This study was prepared under the commission of Civitas Institute by József Péter Martin, executive director of Transparency International Hungary Foundation, Gabriella Nagy, head of public funds programmes of Transparency International and Miklós Ligeti, legal director of Transparency International. K-Monitor Public Benefit Association was involved in the preparation of the case descriptions provided in the second part of the study, the case descriptions are based on the database of K-Monitor Public Benefit Association.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................6

1. Assessment of the anti-corruption performance of Hungary............................................................8

2. Certain cases of system level corruption ............... 12
   2.1. Foundations of the National Bank of Hungary....12
   2.2. The system of support to team-sports ..............13
   2.3. Government settlement bonds..........................16

3. Corruption risks in the use of European Union funds18

4. Public procurement: a sore lack of competition.....25

PART TWO ...........................................................................................................29

1. FINA World Aquatics Championships....................29
2. Supports provided from the corporation tax allowance.................................................................30
3. Casino concessions, tax allowances for Vajna... 32

4. The sale of TV2.................................................................33
5. The tobacco kiosk deal ............................................34
6. The banning scandal ...............................................35
7. MNB foundations......................................................36
8. The Quaestor affair..................................................38
9. Paks 2........................................................................39
10. The no. 4 subway.....................................................40
11. BKV-Alstom subway cars.....................................42
12. Settlement bond.....................................................43
13. Sale of MKB.............................................................45
14. The NTCA (NAV) scandal....................................46
15. Jeremic Funds........................................................47
16. The Pharaon affair................................................48
17. Suspension of Népszabadság.................................49
18. Campaign financing for fictitious political parties 50
19. Suspicion of fraud in the privatisation of INA .......................... 51
20. The Origo affair .......................................................................... 52
21. The Elioaffair ........................................................................... 53
22. Felcsúti Utánpótlás Neveléséért (For the Youth Training of Felcsút) Foundation ......................................................... 54
23. A framework agreement of 420 billion HUF for the construction of public utilities ...................................................... 56
24. The EMIR affair ........................................................................... 57
25. The integration of savings cooperatives ................................. 58
26. The Budapest – Belgrade railway line ...................................... 59
27. The emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szíjj 61
28. State contracts to companies of Simicska .............................. 62
29. Exim loans to Fidesz-related companies .............................. 63
30. Radio frequencies of Andy Vajna .......................................... 65

ANNEX 68
Greetings to the Reader!

The Civitas Institute intends this study volume to be both a description of our time and a description of pathology. It is a description of our time for posterity, a snapshot of a period of Hungary indicated in the subtitle, i.e. the time between 2010 and 2018. But it is also a description of pathology, a diagnosis of a severe conspicuous disease of society, presented in the form of a collection. So the text is about the spread of corruption and the resultant crisis of democracy in Hungary. Apparently, it is a failure of each of us that the young and promising Hungarian state after about a quarter of a century gradually sank into the quagmire of public abuses.

We have issued this publication in order to establish a tradition, while we express our hopes that in the future the need for such summaries will be decreasing gradually, and we trust that in the Hungary of the future the size of these volumes will be constantly shrinking, year by year, as a result of a drop in the cases of corruption. We are convinced that a public life saturated with abuses leads to severe economic and social instability, which manifests in such conspicuous signs as a high level of outward migration, involving several hundred thousand people.

This Black Book on the state of corruption in Hungary between 2010 and 2018 is made up of two parts. While the first part shows the risk of corruption in Hungary and the exposure of the country, as well as the main forms of manifestation and methods of corruption embodying abuses of public funds, the second part contains a short description and classification of 106 specific cases of corruption. The cases presented here are mainly intended to represent the various types of corruption, and regrettably, the registry is not comprehensive, since it only presents a fraction of the known cases of corruption. By giving a diagnosis of the situation, our paper is meant to contribute to this correction, to help get rid of corruption.

The Publisher
INTRODUCTION

Transparency International Hungary (hereinafter: TI Hungary) defines the concept of corruption as an abuse of public authority, public trust or a vested position in order to generate personal benefits. During corruption a group of actors obtains economic benefits without providing socially beneficial consideration, therefore it causes a loss at the level of society, both by less efficient resource allocation and by the costs of operation and prosecution. In Hungary, the disruption of the institutions of democracy and the rule of law significantly weakened the efficiency of the institutional system of the State against corruption.

In Hungary an inverted version of state capture happened. In contrast with the classic form of a captured state, when weak public authority is controlled by influential economic interest groups, in Hungary the non-transparent cooperation between the public authority, which is uniquely strong in the European Union, and the business circles (oligarchs) maintaining a close relationship with it became a common occurrence, in which usually political actors have the final say.

In the opinion of TI Hungary, each of the institutions of the state implements the will of the Government, therefore they are an instrument rather than a control of the power of the government. There is one exception: courts, which in the opinion of TI Hungary are still autonomous actors independent of the power (here we mainly mean the decisions of judges and not the organizational set-up of courts). The capture of public authority by private actors was thus simultaneously the cause and consequence of the institutional disruption in the system of democratic checks and balances. It was a cause, in the sense that the exercise of political powers by cliques does not tolerate institutional controls, and also a consequence, because the weakening of these controls was enabled by exercising the authority of the state in a way that is increasingly less transparent and accountable.

The fact that the state actors, intended to keep executive power under control, fail to do their duties or do them insufficiently, makes it easier for the government to make and implement decisions that serve the interests of the ruling group, as opposed to the public good. In this process corruption is a specific tool that strengthens the position of those in power in the short term, primarily by the allocation of public funds. Therefore corruption is not only aimed at individual enrichment - although it obviously does have such an effect -, it is much more meant to ensure that those in power cannot be called to account or replaced. It is a solution that can be used to reward members of the clientele selected on the basis of loyalty.
Severe forms of corruption had been present in Hungary in the period before 2010 as well. TI Hungary pointed it out in 2008\(^1\) already that “corruption shows signs of becoming institutionalized”, and determined that “the phenomenon of corruption in an institutionalized form is present in economic life with a non-negligible weight.” However, the disruption of the democratic checks and balances resulted in such a new quality of corruption, which is obviously a product of the system of exercising power in Hungary, in the making since 2010, and also is a determining characteristic of its mode of operation. That way, the current corruption goes beyond the transactions, traditional bribery and kickbacks, and takes on a systemic nature. The most important risk of corruption is the distortion of the institutional system itself.

PART ONE

1. Assessment of the anti-corruption performance of Hungary

Now corruption appears in Hungary not as a malfunction in the operation of the power of the state, rather as a modality applied by the state. The constant attenuation of actions by the state against corruption are also confirmed by the results on Hungary of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) calculated by Transparency International and ranking the countries of the world according to exposure to corruption.²

The results of this survey of 180 countries indicate that based on the assessment of businesspeople and experts, in 2017 - compared to the previous year, i.e. to 2016, Hungary was demoted by nine places and three points, so currently it stands in the 66th place with a score of 45. That still makes Hungary one of the moderately corrupt countries worldwide. While TI Hungary highlighted in its report ³ presenting the results of CPI for 2016, that of the member states of the European Union “Bulgaria is the most infested with corruption, furthermore, the situation is worse in both Greece and Italy” than in Hungary; concerning the year 2017 it had to conclude that of the 28 EU member states Hungary occupies the 27th place, only preceding Bulgaria, the dead last country on the list. In 2016 Hungary still stood on the same level as Romania; but in 2017 the performance of our eastern neighbour stagnated, while that of Hungary dropped by three points. In Romania the anti-corruption prosecuting authority (DNA) has accomplished some impressive results in the prosecution of white-collar corruption, even though the organization has been criticised by both political and professional groups.

For several years, of the “old” Union member states, the anti-corruption performances of Italy and Greece were worse than that of Hungary. But by now this has also changed: In 2017 Italy performed better than Hungary by 5 points, while Greece by 3 points.

### Table 1: The CPI scores of member states of the European Union in 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 ▼</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>15 ▼</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 ▼</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>3 ▼</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>17 ▲</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 ▲</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<td>4 ▼</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 ▲</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>18 ▼</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 –</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>21 ▲</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 –</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22 ▲</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 ▼</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>10 ▲</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24 –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 ▲</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>25 ▲</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 ▲</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25 –</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 ▲</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>27 ▼</td>
</tr>
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<td>14 –</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28 ▲</td>
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</tbody>
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Over the last decade the position of Hungary has deteriorated concerning the Central and East European region as well, to which we assign 11 Central and East European countries. In the years following the country’s accession to the European Union, Hungary occupied the third place in the region - after Estonia and Slovenia -, while currently it occupies the penultimate, i.e. the tenth place. The CPI score of Hungary dropped from 55 to 45 points between 2012 and 2017, and thus **in the region the perception of the anti-corruption performance of Hungary has dropped the most over the last six years**. Based on the CPI, in 2017 Bulgaria was the only country of the region that was even more corrupt than Hungary.

The opinion polls of the European Commission also confirm that Hungarians perceive corruption as an increasingly severe problem of Hungary. In **2017 86% of Hungarians were of the opinion that corruption is common in Hungary**, and 58% thought that the level of corruption had become worse over the last three years, while the Union average was only 68% and 43%, respectively. The ratio in Hungary was the third highest in the EU after Cyprus and Spain. 69% of Hungarians believed that the high-level (white collar) corruption was not prosecuted properly (which is also one of the highest ratios in the EU), and only 19% believed otherwise.

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4 A specific Eurobarometer survey on corruption, 457:
Only 4% of Hungarians believed that the level of corruption had decreased over the last three years, while 33% believed that this level remained unchanged. Furthermore, 77% and 76% of all Hungarians thought that corruption was present in local and national public institutions, respectively.

Similarly, business actors also believe that the corruption situation in Hungary is severe, according to the survey of Eurobarometer. 56% of Hungarian entrepreneurs are of the opinion that corruption poses problems in their business activities. In contrast, the Union average is only 37%. 91% believe that corruption is a common problem in Hungary, which shows a significant deterioration compared to 81% measured in 2015. In this case the Union average was only 67% in 2017, a slight improvement has been registered since 2015 (71%). Almost three fourths of the Hungarian citizens in Hungary are of the opinion that no one can be successful in business life without political connections, while in the countries of Scandinavia only 14 to 23% of the society are of that opinion.

Corruption is the most important sign of “bad governance”, which is usually coupled with the violation of the rule of law. In such a case the biased institutions of the state, intended to secure the power of the currently reigning elite, do not prosecute, rather tolerate and sometimes downright encourage corruption, by which members of the ruling elite will acquire even more power, while the society becomes poorer. This violates the principle of equality under law, erodes public trust, leads to rent seeking and impairs the business environment. The deterioration of business climate leads to decreasing investments, which undermines sustainable growth (refer to figure 1). This is how corruption is related to the per capita GDP (figure 2). In 2017 in the European Union a strong relationship could be observed between the per capita national income and exposure to corruption (see the figure). As part of the less developed group of East and South European countries, within the EU Hungary belongs to the group of countries with low GDP and high exposure to corruption.

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Figure 1: Rule of law and investments in Hungary

Figure 2: Relationship between corruption and economic performance in the EU

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2. Certain cases of system level corruption

In the following part we will analyze some of the systems that were mainly created to enable decision makers with public authority to siphon off public funds into private pockets. It is common to these cases that they are dependent on the deactivation of checks and balances, which the Hungarian Government has consistently accomplished since 2010, opening up the way to state-controlled income reallocation. We consider these cases as manifestations of system level corruption.

2.1. Foundations of the National Bank of Hungary

The National Bank of Hungary (MNB) transferred almost HUF 267 billion in total to Pallas Athéné group of foundations, established by itself. This amount equals almost 0.8 per cent of the gross domestic product of Hungary generated in one year. The foundation has invested approximately HUF 197 billion into government securities, and from the remaining part of the assets they supported persons close to the management of the central bank, by amounts in the order of magnitude of hundred million.

TI Hungary first indicated it in September 2014\(^9\) that the establishment of foundations by the central bank may be illegal. Partly as a result of the action of TI Hungary and lawsuits initiated by certain journalists, on 22 April 2016 the foundations published their contracts, and thus it became obvious that they were quite generous with public funds. For example, they paid over 500 million forints to New Wave Production Kft., the company that also publishes the portal of VS.hu, whose owners include the nephew of György Matolcsy, the governor of the central bank, they paid 70 million forints to the author of the book titled Chess and Poker, written about György Matolcsy, the governor of the central bank; and\(^10\) Miklós Kásler, a former member of the board of one of the foundations of the central bank,\(^11\) received 39 million forints for the book titled National Major Examination. Furthermore, each of the foundations ordered from BanKonzult Kft. the analysis titled “Domestic and Global Economic and Financial Trends” for the price of 750 thousand forints, even though the copies were substantially the same. They also received funds to purchase a book containing the collection of the published articles of György Matolcsy, governor of the central bank, under the title of Equilibrium and Growth.


\(^{10}\)http://www.pallasalapitvanyok.hu/data/downloads/2017/05/15/05.-Melleklet-PADOC-Alapito-Okirat-2016.01.25.pdf (23.02.2018)

\(^{11}\) Miklós Kásler was a member of the board of Pallas Athéné Domus Concordiae Foundation, which was terminated by legal succession under the decision of the founder made on 21 December 2016.
The Government tried to classify this juggling with public funds by the foundations of the Central Bank. The law intended to accomplish that, hastily enacted by the Fidesz-KDNP Party majority of the Parliament, informed everyone that in the opinion of the Government the national funds allocated by the National Bank to the Pallas Athéné foundations “lost their quality as public funds.” However, the Constitutional Court thought otherwise and stated that the foundations of MNB “undoubtedly manage public funds and perform public duties,” i.e. their assets constitute part of the assets of the nation.

The use of public funds is subject to strict rules in Hungary. These rules do not authorize the leadership of the MNB to allocate national assets, through foundations or in any other way, to fund aims that are not related to the functions of the central bank in any way. Several hundred million forints disappeared from the books of the MNB and went through the Pallas Athéné foundations to ineligible parties, including family members of the leadership of the MNB. This could only be accomplished because the leaders of the central bank violated their obligations concerning the management of national assets. TI Hungary initiated penal proceedings at the Chief Prosecutor owing to mismanagement and abuse of office committed by way of the foundations of the central bank, but the prosecuting authority did not order an investigation. The failure of the prosecutor to take action is probably not unrelated to the fact that the wife of the chief prosecutor is the personnel director of the MNB and a member of the supervisory boards of two foundations of the central bank.

As opposed to the prosecuting authority, the Public Procurement Arbitration Board did investigate the finances of the foundations of the central bank, and concluded that the foundations violated the law by failing to initiate a public procurement procedure when they spent the public funds entrusted to them. The foundations got away with the infringement with an outrageously low fine of only 84 million forints, even though the Arbitration Board could have imposed a fine five times as high.

2.2. The system of support to team-sports

The system established for the support of organizations of team sports in 2011 (ice hockey, handball, basketball, soccer and water polo, and volleyball since the summer of 2017), called commonly although somewhat inaccurately “Tao. support”, diverts some of the pre-tax profits of companies to the coffers of sports organizations, instead of the coffers of the state.

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12 Refer to bill no. T/9380 on the amendment of Act CXXXIX of 2013 on the Magyar Nemzeti Bank and C of 2016.
13 AB resolution 8/2016. (IV. 6.)
This is not a form of sponsorship, therefore, for lack of a consideration, what motivates companies to support organizations of team sports is that they are allowed to reduce their payments of corporation tax by the amount of the support. In other words, the companies may reduce their pre-tax earnings by the support transferred to organizations of team sports, rather than decreasing their after-tax, net profit. Therefore the Tao. supports result in a reduction of tax revenues of the state, and in an annually increasing extent at that.

In 2012 companies donated 39.6 billion forints, in 2013 41.9 billion forints, in 2014 66.5 billion forints, in 2015 77.5 billion forints and in 2016 135.1 billion forints to the beneficiary sports organizations. Until the end of 2016 the state had lost corporation tax revenues of a total of 360 billion forints owing to Tao. supports. The state budget for the year 2017 set the anticipated amount of support to team sports at between 82 and 92 billion forints, while the Tao. support appropriation for 2018 amounts to 80 billion forints.\(^\text{14}\) This means that until the end of last year the system of Tao. support reduced the tax revenues of the state by at least 450 billion forints, and the amount of lost taxes could rise to 530 billion forints this year.

