



European Center for
Not-for-Profit Law



Ms. Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

Berlin, September 29, 2025

Ms. Henna Virkkunen

Executive Vice-President, Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

Mr. Michael McGrath

Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Ms. Hadja Lahbib

Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management

Subject:

Civil Society Calls on Commission to Act: Hungary Escalates Rule of Law Breaches by Banning Pride Scheduled for 4 October 2025

Dear President, Dear Executive Vice-President, Dear Commissioners,

The undersigned civil society organisations are writing to express our grave concern over the Hungarian police's recent decision to ban the Pride event in Pécs on 4 October 2025. The ban has been upheld by the Kúria, the highest judicial authority of Hungary.

According to current Hungarian legislation, anyone attending will be committing an infraction. This escalation dismantles the rule of law and directly undermines the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The decision to ban the event follows the April 2025 legislative amendments criminalising participation in Pride events banned by the police, with penalties including excessive fines. These amendments also introduce the use of facial recognition technology against protesters, which according to our legal analysis constitutes prohibited real-time remote biometric identification, in direct breach of Article 5 of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.

This ban is alarming on several levels. It represents a denial of freedom of expression by preventing LGBTQ+ people from peacefully expressing their identity and views in public, in violation of Article 11 of the Charter and Article 10 ECHR. It constitutes direct discrimination, as the LGBTQ+ community is singled out and stigmatised solely on the basis of sexual orientation, contrary to Article 21 of the Charter. Most gravely, by prohibiting the use of the pink triangle – a symbol commemorating LGBTQ+ victims of the Holocaust – on the grounds that it “advertises homosexuality,” the authorities engage in historical erasure, undermining remembrance of persecution and violating human dignity (Article 1 of the Charter). Furthermore, the ban allows the police to deploy prohibited near real-time facial recognition technology, likely to create a chilling effect for the exercise of civic freedoms, in violation of the AI Act and Articles 7 and 8 of the Charter.

The Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the EU has already confirmed that Hungary's so-called "child protection law" – used as a basis for these bans – violates EU law, including Article 2 TEU. If the Commission does not act, this case risks setting a dangerous precedent and emboldening other Member States to follow suit.

The Budapest Pride, held on 28 June 2025, was finally held as a cultural event under the formal auspices of the municipal office, with the municipality assuming full responsibility for the event and its logistical support. The upcoming Pécs Pride is classified as an assembly, which, under international and regional human rights standards, should not have been banned, and where the police would legally be obligated to safeguard participants and guarantee unobstructed routes. Therefore, the Pécs Pride is the first event to fall fully within the scope of the new laws, which violate Article 5 of the AI Act, as well as Articles 10, 11 and 21 of the Charter. Article 5 of the AI Act was specifically designed to prevent the most grave misuse of AI technologies. If the violation continues to remain unaddressed, freedoms will be further curtailed in Hungary and other Member States may also be emboldened to adopt similar legislation.

With Pécs Pride taking place in just a week, urgent action is essential to ensure the safety of participants and organisers and to safeguard fundamental rights within the Union. While the Hungarian government is negotiating the unfreezing of billions in EU funds, Hungary escalates rule of law breaches by banning the Pride event in Pécs and preparing to deploy near real-time facial recognition technology.

Hungary's actions represent a systematic dismantling of EU values and legal obligations. We call on the Commission to take immediate, decisive steps to uphold the Union's commitment to democracy, rule of law, and fundamental rights.

We therefore urge the European Commission to:

1. Launch infringement procedures against Hungary for violations of EU law, including Article 5 of the AI Act and multiple articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.
2. Ensure an expedited procedure and if the infringement proceeds, request the Court of Justice of the EU to grant interim measures to ensure the laws cannot continue to be utilised pending judgment.

Respectfully,

Balázs Dénes
Executive Director
Civil Liberties Union for Europe

European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
Our previous letter:

<https://www.liberties.eu/f/m3vovi>