

Central European University, Budapest Nador Street, September 17, 2025

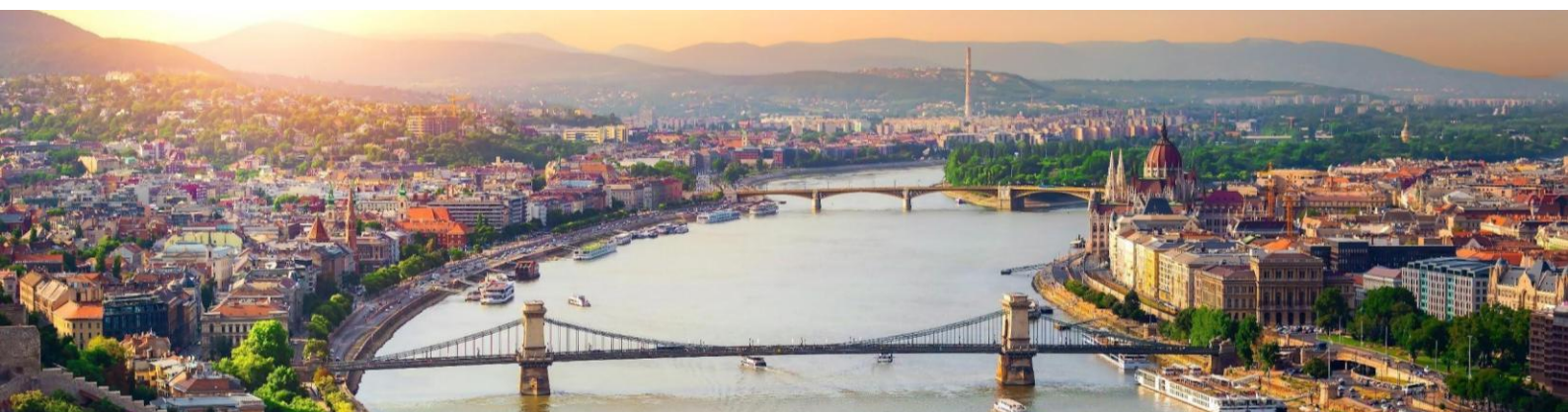
Based on the success of the last years, Budapest Forum will return in 2025. The conference will be organized again by the Municipality of Budapest, Political Capital, and CEU Democracy Institute to discuss the most pressing issues currently facing citizens of democratic and nominally democratic countries. The Forum will explore and examine policy proposals under the banner of 'Building Sustainable Democracies'.

The Budapest Forum has emerged as a key player in the international policy event scene over the last four years, bringing together mayors, commissioners, MEPs, decision-makers, policy experts, academics, and activists for 15-20 panels and sessions per year, as well as multiple side events and discussions. The public interest was equally large, with more than 450 in-person participants per year and almost 40,000 viewers online per year, as well as hundreds of Hungarian and international media appearances. The feedback from participants and partners was very positive, highlighting the organizational quality, impressive line-up, thematic diversity and hitting a niche with the role of cities in addressing the most pressing challenges of our time.

The 2025 Budapest Forum proposes to examine the growing role of geopolitics in shaping international relations. Among the many topics we intend to address are the shifting dynamics of transatlantic cooperation, the transformation of the global economic landscape, and the increasingly urgent questions surrounding war and peace. In addition, we aim to explore how democratic societies can respond to the complex challenges they face in this evolving geopolitical environment.

We are convinced that it is not only the multitude of crises that define our time, but also the commitment and the intellectual prowess of broad segments of our societies to tackle these crises. The palpable interest that we have seen in the last years, attests that we are on the right path when we seek to galvanize policy debates across borders and levels of government and provide a joint platform for all relevant stakeholders in search of a sustainable and democratic future.

We, as co-organizing partners, the Municipality of Budapest, Political Capital Institute and CEU Democracy Institute, will draw upon this valuable experience this year when organizing the fifth Budapest Forum, scheduled for September 17. We are looking forward to expanding our growing Budapest Forum network with the most impactful changemakers.



Central European University, Budapest Site, September 17, 2025

SEPTEMBER 17

09:15-09:30

Opening speeches

Carsten Q. Schneider – Interim President and Rector, CEU

Benedek Jávor – Head of Brussels Representation, Budapest City Hall

Péter Krekó – Director, Political Capital Institute / Policy Leader Fellow, EUI

09:30-09:45

Welcome speech: *Gergely Karácsony* – Mayor of Budapest

09:45-10:00

Undoing autocracy: Rebuilding the rule of law and democratic norms

Keynote speech: *Rafał Trzaskowski* – Mayor of Warsaw

10:00-11:00

Markets under pressure: The economic impact of the return of geopolitics

(In partnership with the Taipei Representative Office in Budapest)

Participants:

Tamás Matura – Associate Professor, Corvinus University

Ming-chin Monique Chu – Lecturer in Chinese Politics, University of Southampton

Krisztián Orbán – Managing Partner, Oriens

Richard Turcsányi – Program Director, Central European Institute of Asian Studies