In the Act on the state budget, the Government planned a loss of corporation tax revenues of only 64-69 billion forints for the year 2016, however, two years ago taxes lost because of the team sport support amounted to 135 billion forints. In other words, in the record year of Tao. supports so far, the actual tax losses were twice as high as planned. Assuming that the state budgets for the year 2017 and 2018 were as generous in planning lower tax losses through Tao. supports as two years ago, it could happen that according to our current knowledge, by the end of this year the Tao. support fund of 530 billion forints will cause even higher tax losses in reality.

While the Hungarian government denied that the system of supporting team sports is being financed from state funds, it admitted the same in Brussels. The European Commission therefore concluded that the Tao. support system is considered state aid.\(^\text{15}\)

Concerning the system, TI Hungary primarily finds it precarious that public funds are transferred to the beneficiary sports organizations without transparency. If the Government had had its way, then the only thing we could find out about supports to team sports is what is the total amount that the beneficiary sports organizations receive in a particular season. Therefore, the Government does not hide the figures on what is the tax loss sustained by the state owing to Tao. support, but it does withhold information on what are those companies that pay some of their

\(^{14}\)http://mfor.hu/cikkcek/makro/360_milliard_forint__ennyirol_mondtak_le_Orbanek_a_TAO_mia tt.html?utm_source=mforfooldal&utm_medium=Direct

tax liabilities to sports teams, as opposed to the treasury. In order to keep this information confidential, the Parliament classified the detailed figures of supports to team sports as tax secrets.\textsuperscript{16}

This secrecy may have delivered its benefits, since the exclusion of publicity probably facilitated for companies to serve political interests when making decisions on Tao. support. Companies seem to know that the best way to the use their resources for Tao. support is giving funds to sports organizations with good political connections. There is hardly any other explanation why the absolute champion in obtaining team-sport supports is Felcsúti Utánpótlás Neveléséért Foundation operating in the village of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, which has obtained corporation tax funds of about 14 billion forints over the last six years. Other teams showing outstanding Corporation tax support efficiency include the football team of Kisvárda, the hometown of Minister of National Development Miklós Seszták and the football team of Mezőkövesd, connected to Secretary of State for Tax Affairs András Tállai. The world of handball seems similarly politicized, where following the appointment in 2015 of Máté Kocsis, the pro-government mayor of Józsefváros, as president of the Association, the Tao. support revenues of this division increased from the former 12 billion forints, first to 21 billion forints, and then to 27 billion forints in the 2016/2017 season. The data clearly show: the capability of sports organizations to draw Tao. support is related to their political embeddedness.

Even though Prime Minister Viktor Orbán emphasized that it is a “communist habit” to consider Tao. support public funds, TI Hungary insisted that the names of the supporting companies and the funds provided by them annually to the individual sports teams are data of public interest, which therefore should be publicly disclosed. We obtained recognition of our claim in court. We initiated a lawsuit for exploring the data of companies paying Tao. support against the government and against the associations of team sports. We won both of these lawsuits conclusively, in addition, the Curia, which reviewed the process initiated against the government, decided in favour of TI Hungary on 25 October 2017, this time conclusively, and ordered the public disclosure of the data of Tao. supports by its non-appealable resolution.

These lawsuits, which were closed with significant success for TI Hungary, contributed not only to making the team-sport supports more transparent, but also threw light on the state of the rule of law. The Ministry of National Economy (NGM), which lost the lawsuit, stated that the data required to be disclosed by it are, in fact, not in its possession. However, according to the legal requirements applying to Tao. supports, NGM is required to obtain the so-called certificates of support. It is not truly stylish either, and even a punishable offence, if the defence of NGM in court was false, but it is an even bigger problem if NGM actually fails

\textsuperscript{16} Act C of 2016.
to obtain the data on the payment of Tao. supports. In fact, if the necessary data are not available, it is not able to audit the funds allocated to team sports even if it otherwise wanted to.

When NGM defended itself by pointing out that the data on Tao. supports are not available, it not only revealed its true intention, but formally denied implementation of the sentence of the Curia. TI Hungary sued NGM at the police, and we also initiated judicial execution against the Ministry. The other ministry that lost the case, the Ministry of Human Capacities, first hesitated to execute the decision of the Curia, but finally it started disclosing the data on Tao. support.

TI Hungary is of the opinion that the regime of Tao. supports should be terminated in its current form and, in order to ensure the traceability of the funds already paid, the law that classified the details of team-sport supports as tax secrets should also be repealed. Every detail of the Tao. supports should be published, and it should be investigated whether the beneficiary sports organizations have used this support legitimately. Furthermore, it should also be investigated whether the government has rewarded the generous supports to sports given by certain companies at the expense of public funds by the biased awarding of public procurements or other state orders.

2.3. Government settlement bonds

By the trading of government settlement bonds the companies managing these bonds, mainly registered in off-shore tax havens, realized an enrichment of about 60 billion forints from public funds.

Essentially, government settlement bonds enable citizens of non-EU member states to obtain residence permits allowing them to stay in the area of the EU permanently, if they purchase the government bond package issued by the Government of Hungary, costing 300 thousand euros. Under this program that had been functioning for about four years until 30 June 2017, a total of 6621 bond packages enabling their holders for settlement were sold. Together with family members, almost 20 thousand non-EU citizens obtained the right of free movement within the Schengen zone.

The government settlement bonds are sold by the Government Debt Management Agency (ÁKK), but not directly; rather through enterprises authorized by the Economic Committee of the Parliament. It is unusual for members of Parliament to deal with company licensing matters. Perhaps, the members of Parliament, who lack the relevant skills in this area as well, did not even find it suspicious that with one exception each of the intermediary enterprises is registered in a country also offering off-shore services, such as the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, Malta and Cyprus.
The enterprises selling the government settlement bonds subscribe to the government bond at a discount, i.e. in practice, of the face value of 300 thousand euros the intermediary company only transfers 271 thousand euros to the Hungarian state, while after the expiry of the term of five years Hungary refunds the entire sum of 300 thousand euros to the company. This means that in exchange for the interest and return, the government leaves 29 thousand euros in the pockets of the intermediary companies on each settlement bond package. In addition, this happens in a situation in which the law provides: the return of Government settlement bonds shall be at least two per cent, and Hungary has been able to sell government bonds at much lower rates of return than that for almost 3 years. In other words, the Government would be able to finance the public debt at lower rates than those provided by government bonds mandating the payment of luxurious interests, and without granting the right of settlement. Therefore, Hungary pays the price of the settlement bond business several times over.

The intermediary companies could register a profit of 60 billion forints deriving from Hungarian public funds on the 6621 government settlement bonds sold until 30 June 2017. Considering the fact that with the exception of one single company registered in Hungary, the intermediary enterprises were registered in off-shore tax havens, these companies are highly unlikely to pay any tax in Hungary on their significant revenues. And we have not even mentioned that under the Fundamental Law it is not allowed to let any public funds be managed by entities whose ownership structure is not transparent.

In cooperation with the newspaper Magyar Nemzet, TI Hungary has conclusively won two lawsuits on data of public interest on the matter of the training of government settlement bonds. The court mandated the Government Debt Management Agency to disclose the number of government settlement bonds sold by the individual intermediary enterprises, and the Economic Committee of the Parliament to disclose the documents serving as the basis for issuing the licenses of the intermediary enterprises.

3. Corruption risks in the use of European Union funds

Annually Hungary receives a support of more than one thousand billion forints from the budget of the European Union. 50 to 60% of all public procurements in Hungary are co-financed by the European Union. In the Union budgetary cycle of 2014-2020 Hungary is receiving a support of almost eight thousand billion forints (25 billion euros), at an annual level this constitutes 3-4 per cent of the Hungarian GDP on average (however, in 2016 and 2017 this ratio was about 6-7 per cent).

This means that among the member states of the European Union, Hungary occupies the second place in the ranking of per capita support, which proportionately exceeds the extent of the Marshall Aid distributed in countries of West Europe after the second world war.

The spending of Union sources in Hungary carries several corruption risks at system level, and the institutions cannot filter out these risks either, in fact, the institutions themselves create opportunities for corruption.

As the 2015 research\textsuperscript{18} of TI Hungary determined, the abundance of resources creates a risk of corruption in itself, since each government in power after the accession of Hungary to the European Union had the primary goal of spending all the funds it had available as fast and as completely as possible. With regard to the pressure for absorption, the planning of the projects, the utility and substantiation of the selected projects are of secondary importance, and the auditing of the projects is not a priority either, since it would only prevent the utilization of resources.\textsuperscript{19}

The organizations deciding on the beneficiaries of European Union resources and those that control the spending of the funds and plan the supported projects are, in fact, parts of the same managing authority, i.e. they are under the same political leadership (the authority of the Deputy State Secretary, and ultimately of the Minister). Therefore the control bodies are expressly interested in not controlling the projects, since controlling would, on the one hand, slow down

\textsuperscript{18} Corruption risk of Union resources in Hungary, Transparency International Hungary, October 2015 (\url{https://transparency.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/TI-Az-Uni%C3%B3s-forr%C3%A1sok-korrupci%C3%B3-kock%C3%A1zata-Magyarorsz%C3%A1gon.pdf} (2018.02.23.)

\textsuperscript{19} We could even interpret these sentences, attributed to János Lázár, as the acknowledgment of the pressure for absorption and the existence of the rent-seeking behaviour: \textit{“We have rushed this very much. Now the most important task was to push out the money, but this is not what we would like for the following 7 years.”} He also said \textit{“there are funds available for everything, except what we want to do, not for preparations, not for construction, rather for obtaining the money or ripping off the money, let’s have a straight talk about it.”} (Origo, 17 June 2015)
the utilization of the resources, on the other hand, if deficiencies, irregularities were explored as a result of the audits, then the Government would incriminate itself, that the relevant beneficiary was not selected with proper care.

It is typical that the Directorate General for Audit of European Funds (EUTAF), which is a control body to be set up mandatorily, independent of the managing authorities, also operates within the organization of the Ministry of National Economy, and its employees are government officials. The institutional guarantees for actual independence are highly questionable at both organizational and personal level.

At the same time, it should be stressed that the **audit of the utilization of European Union funds is primarily the competency of the member state**, it is the responsibility of the relevant authorities of the member state - primarily the managing authorities, but ultimately the prosecuting authorities. The control bodies of the European Union - the auditors and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) -, are not capable of auditing tens of thousands of projects in an itemized manner. For illustration: OLAF starts approximately 300 audits in the 28 member states, within one year a few dozen projects get audited, for example, in 2016 OLAF closed 13 audits affecting Hungary, of these OLAF found irregularities in 11 cases. In contrast, in the previous seven-year budgetary period, the one between 2007 and 2013, over 60,000 projects were implemented in Hungary alone partially or fully funded by Union resources. The Hungarian partner bodies of OLAF are the OLAF Coordination Office, operating as part of the National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary on the one hand, and ultimately the prosecuting authority. This means that OLAF delivers its audit findings to the prosecutor's office, but it does not exercise the powers of a prosecuting authority, and therefore it cannot directly refer the matter to a court. As is shown by Table 2 below, the prosecuting authority raised charges in only three cases in the period between 2009 in 2016, based on the 31 reports of suspicion of fraud, and it closed six cases without indictment.
Table 2: actions implemented by the judicial authorities of the member states based on the recommendations of OLAF, between 1 January 2009 and December 2016<sup>20</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>The prosecuting authority has not yet decided on the case</th>
<th>Number of decisions made by the prosecuting authority</th>
<th>Ratio of indictments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full amount</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full amount excluding SAPARD</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>20</sup> The report of OLAF for 2016, page 33. (Translated by TI Hungary)  
Otherwise, for several years Hungary has been on top of the list of cases closed by OLAF with so-called “recommendations”, i.e. cases in which signs of fraud or other irregularities were explored.

Table 3: Number of completed audits in 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>Total number of closed audits</th>
<th>Audits closed with a recommendation formulated by OLAF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, Togo, Turkey, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>21 (1 for each country)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the Government intends to spend this huge amount of money as fast as possible, it is typical that the individual projects are overplanned, i.e. much higher sums are authorized than would be necessary. This is further compounded by insufficient control, and these two factors highly contribute to the overpricing of European Union projects having become general phenomena. According to the research of 2015 cited above, based on the expert estimate of TI Hungary relying on interviews with public figures and beneficiaries, overpricing may affect over 90% of the projects, and the rate of overpricing is 25% on average.

The following figure shows an extreme case of overpricing. In this case, which was explored and described by OLAF in 2014, a healthcare center beneficiary in Hungary received a support of 674 thousand euros, and in a project partially implemented from Union funds it purchased equipment from a company based in Slovakia for 1.7 million euros, which was purchased in Slovakia (probably at realistic market value) for 262 thousand euros. Part of the rent acquired by overpricing is obtained by the affected parties as commission for mediation. The other part of the rent was used for obtaining the down payment for the project, in such a manner that the supplier transferred the outstanding balance to an offshore company registered in the Seychelle Islands, and the company lent this amount free of interest to the Hungarian healthcare center.

**Figure 3:** A case of overpriced asset procurement in the form of cross-border cooperation

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As has been mentioned, in several cases the **substantiation and utility of the projects are only raised as aspects of secondary importance**, which is also manifest in the definition (in programme level decisions on allocation) of the allowance intended to be spent on one particular programme (development aim). Under the decision of the Government, in the programming period of 2014-2020 60 per cent of the European Union resources available for Hungary must be directly spent on economic development. In the period of 2007–2013 this ratio stood at 24 per cent, and it is confirmed by several datasets that these supports were utilized with very low efficiency. We are convinced that the significant increase of resources available for direct economic development further strengthens the absorption pressure, which increases the risks of corruption.

The contribution of the funds providing the financing and the planning guidelines partly determine the structure of the resources allocated to the programmes, however, member states have significant latitude in the designation of their own development aims. In addition to increasing the risks of corruption, the decision of the Government is also problematic because that way most of the 60% of the Union resources provide only small amounts of support to Hungarian small and medium enterprises, which is unlikely to contribute to the long-term sustainable growth of the Hungarian economy.

The success story of several years of Elios Innovatív Zrt., the company in which István Tiborcz, the son-in-law of the prime minister has an interest, is a case in point for the Hungarian practice of the utilization of Union resources, but is also illustrative of the nature of public procurement projects in Hungary, **especially for public procurement projects customized to a particular specific bidder and the highlighted role of grant writers**. In the public procurement projects announced between 2009 and 2014 on the support of public lighting from Union resources, the conditions of suitability were deliberately defined in such a manner that only the company in question could meet them. In addition, in each of the processes under examination the contracting authorities, i.e. the local governments were assisted by consulting companies, which means that the suitability criteria were formulated by consulting companies that can be proven to be associated with the party that won the contract later, i.e. with Elios Zrt., through the shared ownership background. This is a clear violation of the rules of the act on public procurement on conflict of interest, which provide, among others, that “persons or entities on behalf of the contracting authority […] unable

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23 Government Resolution 1600/2012. (XII. 17.).
24 Corruption risk of Union resources in Hungary, Transparency International Hungary, October 2015, pages 31-31 (https://transparency.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/TI-Az-Uni%C3%B3s- forr%C3%A1sok-korrupci%C3%B3-kock%C3%A1zata-Magyarorsz%C3%A1gon.pdf).
25 Article 25 paragraph (2) of Act CXLIII on Public procurement
to perform their functions in an unbiased and objective manner for whatever reason, in particular due to economic or other interests or any other common interest with an economic operator participating in the procedure, shall not participate in the preparation and the execution of the procedure, for that shall qualify as a conflict of interest.” In addition, it is likely that the projects were overpriced, there was tacit collusion with the competitors - Tungsram-Schréder, which also had been a bidder earlier, and later appeared as a supplier to the winning bidder - and that documents may have been falsified (concerning the rate of return of the bulbs). According to news in the press, OLAF proposed it to the European Commission that a sum of 13 billion forints should be refunded.26

The beneficiaries spent the majority of Union resources through public procurement, which is one of the riskiest stages in terms of corruption of the utilization of Union resources. If the beneficiary is a governmental or budgetary organ or state-owned enterprise, then it is mandated for public procurement anyway. However, if the beneficiary is a company that otherwise would not be mandated to perform a public procurement procedure, then it is still required to announce a public procurement procedure if - put in a simplified way - the rate of the support exceeds 50% (above the Union threshold) or 75% (below the Union threshold), or the amount of the support is at least 40 million forints.27 Several actions have been taken in order to bypass this rule. On the one hand, the government may grant a release from the obligation of public procurement,28 on the other hand, the amount of the support may also be determined in such a manner that it should not exceed the public procurement threshold; for example, the aid rate of the Vál Valley Light Railway (“Light Railway of Felcsút”) was only 70%.

