

# Hungary

In the European Union



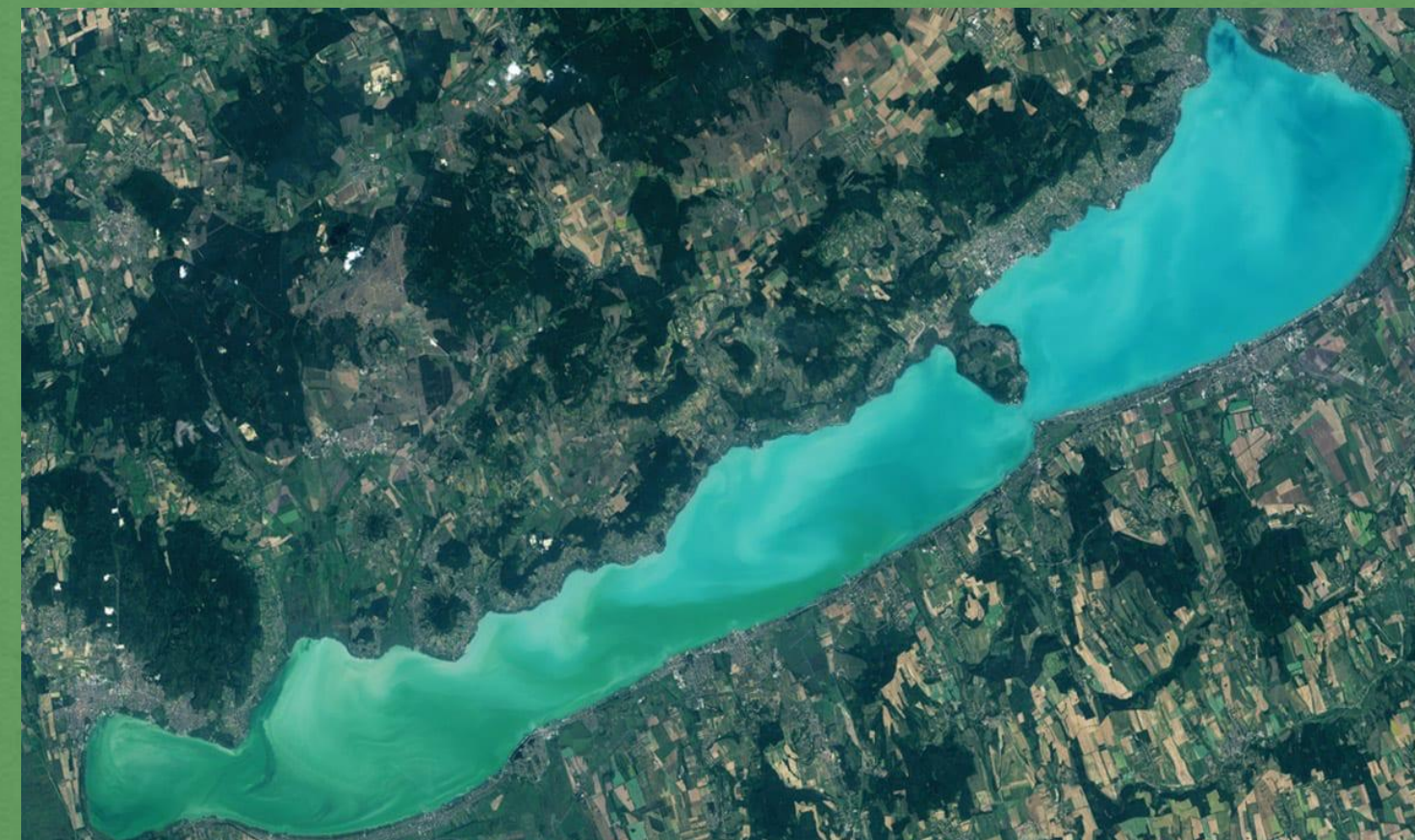
HÉLAOUËT MORICHON Cloé  
INALCO Paris, France

