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Budapest Pride March 2025, international press conference: opening statements by Gergely KARÁCSONY, Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ Vice President of the EP and Máté HEGEDÚS

Reference: [I274425](#) Duration: [00:31:18](#) Location: Date: [Jun 27, 2025](#) Type: [EbS live](#)

Summary:

Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, preparedness and crisis management, Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament and Máté HEGEDÚS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, give an international press conference during the Budapest Pride March 2025. On 18 March 2025, a law was adopted in Hungary restricting the freedom of assembly, by connecting it to a previous controversial law from 2021, which prohibited the public portrayal to children of 'divergence from self identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality'. Consequently, events such as Pride marches have been prohibited in the country. However the Budapest city hall organises the Budapest Pride march as a local event. This transcription is a result of an automatic process. Please check against delivery.

Only the original language version is authentic and it prevails in the event of its differing from the translated versions.

TIME	DESCRIPTION	DURATION
00:00:00	SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, Good afternoon everyone. My name is Oliver Pils. I'm the mayor's policy secretary, and I'll be moderating this event. This is a bilingual event. Our Hungarian speakers will be speaking in Hungarian and are international speakers in English. Simultaneous interpretation is available. Please ask my colleagues for a headset if you wish to use one.	00:00:24
00:00:00	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, Ladies and gentlemen, let me welcome everybody. The language of the press conference will be	00:00:12

24	English and Hungarian, and my colleagues will help you with the headsets. If you want to listen to the translation.	
00:00:36	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, For being here today and a very warm welcome to this international press conference hosted here in the Council Chamber of the Budapest City Hall. We are truly encouraged by the high level of local and international interest, and at the same time, we must express our regret that due to space limitations, many journalists who wish to attend in person could not be accommodated and are following us online. Instead. For the sake of our live broadcast, we kindly ask the photographers to remain on the sides of the room.	00:00:33
00:01:09	SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, We are here today under exceptional circumstances. As many of you know, the Hungarian government attempted to ban this year's Budapest Pride march. In a strong and symbolic response, the Municipality of Budapest has decided to organise the event as a municipal event, taking a firm stance in support of equality and human rights. The City of Budapest has invited its international partners and allies to join the Pride March as a show of solidarity.	00:00:31
00:01:40	SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, 'Tomorrow. We will have over 70 members of the European Parliament, National MPs from several countries, multiple ministers, mayors and city leaders, as well as prominent representatives of international organisations. We also expect this year's Budapest Pride to be the largest it has ever been. With this in mind, let me introduce our speakers. First, our host, Mr.Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest from the European Commission, we have Mrs.Hadja LAHBIB, European Commissioner for equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management. We are joined by ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Mr Nicolae Vice-President of the European Parliament. We would have loved to have all three European institutions represented, but the only member of the European Council who is in Hungary is working on banning Budapest Pride. However, we have Mr. Máté Hegedűs, spokesperson of Budapest Pride, who partnered with the Budapest City Hall through a public interest commitment and will be coordinating tomorrow's March. We will begin with brief remarks from each of our participants afterward, and there will be a short opportunity for questions. However, due to the large number of journalists present, we	00:01:48

