of Justice. Since 2019, he has been an associate professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church. Between 2021 and 2022, he was State Secretary to the Prime Minister for European Union Affairs at the Government Office of the Prime Minister. Between 2022 and 2023, he was Secretary of State for European Union Affairs at the Ministry of Justice. Since 2022, he has been the Prime Minister's Commissioner and the Prime Minister's EU Sherpa. Since 1 August 2023, he has been Minister for European Union Affairs.



THURSDAY OCTOBER 24th

Dr. Katalin Szili
former Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly

Her biography will be shared later.

Dr. Attila Tilki
Vice-Chair of Committee on Foreign Affairs



Dr. Attila Tilki is a seasoned Hungarian politician and public servant. A member of the Hungarian Parliament since 2006, he has held key roles, including serving on the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Committee on Municipalities and Regional Development. As of 2022, he is the Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and leads the Hungarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Additionally, he chairs the Hungary-Turkey and Hungary-Ukraine Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group. Dr. Tilki's political career also includes serving as the mayor of Fehérgyarmat (2006–2014) and holding various roles in local and regional government, such as vice mayor and assembly member of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. Prior to his political career, he worked as a teacher, specializing in English and History, before obtaining a law degree from the University of Debrecen. His linguistic skills include proficiency in English (C1), Russian (B2), and German (A2). Over the years, Dr. Tilki has also participated in drafting the constitution of the Ung-Tisza-Túr EGTC, further reflecting his commitment to regional development and cross-border cooperation.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

Dr. Koloman Brenner

Vice-Chair of Committee on Foreign Affairs

Koloman Brenner, born on May 28, 1968, in Sopron, Hungary, is a distinguished academic and politician with a strong background in linguistics and minority studies. After completing his secondary education at Széchenyi István High School, he earned a degree in History and German from József Attila University in 1992, followed by a Dr. Univ. degree in 1994 and a Ph.D. with "summa cum laude" distinction from Eötvös Loránd University. His professional career has included various teaching roles, culminating in his current position as Associate Professor and former Director of the Institute of German Studies at Eötvös Loránd University. Brenner has also actively engaged in university governance and national minority advocacy, holding significant positions within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the National Self-Government of Hungarian Germans. Politically, he has been a prominent member of Jobbik, serving as a Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, where he focuses on education and foreign affairs. Brenner is multilingual, fluent in German and proficient in English, reflecting his commitment to cultural and academic exchange.



Mr. Péter Balassa

Vice-Chair of Committee on European Affairs



Péter Balassa is a Hungarian politician and former professional footballer, born on March 18, 1975, in Sárvár. He has been an active member of the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary since 2009. Balassa was first elected to the National Assembly in the 2010 national elections and subsequently served on the Council of Szombathely, where he held a council member position until 2019. He made multiple attempts to secure a parliamentary seat in the subsequent elections but was elected as a member of the national list in 2022, placing 31st. Currently, he serves as the Vice Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian National Assembly.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

Dr. Dénes Bank
GKI Economic Research Institute

Dénes Bank (born September 28, 1979) is a Hungarian economist and sociologist. He earned his PhD by examining the Hungarian economic system and analyzing sustainability and corporate responsibility. He is the managing director of GKI Innova, which focuses on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) issues, as well as the director of GKI Economic Research Co., which conducts macroeconomic and market analyses. He regularly takes on teaching roles at universities in Budapest and is currently a supervisor at the Doctoral School of Sociology at ELTE. He has always had a strong interest in matters related to the European Union and was previously a member of the European Youth Parliament and the European Youth Forum.



