

**Constitutional Reforms in Hungary:
European Commitment and National Sovereignty.
A Global Conversation with Ambassador Péter Paczolay**



October the 20th was the opening day of “Diplomacy - Il Festival della Diplomazia” and the 1st year and 2nd year Global Governance got to meet current Hungarian Ambassador to Rome, Peter Paczolay.

He has been holding this office since April 2015. His main fields of study are theory of the state and

comparative constitutional law and he teaches history of political theories, theory of State, legal theory, political sciences, history of political thought, federalism and constitutional justice. He also served as Head of the Office of the President of Hungary (2005-2006) and in the Hungarian Constitutional Court as chief counsellor, judge, Secretary General, Vice President and as President.

Amb. Paczolay first explained us Hungary’s constitutional history which has a tradition that goes back to Saint Stephan (X-XI Century AD) and was affected first by the Holy Roman Empire (Golden Bull, 1222), and later by Austria (Great Compromise, 1864) and the Soviet Union (Socialist Constitution, 1949).

In 1989 after the fall of the Socialist regime began a process of revision of the constitution. On the October 23rd the Republic was officially promulgated and Constitutional court was established and free elections were held.

The new constitution was an effort to move close to Western countries and the European Community. However the Hungarian Constitution is pretty flexible because the reforms only need two third majority in the mono-cameral Parliament. So during the economic crisis, as in Hungary there was widespread disillusion of the European Union and chaos and riots, Constitution was again changed.

Then we took a closer look at the 2011 Hungarian Constitution, which entered into force on January 1st 2012. Beside the media regulation and limitation of the Constitutional Court the most striking features of this Constitution is the presence of both Nationalism and Europeanism.

The first line of the Basic Law says “*God bless the Hungarians*” and the last one says “*Let there be peace, freedom and concord!*”, which was the 1848 movements’ motto.

Ambassador Paczolay showed us that the content of the Basic Law is sometimes very nationalistic but there was also a great European Commitment and an ideological rift with the Communist past; For example in the Preamble (National

creed) we can find a mentioning of the Holy Crown which is Patriotic symbol of the Country but also the belonging to the “Christian Europe” .

As pointed out by the Rome and Venice commissions, Hungary adopted the Fundamental Rights of the European Union but also has its specific articles about freedom and responsibility.

All in all the late Constitution is very similar to the 1989 Constitution, it has an unusual structure and it is very ideological, but it is still very young and maybe there will be further development in the near future.

At the end Amb. Paczolay received questions about very recent happenings in european politics, at which he answered expressing his thoughts about Brexit, stating that UK has always been an important part of EU, but also that never had an active role in carrying forward EU policies. He also stated that though Hungary is advancing a protectionist policy against refugees seeking asylum in EU, is still accepting many of them and is eager to have a more important role in EU politics.

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