Anti-LGBT Hungarian Referendum is in Bad Faith, says ILGA-Europe

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A referendum to be held this coming Sunday during the Hungarian general elections carefully designed to force voters into siding with the current ruling party, Fidesz, against the LGBTI community.

On April 3, the same day as the Hungarian general elections, the ruling Fidesz party will hold a referendum asking the public to validate anti-LGBT legislation that was introduced last year.

The law, banning the “portrayal and the promotion of gender identity different from sex at birth, the change of sex and homosexuality”, was decried by a majority of member states of the European Union, and led the European Commission to take infringement procedures against Hungary.

The referendum, which will be held on the same day as the Hungarian general election will ask four questions:

- Do you support the teaching of sexual orientation to minors in public education institutions without parental consent?
- Do you support the promotion of sex reassignment therapy for underage children?
- Do you support the unrestricted exposure of underage children to sexually explicit media content that may affect their development?
- Do you support the showing of sex-change media content to minors?

However, it is clear from polls and actions of the Hungarian people that state-sponsored anti-LGBTI rhetoric and legislation is not matched by public opinion. Support for LGBTI people in Hungary has never been as high. A record 35,000 people marched at Budapest Pride last July, including many MEPs and other European officials.

According to a representative poll commissioned by Amnesty International Hungary and Háttér Society and conducted by polling agency Medián between 13 and 19 July 2021, 73% of Hungarians reject the government’s false claim that gay and lesbian people abuse or harm children. A clear majority of Hungarian society (74,5%) believe that transgender people should be able to change their gender and name in their official document, while 59% support same-sex marriage.

According to ILGA-Europe’s Advocacy Director, Katrin Hugendubel: “The referendum is in bad faith and specifically timed as part of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s continued effort to scapegoat LGBTI people as a method of holding onto power, by distracting from the gross failings and corruption of his government. The questions it poses are carefully designed to force voters into siding with Fidesz against the LGBTI community, thereby giving the false message that the values of the Hungarian people are contrary to the values of the European Union.”

Due to the fact that the referendum coincides with the elections, LGBTI activist organisations in Hungary are not calling for a boycott. Rather they are asking for people to invalidate their referendum vote, since the questions it poses are not in good faith