Elliot Wang – Representative, Taipei Representative Office in Hungary

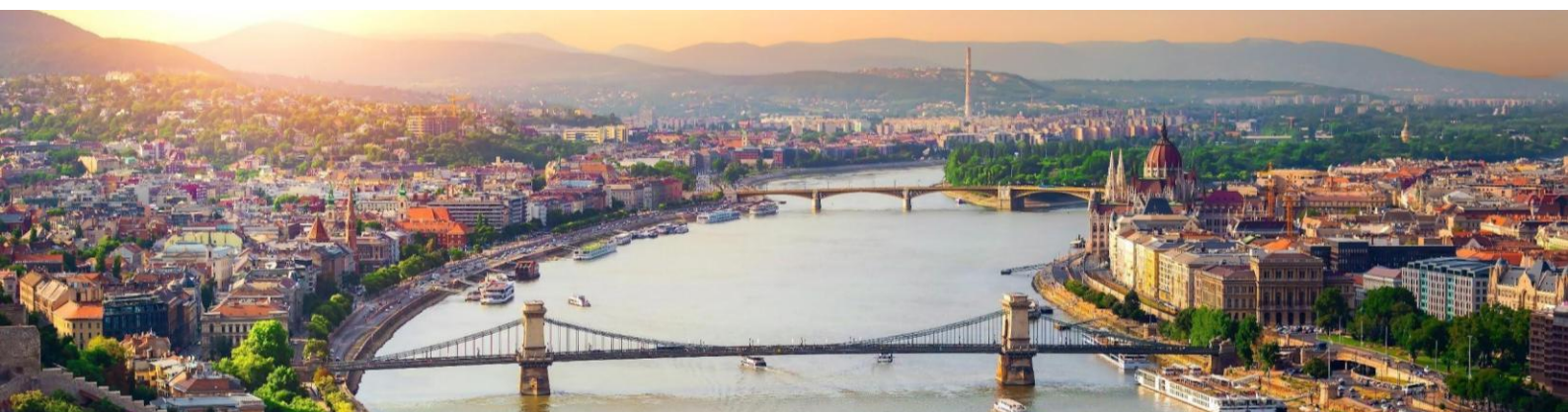
Moderator: *Lili Takács* – Journalist, 444.hu

11:00-12:00

Liveable, innovative and climate neutral: How do cities respond to a changing climate?

(In partnership with the Heinrich Böll Foundation)

Participants:



Peter Kraus – Co- Leader, The Green Party Vienna / City Councilor and Member of the State Government Vienna

Diána Kupper – Green Finance Expert, Global Green Growth Institute Hungary

Attila Varga – Habil. Associate Professor, Eötvös Loránd University

Moderator: **Adela Jurečková** – Director, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Prague

12:00-12:45

Lunch break

12:45-13:45

European political trends from different mainstream points of view

(In partnership with Friedrich Naumann Foundation)

Participants:

Alexander Ackerl – Member of the Vienna City Council and Vienna State Parliament for the SPÖ

Katalin Cseh – Member of the Hungarian Parliament

Pawel Zerka – Senior policy fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

Moderator: **Lars-André Richter** – Director, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Prague

13:45-15:00

Understanding populist electorates: Who votes populists (back) into office, and why?

Keynote speech by **Ivan Krastev** – Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies / Albert Hirschman Permanent Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IWM)

Participants:

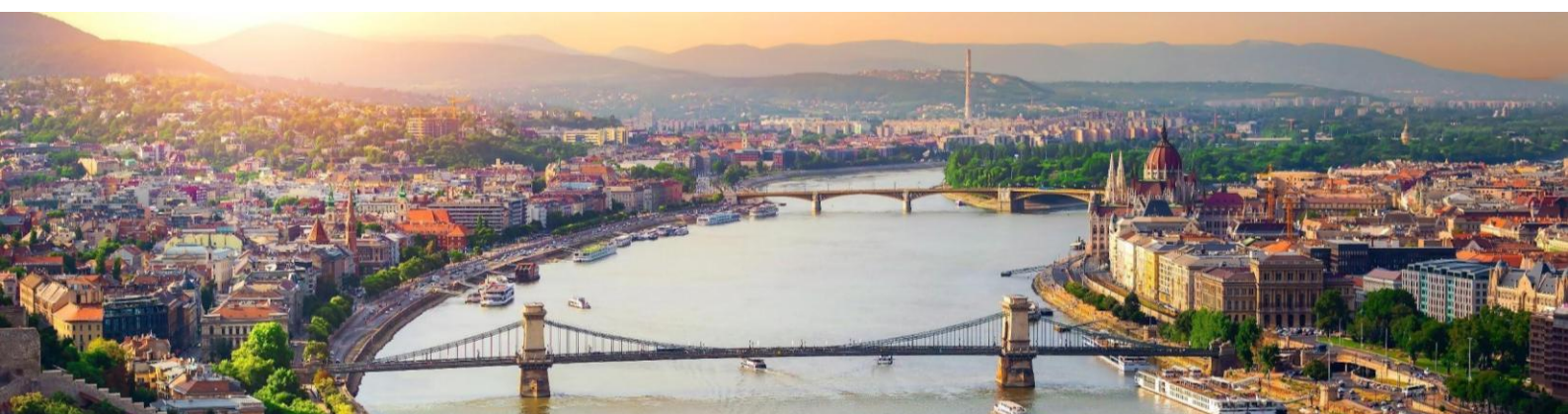
Maciej Kisilowski – Associate Professor, Faculty Director, CEU

