

# For the Renewal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

## Editor-in-Chief's Introduction



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### POLITICAL MANIFESTATION OF THE ACADEMIC SCIENTIFIC BODY

On May 5 2025, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences will hold its jubilee general assembly on the occasion of its 200th anniversary, without Hungary's Prime Minister in attendance, who has been in office for 15 years. The Academy's Section of Economics and Law (Section IX) has published a unanimously approved resolution declaring Prime Minister Viktor Orbán a *persona non grata*. Nearly four decades after the regime change, a significant portion of Hungarian scientific life has definitively shifted the focus of its activities to the internal political sphere through this resolution and through its continuous political manifestations of increasingly deeper content in recent years. It is of great concern that academicians who held high state positions during the past 15 years, and even during earlier civic governmental periods, and who were showered with state decorations, Széchenyi Awards, and the Hungarian Order of Merit, now belong to the political camp opposing the civic government, revealing such Janus-faced behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences – in accordance with founder István Széchenyi's intentions – should serve knowledge, the nation, and universal science through continuous renewal. Its operation should be based on respect for scientific facts, principles, and methods, as well as on the freedom of research. This is far from being realized, seeing the political manifestations and scientific performances of economist and legal academics.

Society would also expect from academicians – especially from MTA members in economics and legal disciplines who have the most direct impact on our everyday affairs – to present competitive knowledge through their own work, to set good examples with their achievements to those applying for academic membership and PhD candidates. That is, they should increase Hungarian intellectual potential, contribute to scientific development, and through it, to enhancing the added value production capacity of the national economy. They should ensure the freedom of scientific research and scientific expression of opinion. The Academy should ensure the freedom of scientific achievements and applications from the influence of external interests, as guaranteed as a fundamental value in Hungary's Fundamental Law. It

would be a requirement that academicians evaluate MTA doctoral applications objectively and select academicians exclusively based on scientific achievements. Unfortunately, the system is increasingly incapable of serving this function.

Nevertheless, legislature and the government significantly support the Hungarian Academy of Sciences both through the budget law and through the real estate assets and revenues conferred upon it. The MTA’s expenditures of 37 billion HUF exceed the public expenditures of the Hungarian Academy of Arts by 164 percent. According to Government Decree 4/1995 (I.20.), the monthly honorary fee – that is, beyond salary and pension – for full members of the MTA is already 455,000 HUF, while for corresponding members it is 353,900 HUF. Moreover, the legislature also broadly provides benefits to academicians’ relatives from taxpayer public funds, including widow’s pensions and orphan benefits. I believe it would be the legal and moral obligation of Academy members to perform objective scientific work, rather than paving the positions of domestic political camps.

#### SAMPLING OF ACADEMIC SCIENTIFIC PERFORMANCES

Let us now examine what kind of substantive scientific work is performed by economist and legal academics who persistently humiliate Viktor Orbán. Do they have any basis for displaying intellectual superiority?

My investigation is based on random sampling. I highlight performance data based on the Hungarian Scientific Bibliography Database ([www.mtmt.hu](http://www.mtmt.hu)). Thus, I show how many scientific publications a person who has been an academician for decades currently has, how many citations they have accumulated by the age of 70-90, which would validate their recognition and intellectual greatness in domestic and international scientific life. This is well supported by their so-called Hirsch (citation) index. It means that the higher the H-index value, the more recognized the researcher. And I specifically highlight articles published in foreign languages in international journals – prioritized in today’s scientific criteria – and the number of (foreign) citations received for them.

*Table 1: Performance data of academics*

Name	Academics				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
<b>Number of publications</b>	318	217	204	470	233
<b>Number of references</b>	452	606	246	641	1323
<b>Hirsch Index</b>	8	9	6	11	16
<b>Number of foreign language articles published in international scholarly journals</b>	6	4	6	23	15
<b>Number of foreign language citations in international publications</b>	0	0	13	12	151

Based on the table, the esteemed reader might even suspect that I have confused certain data regarding the lifetime achievements of academicians with the database of young researchers about to obtain their PhD degrees. I have not confused them. I have quantified the performances of those with academic membership in Section IX from the publicly available publication database maintained by them. This academic body consisting of lawyers and economists certainly does not show such an outstanding level in scientific achievements as would be expected – alongside significant remuneration.<sup>2</sup> Their international reputation is simply non-existent (apart from a few exceptions). But their voice in the political sphere is increasingly sharp. Indeed, the Section of Economics and Law has placed itself in the political field, while their scientific achievements are not very convincing. It is time for academic membership to receive new meaning, new content.

The question arises regarding the situation with academic succession, the election of new Academy members, which is carried out by the body analysed above. Also using random sampling, I highlight two social science researchers who are applying for academic membership in 2025.