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27 Act CXLIII on Public procurement (PPA) Article 5 paragraphs (2) to (3).

28 PPA Article 5 paragraph (5).
4. Public procurement: a sore lack of competition

Although as yet we have no data for 2017, we know from the statements of the president of the Public Procurement Authority\(^29\) that in 2017 3457 billion forints were spent through public procurement by the organs of the state - including but not limited to bodies governed by public law, companies owned by the State or by local governments, furthermore, public utility companies. Last year, almost 1500 billion forints more public funds were spent on public procurement than in 2016, which is an outstandingly high value compared to funds spent in public procurement so far. In the last decade - until 2016 - the value of public procurement was the highest in 2013, but even then it only amounted to 2400 billion forints. While in 2013 the funds spent in public procurement constituted 8.2% of the GDP, in 2017 this value reached 9.4% of the GDP.

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the total value of public procurement in Hungary between 2007 and 2016 and its ratio compared to the gross domestic product.

**Figure 4:** The total value of public procurement in Hungary between 2007 and 2016.\(^30\)

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\(^{30}\) **Source:** “Briefing of the president of the Public Procurement Authority on the development of public procurement in the period between 1 January and 31 December 2016”, page 1. [http://www.kozbeszerzes.hu/data/filer_public/46/ac/46ac88e6-dd10-4a86-9ad8-275c2722f21a/a_kozbeszerzesek_alakulasa_a_2016_evben.pdf](http://www.kozbeszerzes.hu/data/filer_public/46/ac/46ac88e6-dd10-4a86-9ad8-275c2722f21a/a_kozbeszerzesek_alakulasa_a_2016_evben.pdf) (199.02.2018)
With regard to the above, it is especially worrying that statistics on public procurement in Hungary have indicated severe problems concerning the practice of public procurement for several years. Competition in public procurement is extremely constrained. This is implied by the fact that, on the one hand, the ratio of one-bidder public procurement procedures has been very high for several years - it has been steadily around 30 per cent since 2009 -, which significantly exceeds the average value measured in the European Union. According to data of 2016, in 36 per cent of the so-called procedures above the EU threshold only one economic actor submitted a bid in Hungary, in contrast, in the European Union the ratio of one-actor public procurement is only 17 per cent on average. The Hungarian value is the sixth highest in the EU. At the same time, it can be assumed that there are even more one-bid public procurement procedures with lower value contracts, especially if we also consider public procurement procedures conducted with sham bids, submitted “for show”.

It is an additional problem that in Hungary the ratio of procedures with no public announcement - i.e. contracts awarded without competition intentionally - has been around 13 per cent for several years, which is three times as high as the European Union average of only 4-5 per cent. In 2016, in the case of public procurement projects above the EU threshold, the ratio of procedures with

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32 The Union rules defined different thresholds for the various types of procurement and scopes of contracting authorities, but in the most typical case, when goods are purchased and services are ordered, it is 135,000 euros, i.e. about 40 million forints, furthermore, in the case of public works it is 5,225,000 euros, i.e. about 1.6 billion forints.

no public announcement decreased to 11 per cent. The situation is even worse if we consider procedures under the EU threshold, i.e. small value procedures, since the rules applying to these are less stringent than the rules defined by the European Union, and control is also much weaker. In this scope the ratio of public procurement with no public announcement is as high as 15 per cent, not to mention the so-called “four bids” public procurement projects. This latter is a unique Hungarian public procurement procedure, when the purchasing entity operating from state funds does not announce the public procurement to the general public, rather it sends an invitation for bids to four companies of its choice. These types of public procurement restrict competition at least as much as the classical procedures without publication do.

The bias related to the allocation of public procurement contracts contributed in a major way to the fabulous enrichment of oligarchs related to the government. While in 2016 the net wealth of Lőrinc Mészáros, the mayor of Felcsút, “only” amounted to 35 billion forints, which earned him the 28th place on the Forbes list of the 33 richest Hungarians, in 2017 he promoted to the 8th place with a net wealth estimated at 106 billion forints. The public procurement data indicate that various companies in which Lőrinc Mészáros holds at stake won public procurement contracts in a total value of 476 billion forints in 2017. 83 per cent of this huge sum, i.e. a net amount of 396 billion forints, came from the European Union. Accordingly, the most well-known pipefitter of Hungary tripled his net wealth last year.

Even though the Hungarian regulation on public procurement, developed in 2015, basically complies with the Union guidelines - at least concerning procedures above the EU threshold -, during 2016 the Parliament adopted several law amendments that further reduce the transparency of public procurement and real competition. Adopted in June 2016, Act LXIII of 2016 authorized the government to allow companies found to have been involved in price-fixing to participate in public procurement contracts. Furthermore, Act CLX of 2016, voted into effect in November 2016, introduced several provisions that give cause for grave concerns. For example, it raised the threshold creating the obligation of public procurement, it enabled the Government to grant a release from the obligation of spending European Union resources in public procurement, and in the case of procedures with no public announcement, it raised the thresholds of public procurement of public works from 100 million forints to 300 million forints.

35 https://forbes.huextra/33-leggazdagabb-magyar-2016/
It is characteristic of the Hungarian practice of public procurement that the family of Pallas Athéné foundations, established by the National Bank of Hungary in 2013 and 2014, did not apply the rules of public procurement at all in its spending of public funds for several years. As we have indicated in the presentation of the investments of the National Bank of Hungary implemented by foundations, the Public Procurement Arbitration Board only imposed a fine of 84 million forints, constituting a mere 3% of the value of contracts concluded by the infringing waiver of public procurement, even though it would have been possible to impose a fine five times as high.\textsuperscript{38}

This case throws light on the severe deficiencies registered in the application of the statutes on public procurement above the Union threshold, even though the statutes themselves can be considered relatively good. One of the reasons for this is that the institutional independence of parties intended to control public procurement - such as the Public Procurement Authority and the Public Procurement Arbitration Board - is highly questionable. In fact, the presidents of these bodies are elected by the Board operating within the framework of the Public Procurement Authority, and of the 13 members of the Board five persons are appointed by the Government, and one other member by the Hungarian Competition Authority, an entity made loyal by the Government.\textsuperscript{39}

The Board elects the presidents of the Public Procurement Authority and the Public Procurement Arbitration Board by two-thirds of the votes of its members. While the Government holds a blocking minority in the Board, it has decisive influence on the election. The rights of the employer in respect of the elected leaders are also exercised by the Board.

The other severe problem is the public procurement remedial system, in which the Public Procurement Arbitration Board constitutes the first forum. Not only is the independence of the government of this entity questionable, it is also mandatory to pay an outstandingly high fee (25 million forints) for initiating a procedure to be conducted by it.\textsuperscript{40} This extremely costly procedure may discourage persons or entities who were treated illegitimately in public procurement from initiating review procedures, as has been experienced by TI Hungary in several specific cases. For lack of sufficient control mechanisms, a high ratio of the irregular or corrupt public procurement contracts remain undisclosed.

\textsuperscript{38}This could have taken place if - in accordance with the request submitted by TI Hungary - the president of the Public Procurement Authority would have initiated the procedure of the Public Procurement Arbitration Board \textit{ex officio}. The submissions of TI Hungary are available here: https://transparency.hu/hirek/a-kozbeszerzesi-hatosag-elnokehez-fordultunk-az-mnb-alapitvanyok-ugyeven/

\textsuperscript{39}PPA. Article 182

\textsuperscript{40}MvM Decree 45/2015. (XI. 2.) Article 1
PART TWO

1. FINA World Aquatics Championships

This sporting event cost several times as much as the original estimated budget of the aquatics championship of 217: it certainly exceeded the net sum of 108 (gross 137) billion forints, or 170 billion forints according to other calculations. It became even more difficult to ensure the transparency of investments and the accountability of the spending of public funds, since the Government did not publish the various items of spending on the event, disputing what items belong to the organization of the World Championships and what are those investments that would have been realized regardless of the championship. In addition to the lack of transparency, another factors that increased the corruption risk of these gigantic sporting event is that with reference to the fact that the event was to be held four years earlier, i.e. in 2017 as opposed to 2021, Act XXXIII of 2015, also known as the “Dagály Act”, authorized all the related public procurement to be conducted on an invitation basis, i.e. in a way that fully excludes competition.

The results of the tenders, conducted under the close scrutiny of the press, show that in many cases the contracts of implementation were awarded to companies maintaining a good relationship with the government, having won several public procurement contracts in a row over the recent years, and owing to the tight deadlines, we can suspect overpricing in several cases. In a number of cases the originally concluded contracts were modified for the benefit of the contractor, as a result, the total cost of the Championship kept rising even at the end of 2017. The security tender of Bp2017 Kft. for the Danube Arena was awarded to Valton-Sec Kft., a Fidesz-related company in March 2017. An amendment later increased their remuneration to 1.167 billion forints. The contract for the construction of the main venue (Danube Arena) was awarded to Market Zrt., owned by István Garancsi, an individual with close ties to the Prime Minister. A bridge for bicycles was also built next to the facility for 424 million, which apparently did not make sense for the event, but it is widely believed that the bridge leads to the entrance of the future Danubio estate to be built on the other bank of Rákos stream, associated with Norbert Szivek, an executive of MNV. The temporary giant diving tower constructed next to Batthyány tér onto a platform built into the Danube, presumably heavily overpriced, cost more than 3 billion forints in total. After much wrangling, this concrete platform built on a World Heritage section was finally dismantled as per the original contract. Both the leased tower and the platform were supplied by WHB Építő, a company having good ties with the government. Certain investments had not been completed until the start of the Championship: the renewal of ELTE Bibó college for advanced studies was also enabled by the Dagály Act, on an invitation basis. However, the cost of the
investment went up from the original 405 million forints to 598.8 million, and the building has not been completed up to now. In Margaret Island the building of the Casino was renewed at the cost of 1.2 billion forints, which had been intended to be the seat of the organizing committee, but it had not been completed, either. The organizers waived the penalty of 4 million forints, a criminal investigation was also started on this matter. Several entrepreneurs with good political ties were awarded a contract: the companies of Tibor Kuna, a businessperson having good connections with Péter Szijjártó and Miklós Seszták Minister of Development, the head of the organizing committee, advertised the sporting events for a fee exceeding 5 billion. The Brewery of Pécs, a company owned by Tamás Szemerey and Zoltán Szemerey, nephews of György Matolcsy, governor of the central bank, became the wholesale beer supplier of the aquatic championship. It was also highly controversial that Főtaxi became the taxi partner of the event without competition, but Luxury Limousine Service Kft., another company of the owner of Valton-Sec, also received a contract for chauffeur services.

http://hvg.hu/sport/20170710_igy_szabadult_el_a_vizes_vb_koltsegvetese
Documents on the website of the organizer company: https://www.fina-budapest2017.com/hu/kozbeszerzesek

2. Supports provided from the corporation tax allowance

By changing the regulation on corporation tax (Act LXXXI of 1996), the Government enabled the taxpayers to offer funds for preferred aims, such as the support of cinematographic work, the support of organizations of performing arts and in the field of the support of certain team sports. The selection of the aims of support (e.g. the selection of the individual sports) were hand-picked by politicians, and the lack of transparency in the system has created severe corruption risks. According to critiques of the TAO system, companies that were awarded high-value contracts in public procurement purchase the goodwill of policy makers by giving billions of forints of support to sports clubs, while owing to the funds available in the system, the sports clubs are not motivated to operate on a market basis, and they also apply various tricks in order to obtain the supports.

According to the report of Transparency International of October 2015, in the space of four years spectator sports received a support of 200 billion forints in a non-transparent way. The authors of the study are of the opinion that, as opposed to the statement of the Government, the funds paid in the TAO system are not private donations, rather indirect state aid, therefore they are subject to the rules applying to public funds. This is also how the European Commission treats them, and the sentence of the Curia adopted in October 2017 also confirms this opinion. Of the 200 billion forints determined to have been paid at that time, 75 billion went to football. 12 per cent of that sum was paid to Felcsúti Utánpótlás
Nevelésért Alapítvány (Youth Training in Felcsút Foundation), while altogether these funds were distributed among roughly 1100 clubs. Of the budget of 3.1 billion forints of the stadium in Felcsút, 2.55 billion were covered by the TAO support, but the town of Kisvárda, constituency of Development Minister Miklós Seszták, also received 1.26 billion forints in 2015. We also consider Szolnoki MÁV Utánpótlás FC Kft. and Szolnoki MÁV FC Kft., owned by Zsolt Nyerges, an attorney of Szolnok since 2011, as entities having good ties with the government. He was a business partner of Lajos Simicska in the construction enterprise called Közgép, among others. The suspicion that the funds were allocated in a politically motivated way was also confirmed by the fact that the sports alliances are managed by pro-government politicians. Volleyball is a case in point for the importance of political connections. The proposal for the expansion of the TAO system, to benefit volleyball, was submitted by Erik Bánki (Fidesz), whose wife is the president of the Beach and Leisure Volleyball Committee of the Association. Soon after that, the Association authorized a budget of 1.1 billion for a company associated with the family.

Despite the criticisms, in the autumn of 2016, according to a law amendment submitted with urgency by the Ministry of National Economy and voted into effect, it comes under the heading of tax secret who receives a tax benefit for what, and all offered tax deductible funds are tax secrets. Despite the conclusive sentences of public interest data lawsuits initiated in order to make TAO funds transparent, to this day it is not known who are the supporting companies, in addition, in 2017 a draft law was prepared that would have made access to TAO data even more difficult. We have reason to believe that these economic operators channel their corporation tax liabilities into sports, otherwise payable into the state budget, because of their political connections. According to the calculations of 24.hu, until the spring of 2017 the State had waived a corporation tax revenue of 415 billion forints. Support to sports has been increasing year by year, in 2016 it amounted to 99 billion forints. In the budget for 2017 the Government anticipated a loss of 82 to 92 billion forints, and a loss of 76 to 86 billion forints for 2018. The youth training center of Felcsút, established by the Prime Minister and owned by Lőrinc Mészáros, has received the most TAO support to this day of all clubs.

In the opinion of Attila Vidnyánszky, director of National Theatre, the TAO funds of theatres do not go to those who need them and deserve them, rather to the “clever” ones. The professional organizations would like to see the TAO system reconsidered, and the process of applying for them made more visible to the general public. The above concerns about distorted selection and transparency can also be raised about the TAO funds given to performing artists.

https://g7.24.hu/tag/tao-tamogatas/, http://k-monitor.hu/adatbazis/cimkek/tao-penzek
At the beginning of 2014 Las Vegas Casino Kft., a company owned by Andy Vajna, who is also a Government Commissioner, received the opportunity to operate five casinos - without the announcement of a tender, by the decision of Minister for National Economy, made on his own authority. At first, back in 2013 the newspaper *Világgazdaság* wrote that owing to the new rules on taxation (every gambling casino operating in Hungary is entitled to deduct its concession fee from the gambling tax) the company of Mr. Vajna has to pay 1.6 billion forints less in public dues. According to the summary of Figyelő published in July 2014, as a result of new legal amendments the state waived a tax revenue of 7 billion forints annually for the benefit of Las Vegas Casino Kft. In the opinion of Mihály Varga, this tax benefit is justifiable because the new casino owners have to make some serious investments in the first few months, but “it has a motivating effect from several aspects, thus it motivates the operators to generate higher clean gambling revenues, which means payment of higher amounts of gambling tax.”

Under the agreement, Andy Vajna should have opened his two casinos in Budapest in September 2014, but ultimately, they were only opened several months later, at the beginning of 2015. During that time the government commissioner should have paid several hundred million forints in concession fees, but instead of collecting this amount, the Ministry of National Economy accepted the postponement of the date of opening the casino, thereby waiving the debt. In addition to Andy Vajna, another business circle, also having good connections with the Government, obtained concessions as well. It was reported that Treff-Klub Kft. won the casino concession in Miskolc. This company is related to Development Minister Miklós Seszták. The current owner is Zoltán Rákosfalvy, an attorney, who has worked for the local government of Győr and for the Fidesz party group, and the managing director is Zsolt Kruppa, who is reported to have lived in the same street with the development Minister in Kisvárda, and their wives also manage a shared company. The casino in Sopron is indirectly in the interest of István Garancsi.