# Hungary Magyarország

- Central European country
- Capital : Budapest
- 9.6 million inhabitants
- Medium-sized country
- Largest of the small member states : 2.1% of the EU population
- Landlocked
- Surrounded by 7 countries : Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia
- 3 climate zones: continental, oceanic, and Mediterranean
- 2/3 : plains and valleys
- 7.6% is protected natural land



# General overview



Lake Balaton « Hungarian inland sea »

# History

- Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918
- Independent country at the end of World War I
- The Treaty of Trianon shaped the modern Hungarian State
- Soviet bloc after World War II
- 1956 : Hungarian Revolution
- 1989 : fall of Communism => democracy and market economy
- NATO integration in 1999
- EU integration in 2004

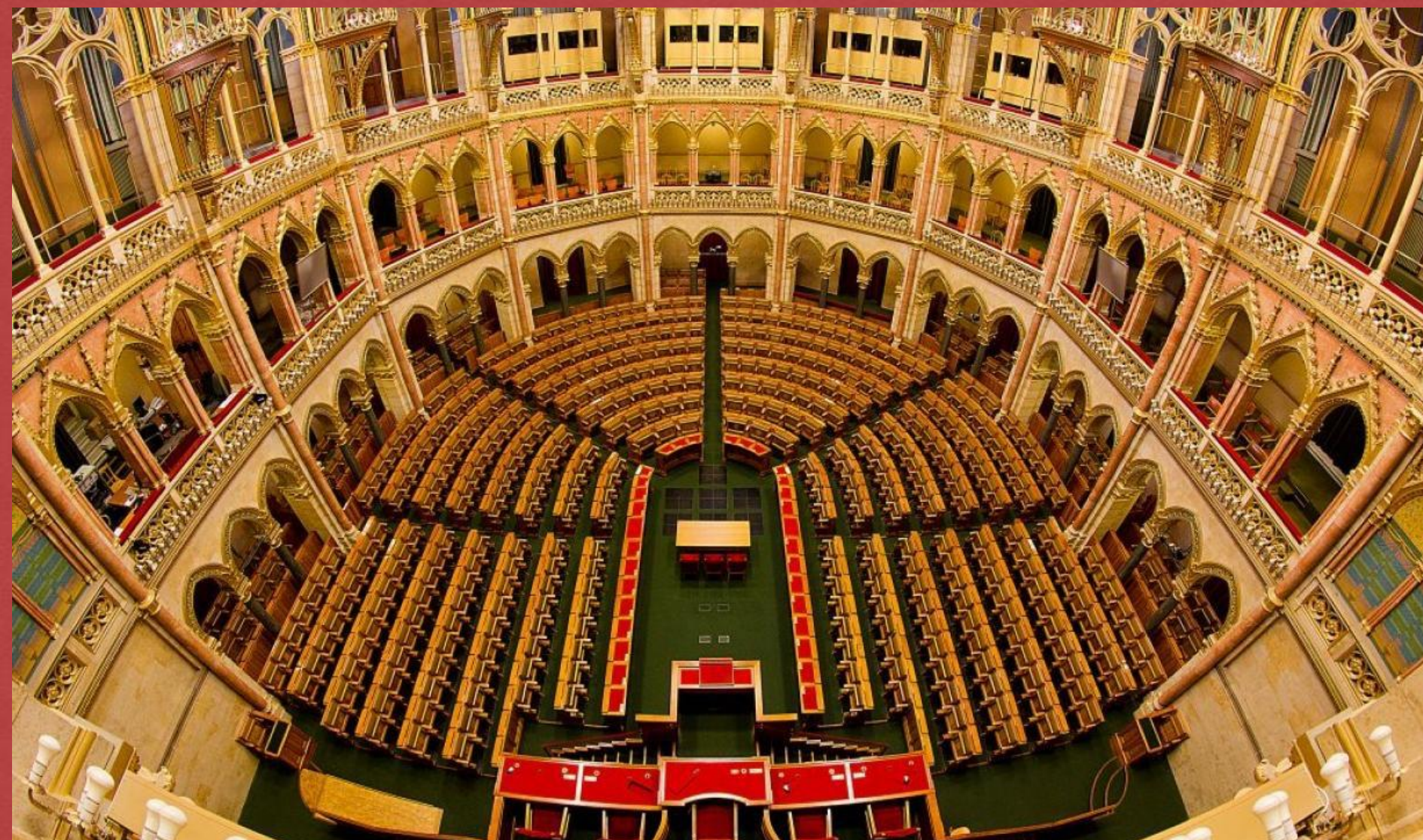


# Politics

Unicameral parliamentary republic



Parliament in Budapest



Viktor Orbán

## Domestic policy

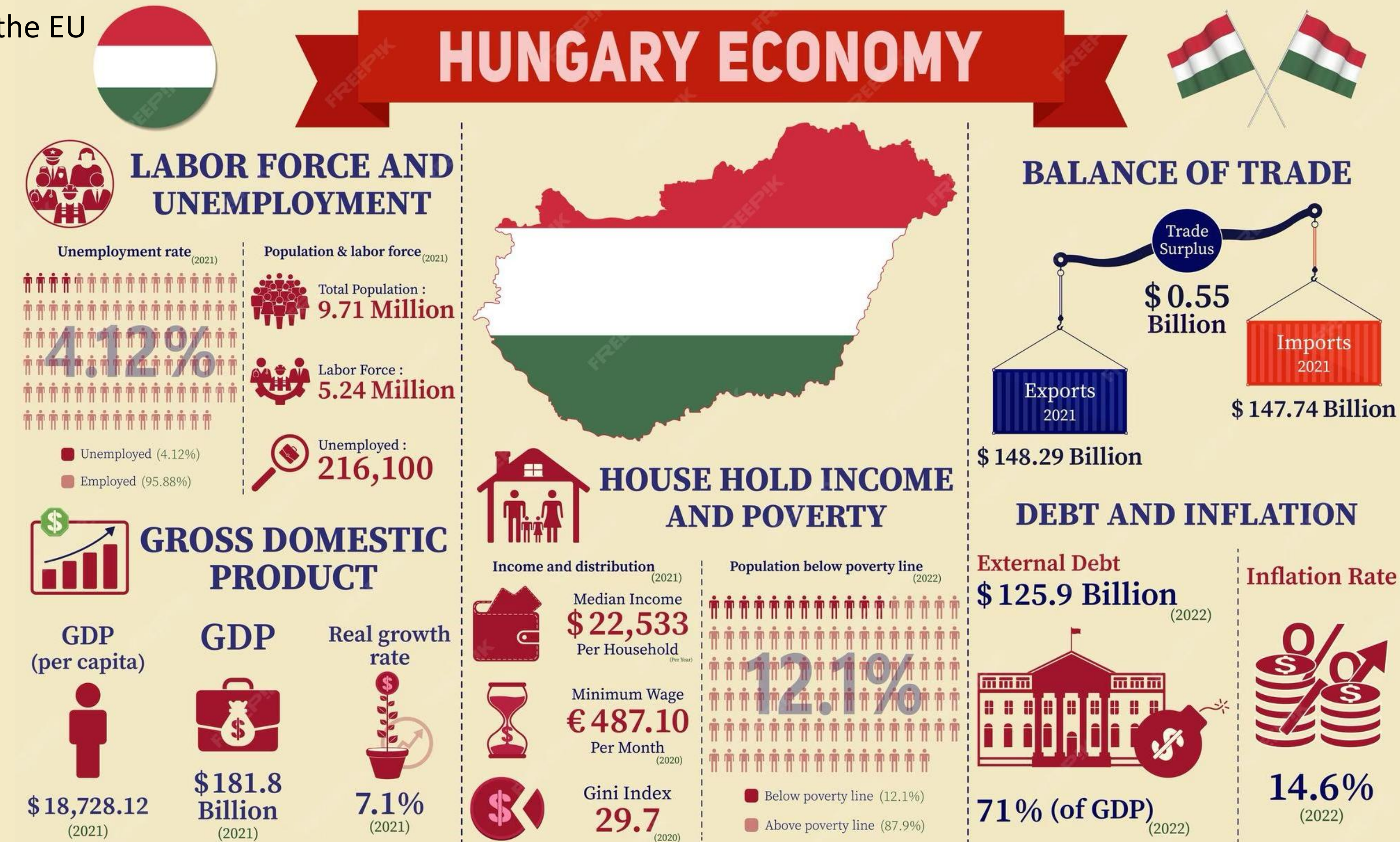
- Viktor Orbán: Prime Minister (1998-2002 ; 2010-today)
- Political party: Fidesz
- Main opposition party: Tisza
- Multi parties but Orbán dominates the political scene
- 'Illiberal democracy'
- Conservative values
- Hybrid regime