*Table 2: the performance of selected academic candidates*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Academic candidates</b>	
	<b>1st</b>	<b>2nd</b>
<b>Number of publications</b>	125	199
<b>Number of references</b>	798	714
<b>Hirsch Index</b>	16	14
<b>Number of foreign language articles published in international scholarly journals</b>	12	8
<b>Number of foreign language citations in international publications</b>	136	1

It is evident that the scientific achievements of academic candidates also leave much to be desired. Their publications in foreign language in international journals are somewhat meagre, and the citations received for them are even less favourable, especially if we also examine who cited the Hungarian academic candidates abroad. Indeed, international recognition is not represented by a Hungarian colleague, subordinate, or ideological companion citing the Hungarian academic candidate abroad. A total of 1 citation abroad was realized for Academician 2. It was also made by a Hungarian researcher.

Of the 136 foreign journal citations for our subject referred to as Academic Candidate 1, 87 items were made by domestic university colleagues, department office colleagues, Hungarian researchers belonging to the same intellectual camp as the candidate, who cited Academic Candidate 1 in their papers published abroad. This shows 64 percent inbreeding. Indeed, where is the international reputation so excessively praised by academicians in this matter?

When examining at an even deeper scientific level, unfortunately we must acknowledge that the evaluation of candidates for the Doctor of Hungarian Academy of Sciences title, which forms the foundation for academic succession, is also politically motivated, largely done by those who do not demonstrate particularly strong scientific achievements. Evidence of this is how, on what basis, the MTA doctoral title was awarded a decade earlier in the case of the examined academic candidates.

The vocal yet underperforming majority propels the consolidated academic majority before itself. One might say, the majority dares not utter a word. This is evidenced by the fact that academicians decorated by the civic government have also submitted to those attacking the government and nationally-minded scientists. They prioritize academic aspirants belonging to their own circles, while crushing others.

The title of Doctor of the MTA should provide quality assurance that is independent, nationally uniform, carried out by highly qualified experts, and integrates international requirements. Strengthening its significance and prestige is an important task of the Academy. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences, tangibly its Section of Economics and Law, does not fulfil this requirement. The application and review procedures lack transparency, and scientific performance metrics are not given primacy in the evaluation of applications.

The nationally-minded scientific community watches with concern the operation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, specifically the Section of Economics and Law, and the process and methods of their evaluation of scientific applications. Serious concerns have also arisen in the author of these lines. Thus, although I have 589 scientific publications, 3992 citations, my Hirsch Index is 35. 1067 citations have been received for my 53 foreign language specialist articles published abroad, and my MTA doctoral performance evaluation in the MTA Committee on State and Legal Sciences is 600 percent. Despite these, I have withdrawn my MTA doctoral application. I trust that there will be a body that evaluates applications not based on political-party sympathy or exclusive ideological agreement.

One cannot demonstrate progressive scientific achievements, especially those with international visibility, based on the renaissance of outdated ideas and vassal-like relationships. In vain does the MTA Section of Economics and Law force the methodology of austerity economic policy based on the Bokros, Gyurcsány, Bajnai methodology in the scientific space and in education, along with deregulatory legal principles that place the state in an insubstantial position; this will no longer work. There are new intellectual trends, and even more dynamic times are coming, to which the current academic intelligentsia should adapt. Yet, it is unable to do so. New academic member elections from their own intellectual and interest circles, MTA doctoral applications evaluated according to academicians' interests do not result in effective scientific performances, competitive scientific succession, or added value-based economic development. The loss of weight in scientific life can hardly be counterbalanced by their increasingly stronger intervention in the domestic political space. It is a significant problem that the Academy's membership is also trying to increasingly infiltrate university doctoral (PhD) schools, acquire well-paying positions there despite their advanced age, thus shaping legal and economic education along their outdated principles, and select (i.e., adverse selection) their own academic succession, the new MTA members who will eventually replace

them, according to their own principles, and position them favourably. This is why today's 30-50-year-old young professionals with university degrees do not understand the operational methodology and legal principles of the civic government that has been in place for nearly two decades. They do not understand the essence of state interventions, official price regulation, and margin caps. They do not accept the methodology of building the internal economy, the pursuit of food and energy security. They are hostile to the repurchase of strategic sectors into national ownership and to domestic actors. The membership of Section IX plays a major role in why the measures implemented by the civic government are transmitted to corporations and society only sluggishly and with limited efficacy.