	<p>kindly ask that each person limit themselves to one question only. Please also kindly note that Commissioner Leiby will need to leave the event at exactly 4:15. So we ask your understanding and cooperation in keeping to the schedule. And now I would lik...</p>	
00:03:28	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So good afternoon. Let me welcome everyone at the, Municipality Council room and in the biggest room of the municipality. And I'm very happy that you are here. And I'm very sorry that even in this largest room, we weren't able to accommodate all of you who want to participate at this press conference., recognition for us that there is such a huge interest. But we know that in, the case of such a small country as Hungary, when the international press, follows the events with such great interest means two things. One, is that something excellent, omething marvellous is happening, or something terribly wrong is happening.</p>	00:00:45
00:04:13	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, Which when? At the beginning of the year, Mr. Viktor Orban, presented that proclaimed that he wants to ban Budapest Prague resort, that something really bad is happening in Hungary, although we got used to it because in the last 15 years, many, steps have been taken by the Hungarian government, which have been the predecessors of today of this defence. Hungary for the last 15 years has not been at the forefront of, promoting democracy, but has become the laboratory of breaking down, this.</p>	00:00:40
00:04:53	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So the European Union,, considers that, government has,, destroyed, the legal status of the country. But, the banning of the Pride is also the, peak of something else because, instead of, doing real governance, it the government has been fighting against an enemy. Against whom, they have to protect people, so the homeless, refugees or George Soros cause, they have been fighting constant wars in. So to speak, protect Hungarian people, from something that they would not have, had to worry about.</p>	00:00:50
00:	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So this time, it is the members of the sexual minorities who are, the targets. So I still believe that although, these are sad and bad things, but it seems like the, government has calculated wrong because something really</p>	

05:43	great is happening. The Hungarian civilians. That's it. The Hungarian electors, and the Hungarian citizens do not want this. So against or despite the homophobic campaigns, the acceptance of sexual minorities has increased and by banning Budapest Pride, especially the large majority of, Hungarian or Budapest electors do not agree with this.	00:00:47
00:06:30	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So in recent years, the Municipality of Budapest has had a lot of political arguments, debates, with the government. And we believe that there should be no first and second class citizens. So we decided to stand by this, event. And instead of the banned, pride event, the Hungarian, the Budapest. Sorry, the Budapest municipality will organise this, to express that no one can be,, discriminated against the way they were born.	00:00:38
00:07:08	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So, international solidarity is a wonderful thing as well. It's not only you who,, curious about what's going to happen. The Pride March. Tomorrow, approximately 30 different countries will be represented. Mayors, European, Union representatives. So all those committed by the, European values will be here with us. And I think it was very, distinctly, establish that no, discrimination, can be, experienced, by, people with sexual, matter of sexual minority and cannot be banned, such events.	00:00:51
00:07:59	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, So this case, belongs to all of Europe because if, in a European member country, the pride march can be banned, then. No, European electors can feel safe. So this case has become a European case and European affair, and no one can be, a second class citizen, in Hungary or in the European Union. So all the rights on which the European unity was built, these are uniform and indivisible. So Hungarian citizens cannot be, worse, less than, the citizens of, Europeans in other European member countries.	00:00:47
00:08:46	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, Therefore, the municipality itself of Budapest will organise this event, which we call Budapest Pride. Freedom. And international name is Budapest Pride. So a few decades ago, the Hungarian parliament made the decision about the last Saturday of June would be the day of Hungary and freedom, because in 1991, that was the time when the Soviet troops left Hungary forever. And when the Soviet troops left,	00:00:41

	then the the despotic policy or politics have disappeared, which we don't want to have back in our country.	
00:09:27	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, And that is why it is the best occasion to have this, celebrated, together with our European friends and the members of the sexual minorities and those who, take solidarity, with this event. So, regarding this, I would like to make it very clear that, the, local government events are not affected by the legislation, like, the right of assembly. They the municipalities are not subject to this. The police has only one task tomorrow, which is a very serious task that those who are present at the event, organised by the municipality to, guarantee the, safety, and security.	00:00:55
00:10:22	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Gergely KARÁCSONY, Mayor of Budapest, 'So although we know that there are very few, of the, counter-protesters, but being encouraged by the government, maybe they will be louder. So I think our, allies in Europe to be here. And thank you very much to the Vice-President also that we can confirm, belief that Europe is the home, or is based on human rights and solidarity. So when, pride is banned in a European country, then another group could be discriminated against. And everything will fall apart, which is which is meant by, European dream of all the countries. So thank you very much for being here and standing by and support the event, which is about solidarity and freedom. Thank you very much for your attention.	00:00:59
00:11:21	SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, Mr. speaker, now, I am pleased to invite Commissioner Hadja LAHBIB to deliver her remarks.	00:00:07
00:11:28	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 Thank you. Thank you. And I would like to start by thanking, the mayor. Budapest Freedom. Dear Gergely, thank you, for your invitation to this, Budapest pride, freedom. And thank you for your courage. This weekend, all eyes are on Budapest. And, yes, you are in the spotlight. And I'm delighted to see so many journalists and a crowded audience that it means that it is an important event that is organising here.	00:00:35
	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And your city is shining in all its diversity. And it is, for me, a celebration, a celebration of	