## Foreign policy

- Member of the EU and NATO
- Close relations with Russia and China for energy purposes
- Cautious stance during the war in Ukraine
- In the EU: Fidesz is in the 'European People's Party'

# Economy

- Integrated to the European single market
- Was the third-largest economy among the countries that joined the EU in 2004
- Medium sized economy:
  - GPD 206.2 billion€ (2024)
  - Unemployment 4.2% (2023)
  - Public debts 75% of GPD (2023)
  - Budget deficit 6.1% of GPD (2023)
  - Trade integration to the EU market
    - import 72% / export 75%
- 1968 : partially open its economy to a market economy
- 1990s : privatization
- 2008 : financial crisis
- Today: relies on EU funds
- Corruption and mismanagement of these funds -> freeze some European financial aid
- Key sectors: automotive industry, agriculture, and services



# European Union integration

- 1998 : negotiations began
- 1999 : NATO membership
- 2004 : entry into the EU
- 2007 : entry into the Schengen Area
- Do not join the eurozone :
  - Does not meet the criteria: inflation rate too high, public debt and deficit too high, etc.
  - Orbàn is firmly opposed because for him it is a risk for monetary sovereignty and independent policy
  - Around 70% of the population is in favor

## Motivation and concern



### Motivation

- Strengthen democracy
- Modernize its economy
- Fully integrate with Western Europe
- Access to the single market, free movement, and financial support

### Concern

- Criticizes Brussels
- Accuse the EU of imposing an ideological vision
- Blocks decisions
- Work with the Visegràd group

# Crises and challenges

## Euroscepticism and relation with Russia

- 1. Euroscepticism
  - 51% wrong direction / 39% right direction
  - 31.5% disagree with the EU and think they would be better outside of the Union
  - Orbàn does not want to leave the EU but to make it in his image
  - ‘Make Europe Great Again’ Orbàn’s slogan during the presidency of the European council in 2023
  - Idea of having to defend national sovereignty against Brussels: ‘Resist Brussels’
  - Assimilates the EU to the Soviet Union
- 2. Hungary, Russia and Ukraine
  - Hungary opposes the accession of Ukraine to the EU
  - Regular relations with Russia: dependence on Russian hydrocarbons
  - Hungary supports the European sanctions against Russia but trades and refuses to allow weapons delivered to Ukraine to transit through its country