In the summer of 2015 it was also on the agenda that Andy Vajna and Gábor Szima (the latter is the majority owner of DVSC Futballszervező Zrt. and holder of the casino concession in Debrecen and Nyíregyháza), as the only casino concession holders in Hungary, could get into the area of online sports gambling, but this was not approved even by the legislative committee, where Fidesz holds the majority. The amendment of the law on gambling, effective since October 2015, has made the operation of online casinos conditional on the concessions issued earlier (free of charge), therefore the funds generated by these also go into
the pockets of the government commissioner for films and Mr. Szima. The licensing procedure was criticized by the Advocate General of the Union as well.

http://nol.hu/gazdasag/afat-sem-fizetnek-vajna-kaszinoi-1470607
https://444.hu/2014/07/31/figyelo-andy-vajna-7-milliard-forintot-kapott-ajanlakeba-a-kormanytol/
https://www.vg.hu/gazdasag/felepult-a-vajna-birodalom-448456/
http://k-monitor.hu/adatbazis/cimkek/szerencsejatek/koncesszio

4. The sale of TV2

The German owner of ProSiebenSat.1 Company Group had been considering the sale of the loss-producing MTM-SBS Zrt. Company group, which also includes TV2, the second largest Hungarian commercial TV, and decided to disinvest its companies in East Europe. Ultimately, on 23 December 2013 it was announced that MTM-SBS, the company that also holds the cable channels of SuperTV2, FEM3, PRO4 in its portfolio, had been purchased, together with all of its assets, by the companies of Zsolt Simon, the chief executive officer and Yvonne Dederick, director of operations. Parties of the opposition believed that Fidesz-related background persons were behind the unsecured transactions, which the new owners wanted to fund from advertising revenues of the State collected by TV2. Simon and Dederick declared that they purchased the 100 percent equity package of the company without the necessary private capital. This also confirms the theory that in fact, TV2 became the property of investors well-connected with the government. TV2 issued an announcement in which they stated that “ProSiebenSat.1 sold the company in a seller's credit scheme, in which the buyers will repay the selling price over a certain time defined in the contract.” Earlier Infocenter, the company of Zsolt Nyerges was reported as having tried to purchase a national commercial channel persistently.

The story of TV2 continued in September 2015, when Andy Vajna’s company, Magyar Broadcasting Co. Kft, announced that it had purchased the channel group from company managers Yvonne Dederick and Zsolt Simon. Two hours later Megapolis Média, the company of Károly Fonyó - a business partner of Lajos Simicska - announced: they had exercised their option right on Tuesday and the TV channel was theirs. Later on the channel issued a publication in which they stated: the option right of Megapolis was the security of the loan that Yvonne Dederick and Zsolt Simon, the managers of TV2, borrowed also from a source related to Simicska, so they can purchase TV2 from the former, German owners. They state that according to the publication, half of this loan was repaid within a short time, but allegedly, the other half was not required to be repaid for the time being, based on an oral agreement, and the lender did not even ask recently that the money should be repaid. This seems to prove that Simicska and his partners were in the background in the change of owners of 2013 already.
The fate of the channel was decided in January 2016, when the company court registered Andy Vajna as the owner of the company operating TV2. According to information obtained by the now defunct Népszabadság, Andy Vajna received a loan from Eximbank and OTP for the purchase of the channel. The terms of the loan of EXIM cannot be obtained, because in the opinion of the bank and its supervisor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the loan was lent on a market basis, it is not considered a public fund. Andy Vajna’s Tx2 Kft. probably has received about twenty times as much advertising money from the state than RTL Group did, which is a company roughly comparable to it.

https://index.hu/kultur/media/2015/10/15/fonyo_karoly_ugy_adtak_el_a_tv2-t_hogy_nem_volt_az_ovek/
http://nol.hu/belfold/vajna-kedveert-mar-villamgyors-volt-a-cegbirosag-1583387

5. The tobacco kiosk deal

On the grounds of suppression of smoking, in 2012 the Government introduced new regulations on tobacco retail. The tobacco kiosk concessions were awarded non-transparently, after which a series of affairs came to light where the concessions were granted to entrepreneurs and their relatives with close ties to the government or to the relevant local government. It turned out about the version of the wording of the law sent for preliminary approval by the Union that it was created on the computer of a user named "János Sánta". This is the name of the manager of Continental Zrt. of Hódmezővásárhely, an acquaintance of János Lázár. That company group of Sánta may have acquired over 500 tobacco kiosks as a result of the law.

Many have indicated that the tobacco kiosks would hardly survive on selling tobacco goods alone, the artificial narrowing of the points of sale - from the earlier 38 thousand to 6 thousand - could result in an explosive proliferation of the black market. And it cannot be prevented in the new system that some large business circles control the tobacco kiosks by secret deals. Finally, in several steps the product offering of tobacco kiosks was extended by gambling, coffee, newspapers, refreshments and alcoholic drinks, so the maintenance of tobacco kiosks became a lucrative business.

Responsible for the reorganization of the market, the Ministry of National Development (NFM) led by Mrs. László Németh, and Nemzeti Dohánykereskedelmi Nonprofit Zrt. published the winners of the first round of the tobacco kiosk tender for a concession of 20 years, which partitioned the majority of the tobacco market. The redistribution of the market may have given an advantage to those with a political clout.
While still a representative of Fidesz, Ákos Hadházy (LMP) made a sound recording in the party group meeting in Szekszárd on how the local Fidesz discussed the awarding of the tobacco kiosk concessions. Ultimately, investigation of this matter was closed by stating that no act of crime could be determined, the grant application materials viewed by them did not contain data implying significant influencing. Later on, the prosecuting authority rejected investigation of the lawfulness of the tobacco kiosk tender, by stating that when the right of tobacco goods retail was transferred, Mrs. László Németh made a decision in the scope of management of national assets. However, decisions made in the scope of asset management do not belong to the powers of supervision of legality of the prosecutor, as defined in the law on the prosecuting authority. A map was also created on the suspicious concessions, and the documentation of the assessments were obtained by the Democratic Coalition by litigation from NFM: in the assessment committee the ministries were represented by Andrea Bagoly, Márton Bitay, Balázs Czipa, Andrea Gulyás, Ádám Hernádi, Balázs Kohut, András László, Áron Márk Lenner, Karina Mészáros, Péter Mihalovics, Krisztina Orbán and Szilárd Pindroch.

https://index.hu/belfold/2013/04/30/trafikmutyi-terkep/
https://index.hu/belfold/2014/08/01/ime_a_trafikmutyi_teljes_dokumentacioja/
https://444.hu/2013/05/27/matolcsyek-es-a-continental-2009-ben-kezdtek-elokesziteni-a-trafiktorvenyt
Laki Mihály - A trafikpiac átalakulása és átalakítása (esettanulmány)

6. The banning scandal

In October 2014 the news that the United States restricted the entry of 6 Hungarian citizens, including Ildikó Vida (the then president of the Tax Authority), caused an uproar. The reasons: they were aware that the affected persons were engaged in or benefited from activities related to corruption. Soon after the announcement it turned out that the case was related to the actions of some persons aimed at obtaining a bribe from American company Bunge, dealing with vegetable oil. Bunge indicated that to its home country, and they also offered their help to the Hungarian authorities against VAT fraud. Bunge suspected that the threads of VAT frauds committed by its competitors lead to higher echelons, since no meaningful progress was made in this case, despite the series of negotiations with the tax authority. In addition, Washington offered a partnership to Hungary in the combat against VAT fraud. Although the tax authority has conducted two investigations, these did not produce any results. The scandal unleashed by András Horváth, who published his report on VAT fraud, did not bring about any meaningful change in the attitude of NAV, either. Although Ildikó Vida, President of the Tax Authority, conducted an audit at the organization, she found everything in order.
The lobbyist of the company was approached by Viktor Tábor, who (according to the indictment of the prosecuting authority of 2015) was peddling influence, pretending bribery. In 2014 Tábor may have said to the lobbyist of Bunge, Tamás Torba, that he could arrange the reduction of the VAT on vegetable oil from 27 to 5 per cent, and that the VAT reclaim of one of the competitors of the company would be withheld. Tábor referred to his acquaintance with Péter Heim, in exchange he requested that 2 billion forints should be paid to a specifically identified foundation. After this approach, Bunge referred the case to the embassy, the banning was the result of this action. The Budapest Capital Regional Court, which tried the matter in the first instance, condemned the accused person for two counts of influence peddling, and imposed a sentence of incarceration of two years, suspended for three years, on Tábor. The prosecuting authority found that in reality, Tábor was not in connection with Heim, who was heard as a witness. However, in the spring of 2017 the sentence was overturned. Ultimately, Ildikó Vida resigned from her office as the head of the tax authority, her office was taken over by András Tállai, as a secretary of state for taxation. The full list of the banned persons is not public to this day.


7. **MNB foundations**

The National Bank of Hungary (Bank) transferred two hundred billion forints in 2014 to its newly established foundations, from its FX gains. The central bank justified it by stating that it was starting its own training courses in economics, it was spending this money on training activities, and most of these funds would be invested in government securities. There has been much criticism about the management of these foundations. The presidents of the boards of the foundations received seven times the monthly minimum wage, and even the members received half a million forints monthly. In fact, the current and former leaders of the MNB sat on the boards that approved the spending of the foundations and were intended to control their operation. Before the end of the year another 62 billion forints was added to the original grant of two hundred billion. The foundations rejected to give an account of their spending. In the opinion of Transparency International, mismanagement may have been committed by the spending of public funds through the foundations.

Referring to the Constitutional Court, TI has proven that the foundations of the MNB “undoubtedly manage public funds and perform public duties”, which led to the disclosure of several agreements on 22 April 2016. The following information turned out from the agreements, among others: in the space of one
and a half years, over 500 million forints were paid to New Wave Production Kft., which is also the publisher of the Vs.hu portal. Later on it turned out that the owner of the company is István Száraz, who then purchased the Origo news portal. Later Ádám Matolcsy (the son of the governor of the central bank) became the owner of the company. The foundations granted 70 million forints to the author of the book written about governor of the central bank György Matolcsy, furthermore, each of them separately ordered the analysis titled “Domestic and Global Economic and Financial Trends”, for 750 thousand forints, even though the contents of the copies were identical (otherwise this analysis mainly summarized the papers of the MNB). BanKonzult is owned by Tamás Szemerey, who is a nephew of Matolcsy. His wife is Gabriella Szemerey, the director of PADA.

In the opinion of TI, in reality, it was the MNB that spent the money through the Pallas Athéné foundations. Since the leaders of the MNB are public officials for the purposes of criminal law, what happens also raises the suspicion of abuse of office. For the above, charges were pressed to Chief Prosecutor Péter Polt. The prosecuting authority did not even assess the charges. The real property developments of the foundations of the central bank were also criticized. In 2017 a budget of 3.6 billion was allocated for the renovation and remodelling of the property at 21 Úri street, serving as the seat of Pallas Athéné Domus Animae (PADA) Foundation, and simultaneously PADA published a public procurement contract notice for the interior works of Villa Budapest, a property located on the slope of Castle Hill, on which almost five billion forints had been spent up to that time. This contract of almost one billion was awarded to the consortium of Magyar Építő Zrt., a company in which László Szíjj (Duna Aszfált) holds an interest, and Raw Development Kft., a company with owners who are attached in many ways to Tamás Szemerey, the nephew of governor of the central bank Tamás Matolcsy. The Public Procurement Arbitration Board initiated an investigation in over one hundred cases concerning the foundations of the MNB, on procurement without competitive bidding, and found in September 2017 that the foundations concluded every tenth contact of theirs illegitimately. The European Central Bank warned the MNB several times because of the functioning of the foundations, since they interfered with the operation of the market of government securities by their purchases of government securities, and that of the real estate market by their purchases of real estate, and they performed a function of the state by their educational activities. Despite the criticisms, the foundations plan on further real estate developments and have deposited significant amounts in Növekedési Hitel Bank of Szemerey. According to press news, the prosecutor's office only ordered investigation in one case of falsification of documents.

https://index.hu/gazdasag/2016/04/21/mnb_cegek_alapitvanyok/
http://magyarnarancs.hu/publicisztika/elvesziti-ugyeszssegjellet-100274
8. The Quaestor affair

After the collapse of Buda-Cash brokerage company and the filing for bankruptcy by Quaestor Financial Hrurira Kft., the previous evening, on 10 March 2015 the MNB partially suspended the trading license of Quaestor Értékpapír-kereskedelmi és Befektetési Zrt. It was suspected that of the 210 billion forints of bonds issued by the company, 150 billion forints’ worth of bonds were fictitious. The National Investigation Office initiated an investigation in the case, on the suspicion of fraud, against an unknown perpetrator, and on 26 March Csaba Tarsoly, the owner of the Quaestor companies, was arrested as a suspect. Several customers may have been informed on the collapse, so they bailed out their money in due time. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which is led by Péter Szijjártó and is tied to Quaestor in the case of the commercial office in Moscow, among others, bailed out the capital of the Hungarian National Trading House from Quaestor one day before the scandal erupted, for which both PM and Jobbik pressed charges. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied having insider information, they stated that they had removed their funds from Quaestor on the instruction of the prime minister, however, according to Pestisrákok, Secretary of State Balázs Kohut was dismissed from the Foreign Ministry related to this case. Viktor Orbán acknowledged: he ordered that the ministries empty their accounts held with brokerage firms, since after the collapse of Buda-Cash he was of the opinion that “in a period threatened by the domino effect not one forint of public funds should be deposited with brokerage companies.” In addition, several clients, such as a former chauffeur of the prosecutor’s office and the husband of the spokesman of Quaestor, removed their funds from Quaestor in the last minute. According to witness confessions, these were not necessarily requested by the clients, rather the managers of Quaestor made a last ditch effort to gain favours by paying off the VIP clients. However, the funds of several dozen municipalities got stuck in the brokerage company. Details of this fraud were explored by Márton Kasnyik in a series of articles issued with the title of The Quaestor Affair.

The lawsuit against Csaba Tarsoly and his associates is in progress. One expert witness was excluded from the case, since he has ties with the liquidator of one of the companies involved in the lawsuit as an injured party. The indictment was based on this expert opinion, therefore the entire lawsuit had to be restarted because of that, by producing expert evidence. In the underlying case, in February 2016 the Chief Prosecutor's Office of Budapest submitted an indictment against a total of 11 persons for embezzlement, fraud and other crimes committed in a criminal organization, which procedure is currently in the judicial phase. Many observers talked about bias, when it turned out that: The daughter of Péter Polt is the life partner of the personal secretary of Tarsoly, and his wife held an executive position at the supervisory authority of Quaestor. Back in December 2015 the investigating authority detached the sub-case affected by the so-called mismanagement of Soltvadkert from the underlying case, in which the
investigators interrogated five suspects on the reasonable suspicion of mismanagement causing especially significant pecuniary disadvantage. The settlement of the losses, which has been also highly controversial, is still in progress, and the victims of the case held several demonstrations against the procedure. We may never know the answer to the question of why the financial supervisory authority (HFSA, then the MNB) had not detected the abuses much earlier, and whether Tarsoly and his associates had been relying on political connections.

https://tldr.444.hu/2016/10/27/kifosztottak-a-kicsiket-hogy-kifizethessek-a-nagyokat
https://tldr.444.hu/2016/11/15/nincs-az-isten-hogy-a-penzugyi-felugyeletnel-ne-tudtak-volna-mi-folyik-a-quaestornal
https://444.hu/2017/05/31/a-quaestor-vagyon-elkotyavetyeselese-a-terv-szerint-halad

9. Paks 2

Hungary and Russia signed an agreement in January 2014 on the expansion of the nuclear power plant of Paks. Under this Agreement, between 2014 and 2025 the Russian State would provide a credit facility of 10 billion euros to Hungary for the project, with an interest of 4 to 5 per cent. This covers 80 per cent of the total costs of the project. The Parliament accepted the contract in February 2014 subsequently, without knowing the details of the agreement. The Parliament decided in March 2015 that the business and technical data included in the contracts of Russian and Hungarian entities and subcontractors commissioned to implement the project, furthermore, the implementation agreements and the data related to the preparation of the agreement and underlying the decisions cannot be disclosed as data of public interest for a term of 30 years beginning from their inception. The European Commission has indicated that Brussels has been assessing the transaction from the aspect of public procurement, since the State of Hungary awarded the right of implementation to the giant corporation Rosatom, in charge of the nuclear energy industry of the State of Russia.