00:12:03	LGBTQ people here in Budapest and everywhere in the world. And that is why it was so important for me to be here today to celebrate this state with you. It is also a celebration of the incredible diversity of our humanity. You know, in all their colours, their shapes, their size., their belief, their culture, and just as not two fingerprints are the same. No two people are the same. And to try to make them to sing just doesn't make sense.	00:00:53
00:12:56	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And I would call this diversity the soul of all European Union. Over decades, we have built our union, a European home, brick by brick, and we will protect it brick by brick and Gergely I'm sure you would agree with me this is bigger than one pride celebration. One pride march. It is about the right to be who you are, to love who you want. Whether it is in Budapest, in Brussels, or anywhere else. So, as the EU Commissioner for equality, I am here today in Hungary, just as I would be in any other member state to uphold our values of freedom, equality and human dignity.	00:01:00
00:13:56	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And you know, as a member of the same family, the European family, we are friends. And, I come to Budapest as a friend to say to my Hungarian neighbours, and between friends, you can be frank, we can be frank. We all join our union not just because of the markets, not just because of interests, but because of the values we share. The values of freedom, of tolerance, of inclusion. And so I'm here to to meet with ministers, Hungarian ministers, Hungarian minister of Justice. I requested meeting with him. And because it's important to engage with each other and to know, even if we don't agree, how we can find a way to uphold our union and our values.	00:00:58
00:14:54	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And my message is very clear. It is not acceptable to think that LGBTI people are not the same, or are not a life of equal or equal values. And you know, the EU is not neutral on hate. We cannot stay passive. We cannot tolerate what is intolerable. Today our values are being tested here in European Union and everywhere in the world. So these attacks are part of a wider push to roll back progress and undo the rights that generations before us fought for.	00:00:46

00:15:40	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 'The right to gather peacefully. It is one of those rights. It must be protected and upheld across the European Union and anti-LGBTQ laws and movements only lead to division, discrimination and fear. And today, unfortunately, more and more LGBTQ plus people are facing hate and harassment in their daily lives. And this we will not accept it. This is why we will keep fighting to protect and expand the rights and freedom for everyone, including our LGBTQ plus community. And there is no going back. There is no going back.	00:00:48
00:16:28	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 There is only a way forward. By preparing a new LGBTQ plus strategy. We are around. We are about to deliver this new LGBTQ strategy beginning of the year or at the end of this year, and this strategy will focus on tackling violence and hate motivated harassment online and offline, and putting an end to conversion practices. And we are here also to, way to the civil society because we are well aware that there is a lot, to do. So we need everyone on board.	00:00:45
00:17:13	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And that is why I'm so also meeting with members of the Hungarian civil society to hear their concerns and express our full support to their vital work. We are ramping up our support because civil society organisations are key partners in advancing LGBTQ plus rights in the EU, and we want to boost the dialogue between the Commission and the civil society and get them more and more involved in policy and decision making.	00:00:34
00:17:47	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner responsible for equality, Speaker 3 We have also a robust budget, so we walk the talk. I mean, it's not only words. We come here also with the budget to support the civil society through, the surf program. We have, €1.5 billion. This is the largest ever dedicated to promoting EU values. So when we have already supported, more than 5400 civil society organisation across Europe and beyond, and you can count on me to be a strong advocate, to, maintain this budget for the next MFF.	00:00:42
	SOUNDBITE (English), Hadja LAHBIB, Commissioner	

