

English Summary of the EP programme of Politics Can Be Different (Lehet Más a Politika – LMP)

Politics Can Be Different (Lehet Más a Politika – LMP) is an initiative with a national network and an expert base, which became a party in February 2009 after a preparatory phase of one and a half years. Its mission is to cultivate a new political approach in the European Parliament, the Hungarian National Assembly and local governments.

The three core values of LMP are – environmental, social and economic – sustainability, social justice and democratic participation. This is the base for the party's programme which is elaborated by a wide network of experts continually.

LMP has a national coverage: its membership is diverse, but they all had enough from being disillusioned and inactive. They want real democracy, a just society, solidarity, and a healthy environment – and they are ready to act for this.

The joint EP list of Lehet Más a Politika and the Humanist Party:

1. Szabó Tímea
2. Ivády Gábor
3. Várady Tibor (HP)
4. Kaufer Virág
5. Rauschenberger Péter
6. Mile Lajos
7. Ertsey Katalin
8. Szigeti Balázs (HP)
9. Pinczés Bálint
10. Mezô János
11. Lelkes Orsolya
12. Osztolykán Ágnes
13. Kopiás Attila (HP)
14. Fehér Dániel
15. Malya Carmen

1. Introduction

Hungary has been a member of the European Union for already 5 years. This period gave us the chance to learn what is that we can expect from the EU, what are the possibilities to realize our interests, and to what extent were the pre-accession fears and hopes reasonable.

Even though a number of critical assessments on the EU membership are justified, at the moment neither our membership nor the existence of the EU is debated. The focus is how and for what goals we should use our membership in the community. Many of the problems we face are not possible to be dealt with in the framework of national politics, thus our active participation in shaping common policies is essential.

LMP is striving for a more just and more sustainable world, both on national and international level. This struggle today is determined by the global economic crisis. This crisis proved that the global economy is built on unstable and unsustainable foundations. The excessive consumption maintained by credits has not only shaken the financial and economic system, but the natural and social foundations, too. The exploitation of natural resources and the increasing emission of green house gases are leading to an ever more threatening ecological crisis. As for the realm of social problems, the innumerable people living in poverty, the growing income inequality within and among countries are the most worrisome phenomena.

The global crisis at the same time - after having been able to avoid the collapse - is a possibility to stop patching up the old, unstable, unjust and ecologically unsustainable system and build a new one. The economy should be given inertia without this leading to the exploitation of resources and the preservation of poverty, and instead creating a less energy and resource demanding system that permits more self-determination, where employment is higher and access to public goods is more equal. This "global transition" needs to be supported on a European level, too, by the reregulation of capital markets and commerce and the refocusing of development resources on energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. The vision of LMP is that the European Union becomes the model of sustainable development.

The European Parliamentary elections program of LMP was worked out in this spirit. Central are the issues that crucially affect the development and wealth of our country, but the decision making takes place on the European level. We highlighted five areas: reregulation of financial markets, minority politics, rural development, food safety and consumer protection, climate safety and energy.

Global finances

LMP is convinced that reregulation of global financial and economic processes is of crucial importance for Hungary. Being an indebted, small, open country that is extremely dependent on foreign credit, the rules guiding international capital markets is a cardinal question. To this end LMP supports stricter regulation of banks, hedge funds, and generally of financial markets; the taxation of financial transactions; the reinforcement of European supervising authorities; and measures against tax heavens.

Situation of Hungarian minorities abroad

The approach to minority politics of LMP can be represented truly efficiently on the European level. The EU is home to regions and nationalities, therefore protection of minorities, support to establish their cultural, local or regional autonomy can naturally find promoters on this level. In LMP's view the atrocities against Hungarian minorities require a more definite response than the one of the

present administration's foreign policy; in order to reach this goal, all available fora and instruments need to be involved. In the European Parliament greens and regionalist parties belong to the same group: MEPs of LMP will be members of this group that is the most determined in representing the interests and strive for autonomy of national minorities.

Rural development

The most centralized common policy of the European Union is agriculture and rural development. This is not exclusively beneficial for Hungary. Presently the most threatening problem is that after 2011 the moratorium on foreigners buying land will cease to exist. The standpoint of LMP regarding the matter is that the moratorium needs to be preserved by using all legal possibilities, so that ownership of land remains connected to local, full time employment agriculture, which is the due of Hungarian citizens. If most of the member states protect the ownership rights of their citizens with moratorium, then it is a possibility also in the case of Hungary.

When framing the Common Agricultural Policy, which fundamentally influences the conditions of rural economy, the goals of LMP are the following: CAP is to be built on the food autonomy of each member state; the subsidies are to support farmers cultivating small or medium size estates and the processing industries closely connected to them. To achieve this, LMP would make subsidies dependent on the size of the estates: the bigger the farm size, the smaller the subsidy is supposed to be. Besides, LMP supports that conditions of agricultural subsidies of CAP include environment-friendly production in the future.