Ivan Krastev – Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies / Albert Hirschman Permanent Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna (IWM)

Raluca Nicoleta Radu – Professor, University of Bucharest

Gábor Scheiring – Assistant Professor of Comparative Politics, Georgetown University Qatar

Moderator: **Ebru Ece Özbey** – Co-Managing Editor, Review of Democracy



15:00-16:00

Truth under threat: Defense of democracy and safeguarding democratic resilience against disinformation

Participants:

Anett Mádi-Nátor – Cybersecurity expert, Managing Partner, CyEx

Art O'Leary – CEO, Electoral Commission of Ireland

Maryia Sadouskaya-Komlach – Global Engagement strategist, Free Press

Unlimited / Fellow, Center for European Policy Analysis

Ágnes Urbán – Director of MerteK Media Monitor / Associate Professor, Corvinus University of Budapest

Moderator: **Péter Krekó** – Director, Political Capital Institute / Policy Leader Fellow, EUI

16:00-16:15

Coffee break

16:15-16:30

Transformation of the global security scene and the future position of Europe

(In partnership with the ERSTE - IWM Europe's Futures fellowship program)

Interview with **Ambassador James O'Brien** – Former Head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination, U.S. Department of State

Interviewer: **Zsuzsanna Szelényi** - Former politician / Program Director, CEU Democracy Institute

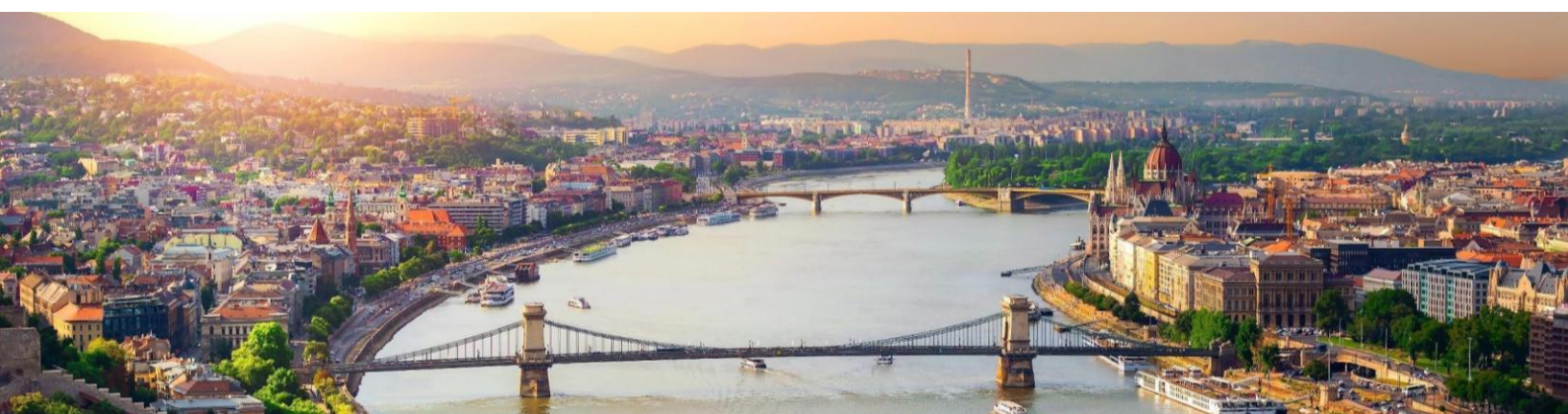
16:30-17:30

The future of Ukraine in Europe

Participants:

Ambassador James O'Brien – Former Head of the Office of Sanctions Coordination at the U.S. Department of State

Dorka Takácsy – Researcher, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration and Democracy



Renáta Uitz – Senior Research Fellow, CEU Democracy Institute / Professor of Law and Government, Royal Holloway, University of London

Moderator: **Zsuzsanna Végh** – Program Officer, German Marshall Fund

17:30-18:30

The changing face of civic resistance in illiberal regimes: Cases from the Western Balkans

Participants:

Andi Dobrush – Director, Open Society Foundations – Western Balkans

Srđan Cvijić – President, International Advisory Committee of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

Vujo Ilić – Research Fellow, Assistant Director, Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade

Ferenc Németh – Western Balkans expert / PhD student, Doctoral School of International Relations and Political Science, Corvinus University

Moderator: **Una Hajdari** – Journalist, Politico

18:30-19:30

Hungary's political climate before the elections (in Hungarian)

Participants:

Eszter Kováts – Researcher, University of Vienna

Nóra Schultz – Political Consultant, Podcast Host, Partizán

Andrea Szabó – Director, Institute for Political Science, HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences

Moderator: **Szabolcs Dull** – Political Analyst, Journalist