At the end of February 2017 (probably as a result of intervention by lobbyist Klaus Mangold, hired by the State of Hungary), the European Commission authorized the state aid for the expansion of the nuclear power plant of Paks. After that, the Government of Austria sued Hungary at the European Court of Justice. Although the study was published on the expansion of Paks, the credibility of the retained company is questionable, since a former secretary of state, Gábor Orbán was involved in the creation of the study. According to the study, block no. 2 will be self-sustaining and will not require state aid, it will also generate 180MW of
electricity. However, it can only be self-sustaining if they will be able to sell the electricity at a price of 85 euros. According to a study made on the order of Greenpeace, if the estimations contained in the study of the State are compared to the forecasts of the Energy Agency and the French Court of Auditors, there is no scenario under which Paks 2 would generate a profit. In their opinion the new block would generate electricity at a higher price in any case than the prices of the international market. Furthermore, they would have to sell the electricity at least at a price of 103 euros for the investment to be self-sustaining. The agreement concluded with the Russian party has also been widely criticized because it will expose the country to the Russians from a geopolitical aspect as well.

Professional organizations also challenged the environmental license of the project, which has become legally conclusive since then. In addition to the issues of foreign debt and questionable return on investment, the non-transparent management also runs the risk of corruption, which is also highly exposed to the lobbying activities of Russian and Western companies. This creates the threat that Hungarian companies would be excluded from the works related to the expansion. However, companies with good ties to the government have already appeared around Paks 2, as can be seen from the agreements of MVM Paks II Zrt. concluded between 2014 and 2016, disclosed by court order. In 2014 MVM Paks II Zrt. spent one billion forints on the promotion of the project, most of which went to Inter Media Group Kft., a company associated with Simicska, but the media interests and the companies of Tibor Kuna also benefitted from the project. Although the project is just starting, last year a sum of 5.3 billion forints was already spent on the wages of the employees of the LTD. Although the Government is still talking about the benefits of funding by the Russians, at the beginning of 2018 it started to make prepayments and they are trying to replace the loan from Moscow with a credit with better terms.


10. The no. 4 subway

Gábor Demszky, the mayor of Budapest at the time, signed a contract with the Government on the expansion of the no. 4 subway line in 2003. Transport experts claimed from the beginning that the subway line was not necessary in its planned form, because the sums allocated to this project could be used more efficiently to improve the transport of the capital. The funding of this major investment was
enabled by the budgetary cycle of the Union beginning from 2004. In order to receive funds of 260 billion forints from the Union, the return on investment indicators of the feasibility study had to be overwritten. When the plans were reworked, a total cost of 480 billion forints was indicated as necessary for the implementation of the first and the second stage. Brussels authorized the aid for the support of the first stage of the no. 4 subway line, but as opposed to the expected sum of 260 billion forints, the Union only granted 181 billion forints for that, on the ground that the capital city concluded 11 of the 50 contracts without open tendering, therefore the EU did not finance the prices of these. Most of these funds were provided by the European Investment Bank. In 2009 DBR, the company in charge of implementation, stated: the costs of the first stage alone are as high as 365.5 billion forints, and the completion of the project could drag on until 2013. In 2011 István Tarlós, the new mayor announced that the EU would not support the construction of the second stage, the capital did not have funds for that on itself. Eventually, in 2012 the Government set the total budget of the first stage, from Kelenföld Railway station to Keleti Station, at 452.5 billion forints, of which 180.8 billion was paid by the EU, 193.7 billion by the State of Hungary and 78 billion by the Municipality of Budapest. The line was delivered in March 2014.

The tunnels were drilled by Bamco Consortium made up of Vinci of France, subsidiaries of Strabag of Germany and Hídépítő Zrt. In addition to them, Swietelsky Építő Kft. also participated in the construction of the stations. The subway cars were supplied by Alstom of France. It only became public information from the docket of the Hagyó case in 2011 that according to the confession of Attila Antal, a former chief executive officer of BKV, a person designated to be an intermediary by Miklós Hagyó requested a bribe of 2 billion forints because they helped the company with winning the interior architecture tender of the subway in the value of 40 billion. Swietelsky denied the accusations. In the same year the investigation of the State Audit Court was closed with an accusation for mismanagement, having explored several irregularities concerning the no. 4 subway line. According to the report of the Audit Court, the State and the Capital suffered significant financial losses from the irregularly conducted public procurement, caused by disbursements not proportionate with performance and by irresponsible contracting practice. Published in January 2017, the OLAF report explored a damage of about 167 billion forints in the no. 4 subway investment project, therefore the European Commission may impose a fine of 76.6 billion forints (87 billion forints according to other sources) on Hungary. The report identified former prime minister Péter Medgyessy, the Municipality of Budapest at the time, led by MSZP-SZDSZ, and Alstom as implicated in the case. According to István Tarlós, the present mayor of Budapest, ultimately the amount to be refunded may be about 59 billion forints, which may paid by the Government. The Hungarian authorities investigated this case after
January 2011, currently the proceedings are in progress because of the crime of bribery committed by misconduct by public officials in high-level offices and other crimes, so far no politically exposed person has been suspected in this case.

https://index.hu/belfold/2017/02/02/kiszivargott_a_4-es_metros_korrupciot_vizsgalo_olaf-jelentes/
https://asz.hu/storage/files/files/%C3%96sszes-jelent%C3%A9s/2010/1023j000.pdf?ctid=731

11. BKV-Alstom subway cars

In 2006 the Municipality of Budapest concluded an agreement with Alstom of France on the production of the cars of the no. 4 subway. However, owing to quality complaints, the authorities denied the issue of the licenses required for the operation of the cars, therefore Budapest rescinded the agreement for failure to deliver in due time. However, it was provided in the agreement that Alstom may not be held liable if the licenses for the metro cars cannot be obtained. This provision served as a basis for the company when it approached the Court of Nanterre, which declared, in the first instance, the rescission of the agreement by the Capital illegitimate, and forbid the banks to enable BKV to invoke the fulfillment guarantee and to refund the advance paid by the transport company. Finally, after changing the braking system the subway cars received the license in 2012.

At the end of 2015 the temporary committee of inquiry of the Municipality of Budapest once again brought the Alstom public procurement under scrutiny, after the Serious Fraud Office of the United Kingdom accused executives of Alstom of having given - or having consented to giving - a total bribe of 2.3 million euros to officials, agents of BKV, in order to influence the transport company of Budapest to purchase the cars of Alstom. This amount was pretended to be a fee payable under a consulting agreement concluded between Alstom and Eurocontact Public Affairs GmbH of Austria on 8 June 2006. In January 2016 the committee of inquiry concluded that “it would have been very difficult” for any company other than Alstom to win the procurement, however, it failed to identify the persons responsible and benefitting from the corruption scandal. At the time of the procurement of the subway cars, former socialist head of government Péter Medgyessy received 180 million forints from Alstom for his advice. The investigative authorities suspect two persons, and an international arrest warrant has been issued against a third person.

https://index.hu/belfold/budapest/2017/01/09/jogszerutlen_volt_az_alstom-metrokocsik_beszerzese/
**12. Settlement bond**

By purchasing a settlement bond, citizens of non-EU member states acquire residence permit for the Schengen zone, a settlement permit after six months, which enables them to travel freely and establish undertakings in the Schengen zone. The validity of this latter is for an indefinite term, it is given for life, furthermore, family members may also acquire rights for the purpose of family reunification. The term of this bond is 5 years, it is repurchased upon expiry by the State of Hungary at the original face value. The traders of the Government settlement bond have been established exclusively for that purpose, mainly as offshore companies registered abroad. They obtained the trading right under an individual decision of the Economic Committee. They earn their profit from two sources: the brokerage fee and the outstanding balance between the discounted purchase and payment of the bond at face value. From 2015 settlement bonds have been on sale in Hungary for 300,000 euros (the initial price of 250,000 euros went up). Until 31 August 2016 12,299 Government settlement bonds had been subscribed by 3,915 persons, but we have no way to find out exactly which were the brokerage companies: the data of agreements concluded with Government Debt Management Agency Ltd. are classified as “business secrets.” The system is designed in such a way that in reality not one single government bond will come into the possession of any foreign citizen planning to settle down, so the mysterious intermediaries have a significant latitude - and they operate at a high profit rate.

As the chairperson of the Economic Committee of the Parliament, Antal Rogán initiated the development of the settlement bond scheme in 2012. The law was worded by a Fidesz-related legal office, which has been allowed since then to participate in the management of administrative affairs. One of the beneficiaries of the system that was launched in 2013 was the intermediary Arton Capital Kft., which also has ties with Rogán: the owner of the company is Radosztina Balogh, a former university mate of the politician. The office of the company was robbed in the autumn of 2017, the money and the documentation of the bond business were stolen.

Since the start of the system several controversies have come to light. A Russian tax fraudster who was conclusively sentenced in his home country also received an opportunity for settlement, he practically laundered his money clean in the bonds of the State of Hungary. His certificate of good conduct was issued by his place of residence in a Caribbean tax haven. It was stated by several sources that the Economic Committee has given authorization to several offshore companies - partially or fully with a Hungarian background - for brokerage, when it distributed the trading rights to them for the respective countries. In the Chinese market, which produced the highest number of subscriptions by far, a company registered in Grand Cayman is the broker, which is represented by the Chinese
banker who booked a helicopter sightseeing for Árpád Habony in Hong Kong. This network with non-transparent ownership, income or taxation conditions, is an excellent tool for the redistribution of part of the funds collected from persons wanting to settle down, therefore it cannot be excluded that some of the profit ultimately lines the pockets of decision-makers related to the government.

It was also claimed that the bond programme does not make sense economically: as other forms of financing became cheaper, the country lost money, while the intermediaries and those involved in the procedure realized a profit. According to press news, it is self-explanatory for the selected intermediaries that they work with Kosik Legal Office, which has ties to Habony and Rogán. According to the calculations of hvg.hu, so far the artificially high interests of this new type of government securities introduced in 2013 has cost the taxpayers 5 to 6 billion forints. The offshore trading companies realized a revenue of over 80 billion forints from the brokerage fees. After a series of scandals and political pressure, the administration promised that the system would be reviewed.

In January 2017, not long after the government had made the decision on phasing out this scheme, Magyar Nemzet won a lawsuit against the Government Debt Management Agency (ÁKK), in which the Metropolitan Court of Budapest qualified the bond purchase data of the individual companies as data of public interest. In November 2017 Magyar Nemzet made a report on the bond programme based on the final data, although owing to family reunifications, at that point it could not be found out how many residence permits had been issued under the programme. According to MN, the offshore companies realized a revenue of 145.9 billion forints, to which a profit of 9.6 billion forints should be added, which was earned by the office of Kristóf Kosik. By 2017, the yield of the secondary market had dropped to 0.15%, this meant that financing had become thirteen times cheaper compared to the interest of two per cent of the settlement bonds. In 2017 only, the Government lost 16.4 billion forints on the bond programme, which raises the suspicion of mismanagement. In addition, in several cases the licensing procedure of companies participating in the settlement bonds business may have been irregular. The committee may have conducted the procedure aimed at the approval of the enterprises on the basis of incomplete data and documents. Despite the anomalies explored by the press in detail, Chief Prosecutor Péter Polt did not commence proceedings in the case.

https://g7.24.hu/allam/20180202/hemzsegtek-a-szabalytalansagok-roganek-letelepedesi-kotvenyprogramjaban-buntetoagy-lehet/
https://mno.hu/gazdasag/a-letelepedesikotveny-program-a-magyarorszagi-korrupcio-mercejevel-merve-is-durva-bunugy-2433631
The State purchased Magyar Kereskedelmi Bank in 2014 from the provincial Bank of Bavaria, then made it financially viable. According to the analysis of Index, by the end of the transaction the State had become poorer by at least 12-17 billion tax forints. From December 2014 the National Bank of Hungary has exercised the rights of the owner over the bank. The privatization of the bank was closed in June 2016: 45 per cent of MKB is owned by METIS Private Capital Fund of Hungary, 45 per cent by Blue Robin Investment, a company with an international background, and 10 per cent by Pannónia Pension Fund. There were many uncertainties about members of the consortium that purchased the bank: for example, Blue Robin was registered in Luxembourg only a few months before the purchase of the Hungarian bank, with quite a modest registered capital and an ownership structure that is hardly transparent. According to information obtained by Figyelő, probably Ádám Balogh and his associates, who came from MNB, acquired a significant minority shareholding as managers of MKB, in such a manner that the investor of the bank, registered in Singapore and Luxembourg, let the management of MKB acquire two-third of its own shareholding of 45 per cent. Magyar Narancs initiated a lawsuit for identifying the actual owners: MNB rejected the disclosure of the data, therefore the weekly paper filed a lawsuit with the support of Transparency International and with the involvement of Dániel Karsai Legal Office, which it won in the first instance. Barna Semsey, who introduced himself at a press briefing as advisor to Blue Robin, actually stated that “the final circle of investors will not be public.”

Finally, in 2017 the owners were identified. As the owners of Blue Robin, chief executive officer Ádám Balog, a man trusted by György Matolcsy and Tamás Szemerey, owner of the competitor Növekedési Hitel Bank - and also the nephew of governor of the central bank György Matolcsy - became the leading owners of MKB together with the employees of the bank, and in 2018 they increased their shareholding to 32.9 per cent. The funds necessary for the acquisition of this position were provided by loans. At the end of the summer of 2017 it also turned out that through Metis, Konzum Investment Fund Manager required an indirect shareholding, while Lőrinc Mészáros and Konzum Nyrt. acquired a direct controlling interest in MKB Bank. The fact that associates of Orbán and Matolcsy are in control of the bank enabled the funding of such media purchases as the acquisition of Origo or TV2.

https://index.hu/gazdasag/2017/05/09/mkb_bankmentes_szanallas_eladas_matolcsy_szemerey_balog_adam/
14. The NTCA (NAV) Scandal

The scandal was unleashed in November 2013 by András Horváth, the professional coordinator of the National Tax and Customs Administration of Hungary (NAV) in charge of audits, by claiming: at the NTCA a well-defined group of taxpayers, the members of which are mainly key taxpayers, enjoyed a privileged status. According to Horváth, who resigned after communicating this, the cross-border VAT fraud may cause a loss of one thousand billion forints annually to the central budget (this is an exaggerated amount even according to experts), therefore he filed charges because of abuse of office. Horváth claimed that major retail chains and the community of their suppliers are involved in this fraud, and they pay less taxes than would be justified by their economic performance. They can do so because there are never any meaningful tax audits aimed at VAT and public dues at these companies, or if there still is an audit, it gets closed without any meaningful finding (detection of tax owed). The NTCA denied these accusations and argued by pointing out: findings by the tax authority in the scope of key taxpayers amount to approximately 70 billion forints annually.

In one of the investigations, a grain producing company (Delta Feed Kft.) was audited, which sold grains for 6 billion forints annually, without having any warehousing or transport capacity of its own. However, an NTCA employee named Andrea F. had the audit of one of the suppliers of the grain producing company terminated, by order received from the top level, she claimed. The police proposed that charges be pressed against this NTCA employee. In terms of financial losses, the largest case was that of General Electric. The Directorate of Key Affairs (KÜIG) found tax owed in the amount of 42 billion forints, about which Zsolt H., the director of KÜIG also made a confession, and the allegation was also supported by the Central Office. However, at the end of a discussion, a representative of GE said that he would take care of this matter with Katalin S., the supervisor of Zsolt H. After that, the employees of KÜIG were summoned to the Central Office of NTCA, where the deputy of Katalin S. said that professionally they did not agree with the record. In fact, it was the Central Office that stopped the investigation. In the opinion of the police, the debate within NTCA was about professional issues, therefore no abuse occurred. The investigations started as a result of the scandal unleashed by Horváth were closed by the statement of the police to the effect that with one exception no crime was committed in the investigated matters, and the investigation was terminated in that one matter as well. Later on, András Horváth was summoned as a suspect in the proceedings commenced against him for obtaining data of the tax authority without authorization. However, the prosecuting authority found that none of the crimes which the NTCA, as the accuser charged András Horváth with has been actually committed.

http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20141029-nav-ugy.html
15. Jeremie Funds

The aim of Jeremie type financial instruments is to enable SMEs to borrow loans. Jeremie risk capital programme was started in Hungary in 2009. The funds of 130 billion forints were distributed to 28 capital funds operating in Hungary, and they were operated by private investors selected by tenders. These latter had to commit that they would add 30 per cent of their own funds to the Union funds of 70 per cent. The term of the programme is up to ten years, within that time the funds will have to repay to the EU the money received. Strong doubts emerged at governmental level as well about the efficiency of the programme. A good part of the supports end up being received by circles with good ties to political groups, in several cases the capital funds have lent loans to companies related to the owners. Index found a conspicuously high number of interests in the corporate R+D category held by István Garancsi, a person with close ties to the Prime Minister. Garangold received Union funds of 4.28 billion forints under the Gyurcsány administration. Some of the beneficiaries of the support had close ties to István Garancsi or to persons related to Fidesz. The start-up funds often went to support activities that were already in operation and cannot be considered innovative.