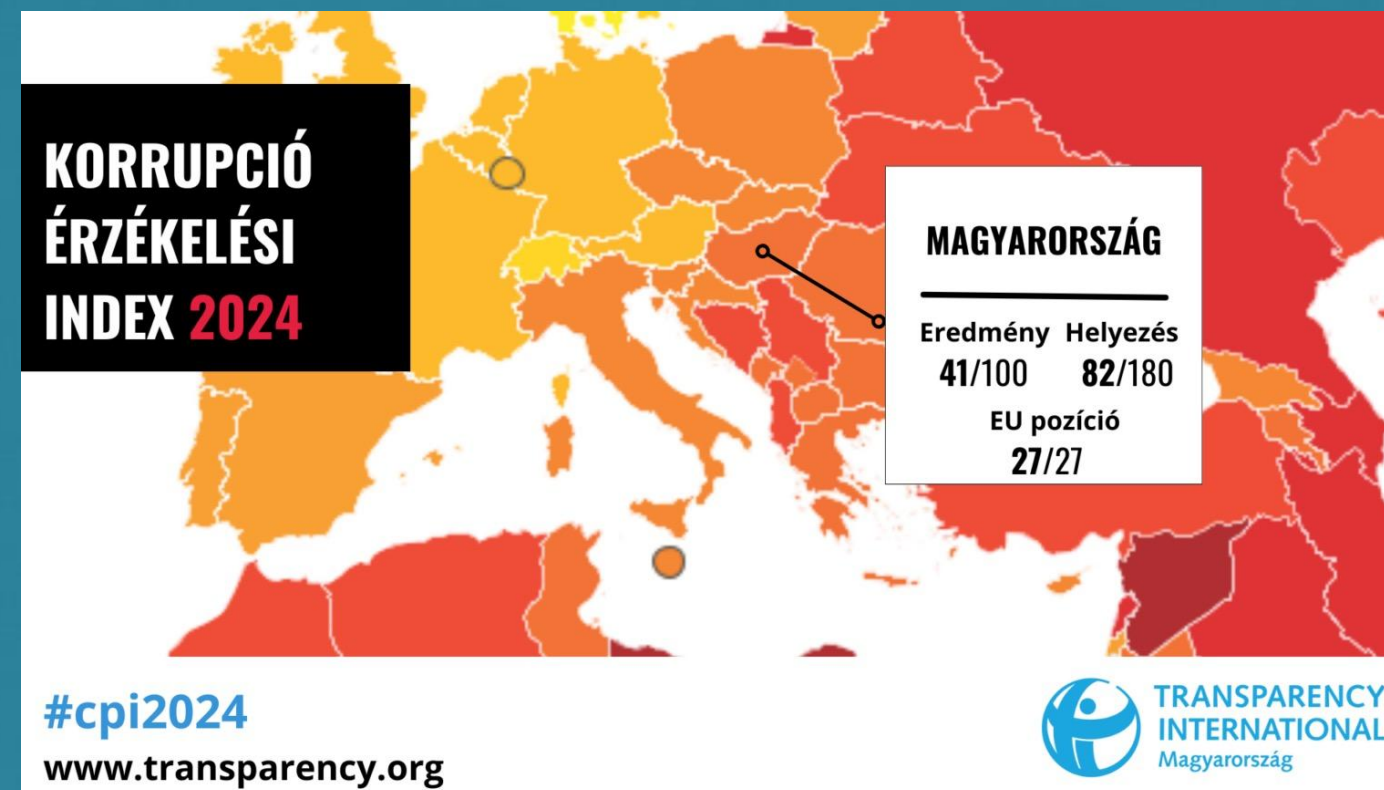