#### THE INTELLECTUAL WANDERING OF THE LIBERAL ACADEMIC INTELLIGENTSIA

Those who transferred themselves from the communist system to the neoliberal system – many of whom have also infiltrated among us – are, however, running out of air and ammunition. The initial decades following the regime change were characterized by the transformation of the Hungarian economy along Western models, at the expense of national interest. This was implemented in a forced manner, without transition, that is, failing to ensure an organic transition. The majority of current MTA members in law and economics took the lead in this. They favoured a neoliberal economy and advocated living according to the principles of an open society, namely, the sale of state assets, the transfer of public services to foreigners. They carried forward the legacy of communism into liberalism. As they advanced in age, they permanently exchanged their practical work for academic positions. By 2007-2008, however, the raw market economy based on excessively neoliberal principles (the system they favoured as their model) failed in the United States, then in the developed West as well, while state involvement came to the fore. In our country, it only occurred from 2010, following the change of government. We wasted nearly three decades with the regime change based on flawed principles, because the practice based on the free market, raw market economy was not suitable for Hungary. Its rapid introduction without transition caused serious damage. It was reprehensible for the current academic membership to assist in this process, and moreover, to construct an entire scientific discipline upon it, demanding and even continuing to impose veneration for this approach. Their failure lies in the fact that, due to their misapprehension of the situation, and perhaps also out of self-interest, they advocated for the implementation of neoliberal market economy practices – which had been in place in the Western world for centuries – in Hungary as it emerged from a socialist planned economy, and subsequently developed theoretical scientific frameworks to support this approach..

The model based on free market principles as well as on the omnipotence of the market, however, had failed by 2007-2008. The excessive autonomy of market participants led to a global economic crisis. The model of Hungarian liberal lawyers and economist academicians faltered. Since 2025, the protectionist approach in the United States has intensified. COVID from 2020, led to the weakening of globalization, and the Russian-Ukrainian war completely shattered international cooperation chains and free trade. The periphery has strengthened; it

is no longer necessarily advantageous to allow the outflow of labour, goods, services, money, and operating capital from developed centres. New economic and regulatory force lines have emerged in the world. The West now has to contend with its Far Eastern rival, which operates according to state capitalist principles similar to the current Hungarian ones, and has thereby become the most dynamically developing region of the world economy. And what does the Hungarian economist academic intelligentsia have to say to this? Nothing substantial, but adds that Viktor Orbán should not attend the Academy’s celebration. The legal and economist scholars, who for decades have favoured Western free market principles and scientific theses based on them in all their scientific manifestations, now maintain profound silence. They have no substantive explanation or answer to the changes taking place in the West. In fact, they hinder the work of researchers representing new ideas, while simultaneously weakening the government’s economic and social policy.

There will be a need for a complete review of the existing MTA regular and corresponding membership based on their scientific achievements, which I propose to start first with the Section of Economics and Law. Taxpayers’ money can only be spent on tangible performances, those who maintain transparent application systems. Only those who deserve it should remain academicians. Their non-transparent, confusing, unethical decisions must be reviewed and repealed.

Furthermore, let us not ignore what cannot be ignored. The economic and legal membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, despite their increasingly fading performances, still enjoys some prestige before the public, and even wants to become a more active influencer of it, that is, a political actor. The start of national security screenings can no longer be postponed in the case of communist academicians who reached their zenith 30-50 years ago, or even their liberal counterparts (the succession) who have turned against the government and society in recent decades, belonging either to the former state party’s secret service nomenclature or even international secret services is incompatible with the principle that, while being financed from public funds and without producing scientific achievements, they engage in the deterioration of society and science. In agreement with historian Mária Schmidt, the operation of the last Stalinist institution must be reevaluated. I would add: their procedures and methods reminiscent of the ÁVO (State Protection Authority) must be eliminated. The disbursement of budgetary support to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, especially for academic honorary fees, must be suspended with immediate effect. This way, we may provide an opportunity for internal purification processes. Perhaps the honourable academicians can voluntarily expel the untenable ones from among their ranks.

## HOW TO REORGANIZE OUR ACADEMIC SCIENTIFIC LIFE; WHAT DOES OUR SOCIAL SCIENCE JOURNAL DO?

*Polgári Szemle* (Civic Review) is an esteemed journal of the civic intelligentsia, publishing its XXI volume in 2025. Our editorial board considers professional and authentic representation of the economic and social changes occurring around us to be its primary objective. Decades ago, when the journal was launched with the support of the *Polgári Magyarországért*