Food safety and consumer protection

Long distance food import on one hand already causes damage by its transportation (increasing cargo traffic and fuel consumption), on the other hand little is known about how was it processed and what does it contain. This is verified by a series of scandals. Products with uncertain origin that travel thousands of kilometers around the world – and are usually marketed by large supermarkets – need to be driven out of the national market. Therefore LMP, as a mean to improve food safety and consumer rights, supports consumption of local products, and is striving for an EU regulation that gives preference to food coming from the closest possible location. In this regard local species of plants and animals are especially important, as their role becomes more important with climate change and the food crisis caused by it. Besides, in order to avoid toxicant residues in our food, it is necessary to make production more environment-friendly and to strengthen supervising authorities on the European level. For all these reasons LMP demands to withdraw trade of food from the free trade regulations of WTO.

Climate safety and energy

Climate change is inevitable; the only unanswered question is its extent. One thing remains certain, that it will affect Hungary more harmfully than the average. Therefore LMP supports that the European Union becomes the initiator of a binding international climate agreement that includes more significant reductions than the present one. According to the standpoint of LMP the most important issue in order to moderate climate change and because of the external dependency of both the EU and Hungary is energy efficiency. Inevitable energy consumption should be gained from renewable sources in an increasing rate. Replacing fossil energy resources with efficiency and renewable energies does not only decrease the expenses of the population and the economy, but creates numerous new workplaces at the same time. The end of the oil era in energy management not only means energy from different sources, but also the restructuring of the whole energy network and more extensive dependence on local sources that increases the role of rural regions.

2. Regulating financial markets

According to the viewpoint of LMP the global financial crisis is not simply a disorder or a passing recession; it is at the same time a symptom of the crisis of the economic model built on self-regulating markets, infinite growth and excessive consumption on credits. The roots of the crisis are in the financial sector, the reason of which was the loose regulation global financial markets. Actors of the financial market were able to spread and make the excessive risks of credit invisible. Heavily responsible for this are the credit rating companies, large financial market investors and state leaders that gave preference to the interest of these institutions. However, the main cause of the credit crisis was the faith that increasing consumption rapidly and constantly was possible, the faith that undermined all political efforts advising community or self-control.

Many experts and for a long time have been warning about the risks of unrestricted global financial markets. Now that this system collapsed, it is high time to frame global and local financial rules that focus on the real economy and especially on the real needs of local economies, instead of giving priority to few getting rich rapidly.

According to LMP the international financial and commercial system should be reformed in a way that will slow down capital movements, create clear liabilities and entirely enforces environmental and social aspects.

LMP is aware of the fact that regulation of financial markets is an issue that actually is to be handled on the global level. However, as a member state, we may be able to influence the policy of the European Union. The condition of financial markets is a key issue for Hungary, as being an indebted, small, open country that is extremely dependent on foreign credit, the rules guiding international capital markets is a cardinal factor. In order to reduce our dependency, gain back our autonomy in economic policy-making and build a healthier local economy, it is fundamental to regulate financial markets more closely, reduce fluctuation and close tax heavens.

LMP also believes that parallel to changing international regulation, also national circumstances need to be altered. The development strategy built solely on the influx of foreign direct investment has failed; and in order to follow a more sustainable development path that relies more on local resources, a different financial system, and new conditions are required.

Chapters:

- The main problems of the present financial system
- Possibilities of the European Union
- Reregulating finances in the EU
- Supervision and regulation of the financial system of the EU
- Hedge funds and high-risk financial instruments
- Financial markets and the Lisbon Strategy
- Reregulating finances globally
- Taxes on financial transactions
- Revision of the Basel II. system
- Free trade agreements of the EU

3. Hungarian Minorities

Chapters:

- Hungarians in the Carpathian basin
- Autonomy in the EU
- Cultural autonomy
- Regional and municipal autonomy
- Outside the great wall
- Regular contacts between Hungarians on the two sides of the Schengen border
- Neighborhood policy
- Fora of dialogue
- Border region cooperation
- Summary

4. Rural development

A major share of Hungary's population lives in a rural setting. Therefore, it is a cardinal strategic issue that rural circumstances allow its inhabitants a good quality of life; to increase its capability to keep its population; and to provide home and living to the greatest possible share of the population.

Recent processes seem to point in a different direction. It is an unforgettable negligence of the previous governments that the situation of the countryside deteriorated to a critical level. Small villages are in the worst, most insecure position, however, almost all rural small towns are in a more and more desperate situation. The rate of public utility services radically dropped that caused the migration of the population. Agricultural production was pushed towards large estates by unreasonable subsidizing, ruining cultural and educational opportunities – along with the public transport network.

In the European Parliament, LMP intends to work for a Hungarian countryside that knows and respects its traditions, protects its environment and resources, and besides these, builds its own community with a strong national and rural identity.

