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Press release | 20.12.2011

Letter to Barroso

Greens warn against factual end of democracy and rule of law in Hungary

Ahead of a crucial vote in the Hungarian Parliament on Friday 23 December, Greens/EFA Co-Presidents **Rebecca Harms** and **Dany Cohn-Bendit** warn in a letter to the EU Commission's President José Barroso that adopting the proposed laws would mean *"the factual end of democracy and rule of law"* in the country. In the letter, **Harms** and **Cohn-Bendit** call upon *"the EU Commission to investigate whether Hungary is still adhering to the core values upon which the European Union was established"*. Should there be any doubts on this, the Commission should *"do everything in its power to bring Hungary back on the path of the Union's basic principles"*, the Greens/EFA Co-Presidents write.

The Orban government, which has a 2/3 majority in the Hungarian Parliament, wants to push through major changes in the voting system of the Hungarian Parliament, which would severely restrict the participation of the opposition in the legislative process. In detail the new laws would

- Change the house rules to allow the government's 2/3 majority to table, without any restrictions, amendments to any law up to one hour before the final vote, rendering any meaningful debate in Parliament and society about the proposals impossible.
- Change the house rules to allow the government's 2/3 majority to push a certain number, per season, of legislative proposals (including on major subjects like the budget) through the parliament in a rapid procedure that allows the final vote to take place 24 hours after the proposal was introduced to parliament.
- Adopt a law that will require a 2/3 majority to make changes to the tax code, thereby taking away the most fundamental rights of citizens to decide, by simple majority, about the budget of their country.

Furthermore, the FIDESZ government wants to push through a law that will merge the Hungarian National Bank with the Hungarian Financial Supervisory Authority, which would end the independence of the last institution in the country that is not governed by a FIDESZ-appointee.

Harms and **Cohn-Bendit** also sharply criticise the proposed change of the electoral code that is tailored to increase the possibility of Fidesz remaining in power at the next elections, even if a clear majority of voters were against this.

The Greens/EFA Co-Presidents recall that the governing party has already done serious damage to

democracy in Hungary, repeatedly harming the principle of rule of law and restricting the basic freedoms of speech and of the media. Harms and Cohn-Bendit also again criticise the forcing-through of a new Constitution in just five weeks with no time allowed for the text to be examined and debated in depth by the opposition and civil society.

Please find the entire text of the letter at
/legacy/fileadmin/dam/Documents/Letters/Letter_President_Barroso_Hungary_20Dec2011.pdf

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Rebecca Harms

Member

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