Barna Szabó
Chief Economist at the Equilibrium Institute



Barna Szabó is the chief economist at the Equilibrium Institute. He worked for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Bank of England, and counselled more than half a dozen other central banks on building forecasting systems. Previously, he worked for OGREsearch, a Prague-based macroeconomic consultancy. He specialises in macroeconomic modelling and forecasting and holds a PhD in Economics from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

András Bíró-Nagy
Director at Policy Solutions

András Bíró-Nagy is Director and Owner of Policy Solutions. He is also Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences and Board Member of the Hungarian Political Science Association. Previously, he worked at the European Commission as political adviser to László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. He comments regularly on Hungarian and European politics both to Hungarian and international press. His publications mainly focus on Hungarian politics, radical right parties, contemporary social democracy and the politics of the European Union. András Bíró-Nagy holds a PhD in Political Science from the Corvinus University of Budapest, and an Msc in Public Policy and Administration from the London School of Economics.



András Léderer
Head of Advocacy at the Hungarian Helsinki Committee



He joined the Hungarian Helsinki Committee in September 2015 as the refugee programme's advocacy officer. Before joining the team, he earned his BSc in terrorism, conflict, and security at Aberystwyth and his MSc in violence, conflict, and development at SOAS.

He leads HHC's advocacy efforts with a specific focus on international protection and the rule of law. He also takes every opportunity to be in the field, which often means traveling to Serbia to document (often violent) push-backs for litigation purposes. Through training, networking, and advocacy, he supports grassroots groups working on this issue.

His PhD research focuses on the relationship between speech and trauma caused by intractable conflicts. Although he largely works on Chechnya, he left his heart in the Southern Caucasus, considering Georgia his second home. He teaches a course he co-developed, the sociology of terrorism, for BA and MA students at ELTE, Hungary's largest university. He is also a proud member of the first Obama Leaders: Europe alumni.

Working in today's Hungary on these issues with his colleagues (many of whom happen to be his friends) is not only a great privilege for him; it is simply the only thing that makes sense.

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER

Zsolt László Becsey
Former MEP

Zsolt László Becsey (born 12 January 1964 in Szeged) is a Hungarian politician and former Member of the European Parliament (MEP) with the Fidesz, part of the European People's Party. He sat on the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs.

Becsey was also a substitute for the Committee on Transport and Tourism, substitute for the Delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee.

From 2010 to 2011, Becsey served as State Secretary for Foreign Economic Relations in the Ministry of National Economy.



Zita Gurmai
Former MEP and FMA Member



Former Member of the European Parliament vice-chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the 2004-2009 term, member of the Committee on Regional Development between 2009-2014 and also substitute in the Committee on Transport and Tourism in the last term.

After finishing the University of Economic Sciences in Budapest, Zita Gurmai worked in the private sphere, in numerous companies. She finally turned to politics in 1995, becoming the chargé d'affaires of the Women's Organisation of the Hungarian Socialist Party, that she has been chairing since 2001. She became vice-chair of the Socialist International in 1999 and 2003 until 2008. She has been member of the Hungarian Parliament between 2002 and 2004 and from April 2018 to date.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER

Martin KERN

Director of European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Martin Kern is Director of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology since 2019 following his appointment by the EIT Governing Board, having previously been Interim Director and Chief Operating Officer at the EIT. Prior to joining the EIT, he worked at the European Commission for 15 years where he held a variety of posts, mainly dealing with enlargement policy and with financial assistance to support economic and social development programmes. This included the role of Head of Operations at the EU Delegation to Serbia, where he coordinated the programming and implementation of EU funds to bring Serbia closer to EU accession.



Previously, he worked as country coordinator for financial assistance for Türkiye, and was seconded to the Swedish Foreign Ministry during their EU Presidency in 2009 in the area of EU enlargement. Earlier on, he dealt among other things with the follow up of the use of EU funds in Bulgaria and Romania during the period of their accession to the EU in 2007. He started his career in the EU in Lithuania and Estonia, working in the EU Delegations and supporting the two countries to join the EU, ending his six years in the Baltic States as Acting Head of the EC Representation in Estonia. He started his career with a stint at the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe in Switzerland. He holds MA degrees in Economics and English from the University of Heidelberg in Germany, and in European Studies from the University of Reading in the UK.

