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Press release | 20.01.2026

Debate on defence spending shows urgent need to protect EU funding

Hungary

Today, thanks to the initiative of the Greens/EFA Group, MEPs will debate the possible greenlighting of 16 billion EUR in EU Security Action for Europe (SAFE) defence funds plan of Hungary,

Daniel Freund MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Budgetary Control Committee, comments:

"The Commission has already frozen 17 billion euros earmarked to Hungary due to concerns over the rule of law and fundamental rights. Now, they want to hand over a similar amount without any conditions attached or guarantee that this money will be used as it's intended.

"We are very concerned that SAFE funds, in particular prefinancing, could be used to support the ruling Fidesz party's campaign ahead of national elections in April. If Hungary's application is waved through, more than two billion euros will flow to Budapest before the April election.

"Instead of that money being used for Europe's defence, it could end up buying the election in favour of Orbán, a man who undermines the EU at every turn. The Commission and the Council cannot just give condition-free cash to a country with well documented corruption and rule of law issues."

Tineke Strik MEP, Greens/EFA Member & European Parliament Rapporteur on the situation in Hungary, comments:

"The Commission is about to send billions of euros to Hungary without any strings attached that could easily end up in the pockets of Orbán, who has already ensured that Hungary's defence industry is largely in the

hands of one of his business allies. This completely undermines the Commission's commitment that EU funding should always be dependent on accordance with EU values.

“The Commission cannot give an autocrat who's known to cling to power through state-funded propaganda and dodgy electoral tricks access to an enormous pot of money without any scrutiny ahead of an election. It’s a gift against democracy.

“The Commission must carefully assess the SAFE plan to Hungary, given serious outstanding concerns over the application of the rule of law, fundamental rights and the protection of the EU’s budget. The Commission must take measures to avoid any election interference involving this money.”

More:

The debate can be followed live this evening here.

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Responsible MEPs



Daniel Freund

Member



Tineke Strik

Member

Contact person



Alex Johnson

Press & Media Advisor EN (English language press)

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