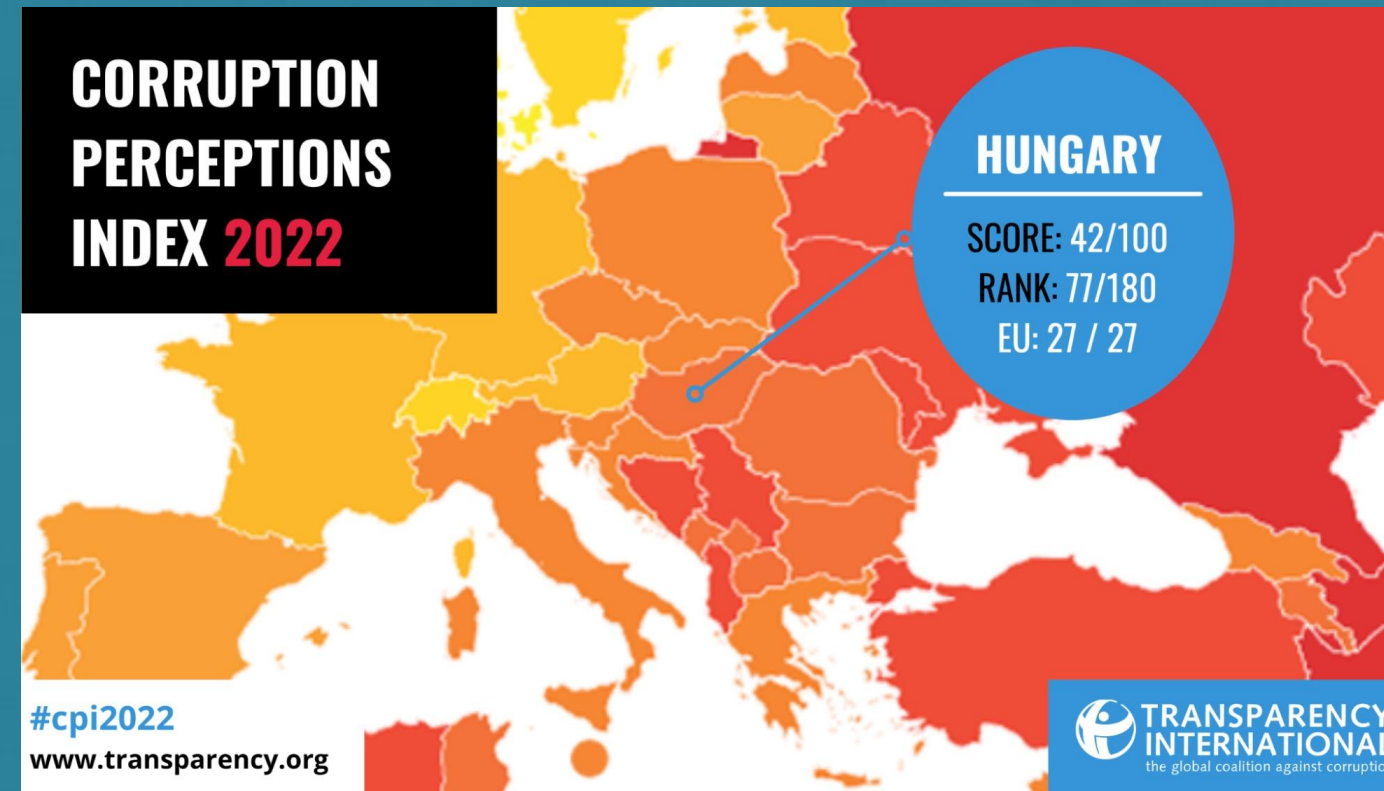
Viktor Orbàn and Volodymyr Zelensky