00:18:29	<p>responsible for equality, Speaker 3 And one more important thing. As we all know, lasting progress will also be built on strong national foundations, so we will continue to work with all Member States to develop their LGBTQ plus strategies. And Hungary. I'm here with you to support you. And to conclude, dear friends, today you know it is the LGBTQ plus community, but tomorrow it could be anyone else for any reason and under any pretext. So let's let's not be fooled. History shows us that there is always a good reason to discriminate. So dear Gergely, thank you again for your fight and maybe for being so stubborn. And for your warm welcome to this beautiful city of Budapest. Even more beautiful in this colour of the pride. Thank you again.</p>	00:01:15
00:19:44	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, Thank you, Madam Commissioner. We're grateful for your powerful message and your presence. Next, I invite the Vice President of the European Parliament, Nicholas STEFANUTE, to take the floor.</p>	00:00:12
00:19:56	<p>Speaker 4 Thank you.</p>	00:00:09
00:20:05	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, Hi. My name is, Nicholas. STEFANUTE. I am an MEP and also a vice president of the European Parliament. I'm coming from Seben, and I speak a little bit of Hungarian and, I have, so many Hungarian friends in Transylvania I change to in English.</p>	00:00:27
00:20:32	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, Not like at home, not only as a Transylvanian, but also as a European. As Vice president of the European Parliament, I have been sent by our President. Roberta METSOLA. I have been sent to represent these over 70 members of the European Parliament and close to 130 staff members who are here today, which is the largest delegation of the European Parliament to a member state event that concerns human rights. And this is a powerful message. It's a powerful message, and I'm very glad to be joined here on stage with the mayor, attorney and the Commissioner to deliver one common strong message.</p>	00:00:43
	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, When we join the European</p>	

00:21:15	<p>Union, all of us, we signed the charter of Human Rights and we took over not only rights but also obligations to take care of minorities. I come from Transylvania. I grew with minorities in my mind, with the fact that we are diverse, that we are not all the same, that some speak other languages, that some behave differently, that they have another culture. I have another orientation. And this is good. This is the beauty of the European Union. This is what makes us rich. So, once we start making exceptions, overriding these rules that we all signed to, we might end up in a situation where the European Union loses its soul, its values.</p>	00:00:51
00:22:06	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, What are we about? Are we then only about money and commerce? Or are we a continent that shares values and helps each other? And that brings me to solidarity. We are here because we wanted to be in solidarity with the people of Budapest, with the people of Hungary, not with the mayor, not with a certain event, but with the people, because we are maybe 200 foreigners. But on the streets tomorrow there might be 50,000 Hungarians, Hungarians.</p>	00:00:33
00:22:39	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, True Hungarians. So it is not the European Union pushing some sort of propaganda. It is the European Union being standing by its brothers and sisters, being together in their moment of need. In addition, the right to assembly. This is a basic right of what is called a democracy. If more than 50,000 people want to attend something that is peaceful, that is loveful. For that is the ultimate definition of what we have as a right to assemble. It is their will. Nobody's forcing them to come. Nobody's forcing them to go on the street. It is their will and is their constitutional right, both in the Hungarian Constitution as well as in the European law.</p>	00:00:56
00:23:35	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, I would like to say that the police and the institutions of the state have a duty to protect the citizens, have a duty to protect the citizens. It is as clear as possible. And we have been fighting for this. I think it is part of normalcy that the institutions of the state take care of their citizens. Of these 50,000 Hungarian, who are your children, who are your relatives. They are not foreigners.</p>	00:00:31
	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Nicolae ȘTEFĂNUȚĂ, Vice President of the European Parliament, I am a father and I would like my</p>	