*Alapítvány* (Foundation for a Civic Hungary), it was formulated as a main aspiration to provide publication opportunities for the civic intelligentsia, to enable the publication of research in civic value-based economics and other social science disciplines. In this spirit, we issue the first Hungarian publication of our XXI volume (as well), in which – highlighting from the multitude of authors – our friend József Szájer, former Member of the Hungarian Parliament and the European Parliament, Director of the Institute for a Free Europe (IFE), examines how law, the court, and justice in the European Union currently, in the age of sovereignty struggles, relate to federalist aspirations. József Szájer ascertains that the Court of Justice of the European Union is the main engine of EU federalization, which, with its judgments, continuously extends the scope of EU law at the expense of member states' sovereignty, violating the treaties founding the Union. The European Parliament and the Council do not exercise control over the Court, thus checks and balances are missing. The concept of the rule of law (while being bent) is used by EU institutions as a tool to keep member countries in check in other areas as well, while they do not apply in their own operation the principles they demand from member states. The author believes that national constitutional courts must join in the EU public law defence of national sovereignty. The Director of the Institute for a Free Europe suggests the so-called preliminary procedure, within which national courts turn to Luxembourg to test the EU conformity of member country law. The paper draws valid conclusions for the entire Union through the presentation of the Hungarian legal sovereignty struggle.

The next author honouring our journal with his writing is Professor Zsolt K. Lengyel, Director of the Hungarian Institute (HUI) at the University of Regensburg, President of the Munich Hungarian Institute Association. In his introductory thoughts, he states that Hungary must find its place in an international environment that has been difficult and increasingly harsh since the early years of the regime change. The main direction of his study is to analyse the development of the image of Hungary in Germany within this international environment, highlighting the role of mass information distorting perceptions in the name of liberal democracy, as well as the one-sided party-political-ideological effect of EU apex bodies. In German-Hungarian relations, the professor researching in Regensburg presents the main methodological components of *political moralism* related to German traditions of Hungary-bashing, from the demonization of the Hungarian Prime Minister to stigmatization, fake news spreading, and political agitation and propaganda. These means aim to overthrow Viktor Orbán and his government, and clearly damage the reputation of Hungarian society. In the European political arena, Professor Lengyel sees a conflict between two conceptions of democracy and two visions of the future. On the one hand, elite democracy and representative-plebiscitary democracy, on the other hand, the visions of the United States of Europe and national/nation-state Europe. The main value of the author's paper is the examination of misunderstood and misinterpreted Hungarian illiberalism, as well as the European exploitation of the proto-liberal value of equality.

As one of the civic right-wing intellectuals fighting for the renewal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, I specifically recommend these two papers to the MTA legal and economist academicians. Our authors' works are characterized by delving into the depths of



economic and social processes, questioning outdated ideas and legal principles, grasping the essence, and formulating concrete, scientifically matured proposals. If academicians attack the civic government, if they try to compromise the work of professors supporting the government, if they handle their applications based on their political prejudices, then they should consider the possibility that if they are the liberals, the neoliberals – beyond what has been described – they are suffering from a significant misconception regarding their role and ideology. Liberalism – in line with the word liberty meaning freedom –, also known as broad-mindedness, is fundamentally based on personal liberty, freedom before the law and scientific review bodies, equality, and objective judgment, namely, on an ideological system representing a wide spectrum of thoughts, whose common feature is to present individual freedom, free thinking as the most important goal. And new scientific results must be considered as fruits matured along the freedom of thought, whose taste and quality should not be judged based on whose garden they were grown in, and whether they are of a different variety than the evaluator’s (i.e., the reviewer’s) fruits. Consequently, liberals should not only be liberal as long as the applicant before them represents their views. True liberalism is about respecting the other’s principles, even if they are fundamentally different from one’s own.

Therefore, in its first instance, the renewal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is nothing other than returning to ensuring original liberalism, free thinking, and its objective judgment, to high-quality scientific debate.

We cordially recommend our writings to the wider readership as well, especially to those who have been drawing intellectual nourishment from our journal for decades.

It is worth reading *Polgári Szemle*!

Budapest, Hungary, 5 May 2025, on the day of the the 200th jubilee celebration of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA).

Prof. Dr. Csaba Lentner,  
University Professor  
Chief Editor of *Polgári Szemle*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Authors note: academics who have held their positions for decades, now quite elderly, have neither collectively nor individually protested against, for example, the Bokros package, or against the privatization that plunged the nation into poverty; indeed, many were intellectual supporters of these measures, and some were practical implementers. They did not protest against the proliferation of foreign currency loans. Yet these resulted in genuine social disasters.

<sup>2</sup> My findings demonstrate strong correlation with Béla Darvas’s article published in *Átlászo* in 2013: <https://atlatszo.hu/kozpenz/2013/11/22/a-magyar-akademikus-eletkora-es-tiszteletdija/> The situation – in my assessment – has since considerably deteriorated to the detriment of scientific endeavours. The number of quality publications from Hungary appearing in the international arena has increased rapidly in recent decades; however, the internal membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences demonstrates a lag in both absolute numbers and proportionally. It is predominantly young researchers who drive and improve Hungarian performance in the international sphere.