The EIT Director is part of the [EIT Management Team](#), which oversees the day-to-day work of the EIT implementing its Multiannual Strategy and Annual Work Programme.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER

Monica Baldi
FMA Vice-President and Delegation Leader

Monica Baldi, architect and urban planner, is Grand Officer of Merit of the Italian Republic. She is Vice President of the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) and of ARS PACE. Ambassador of AWomen20. Deputy and Secretary of the Commission for Foreign and Community Affairs at the Chamber of Deputies from 2001 to 2006. MEP and Deputy President of the Committee for Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport from 1994 to 1999.



Baldi was Vice President of the Red Cross of Pistoia and President of the associations: Pinocchio di Carlo Lorenzini, Pinocchiorworld, Laurus and Professional Cycling Groups League. She is speaker and promoter of conferences on: international politics, cooperation and development, culture, urban planning, environment. She has always been committed to the defence of Human Rights and in particular for the Rights of Women. She is the co-author of the FMA publications produced in collaboration with the Historical Archives of the European Union: "Overcoming the Pandemic", "Present Future of Europe" and "Participation in Europe".

Dr. Paul Rübzig
***FMA Board Member and
Former Member of the EIT Governing Board***



Paul Rübzig (born 6 May 1953) is an Austrian politician who served as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from 1996 until 2019. He is a member of the Austrian People's Party, part of the European People's Party. Rübzig became a Member of the European Parliament on 25 January 1996, and was re-elected in 1996, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. Hence, he was the longest-serving MEP from Austria. On 25 June 2013, Rübzig was elected already for the second time in a European-wide vote as MEP of the Year for his outstanding commitment in the field of research and innovation. Today, he is a Member of the EESC, Member of the EIT Governing Board, and Member of the Advisory Board of Rübzig Holding GmbH.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER

Mr. Tuan Trinh
Regional Node Director East, EIT Digital

Tuan Trinh is the Regional Director East at EIT Digital, responsible for Central and Eastern Europe, including the Western Balkans. EIT Digital is a leading European digital innovation and entrepreneurial education organization, part of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

He holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME), where he founded the Network Economics Group. He also established the Corvinus Fintech Center at Corvinus University of Budapest.

Tuan has been a visiting scientist at various institutions, including Ericsson Research, British Telecom, and Oxford University. He teaches courses at BME, University of Bern, and University of Luxembourg. He has advised the Hungarian government on spectrum auctions and the European Commission on emerging technologies.

He is a Pollák-Virág prize recipient and a MIT Certified Senior Cybersecurity professional. His Erdős number is 3.



Mr. Ferenc Pongrácz
Deputy Managing Director, EIT Health Innostars



Ferenc Pongrácz is Regional Director EIT Health InnoStars. He has extended international management experience in business leadership positions, including Managing Director and Business Line Leader at one of the IBM subsidiaries in Hungary and a Business Development Executive role in Central and Eastern Europe. He was the Chief Innovation Officer of Tungram Group, a spin-off of General Electric. During his carrier, he has been involved in multiple healthcare-related projects, for example, the first implementation of IBM's Watson for Oncology, an AI-based expert system in the CEE region.

FRIDAY 25 OCTOBER

Mr. István Vilmos Kovács
Project lead, ABCD project, METU

István Vilmos Kovács graduated as a Math and Physics teacher in 1984 from Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary. He worked as a Physics Teacher in a secondary school for 13 years. Having gained a second MA in Sociology, and a teaching certificate in Social Studies, he then worked for state administration in the policy domains of Education, European Affairs, Cohesion policy, and national development for the next 13 years. In that period, he was also a member of the Education Committee of the OECD, later of the EU. Since then István has worked for Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in fields related to higher education: research and innovation, internationalisation. He is currently responsible for the coordination of methodology transformation of learning and teaching at Budapest Metropolitan University, Hungary. The Budapest Metropolitan University is the largest Hungarian private university, an ambitious innovator in the field of learning centred teaching. its motto is 'Inspired by creativity'. The complex approach of myBRAND, a personalised approach impacting on students' carriers and lives, has been trademarked.