The EU criticised that companies “belonging to a certain circle of investors” were appointed to pay the funds. Several of the challenged projects were related those Zsolt Hernádi, the chairman-chief executive officer of MOL. Hernádi was selected in 2013 already, and his fund management company Gran Private Equity received 3 billion forints to help start-up companies. The purpose is to support start-ups that perform innovative activities. However, according to an employee of MFB, the fund management company owned by the head of MOL did not intend to pay the funds to such companies. The documents processed by Direkt36 point out several problems that are contrary to the original aims of the programme, and sometimes violate rules. It turned out, among others, that the capital fund managed by the company of Hernádi supported a relative of Hernádi and a close acquaintance of his by 840 million forints, to enable them to conduct real property deals. It also turned out that the fund of Hernádi closely cooperated with the fund of Garancsi, also a participant of the programme, and it even supported an interest of the businessman by several hundred millions. GB & Partners, the company of Ágoston Gubicza was the manager of several Jeremie funds where the controversial investments were made. After the end of the Jeremie period, the company won a tender of Eximbank, a bank owned by the State of Hungary, for a similar venture capital programme. According to Direkt36, the fact that Gubicza and Rogán are acquainted may have played a role in that.
Furthermore, it also turned out from the leaked documents that the EU has found specific irregularities in the programme, related to the passivity of the Hungarian authorities and also related to the fact that such companies (e.g. companies based in Budapest) also received support that would not have qualified for the support according to their venue of operation. Partly owing to the practice of Hernádi and his company, the disbursement of the funds was suspended for some time, and a fine of 4.3 billion forints was imposed. Anomalies also happened at funds not closely related to politics, which reveals errors in the system of management. Penal proceedings were also initiated against one of the company groups: in the audit of Netfone it could not be determined whether the Hong Kong-based company that sold the software purchased for 170 million forints actually deals with the development or trading of such software. Netfone received funds by way of Morando, a company related to András Tombor, a former advisor to the prime minister. The tendering of financial instruments supporting SMEs had been reworked significantly for the cycle beginning from 2007.


16. The Pharaon affair

Ghaith Pharaon, a Saudi businessman, oil tycoon and a former shareholder of Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), had been wanted by the FBI and Interpol for 25 years. The charges included, among others: fraud, money laundering and bribery, arms trafficking, support of terrorism, trafficking with nuclear technology, smuggling, support to prostitution and illegal immigration. Pharaon applied for and received Hungarian visa in October 2014, after which he visited Hungary five times. Theoretically, the Hungarian authorities were also aware of the arrest warrant issued by the FBI against him, but they did not consider it a threat to national security, even though Pharaon indicated in his first visa application that he wanted to meet Viktor Orbán. In the second application it was not considered a problem that Pharaon failed to submit a certificate of income, on the ground that the consul of Jordan supported his livelihood, while he was trading in real properties worth several billion forints. At first the Hungarian authorities denied that he was the same Pharaon who was wanted by the FBI, but later on it turned out that they were aware of the affair.

The legal counsel of Pharaon, Ammar M. Abu Namous, established five companies in Hungary that bear the name Pharaon. The companies were registered for the residence of Zaid Naffa, Honorary Consul of Jordan, and until September 2016 they had maintained accounts with MKB, a state-owned bank. Their core activity was the purchase of properties under monument protection,
especially castles. It was one of the dinners of Zaid Naffa where Ghaith Pharaon became acquainted with Viktor Orbán. In the meantime the Naffa brothers wanted to apply for Hungarian citizenship, however, Naffa failed to pass the screening of the Counter Terrorism Centre for terrorism twice, presumably because of the unclear background of Pharaon. Even Zsolt Semjén intervened in this matter. When Mártá Demeter, a representative of LMP wanted to ask questions about this matter in the session of the committee of national security, she was excluded without giving grounds.

The headquarters of Postabank was purchased by the company Pharaon-Kappa Kft. from an interest of Turkish businessman Adnan Polat, and from a company whose duty was paid by István Tiborcz upon establishment. Adnan Polat was presented by Kálmán Mészöly to Viktor Orbán in 2005. In 2014 Magyar Nemzeti Kereskedház Zrt. (MNKH), a company with its majority shareholding held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commissioned the company of Adnan Polat, Magyar–Török Kereskedelmi Központ Kft. (ALX) to establish and operate a total of eight local trading houses in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. The manager of the trading house that has been established in the city of Izmir since then is a nephew of Anikó Lévai. In October 2015 a property opposite the house of Viktor Orbán – Cinege u. 4-6./ Kútvolgyi út 70-72. – came into the possession of Pharaon Delta Kft. Ghaith Pharaon died on 6 January 2017, in Beirut. At present there is no investigation in progress concerning the obtaining of visa by Pharaon, and there is no information on what happened to his investments in Hungary, for example, the Zichy–Hadik Castle in Seregélyes, or the Apponyi residence in Hőgyész. Officially the Pharaon companies were never registered for his name, the owner of these is Abu Namous. http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/a-szaudi-szomszed-101257

17. Suspension of Népszabadság

On 8 October 2016, Mediaworks, a company in which Heinrich Pecina holds an interest, suspended the publication of Népszabadság, the Hungarian political daily with the highest circulation, as well as its online version. The publisher explained this action by stating that the circulation of Népszabadság had decreased by 74 per cent over the last 10 years, and it produced a loss of 5 billion forints. According to their statement, the newspaper would be suspended until “the new concept has been developed”. The decision was surprising: Mediaworks spent much money on the development of the online appearance and contents, there was a journalist who was to join the editorial team in November. The court that proceeded in the case determined that Mediaworks violated the Labour Code by suspending the employees, many of the staff members did not have access to any of their personal items, they were excluded from the emails of the company, and the court of register found that Mediaworks proceeded illegitimately when it
failed to ensure representation of employees in the supervisory board of the company that decided on the shutdown of Népszabadság.

Every party of the Parliament except Fidesz and KDNP condemned the termination of Népszabadság. During the weeks prior to its suspension, the newspaper wrote about the girlfriend of governor of MNB György Matolcsy, her luxury apartment loaned from the president of the Banking Association, and on the helicopter journey of Antal Rogán, and because of that it was widely believed that the suspension and termination of the newspaper was motivated by political retribution. However, the shutdown of the newspaper was probably much more motivated by the intention of a complete rearrangement of the media market, which was actually implemented by Fidesz step by step. Heinrich Pecina - who was sentenced for 22 months of suspended incarceration and a fine of about 90 million forints (converted) for mismanagement and embezzlement in another case - later on sold Mediaworks to Optimus Group, which is related to Lőrinc Mészáros. After the change in ownership, significant advertising funds started accruing from the state to press publications of Mediaworks. Pecina did not leave the Hungarian media market. At the end of 2017 he used a newly established company - also taking advantage of the loan by MKB Bank, which is related to Mészáros, he purchased Russmedia, considered the largest local media publisher of East Hungary.

https://444.hu/2016/11/17/ilyen-volt-a-nepszabadsag-halala-belulrol

18. Campaign financing for fictitious political parties

The Parliament adopted the new campaign financing regulation on 10 June 2013, concerning which both the opposition and civic organizations had warned of corruption risks from the very beginning. The suspicion was confirmed, more “fictitious parties” ran in the elections than ever before, political parties with no real agenda, only intended to obtain campaign support. Taking advantage of the anomalies of the regulation, these parties acquired billions without risk. The tax authority was unable to collect fines of about 1.96 billion forints from the fictitious parties that ran in the elections of 2014, and in December 2017 it actually closed these cases. In many cases these parties received less votes than the number of recommendations they had collected, and their financial reports have been also found to contain serious anomalies. In addition, the civic organizations had to go to trial with the State Treasury in order to obtain the financial reports.

The regulation remained unchanged: in the elections of 2018 it is possible to establish a national list by running 27 individual candidates and by collecting 13,500 signatures. The party is entitled to a support of 149 million forints for up to 53 candidates, and a party running 106 candidates can already expect a support of 579 million forints. However, in November 2017 the Parliament decided by a
law amendment adopted with two-third majority, that if a party fails to reach 1 percent in Parliamentary elections, it has to repay the received state support from the assets of the leadership of the party. But the amendment failed to deter the fictitious parties, in 2018 over 400 parties will run for the April elections. János Zuschlag established a political party with a friend for the 2018 elections, but they wanted to obtain the 500 signatures for the candidates not by a real campaign, rather by using data stolen from the database of a financial consulting company. Zuschlag was put in pre-trial detention for prohibited data acquisition committed in a criminal association. In 2014 the name of Zuschlag was associated with the fictitious parties New Hungary and New Dimension. In the case of New Hungary party - which reported a sum of 62 million HUF spent on transport and fuel in the fifty days of the campaign, but still only managed to garner 1,578 votes - the investigation was terminated by a legally binding resolution, but investigation is still progress in the case of other parties.

http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1130182-kamupertok-jogerosen-megusszak

19. Suspicion of fraud in the privatisation of INA

The Directorate against Corruption and Organized Crime of the Croatian prosecuting authority (USKOK) pressed charges against Zsolt Hernádi in 2013. According to USKOK, the head of MOL paid a bribe of ten million euros between 2008 and 2009 through offshore companies to Ivo Sanader, the head of government of Croatia at the time, to enable MOL to acquire the right of control over Croatian oil industrial corporation INA. Sanader was once-condemned in this case - but he was released in November 2015, after his legally effective judgment was overturned owing to procedural errors. MOL and Zsolt Hernádi denied the accusations in each case. The extradition of Zsolt Hernádi was first requested by the Croatian authorities in 2013, at that time it was denied by the Metropolitan Court of Budapest on the ground that an arrest warrant was issued against Zsolt Hernádi in a case in which the Hungarian prosecuting authority has already conducted an investigation, and which was terminated in 2012 for lack of a crime. However, the competent officials of Croatian decided that this would not affect the proceedings against the head of MOL in Croatia, therefore it is in progress to this day: the court of Zagreb County stated that they did not violate the prohibition of trying someone twice in the same case, which was the reason why in November 2015 Zsolt Hernádi was taken off the wanted list of Interpol, and both Germany and Austria suspended the execution of the Croatian arrest warrant against the chairman-chief executive officer of MOL. The arbitration proceedings in the Mol-INA case cost Croatia over 30 million dollars (9 billion forints), since the Hungarian company challenged the steps of Croatia by
initiating arbitration proceedings against the alleged breach of contract by the Croatians. The procedure was initiated by MOL at the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), since it was of the opinion that it had suffered a loss of almost 80 billion forints because the Croatian government failed to implement the agreement on taking over the natural gas division of INA.

The weekly paper Heti Válasz, which processed the sentence of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) adopted in Geneva, found that essentially, Croatia initiated a show trial against the largest Hungarian corporation and its head, Zsolt Hernádi, driven by “national interests and party politics.” In this case the Hungarian government was on the side of Hernádi from the very beginning, both in the procedure and on the diplomatic front. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated in September 2017 that Hungary would not support the application of Croatia to join the OECD owing to the situation that emerged about the investment of MOL in Croatia, and the proceedings of Croatia against the head of MOL. Today MOL, a company with one-quarter state ownership, would like to get rid of INA, in which it holds a share of 49.08 per cent and controlling rights.

20. The Origo affair

In June 2014 the management of Origo unexpectedly terminated the employment of Gergő Sáling, the editor-in-chief of the portal. According to press news, he was dismissed at the insistence of János Lázár (whose suspicious foreign trips were presented in a series of articles in Origo), who found the portal too pro-opposition, and discussed the firing of the editor-in-chief with the managers of the Hungarian and German parent companies, Magyar Telekom and Deutsche Telekom. The entire staff of the political section and many of the journalists left the portal after the scandal erupted, along with several managers, the deputy editor-in-chief and Péter György, the founder of Origo. CEO of Origo Miklós Vaszily who dismissed Sáling, also left the company, later on he became CEO of MTVA. Telekom and János Lázár denied that the editor-in-chief was dismissed as a result of political pressure. After that, the portal was bought from Telekom by New Wave Media, a company managed by István Száraz, a person with strong ties to Tamás Szemerey, relying on a loan received from MKB, under the supervision of the MNB. In 2007 the media company that owns Origo was acquired from New Wave by Ádám Matolcsy, the son of György Matolcsy. In the meantime, Origo became a portal with a pro-government tendency, which has been receiving more and more spending from governmental information campaigns. One month after the arrival of Ádám Matolcsy, New Wave Media received a support of 340 million forints from National Research, Development and Innovation Fund, for the project of the company with the fancy name of Email 2.0, whose rationality has been widely criticized since then.
21. The Elios affair

Elios Innovatív Zrt. was established in 2009. In its first year of operation the company generated sales of 8.4 million forints, but by 2011 this amount had exceeded three billion. The company (and its legal predecessor) was founded, among others, by István Tiborcz, the son-in-law of prime minister Viktor Orbán, who had functioned in various roles in the company until May 2015. From 2010, through Közgép, Lajos Simicska, an oligarch who was pro-government at the time, had also been present as an owner in the company, but he left it two years later - leaving behind a profitable company, and without taking out dividends. In 2014, when István Tiborcz acquired a share of 50 per cent in the company, Elios once again won public procurement contracts in the value of over three billion forints. Most of the revenues of Elios came from projects financed by the Union, and their core activity was the implementation of public lighting systems using LED technology. The first major tender, which later on served as a reference for Elios, was awarded in March 2010 to the company, called ES Holding Zrt. at the time, in the city of Hódmezővásárhely, where the mayor was János Lázár. Several of the public procurement contracts awarded to the company were prepared by Sistrade Kft., whose owner was Endre Hamar, a business partner of István Tiborcz, one of the earlier owners of Elios. According to a published sound recording, Elios was involved one and a half years earlier in a major project, while the contract notice for the project was not even published yet. In March 2015 the police started investigations on four public procurement projects against Elios Zrt., and OLAF also started auditing the KEOP 5.5.0/A/12 and KEOP 5.5.0/K/14 programs for the funding of reconstruction of public lighting systems, which were announced “customized to Elios” according to industrial sources. In April 2015 Tiborcz left Elios and sold his shareholding to West Hungária Bau Kft., which is also extremely successful in the public procurement market.

In January 2018 the investigation of OLAF (which was much more in-depth than that of the Hungarian police) was published, which suggested that the European Commission should withdraw a Union support of 43.7 million euros, i.e. over 13 billion forints, concerning the tenders awarded to Elios Innovatív Zrt. OLAF found a series of irregularities in public procurement, the report contains findings on the manipulation of procedures, as well as the suspicion of conflicts of interests among the participants and suspicion of fraud. According to the information gone public so far, OLAF assessed the Elios contracts of 35 communities, and found each of them affected by abuses; concerning 17 communities it found that organized mechanisms of fraud had been built up. The
The report of OLAF also confirms the suspicion that the staff of the company may have influenced the public lighting tenders in the stage of preparation already.

The external consulting companies may have played an important role in the organization of frauds: the studies prepared by them were used to determine how much money would be available for the renewal of public lighting, i.e. how much the winner will receive. In the majority of the cities that later awarded the implementation contract to Elios this expert was Sistrade in 12 cases (involved in preparations or as a project manager), and Tender-Network in 13 cases, but Eupro Projektmenedzsment Kft., a company also related to Endre Hamar, also appeared. In several cases the competitors can be also associates with Elios: the proposal of INS Energia Kft. (an independent auditor) submitted to the city leadership of Szolnok was signed by Ivette Mancz, one of the managers of Elios and András Puskás, the managing director of Sistrade. SMHV Energetika Kft. was involved in 22 Elios projects, mainly as a subcontractor of the company managed by Tiborcz, but sometimes as a competitor. According to the report of OLAF, it has happened that the proposal of SMHV and those of two other companies were written on the same computer. In addition, the OLAF report mentions Tungsram-Schréder Zrt., which was first a competitor, then a regular supplier of Elios, to which it supplied its goods cheaper compared to the competitors.

The general director of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) proposed in its recommendation dated 22 December 2017 that the Hungarian prosecuting authority should start penal proceedings concerning the public lighting projects implemented by Elios Zrt.; as a result, an investigation was ordered (once again) on 22 January 2018 for the crime of budgetary fraud and other acts of crime. This will be conducted (once again, after a former investigation closed without results) by the Office of Investigations under the docket number of 33/2018 bü.