When handling the issue of the capability to keep the population of the countryside on the European level, the most important question is the transformation of the system of agricultural subsidies. While the present system has been supporting the expansion of large estates that have a low impact on employment, a completely different approach should have been employed. This alternative would have subsidized small estates in order to establish a more stable, diverse agrarian pattern that produces in compliance with the demands of local needs.

Chapters:

- Common Agricultural Policy
- The land
- Redesigning the system of agricultural subsidies
- Community
- For the rural environment
- Policy of environment preservation
- Accessible countryside
- National tasks
- A say in issues concerning us
- Knowledge
- Energy
- Market

5. Food safety and consumer protection

LMP would like to remind of what environmentalist movements have been asserting for decades: there are serious problems with agricultural production and food safety. While the efficiency of agricultural production has been growing, the ratio of the starving remained steady and in the developed countries obesity is a widespread disease. The structural problems of the global food market were revealed once again by the food crisis caused by the sudden rise in crop prices in 2007-8. For instance the world market price of wheat increased by 130% between March, 2007 and March, 2008. According to the statistical data food prices in Hungary increased by 15% between April, 2007 and April, 2008. The average increase in the European Union was only 7% (Agricultural Committee, 2008).

The now functioning industrial agriculture in addition disregards ecological boundaries, thus it is not sustainable on the long run. Its destructive ecological effects – destruction of natural habitats, soil depletion, soil and water pollution, and indirectly climate change etc. – are more and more obvious. Monoculture production is in contradiction with natural processes, therefore it can only be maintained by intensive and aggressive use of chemicals, intervening and energy input. This model of agriculture ruins the ecological systems and environment it is built on in order to increase short-term production and profits. It damages the chances of producing healthy food in the next decades, and this way destroys the essential conditions of future generations. The more industrialized production in addition rearranges the structure of incomes, thus it is accompanied by elimination of village communities.

It is a conviction of LMP that the circumstances of Hungary allow us to produce all the food we need with the means of gentle production, while also allowing this for the next generation.

The ecological unsustainability of agriculture is not the only problem: in the present system we can only guess what is in our food. We do not know where it comes from and what does it contain. In the last few years only numerous scandals demonstrated this: cases of changing the labels several times, toxic paprika, meat products containing hormones and antibiotics, the melamin scandal originating from China, salads containing several times more fungicide than allowed or the Irish pork containing dioxin. Given the “modesty” of our sampling and control system of food we are particularly defenseless, while our health extensively depends on it.

Chapters:

- Environment and climate friendly production
- Reduction of carbon “footprint” of food
- Local produces and lands
- Expanding ecological production
- Safe, high quality food
- Food without chemical residues!
- GMO free Hungary!
- Controlled food trade
- Consumer protection
- Toxic free future!
- Adequate execution of EU laws
- Single, adequate labels!
- Global responsibility

6. Climate and energy policy

One of the greatest challenges of our time is climate change and the closely related issue of energy. The present energy regime is built on fossil resources, of which the supply oil and gas most probably reached its peak. An even more serious problem than the exhaustion of these resources is posed by burning them: the emission of greenhouse gases. This process drastically changes the climate of the Earth, thus endangering the conditions of human life. It is also known that the impacts of climate change – drier and hotter summers, milder winters, more extreme weather and precipitation – affect the Carpathian basin above average.

Even though the price of oil is currently low, according to experts in a couple of years the so called “oil peak” will be reached, when the global production will not be able to keep up with the demand anymore. This will also impact the market of natural gas. The EU presently is highly dependent on external energy sources: 75% of the oil, 42% of the natural gas is imported. 99% of the uranium required by nuclear power plants is also imported. In the case of Hungary import of fossil energy resources (oil and natural gas) is more than 80% of the total energy.

Our present economy and society is built on cheap and abundant energy. With the exhaustion of resources it is time to reform our economy by developing alternative, more sustainable and renewable energy sources and ways of energy efficiency and saving. If we start with this right away, the soon to occurring disappearance of fossil fuels will not ruin our lives. It will be a “controlled transition” that will bring positive changes in many other aspects as well, not lastly because of the growing employment. However, if we do not start to prepare now, the rapid exhaustion of energy sources will cause extraordinary shocks.

On the basis of the values represented by LMP a reform of energy production, distribution and consumption is required on the national, European and global level. The energy resource potential that can be extracted within the ecological barrier and requirements of the fight against climate change need to be given priority. The needs of economy and society need to be taken into account, but resource consumption must be regulated more strictly; and a system of coordinated incentives needs to be developed both on the European and national levels to realize our goals.

Chapters:

- Strict and effective climate law!
- Energy efficiency and saving
- Renewable energy sources
- Green workplaces
- Pan-European taxes for transport
- Representing special Hungarian interests in the EU
- Development programs and financial instruments
- District heating
- Quotas as asset and Green Investment System