

# HUNGARY: A KEY U.S. ALLY THAT SHARES WESTERN VALUES

The U.S. and Hungary are longstanding economic and strategic partners that share a core foundation based on freedom and opportunity. The Government of Hungary is committed to continuing bilateral cooperation with the U.S. through greater economic and peacekeeping initiatives.

In a May 2015 speech, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán embraced NATO, the European Union, and Western democratic values by saying, “for us Hungarians this is our family,” and “we will not break with them.”

## U.S. ALLY

Hungary is a geo-strategically vital U.S. ally in Eastern Europe committed to Western and NATO peacekeeping initiatives to counter strife in the region and around the world.

## COMBATING ISIS

In May 2015, Hungary’s parliament authorized the use of Hungarian troops to support the fight against ISIS in the Middle East.

## NEED FOR DIVERSIFIED ENERGY

Given their critical infrastructure and resource needs, nations in Eastern Europe like Hungary have been hard-pressed to turn away from Russia, especially to satisfy their requirement for reliable and diversified energy. This unfortunate dynamic has strengthened Russia’s hand in Eastern Europe and fueled its expansionist agenda. Hungary is rebuilding its efforts to work with the West to develop diversified sources of energy.



## Peacekeeping and Security Allies

Hungary continues to be an important Eastern European and NATO ally given today's ever-changing political landscape. Hungary is dedicated to Western peacekeeping and antiterrorism initiatives as demonstrated by the hundreds of troops that Hungary has deployed to more than a dozen UN peacekeeping and peacemaking missions.

As of the end of last year, nearly 800 Hungarian troops were serving on three continents in 12 countries as part of Western peacekeeping missions.

Recently, Hungary's parliament overwhelmingly authorized the use of Hungarian troops to support the fight against ISIS in the Middle East.

## Increasing Transparency and Promoting Integrity

The current Hungarian government has shown its commitment to increasing transparency and promoting integrity across multiple sectors. The Government has created greater protections for whistleblowers, implemented an integrity and ethics education to primary and secondary schools, and launched a new website in 2013 to publicize information and expert materials related to anti-corruption efforts. The government also strengthened corruption



enforcement as the Prosecutor General tasked more than 50 individuals within a special anticorruption department of the Central Prosecution Service for Investigation. More recently, in January, the Hungarian government launched the Electronic Public Road Trade Control System to prevent the most common commercial tax violence in the region – spreading false claims to move goods across countries. This measure is one of the most powerful of its kind in Europe.

On the international front, Hungary has joined multilateral initiatives to combat corruption by joining other like-minded nations like the U.S. Hungary joined the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), which was established based on the joint initiative of the UN, Interpol, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), and the State of Austria in 2010, as well as joining the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative with the U.S., United Kingdom, Norway, and five other countries in 2011.



At a ceremony in Kossuth Square in Budapest, NATO Defense Ministers honor Hungarian and other ISAF soldiers returning from duty in Afghanistan.

## Shared Values of Freedom and Prosperity

Hungary and the U.S. share the same commitment to democracy and civil liberties. Hungarians have the right to dissent – a right that is widely observed and protected by the current government. In Hungary, tens of thousands of NGOs operate freely. In fact, for the year 2014, the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House concluded that Hungary scored 12 out of 12 for protecting the associational and organizational rights of NGOs.

A look through Hungary's daily newspapers reveals numerous articles openly critical of the government. Demonstrations and protests occur without restriction or retribution and there is not a single jailed journalist in Hungary. The media laws currently in place are based on existing precedent found in at least 10 European and EU-member states, especially that of Germany. At the end of 2011, amendments to the Hungarian Constitution were made to further strengthen the protection of journalistic sources.

Since the fall of communism, Hungarians have participated in several internationally-recognized Free State elections. Demonstrators and political opposition parties can freely gather, protest, and voice objections against government policies. Freedom House scored Hungary's electoral process at 12 out of 12.

Hungary's Constitution protects the right to freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, and freedom of religion. Freedom House gave Hungary a score of 15 out of 16 for freedom of expression and belief – the same score as the U.S.



## Statements from Members of the U.S. Congress at a House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing on the future of U.S. and Hungarian Relations

May 19, 2015

**Subcommittee Chairman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA):** "This hearing is part of the subcommittee's work to ensure that the bonds between America and our key allies remain strong and durable. Both of our nations have fought for our freedoms and as we each work to perfect our democracies, we should be able to speak frankly and honestly in the spirit of mutual benefit. "

**Subcommittee Ranking Member Gregory Meeks (D-NY):** "The Hungarian government and its people should understand that we support our common democratic values that are also reflected in the NATO alliance. This is essential."

**Representative Ted Poe (R-TX):** "I value the relationship we have with the nation of Hungary and we need to work together on a lot of issues."

**Representative Albio Sires (D-NJ):** "It is imperative we continue to engage with Hungary to ensure that democracy and human rights are protected, as well as encourage Hungary's continued engagement with the West."

**Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ):** "The conversation between two countries must be a conversation between friends and equals, so I urge the [Obama] administration to act accordingly. As a conversation between equals, there is a lot we can learn from the Orbán government."