

Patriots for Europe: Hungary's Orban announces new EU Parliament alliance

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Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban has selected 'Make Europe Great Again' his motto for the bloc's presidency [File: Szilard Koszticsak/AFP]

Vienna, July 1 (RHC)-- Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPO), Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz and the populist Czech ANO party led by Andrej Babis are forming a new alliance in the European Parliament.

"We take on the responsibility to launch this new platform and new faction. I want to make it clear that this is our goal," Orban told reporters at a joint news conference with FPO leader Herbert Kickl and ANO's Babis, calling for other parties' support.

The new alliance has been dubbed the "Patriots for Europe" and will require backing from parties from at least four other countries to be recognised as an official group in the European Parliament – where far-right groups have made gains.

Parties from at least a quarter of the European Union's 27 member states are needed to officially form a new political group.

"A new era begins here, and the first, perhaps decisive moment of this new era is the creation of a new European political faction that will change European politics," Orban said. The three men signed a "patriotic manifesto", promising "peace, security and development" instead of the "war, migration and stagnation" brought by the "Brussels elite", according to Orban.

Kickl's FPO is part of the Identity and Democracy grouping, which also includes France's National Rally and Italy's League. The centrist ANO movement of billionaire former prime minister and eurosceptic Babis announced last week it was leaving Renew Europe. The three parties were the strongest performing in their respective countries during the EU elections earlier this month.

While Fidesz has remained outside larger groupings since it parted ways with the mainstream centre-right European People's Party (EPP) in 2021, the FPO is part of the Identity and Democracy political group along with Marine Le Pen's National Rally party in France. ANO is not part of any political group.

The new alliance is shaping as Hungary takes over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU from Monday. The bloc's presidency bloc brings little real power but enables countries holding it to put their priorities higher on the agenda.

Hungary has in recent years increasingly blocked, altered or delayed a number of key EU decisions, including those on the war in Ukraine and relations with Russia and China. He has selected "Make Europe Great Again" as his motto for the presidency, alarming European politicians for its nod to the slogan of former United States President Donald Trump, whom Orban has previously called a "good friend."

Leaders in Brussels earlier this week launched membership talks with candidate countries Ukraine and Moldova amid Orban's repeated threats to block Ukraine's candidacy. Amid longstanding accusations of undermining democratic institutions by Orban, an EU Parliament resolution in late May said the bloc's presidency must be taken out of Hungary's hand altogether.

In this month's European Parliament election, nationalist parties capitalised on voter disquiet over spiralling prices, migration and the cost of the green transition, and are looking to translate their seat gains into more influence on EU policy.

While the FPO has a clear lead in Austrian opinion polls ahead of the September 29 parliamentary election, Orban faces a growing threat in Hungary from the new opposition party Tisza, which said this month it would join the EPP in the European Parliament.



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