Our letter to von der Leyen on freedom of assembly in hungary

News, Civil Rights and Freedom, Hungary

> Last week, on september 23, we sent this letter to President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, alongside Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis, Hadja Lahbib and Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law, Michael McGrath.

September 23, 2025

Dear President von der Leyen, dear Commissioner Lahbib, dear Commissioner McGrath,

Following my email from 16 July, in which I shared details about the three assemblies banned under the Hungarian Assembly Act and about the legal proceedings Hatter Society, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International Hungary have been taking to restore the fundamental right of freedom of assembly in Hungary, I am today sharing updates with you, concerning the police ban of PécsPride, issued on 5 September.

The ban of Pécs Pride, planned for 4 October to take place, shows yet again that the police are applying the newly introduced provision of the Assembly Act to restrict freedom of assembly of organisations and people wishing to stand up for LGBTI rights and the LGBTI community, and the Hungarian Kuria confirms this violation of fundamental rights and is blocking a referral to the CJEU.

Since you, President von der Leyen and Commissioner Lahbib, spoke out clearly in solidarity with the LGBTI community in Hungary and called on the government to lift the ban, the government instead escalated the situation further:

- In a ban the police issued on 4 July 2025, the Police argued that the designation of a trans person as a speaker, or the organiser who is an openly gay person in themselves are sufficient to establish that prohibited content will be displayed. The discrimination is thus based on the sexual orientation of the organiser.
- After having been questioned by the police about being a suspect in the investigation about Budapest Pride on 1 August, the Major of Budapest Gergely Karacsony is now facing charges that could include incarceration. The investigation is ongoing.
- The new ban on Pécs Pride is exposing the organiser to the threat of imprisonment, as on this occasion the legal responsibility is not carried by the local municipality government. Furthermore, as the Pride will be a smaller event than Budapest Pride, the risk for participants' to be exposed to arrest and facial recognition surveillance is much higher than in Budapest.

Unfortunately, we have not had any reaction to our email, sent on 16 July. We are yet again calling on you to ensure the European Commission fulfils its role as guardian of the Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and do everything in your power to stop the law from being implemented.

Specifically, we are calling you to:

- Announce, as soon as possible, the opening of infringement proceedings and demand interim measures against the Assembly Act, in order to guarantee the safety and security of the organisers and participants of Pécs Pride as they exercise their right to assemble.
- Publicly speak out against the ban on Pécs Pride and the ongoing violations of the fundamental right to assembly by the Hungarian government, and stand with the organisers and Hungary's LGBTI community as they claim their fundamental rights.

We also would like to request again to meet with your Cabinet to discuss the further steps the European Commission will be taking to fully address the ongoing fundamental rights violations through the 2021 and 2025 laws by the Hungarian government.

Thank you very much for your attention and we are looking forward to hearing from you and to meet soon,

Kind regards,

Katrin Hugendubel

Advocacy Director, ILGA-Europe