22. Felcsúti Utánpótlás Neveléséért (For the Youth Training of Felcsút) Foundation

The Government has created very favourable conditions to For the Youth Training of Felcsút (FUNA), established in 2006 and chaired by Lőrinc Mészáros, the mayor of Felcsút, for the development of its hospitality and sports infrastructure. Orbán is not only the founder of FUNA: he let his land of a total of 5035 m², located in the internal part of the village and owned by multiple parties, be used by the Foundation for a term of 50 years, and he himself often uses the facilities of the foundation. The government discards any criticisms of
the developments of the native village of 1800 inhabitants of the Prime Minister as political criticisms directed against Viktor Orbán. In the village, in 2014 the team of Puskás Ferenc Football Academy received a stadium with a capacity of 3500 spectators, built on a budget of 3.8 billion forints, which is located just a few meters from the house of the Orbán family. The resource was provided to FUNA from the corporation tax offered in the TAO system implemented in 2011, by companies that have not been identified so far, although according to the government these are not public funds. several court sentences contradict this opinion. FUNA received more TAO supports than any other sports organization, a total of 14 billion forints, and in 2017 it received more funds than ever before. Although when the TAO system was implemented, support to youth training and to grassroots sports were emphasized, the TAO funds were also used in Felcsút to build a “Makovecz style boiler room”, parks and roads, a youth hostel and a conference center. In the summer of 2017, the TAO system was changed by a law amendment, to suit the needs of Felcsút.

In 2015, by a targeted grant the Government awarded an EU support of 600 million forints to FUNA for the construction of the light railway of Felcsút, which was declared a key investment. Earlier it was written in the press that the plans anticipated an unrealistically high number of passengers, 7.5 thousand persons per day, but the published documents indicate a passenger count of 10,000 per year. The utilisation rate of the light railway is not high even in that case: Until July 2017 there had been 53 days when the light railway did not carry one single passenger. At the beginning of 2015 the tender was awarded to For the Youth Training of Felcsút Foundation, which was the author of the idea and the only bidder, and construction was performed by Swietelsky Vasúttechnika Ltd., where Zsolt Homlok, who later became the son-in-law of Mészáros, was the managing director at the time. The company of the mayor of Felcsút, Mészáros és Mészáros Kft. worked on the project as a subcontractor, while project management was the responsibility of Provital Zrt. with Aditus Zrt., companies often involved in tenders awarded to Mészáros. The planned completion date was postponed to the spring of 2016. In September 2017 Átlátszó managed to get hold of the documents of the project. In September 2017, the budgetary committee of the European Parliament visited the light railway of Felcsút in addition to several projects supported by the EU, although at first the government strongly protested against the idea.

https://atlatso.hu/2017/10/10/kipereltuk-es-kozzetesszuk-a-felcsuti-kisvasut-unios-palyazatat/
Severe irregularities may have happened in one of the highest value tenders in the history of Hungary, in the framework public procurement of a total value of 420 billion forints, as well as in the related consulting tenders. This tender is the largest Union-financed (EEEOP) project in Hungary, an infrastructure development programme of four years in the period 2014 to 2020, which was published by the National Development Programme Office. It turned out in the announcement of the results in October last year that several companies belonging to cronies were added to the scope of companies with special privileges, of which the contractors of the individual projects would be selected by “a competitive procedure”. Winners of the giant tender: North Hungarian region: Hódút Kft., Swietelsky Magyarország Kft., Penta Általános Építőipari Kft., M-E 2020 Consortium (Mészáros és Mészáros Kft., EuroAszfalt Kft.), Northeast Hungary region: Colas Alterra Zrt., Swietelsky Magyarország Kft., Penta Általános Építőipari Kft., E-B 2020 Consortium (EuroAszfalt Kft., Betonútépítő Zrt.), Central and East Hungary region: Magyar Vakond Kft., Magyar Bau Holding Zrt., SV KEHOP 2 Consortium (SADE-Magyarország Kft., Veolia Magyarország Zrt., A-G HÍD Consortium (A-Híd Zrt., Híd Zrt., G-Híd Zrt.), West and South Transdanubia region: Szabadics Zrt., Magyar Bau Holding Zrt., E-B 2020 Consortium (EuroAszfalt Kft., Betonútépítő Zrt.), A-G HÍD Consortium (A-Híd Zrt., Híd Zrt., G-Híd Zrt.). This high-value framework agreement of four years restricts competition and carries a significant danger of price-fixing among the 4 creditors selected for each region. Consulting companies involved in the conduct of the tender include enterprises related to Mészáros and Tiborcz and companies subject to the investigation of OLAF (Provital Zrt., CUE-Tender Zrt.). The consulting orders of 5 billion may have been heavily over priced (therefore the auditors of the Union recommend a 100 per cent adjustment concerning the consulting tender.

The European Commission and OLAF have investigated this tender from the beginning. According to the auditors of the European Commission, of the 69 valid bids 62 should have been excluded under the public procurement contract notice, because they failed to complete the sample task accurately. Failure to exclude them is an infringement. Of the 24 winners, there were only 4 who won on the basis of valid tender, therefore most of the framework agreements were concluded based on invalid bids. In the summer the Government also received the draft report of the audit of the committee. Owing to the irregularities, it is expected that some of the Union aid will have to be repaid, despite that, the drawdown of the framework agreement is still in progress. The suspicion of mismanagement and restriction of competition may arise, therefore Benedek Jávor, a politician of Párbeszéd, pressed charges against an unknown perpetrator.
However, the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the Capital is not conducting an investigation in this matter, in their opinion there is no indication of any crime having been committed.


24. The EMIR affair

The Hungarian Government has to repay 18 billion forints to the European Commission owing to regular public procurement contracts related to the establishment of the EMIR system - reported the Information Center of the Government on 14 May 2017. This is the second largest amount that Hungary has to refund (next to the affair of the no. 4 subway line). The reason is that the European Union found severe irregularities in the case of eight contracts concluded between 2003 and 2009. The investigations explored that “the responsible organs of the state awarded to Welt 2000 Kft. the contract for the operation of the IT system that managed 12 thousand billion forints of Union funds by the material breach of the rules of public procurement, in a manner violating the interests of the State of Hungary” claims the report.

From 2002 Klára Dobrev - the wife of Ferenc Gyurcsány - had been the deputy president of the legal predecessor of the National Development Agency until August 2004 - wrote Origo about this case. Dobrev was the supervisor of the general department of monitoring methodology, which was in charge of managing EMIR. According to the records of the meeting of the competent inter-ministerial committee held in 2003 and 2004, Klára Dobrev was the officer in charge of the items of the agenda on EMIR. The article of Origo states that Dobrev “played a major role” in the EMIR affair and in concluding the agreements with Welt 2000 Kft. The amount to be repaid is eighteen billion forints because this is the amount of orders granted to Welt 2000 Kft. since the start of the programme in 2004. The majority owner and the managing director of the company was András Komáromi, who was a representative of the Socialist Party at the municipality of Kőbánya. At the end of 2014, the State of Hungary purchased the business quotas of Welt 2000 Kft., “to be able to remedy this failure.” The state exerted severe pressure on the owners for the sale of the company - this may have been related to the death of Komáromi on the day following the transaction. In 2017 the Prime Minister’s Office waived the debt of 600 million forints of the legal successor of the company (Új Világ Kft.).

According to Péter Heil, former Vice President of the National Development Agency, so far 9 audits have assessed the system, including the audit of the European Commission in 2009. In his opinion it was not corruption, rather procedural errors. In addition, when it was raised that a procedure with no public announcement may be infringing, then the National Development Office, the
legal predecessor of the National Development Agency itself referred the matter to court, requesting the clarification of the legal situation. More than 25 billion forints had been spent on the system between 2007 and 2015, and the majority of this sum was paid after 2010, in addition, after the second Orbán administration entered into office, the project was modified several times, and the eligible costs were raised by each of these modifications, shows the compilation of Népszava. Currently an investigation is in progress on the EMIR affair.

http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/101688/EMIRugy_tovabb_nyomoznak
http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1129427-a-kormany-lemond-18-milliardrol---vajon-miért

25. The integration of savings cooperatives

The legal basis for the transformation of the sector of savings cooperatives was provided by Act CXXXV of 2013. According to the preamble of this law, the transformation of the sector became necessary because "its capitalization is low, the level of services is not appropriate and there is reason to believe that in its current form it will not remain viable in the long term." In order to remedy these problems, the act on savings cooperatives made the continued operation of the cooperatives conditional on their joining the Integration Organization of Cooperative Credit Institutions (SzHISz). In fact, the original contractual integration process of savings cooperatives was replaced by forced integration. Takarékbank became the central actor of SzHISz, in which the Hungarian Post and Magyar Fejlesztési Bank (MFB) obtained a majority shareholding through a capital raise. The transaction has been classified a secret, therefore there is no way to find out how much public funds were spent by the two state-owned investors on the acquisition of a majority shareholding of Takarékbank - according to press news, the deal amounted to approximately 4.5 billion forints. After that, it sold the majority, state-owned shareholding of Takarékbank, which was acquired by Magyar Takarék Zrt. for some nine billion forints, whose owners include FHB Mortgage Bank, an interest of Zoltán Spéder, as well as Hungarian Development Bank. Although the state sold the shares of Takarékbank for twice the price at which it had acquired them earlier, but since MFB also had a shareholding in Magyar Takarék Zrt., it is not known to what extent the sort of vendor loan lent that way deteriorated the actual balance of the transaction. As a transaction of national strategic significance, the privatisation is exempt from the anti-trust procedure of the Competition Office.

The Alliance of Savings Cooperatives filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court, on the ground that the State squeezed them out from Takarékbank by legal means, by which it violated their right to property. In its resolution no. 20/2014 (VII. 2.) AB (with the minority opinions of judges Bragyova and Kiss) the Constitutional Court determined that “comprehensively and put in a broad
context” that the “reference to public interest evoked as the cause of limitation of the owner’s rights and freedom of enterprise of savings cooperatives was substantiated.” Sándor Demján, the Banking Association and others have criticised the cooperative integration, questioning the fitness of the FHB-Takarékbank banking group. Specifically, Demján talked about the “consortium led by Zoltán Spéder” and stated that Zoltán Spéder and his business partners “suck the resources of the sector like parasites.” In the opinion of Takarékbank, the aims of integration were accomplished, “the sector finally got rid of abuses of the years during the rule of the National Association of Savings cooperatives hallmarked by Demján” and of the irresponsible savings cooperatives. In June 2016 Viktor Orbán proceeded personally in this matter and in accordance with the request of Demján, he appointed a government commissioner for the management of the transformation, while a smear campaign started in the pro-government press against Spéder. Later on Demján claimed, if he had not intervened, Spéder would have removed further some of 80-100 billion from the cooperatives. As a result of this falling-out, several persons were also replaced in the institutions of the process of integration, where up to that time several bankers on good terms with Spéder had been in office. In October 2016 Spéder sold his shareholding in FHB and gave up his control of the company in exchange for 7.5 billion forints. There are several investigations still in progress in the FHB case, including one aimed at exploring how FHB gained influence at the Hungarian Post. The 2016 amendment of the law on the integration of savings cooperatives reinforced the IT leg of the integration of savings cooperatives, which was mainly implemented by the company Takarékinfo Zrt., a company that received a loan of over 11 billion forints, mainly from Takarékbank. In the development the hardware was supplied by T-Systems for 7-8 billion forints. During the integration, the cooperative sector in transformation gradually floated near Mészáros and his associates. Konzum Investment Fund Manager, which managed the secret funds, took over the management of the real estate fund of Diófa Fund Manager - a company managing a total wealth of 470 billion forints - worth a net asset value of 12 billion forints.

https://index.hu/gazdasag/2017/06/23/onkent_es_dalolva_megyunk_az_akolba_-_rezletek_a_takarekszovetkezetek_atalakitasarol/

26. The Budapest – Belgrade railway line

Based on the communication of the Government, the aim of the Budapest-Belgrade railway development project is the establishment of a transport link between the port of Piraeus, operated by the company COSCO of China, and the eastern part of the EU, which would strengthen the transport position of Hungary. The entire project affects a line section of 374 km, of which a section of 40 km has been upgraded and a section of 166 km is located in the area of Hungary between Budapest and Kelebia. The project involves turning the line into a
double-tracked railway, increasing the speed to 160 km/h and the installation of a train control system meeting the EU requirements. According to experts, this railway line is not significant in terms of passenger transport, however, its potential for freight transport is reduced by the fact that it will not be implemented in this pace as far as Piraeus, it will only connect Belgrade to the Hungarian capital. The Government argued that a revenue of 9 billion from customs clearance charges from the import activities performed on the transport corridor and an additional domestic tax revenue of 33 forints on every unit of 1 forint cleared here justify the project. Hungary and Serbia signed the agreement on starting the project in November 2013.

In May 2016 the European Commission investigated the preparation of the project in terms of competition law and missing the public procurement procedure, after which it started preparations for the infringement proceedings. For this reason Kínai-Magyar Vasúti Nonprofit Zrt. was established in 2016, 85 per cent of the shares of which are held by China Railway International Corporation (CRIC) of China and China Railway International Group (CRIG), while to an extent of 15% MÁV Zrt. is responsible for conducting the public procurement related to the implementation of the project, and for project management. The Commission also assessed the borrowing, since they are concerned that the financing of 85 per cent of the budget of 750 billion forints of the project (the original 470 billion was raised first by the organization of the Olympics to 550 billion, then to 750 billion forints) comes dangerously close to the debt limits specified in the conversion program applying to 2016–2020. Several persons requested that the Ministry of National Development issue the feasibility study, however, as the study providing the basis for the decision, it is classified as a secret for 10 years. The Chinese-Hungarian intergovernmental agreement defining the terms of the credit is similarly classified as secret, although this would enable us to know the financial indicators of the funding.

According to press information denied by the Government, the Government would borrow a loan of 637.5 billion for a term of 20 years, therefore the interest alone would amount to 132.9 billion, but not more than 199 billion forint, i.e. Hungary will have to repay a total of 770.4–836.5 billion forints. The own contribution of 15 per cent, i.e. 112.5 billion forints of the project should be added to this, therefore the project, planned to cost 470 billion, will cost the Hungarian taxpayers 882.9–949 billion forints. However, based on the announcement of minister of foreign affairs Péter Szijjártó, the interest of the loan seems to be as much higher as is the share of Hungarian suppliers in the project.

The public procurement contract notices were published in November 2017, 2020 was designated as the initial year of the project, while completion is planned in 2027. The specific cost of the project significantly exceeds the historical costs of similar investments implemented or being implemented in West Europe, furthermore, according to experts no European companies can produce references
of a similar magnitude as is the railway construction reference expected among the requirements of the contract notice of the tender, which is supported by the fact that only Chinese-related companies requested the public procurement documentation. It is an interesting bit of information that on 23 November 2017 Lőrinc Mészáros established a railway construction company by the name of RM International Zrt.


