

Poll: Hungary to largely reject fresh influx of migrants in October referendum

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News

A new opinion poll shows that people in Hungary will turn out in large numbers and reject any fresh influx of asylum seekers in the country's asylum referendum in October.



Viktor Orbán. *Photo credit: Press Association*

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been a vocal critic of the EU's migration policies and recently described people fleeing war and persecution to seek protection in the EU as "a poison".

The question to eight million Hungarian voters on 2 October will be: "Do you want the European Union to be entitled to prescribe the mandatory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the consent of Parliament?"

According to data compiled by Hungarian news site Index, some 33.6 per cent of those polls indicated they will say no to any quotas, compared to just 4.8 per cent who said they will vote to accept them.

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Turnout is predicted to comfortably surpass the 50 per cent required to make it valid under the country's laws.

In total, 54 per cent of eligible voters backing the country's five main parties have said that they will head to the ballot box for the vote.

A No outcome would put Hungary at loggerheads with the EU over migration, which has become an increasingly fractious topic across Europe.

Several central European countries including Hungary, Austria, Croatia and Slovakia have voiced concern at a possible plan for migrant quotas, and some member states have launched a legal challenge to the scheme.

Although the upcoming referendum does not have any legal force, the Hungarian government hopes it will send a strong signal to Brussels over public opposition to mass migration in the country.

A separate survey showed that two-thirds of Hungarians say they are either "scared" or "very scared" by the impact the migrant crisis is having on their communities

The news comes after it was revealed recently that the EU registered double the number of asylum seekers last year than its previous peak figure, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Some 1.3 million people applied for asylum last year in the 28 EU states along with Norway and Switzerland.

Germany remained the top destination overall, with 442,000 applications lodged last year.

Hungary (174,000) and Sweden (156,000) were next most popular and Hungary also had the highest number of applicants as a proportion of its population.

Meanwhile, most Germans think Brussels should scrap a landmark migration deal with Turkey and scupper negotiations on its accession to the EU, according to a poll published on Sunday.

The deal, agreed by Ankara in exchange for the revival of financial aid, the promise of visa-free travel to much of the EU for Turkish citizens and accelerated EU membership talks, has sharply cut the number of refugees entering Europe via eastern routes.

Last year Germany took in around 1.1 million people fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and beyond, far more than any other EU state, creating conditions that have led to a rise in social and political tensions in Europe's powerhouse economy.

Poland and Hungary, among other countries, could be sanctioned financially for refusing to comply with EU values or rules on migration relocation, a senior MEP has warned.

"There need to be stronger rules for the disbursement of funds," Ingeborg Grässle, a an EPP group MEP and the head of the Parliament's committee on budgetary control, told a German newspaper.

"Countries that don't respect EU laws, or countries that don't participate enough in the resettlement of migrants or the registration of refugees, should be deprived of funds."

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter for the Parliament Magazine

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