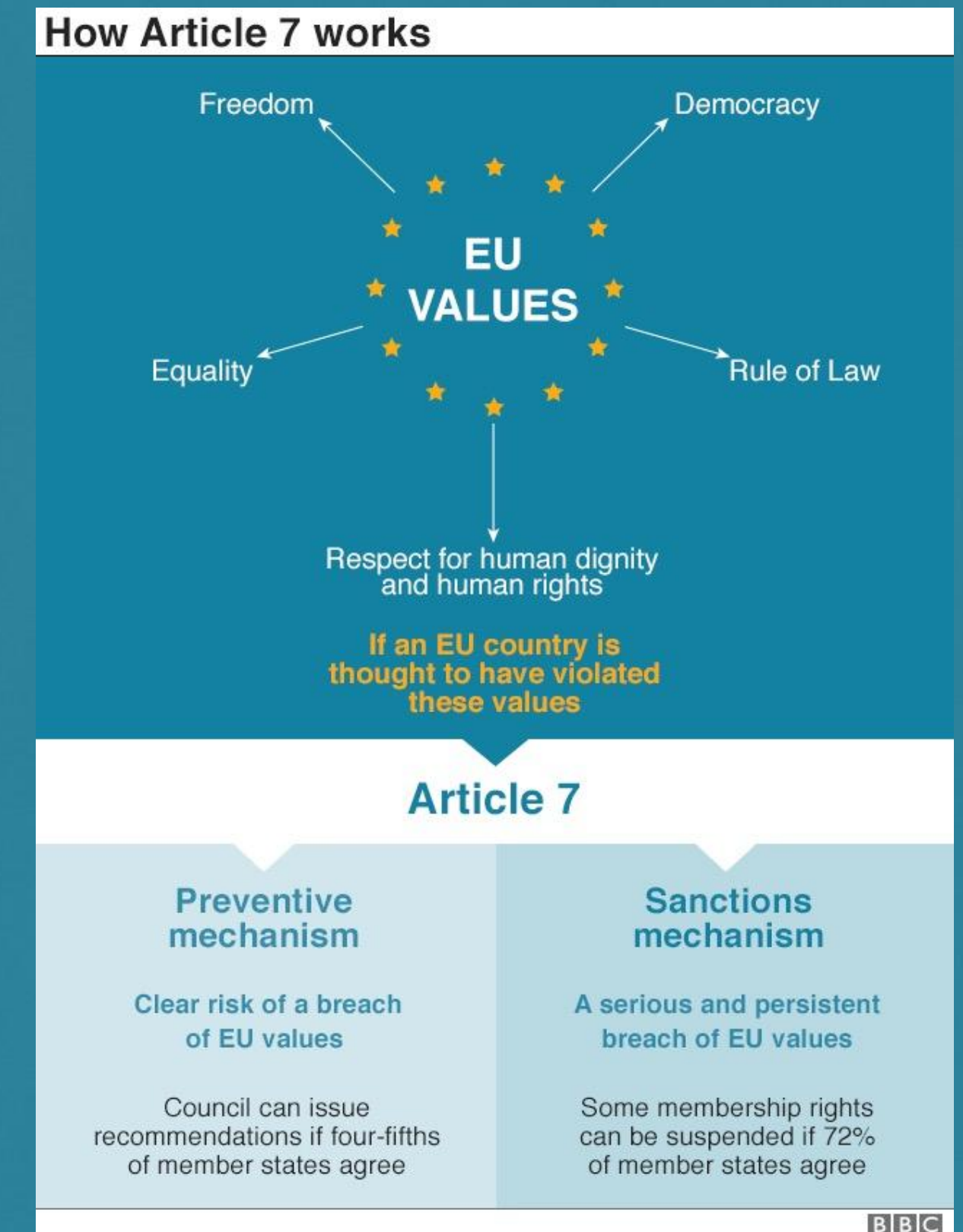
Vladimir Putin and Viktor Orbàn

# Crises and challenges

- 3. Rule of law
  - Government control over media, judiciary, and civil society
  - The EU declared that Hungary could no longer be considered as a full democracy
  - 2022 : Article 7
- 4. Financial conflicts
  - The EU has frozen billions of euros in funds because of corruption
- 5. Migrations
  - 2017 : border fence between Hungary and Serbia to block immigration
- 6. Institutional tensions
  - Use of its veto power to block collective bargaining EU decisions
  - Has been involved in controversies



Fence between Hungary and Serbia



# Conclusion

- Major challenge for the EU
- Hungary's current political trajectory moves it away from the core values of the Union
- Hungary highlights the limits of the EU in addressing internal deviations by member states

Thank you for your attention!