00:24:06	<p>daughter to be able to protest on the street, to be able to show love on the street. They are not aliens. They are your children, your relatives, your blood. In addition to to this, I would like to say that this has been an event that has been going on for 30 years. If I understand correctly. And as a fellow Eastern European, I know what 30 years, 35 years ago means. It means when we are finally able to breathe again, to express ourselves again. It was a beginning. So now there are forces in this country who want to put an end to that beginning. I say to these forces that they might be seeing the beginning of their end. And let us not go down that path. Let us not go down the path of hatred. Let us keep the path of love. A pride is an event that speaks about love. It is a celebration. It is something that we should worth cherishing. So I'm very, very honoured to be here and represent the institution, to repres...</p>	00:01:28
00:25:34	<p>SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor of Budapest, Thank you, Mr. Vice President. And now let me give the floor to the spokesperson of Budapest Pride.</p>	00:00:11
00:25:45	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Mate HEGEDUS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, 'Thank you very much. And let me welcome all the representatives of the press and the organisers of Budapest Pride on behalf of the Rainbow Mission Organisation. So 2021 is a feminist, anti-racist organisation and our main aim is to build, to present, to make the LGBT Q community visible. So since the 1990s, regularly, every year we organise the event to the end of March and that the only time that we did not have the March is during the Covid times, when we had an online, event. So this year's events have been planned since 2023. We were really expecting the celebration on the 30th anniversary. So, 28th of June of 2025 is not only going to be the day of Hungarian, freedom, but it's the 56th anniversary of Stonewall Revolt. This event was one of the important milestones of LGBTQ community.</p>	00:01:10
00:26:55	<p>SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Mate HEGEDUS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, So our slogan to this year is that we are at home. By this, we want to draw attention that LGBTQ people are the integral parts of Hungarian society, just as any other people in our history, in our culture, this is where we belong. We have had. We are having, and we will have a place for the LGBTQ community. Our community is not imported from the West and it's not propaganda. It's not an ideological product. LGBTQ people do not live only in</p>	00:00:48

	Budapest, but all of Hungary. And we welcome everybody at this march where we will stand by every, LGBT people so they can be born in major cities or in the small villages.	
00:27:43	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Mate HEGEDUS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, As I mentioned, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary. We haven't had any problems with the event. We have worked together with the police in most cases, in most years, and they have been very helpful in, holding the event. This for this year's anniversary. We had, many important, events like a short story collection it's called the Taste of the land. My homeland in, our in our mouths. We also organised,, international conference for, brides and very important participants, experts as well as activists participated. There were panel discussions and workshops.	00:00:57
00:28:40	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Mate HEGEDUS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, So our community festival this year, 33 embassies have issued statements supporting our events. And when Mr. Viktor ORBAN, said at the beginning of the year, not to worry about organising this event this year, I was a bit taken aback. I was a bit disappointed. But we kept on working on, organising and implementing this event, and when the municipality offered their assistance, we accepted it. And we were very happy when we declared, when we announced that we would organise this event together. So this is not only from our minds, but several, big cities like Brussels, Ljubljana, Paris, and other places where the municipalities work together with the, citizens, also help us. So, we expect the police to accept that this is not just an assembly, but this is an event organised by the municipality. And to protect, the participants from the extreme right activists who could pose a danger.	00:01:22
00:30:02	SOUNDBITE (Hungarian), Mate HEGEDUS, Spokesperson on behalf of Budapest Pride, So in recent, in previous years, we experienced that these activists, these extreme right extremists, try to stop and make the march impossible. So we ask the participants to join us tomorrow from, 2 p.m. in the park and from, 2 p.m. to proudly march with us for the rights of LGBTQ people, and also for the right for every Hungarian person to,, march freely and to stand by their, their rights. And we expect everybody at the the Danube bank, for the final event. And it is not, from public funding, but from the donations of people.	00:01:07
00:	SOUNDBITE (English), Oliver PILS, Policy secretary of Mayor	

31: 09	of Budapest, Thank you, sir, truly grateful for your courage and activism.	00:00:04
00: 31: 13	End	00:00:05

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