

# MOTERIS: THE CASE OF THE MAGYAR HOMEOPATHIC CURE AND HUNGARIAN WOMEN

Yesterday, around 9pm, the streets of Budapest were filled with people; mostly young women and men, high school and university students, young workers, IT people and bricklayers coming home from Austria or London to vote, celebrating the landslide two-thirds victory of the opposition party, Tisza. It is led by a new contender against former prime minister Viktor Orbán, Péter Magyar.

The young people on streets were singing Hungarian folk songs about spring lovers' choices and Lajos Kossuth, a 19th-century revolutionary leader who died in exile, and chanting a foreign policy-related rhythm ("Russians, go home!") about an oppressive empire that was born in the streets of Budapest in the 1956 revolution. Never in the history of democratic Hungary since 1990 has any party had such a victory at a general election, and 2026 April had also the highest voter turnout.

How did sixteen years of the Orbán regime end? Who ended it? And what has it got to do with women?

Orbán can pride himself for having raised a winner, Magyar was a home-grown Fidesz product. Magyar (a family name meaning *Hungarian*) was a Fidesz voter until two years ago. He was the husband of Orbán's minister of justice, Judit Varga, one of the few women in office. A model family: three sons, Catholic mass every Sunday, law degree, Brussels career, and high salaries. Magyar knew how Fidesz can mobilise people through local citizen's circles even in opposition, how important ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary were; how to hold the hands of unknown people sitting next to him in the pews of the Catholic church. These were all methods he used when building up his small Tisza party and in less than two years it became a nationwide movement of the Tisza-islands with volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this victory a reality. *Similia similibus curentur* - the foundational principle of homeopathy that you can cure an illness with a similar substance, was the key.

Hungary has prided itself on being "family-friendly", being supportive of mothers. Spending a large part of GDP on family support, they introduced the concept of "family mainstreaming" instead of gender mainstreaming. Making mothers of 2 or more children be tax-exempt for life for demographic growth, while passing legislation never to implement the already signed Istanbul Convention. But was it really better to be a woman in this era? Or was it terrible?

A lot of research has been conducted about democratic backsliding and backlash in gender equality and women's rights in Hungary. Most recently feminist historian Andrea Pető from the exiled international university, Central European University (CEU), analysed the past sixteen years and women's policy in her book *Orbán's Affairs with Women. The Illiberal Playbook: Gender, Power, and Control*.<sup>1</sup>

In it, the authors pondered why so many female voters voted for Orbán. Another political science observation was that there are two strata of society uninterested in politics: women and young people. But with a near 80% turnout and 3 million people voting for Tisza yesterday, this observation is of course not accurate. According to political scientist specialising in youth research, Andrea Szabó said this was a generational revolt. Was this also a feminine revolt?

In the self-organised communities in the Tisza islands, a lot of women became active, and did an amazing volunteer work in the past two years. And though Péter Magyar is a very masculine figure, proud of being potent, with an Instagram profile titled “The Man”, the second figure behind him from the start was a woman - a feminist writer and expert on Roma integration - Krisztina Bódis.

The final results will be published in a week, but we anticipate the number of women MPs to be higher than before. Hungary is at the last place in political representation in Europe according to EIGE<sup>2</sup> a statistic not so difficult to beat, but somehow no party has attempted it.

The future Tisza MPs do not have a political background, they come from multinational companies, they are village GPs, small business managers, one is even a zoo-manager. While their programme includes a large chunk of women’s policy, it is unclear what their governance will be like, but on the positive side, more women will be in politics now than before.

Unlike Orbán’s campaign, which focused on foreign policy (the US Vice President JD Vance visited Hungary four days before the elections in support), Magyar dealt only with everyday national questions. In other words: good governance questions like the state of public healthcare, education, children’s protection, the care crisis, public transport, and local issues like air pollution by Asian big battery plants, unemployment, and roads filled with potholes. This seems to have resonated with the voters, as the numbers proved.

You cannot formulate a good family policy without a good women’s policy, and vice versa. Similarly, there can’t be a good gender equality policy without good family policy given that the burden of care is almost always on the mothers.

Slogans and propaganda (Family Friendly Hungary) alone cannot mask the grim reality of a critical lack of nursing staff in hospitals, the cruel treatment of women seeking abortion: due to the 2022 ‘Heartbeat Law’, the gynaecologist must ensure the woman seeking abortion can hear the the heart beat of the child via ultrasound, before she can apply for abortion. Because of such a requirement, women must wait for weeks, even if the pregnancy is in its early term and no heartbeat is audible.

All of Fidesz’s campaigns before general elections since 2014 were built on hatred and fear. Just as sex sells everything according to marketing gurus, some political advisors think fear wins everything.

<sup>2</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2025/HU/power>

The citizens of Hungary were in constant fear of the civil society organisations and the free media that acted as foreign agents such as the Hungarian Jewish Holocaust survivor George Soros as a donor of these CSOs, the EU conspiring with Soros and CSOs, the “illegal” Syrian refugees, feminists and gender studies experts, “LGBTQ” people, and most recently President Zelensky and the Ukrainians themselves.

Hungarians were triggered by the hate and fear mongering campaigns of war, and children being in constant danger, of “LGBTQ ideology” and Pride parades, of migrant men raping women etc. After a while, as the numbers prove, all this was too much to ignore, and their tactics were no longer working. The Hungarian Women’s Lobby and several of its member organisations have been attacked several times by the government-owned media and the Tax and Sovereignty Office authorities over ideological differences since 2012. Yet, this did not make the problems women face (violence, prostitution, pay gap, care crisis, rigid labour market, obstetric violence, extreme poverty of segregated communities etc.) go away, so the Hungarian Women’s Lobby and its member organisations did not go away either. This proves that the shrinking space of women-led CSOs can expand despite all efforts to quash them by an illiberal regime.