Press release | 26.04.2017

Conservatives must not block action against Hungary

Commission statement on Hungary

The European Commission has decided this Wednesday to open infringement proceedings against Hungary as a result of the restrictions on international universities in the country. In today's debate with the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the Greens/EFA Group will call for the European Parliament to launch the Article 7 procedure for the protection of the rule of law in Hungary. Greens/EFA co-president **Ska Keller** comments:

"This infringement procedure is an urgent necessity. But it is not the only one. Until now, the European Commission has shrunk from initiating concrete action against the Hungarian government. This needs to change. In Hungary, it is not only the universities that are threatened, but democracy and rule of law as a whole. Viktor Orbán, once a champion of democracy in Hungary, is dragging his country far away from democratic and constitutional values.

"Step by step, Orbán is turning against the defenders of rule of law and the urgently needed civil society forces. The European Union must respond to this with an Article 7 procedure for the protection of the rule of law. If the Commission will not act, the European Parliament must itself initiate Article 7, as provided for in the Lisbon Treaty. For the necessary two-thirds majority we would need the support of the Conservatives. The EPP can no longer be allowed to hide from this issue. It must take action against Orbán and exclude his party from the European People's Party."

Greens/EFA co-president **Philippe Lamberts** adds:

"It is our duty to preserve democratic and legal principles within the European Union. How far does Orbán have to go before the EPP is willing to take action against its party colleagues? Democracy and the rule of law cannot be sacrificed for the sake of their party unity.

"At the same time, the EU should support those in Hungary who are defending democracy and human rights. We must stand up against the law on foreign-funded NGOs. NGOs must continue to be financially supported, regardless of whether Orbán likes their views or political positions. This is especially true for those receiving EU funding."

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