27. The emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szijj

Lőrinc Mészáros is a Hungarian entrepreneur, the mayor of the village of Felcsút since 2011, with the support of Fidesz and KDNP. His fast enrichment induced significant political debates, since Mészáros, originally a pipefitter, became a wealthy person starting with nothing within a few years, by 2017 he had become the 8th richest person in Hungary. Many observers explained that by the political support of the Government and his friendly connection with Viktor Orbán, but according to the parties of the opposition Mészáros is in reality the “front man of Viktor Orbán.” By 2017 Mészáros had increased his net worth by 100 billion, on the list of rich persons of which persons he had jumped to the fifth place, and on the similar list of Forbes to the 8th place, with his net worth of 105.7 billion forint. This was generated mainly by state contracts, a public procurement practice that was often favourable for him and by the supportive legislative changes. During 2017 his affiliated enterprises won 242 billion forints in public procurement, they were the beneficiaries of a Union support of 17 billion forints, the football academy Felcsút, which is also his property, received TAO support of 2.9 billion forints, and he bought advertisements in state-owned media in the value of 2.7 billion forints. In 2017 the empire of Mészáros embarked on buyouts in a fast pace: in the space of six months he increased the assets of his companies by 45 billion forints. He completed most of these transactions through OPUS Globál (formerly Opimus and Konzum) Nyrt., today a company floated in the stock market. The expansion did not stop in 2008 either. Until 30 June 2018 OPUS Global Nyrt. completed a total of six transactions at different times in order to bring the non-floated manufacturing and industrial companies of Mészáros Group into the company as in-kind contribution (these are: the 51 per cent shareholding in Mészáros és Mészáros Ipari és Kereskedelmi Kft., the 51 per cent business quota of R-Kord Építőipari Kft., the 51 per cent business quota of Visonta Projekt Kft. (an investment project of 30 billion in the industrial park of the Mátra Power Plant), an additional business quota of 24 per cent of Kall Ingredients Kft. (a green field investment of 45 billion, in which OPUS owns 30 per cent), and a business quota of 20 per cent of Mátrai Erőmű Zrt.).
After the falling out with Lajos Simicska, László Szíjj, an entrepreneur of Tiszakécske, the owner of Duna Aszfalt, a company with close ties to Fidesz, became a similarly important oligarch. Essentially, Duna Aszfalt replaced Közgép in the field of public procurement in construction, but in contrast with Simicska, Szíjj did not extend his corporate empire to areas like media. Szíjj, who is on good terms with Mészáros, supports the football teams of Felcsút and Tiszakécske. According to Forbes, in 2016 he was the sixth richest person in Hungary with a net worth of 120 billion, while in 2017, with a net worth of 105.3 billion forints he comes right after the mayor of Felcsút - a frequent consortial partner in public procurement - in the 9th place. With winning tenders worth 606.5 billion forints, the companies of László Szíjj made a killing in public procurement contracts of 2017. In addition to sports and the construction industry (DA, Magyar Építők, Körösszafalt) Szíjj has only started expanding recently, it is very likely that he invests his capital partly through the fund manager of Mészáros. Károly Varga (Hódút, Magyar Vakond), a former business partner of Szíjj, who also does business frequently with Mészáros and has been doing well in in construction tenders jointly with his companies, has taken a similar path to that of Szíjj.

https://index.hu/gazdasag/2017/10/31/forbes_meszaros_lorinc_105_milliardnal_tart/

28. State contracts to companies of Simicska

Lajos Simicska, a businessperson and media tycoon, a former president of the tax authority, had been the most important ally of Viktor Orbán, a central figure of the purposely built economic inner circle around Fidesz during the terms of the first and second Orbán administrations. After 2010 he was regularly criticised by the opposition because companies in his interest received an outstandingly high number of orders from the state. Közgép Zrt., whose ownership background had been non-transparent in the beginning, won tenders on the order of hundred billion from railway, road and communal developments by state. During the time of the city management before 2010, the contract for the renewal of Margit Bridge (with a substantially raised price) was awarded to Közgép in a consortium. In 2013 the company received a total of 328 billion forints worth of state contracts in which the clients were mainly NIF Zrt. and Magyar Közút Zrt. The shareholders took out several billion forints of dividends from Közgép. It was known about the company that its chairman was Zsolt Nyerges, an entrepreneur with good ties to Simicska, but it only became certain in the spring of 2012 that the beneficial owner was Simicska himself.

After 2010, Simicska and the companies of his close business partners (Zsolt Nyerges, Károly Fonyó) made a killing in the market of advertisements of the State, and they concluded favourable advertisement owner contracts with 19
municipalities. The advertising companies of Simicska performed much above the profit level of the industry that was undergoing a crisis at the time, they were responsible for the communication of certain ministries, and most of the state advertisements went through them. In the media the advertisements of the State were completely removed from the reach figures, which caused the (pro-government) newspapers of the Simicska empire to become favourites with advertisers of the State. The agricultural interests of Simicska were also getting wealthier: By 2013 the interests of Simicska and Nyerges had become the largest beneficiaries of the agricultural supports of the Union. At that time Simicska was considered such an influential person, that it was widely believed: the cronies of Simicska held key positions in public administration and in the government, the oligarch captured certain areas of the state and had these adopt regulations favourable for him. This perception was confirmed in 2012, when Mrs. László Németh, a person with no political history, replaced Tamás Fellegi as the head of the Ministry of National Development, and hired the brother of Zsolt Nyerges to be her chief political advisor. Even before that, persons attached to Simicska and Nyerges had been in key positions in the ministry in charge of supervising the assets of the state. The chairman-chief executive officer of Hungarian Development Bank, which was also the lender of Közgép, was László Baranyay, an old confidant of Simicska, while MVM was managed by Csaba Baji, an old acquaintance of Nyerges. Átlátszó has identified several actors from this network, who held decision-making positions in the field of infrastructure development, agricultural policy and advertisements by the state. At the beginning of 2015 Simicska fell out with Orbán, after which the Government attempted to disrupt the empire of Simicska on several fronts, which terminated the golden era of the empire, by the end of 2015 the cronies of Simicska had mainly lost their offices with the State.

http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20120305-a-fidesz-gazdasagi-hatorszaganak-epulese-i-resz.html
https://atlatszo.hu/2012/09/24/a-nemzeti-egyuttmukodes-rendszere-kik-ejtettek-foglyul-a-magyar-allamot/

29. Exim loans to Fidesz-related companies

The first Orbán administration used Hungarian Development Bank to strengthen its economic interests, at present it has several funding options following the purchases of financial institutions. Of these, one of the new favourites is Eximbank, supervised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the owner, whose lending practice is presumably often driven by political considerations, as
opposed to the need to strengthen foreign trade. Hungary lost against the Statistical Office of the European Communities, as a result, Exim has to be classified within government finances (as a “captured institution”), which will lead to the increase of public debt. Over one-half of the loans of EXIM lent within Hungary may have been received by economic operators with close ties to the government. This happened after the appointment of András Puskás, a person with little experience in banking, the former deputy of Antal Rogán in District V, to be the deputy chief executive officer of Eximbank.

It can be hardly explained by foreign trade considerations that in November 2015 Andy Vajna received a domestic investment loan of 6.72 billion forints aimed at the improvement of competitiveness, which enabled him to purchase TV2-t and make it the stronghold of pro-government media. Later on, in April 2016 Eximbank lent another loan of 1.2 billion forints to the TV station of Vajna. The company of Vajna replaced these by a commercial bank loan at the end of 2016. The private investment called BudaPart, planned to be implemented on Kopaszi Dam and including the construction of the first skyscraper in Budapest, related to businessman István Garancsi, a person with ties to Viktor Orbán, received a loan of 16.5 billion forints in 2016. Foreign nationals with good relations with the government can also expect to receive Exim loans. In addition to having been classified as an investment of special significance for the national economy, the project of Párizs Property Kft. (conversion of Paris Court into a luxury hotel) received a loan of 6.85 billion forints under the heading of “domestic investment aimed at improving competitiveness”. Pedro Vargas David, the son of Portuguese politician Mário David, a person maintaining good relations with Viktor Orbán, is the fund manager of the bilateral Hungarian-Portuguese East West European Venture Capital Fund planned with a capitalization of 6 billion forints and with Exim as one of the shareholders. The executives of GB Partners fund manager, Ágoston Gubicza and Mihály Boris, received a larger fund - 16 billion forints - than that and one that manages European Union funds as well, with Sándor Holbok as one of the members of the supervisory board. They got hold of this fund by the acquisition of Prosperitás, which had operated earlier from Jeremie funds, while Gubicza and his team may have been helped by familial ties to Antal Rogán with gaining the resources from Eximbank. In the summer of 2017 an Exim loan of 15 billion forints was lent to persons with close ties to Norbert Szivek, the head of the Asset Manager. There may have been ties of kinship behind another decision of Eximbank as well, the decision on lending a loan of 15 billion, which was borrowed by BDPST Zrt., a company belonging to the interests of István Tiborcz, the son-in-law of Viktor Orbán, intended to finance Futura House and the former head office of the United Savings Cooperative of the Capital City of Budapest from the direction of Apáczai Csere János Street. Later on, in the autumn of 2017 the loan of Eximbank was replaced by a loan of Magyar Takarékszövetkezeti Bank Zrt. In December 2017 it became clear from
the statements of Gábor Széles, a person with good ties to the government, and from news published in Iranian newspapers, that he was going to manufacture 100 Ikarus buses to be exported to the Iranian market from the loan of Eximbank of 162 million dollars (approximately 43 billion forints), lent for a term not exceeding 10 years. Eximbank was also involved in the international offshore scandal, which supported the export activities of canned food manufacturer Fit Food Kft. to former republics of the Soviet Union. The company was contracted with two important offshore companies of the money laundry in Azerbaijan, Polux Management LP and Hilux Services LP of Britain. While lending by the bank ultimately ran increased risks for the state budget, the activities of Exim highly contributed to the enrichment of the Government-related clientele after 2014. Exim seems to be a payment point related to politics from another aspect as well: it regularly hires Young & Partners, a company belonging to the interests of Tibor Kuna and also taking preferred positions in public procurement tenders issued by the state, to organize events, but it is also contracted with Humansoft Kft., a company with a suspicious background.

https://atlatszo.hu/2017/01/19/hazipenztarkent-hasznaljak-az-eximbankot-kormanykozeli-uzletemberek/
https://444.hu/2016/02/03/bibliai-leptekekben-omlik-ki-a-penz-a-kulkerbankbol

30. Radio frequencies of Andy Vajna

In several cases the Media Council has favoured companies related to Vajna when local and national frequencies were allocated, including cases when frequency licenses were extended, the process of application, the start of broadcasting and observation of legally imposed rules (e.g. the ratio of Hungarian music). These changes in the market would not have happened but for the intervention of the Media Council. They made lots of decisions that helped Vajna, Mészáros and Habony with inundating every segment of the media market. A pro-government Media Council elected by a two-third majority

On a national frequency the Media Council disqualified Class FM from the national commercial radio tender. Mátyás Bakai, the managing director and owner of the LTD that was the only company shortlisted in the tender, had worked for Andy Vajna just a few months earlier, and the company is still a partner of Radio 1. The LTD borrowed a loan from the bank of Lőrinc Mészáros. The company Hold Reklám Kft. will be allowed to start broadcasting on the national radio frequency that had been used by Class FM until November 2016. Although Advenio Zrt. started a lawsuit against the Media Council, it did not wait for the resolution of the court, and announced a new tender for the new frequency. The local radios of Hold Reklám Kft. operate connected to a network with Radio 1, i.e. they broadcast the programs of Radio 1. Class FM had to go silent in November 2016 on its analogue frequency as a result of the decision of the Media Council, since the Council did not extend - referring to the media law - the license
of the radio that had been an interest of Lajos Simicska until May 2016, and later that of American businessman Michael McNutt. It was claimed that the American businessman submitted a business plan that was based on inappropriate calculations.

In the frequency tender of Békéscsaba there were several deficiencies in the bid of Andy Vajna, for which the Media Authority should have disqualified him. Among others, they could only submit the certificate of the bank properly on the third attempt, and even that was not compliant. On the one hand, they should not have been allowed a second and a third attempt. On the other hand, at the time of the publication of the contract notice, a sum covering the operating costs of the radio for 3 months should have been deposited on a blocked account, but the verified account with Duna Takarék, a financial institution related to Garancsi, was opened much later. Radio Plus Kft., the company of Vajna, still gained the frequency, the decision hinged on one single point, which was awarded to the company of the government commissioner for the subjective part of the tender. Interax Kft., which had possessed the frequency for 24 years at that point, challenged the decision of the Authority in court.

Similar errors may have been committed in other local radio tenders as well, and the tender bids are often identical, there may be collusion among the actors, which is prohibited by law. After the tender in Békécsaba, 24.hu requested inspection of the documents from NCAH, which had stated earlier that after contract conclusion every tender bid would be available for inspection by anyone. Although this was not fully accomplished, it was conspicuous that in many cases the bids were verbatim identical and not only at LB Rádió Kft., which can be associated with Vajna. For example, the tender bid of FW Befektetési Kft., which possesses 101.3 MHz of Eger, was 100 per cent the same as the bid submitted by LB Rádió Kft. for gaining the frequencies in Hajdúszoboszló and Derecske. NCAH pointed out that it had no authority to compare the tender bids.

The transparency of the decisions is not guaranteed, either. In Székesfehérvár, Veszprém, Pécs, Tatabánya and Kaposvár the Curia decided on the suspending the tenders. Regionális Rádió Kft. challenged the decision of the Media Council in court. At first it was rejected as unsubstantiated, but then the Curia revised the case and adopted a resolution on suspension. Andy Vajna submitted a bid in each city, but they were not excluded from any of the tenders. In Székesfehérvár the case is pending substitution of missing items, in Veszprém LB Radio, which is affiliated with Vajna, seems to have the best chances, in Tatabánya the assessment panel requested further information, which means that there is something in the tender documents that they cannot interpret. In Pécs P1 Kft. submitted a bid, about which it became clear earlier that at ownership level it is entangled with Mambó Rádió Kft., which already possesses a frequency in Pécs and was connected with Radio 1 of Budapest. Although the owner of P1
submitted a bid containing fictitious personal data, he was still not disqualified, which means that, among others, the media law was disregarded. In the opinion of NCAH there is no conflict of interest, even though there is close cooperation between the National Film Fund supervised by Vajna and the media authority. Although the media law does not specify whether a government commissioner may have his own radio, the question about how they tried to avoid that the decisions of the Media Council can be influenced by a member of the government, went unanswered.

https://index.hu/belfold/2017/10/19/nmhh_mediatancs_vajna_meszaros/

Closing of the case descriptions: 1 March 2018
ANNEX

We have assigned the 30 cases of corruption listed above to the following categories, which are not mutually exclusive: EU funds, public procurement, overpricing, market acquisition, application of pressure, questionable return on investment, bribery, corruption through legislation, corruption based on loyalty to Fidesz, corruption associated with oligarchs, lining their own pockets, funds allocated to relatives, construction projects for showing off.

The following list shows which case belongs to which category. (One case may be mentioned in several places).

**EU funds:** EMIR affair, no. 4 subway line, For the Youth Training of Felcsút Foundation, framework agreement of 420 billion for public utility construction, Abuses of Union funds given for the audit of public procurement, Jeremie funds, Emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szijj, Intermodal logistic centers in Bátonyterenye and Bicske, Elios affair.

**Public procurement:** BKV-Alstom subway cars, EMIR affair, Budapest - Belgrade railway line, no. 4 subway line, For the Youth Training of Felcsút Foundation, framework agreement of 420 billion for public utility construction, Abuses of Union funds given for the audit of public procurement, State contracts to companies of Simicska, FINA Aquatic Word Championship, Emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szijj, Paks 2, Elios affair.

**Overpricing:** Budapest - Belgrade railway line, no. 4 subway line, State contracts to companies of Simicska, FINA Aquatic Word Championship, Emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szijj, MNB foundations, Elios affair.

**Market acquisition:** Quaestor affair, Origo affair, Suspicion of bribery in the privatisation of INA, Banning scandal, the sale of TV2, Casino concessions, tax allowances for Vajna, radio frequencies of Andy Vajna, Exim loans to companies related to Fidesz, Settlement bond, State contracts to companies of Simicska, the tobacco kiosk deal, integration of savings cooperatives, Emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szijj, Paks 2.

**Application of pressure:** Suspension of Népszabadság, NAV scandal, Origo affair, Banning scandal, Sale of TV2, radio frequencies of Andy Vajna, TAO system, State contracts to companies of Simicska, The integration of savings cooperatives, Elios affair.

**Questionable return on investment:** The sale of MKB, the Budapest - Belgrade railway line, no. 4 subway line, Settlement bond, FINA Aquatic World Championship, MNB foundations, Paks 2.
**Bribery:** BKV-Alstom subway cars, NAV scandal, Suspicion of fraud in the privatisation of INA, Banning scandal

**Corruption through legislation:** Campaign financing for fictitious political parties, Casino concessions, tax allowances for Vajna, Settlement bond, TAO system, The tobacco kiosk deal, The integration of savings cooperatives, Paks 2

**Corruption based on loyalty to Fidesz:** Sale of MKB, Exim loans to Fidesz-related companies, TAO system, A framework agreement of 420 billion for the construction of public utilities, Abuses of Union funds given for the audit of public procurement, Jeremie funds, the tobacco kiosk deal, The integration of savings cooperatives, MNB foundations, Paks 2

**Corruption associated with oligarchs:** Pharaon affair, Suspicion of fraud in the privatisation of INA, the sale of TV2. Casino concessions, tax allowances for Vajna, Radio frequencies of Andy Vajna, Exim loans to Fidesz-related companies, Settlement bond, TAO system, For the Youth Training of Felcsút Foundation, A framework agreement of 420 billion for the construction of public utilities, Jeremie funds, State contracts to companies of Simicska, the tobacco kiosk deal, FINA Aquatic Word Championship, The integration of savings cooperatives, Emergence of Lőrinc Mészáros and László Szíjj, MNB foundations, Paks 2, Elios affair

**Lining their own pockets:** Quaestor affair, Abuses of Union funds given for the audit of public procurement, Jeremie funds

**Funds transferred to relatives:** Pharaon affair, the tobacco kiosk deal, MNB foundations, Elios affair

**Construction projects for showing off:** For the Youth Training of Felcsút, FINA Aquatic Word Championship, MNB foundations
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