

Orbán, Babiš and the Czech Pirates

With autocratic forces in Europe on the rise once again, the Visegrád Four – the Czech republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – has quite a lot on its own plate. The Czech Prime Minister and president, and the prime ministers in the rest of the countries tend to follow these tendencies, but especially tend to support each other a lot. And the Czech Pirates won't have it.

On Wednesday, 12th September, the European Parliament recommended the EU member states to initiate proceedings against Hungary because of violation of the Article 2 of the Lisbon treaty, citing Orbán's assault on democracy, free media and judicial system. Andrej Babiš, the Czech Prime Minister, immediately expressed support to his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán: even though the members of the European Parliament, who have been elected as part of Babiš's political movement ANO, unanimously supported the action against Hungary. Yet, Babiš has shifted in the last few years towards populist, anti-immigrant and anti-democracy stance, praising Orbán on numerous occasions. Babiš has clearly decided to ally himself with authoritarians of the V4, probably trying to empower his position in the upcoming municipal elections in the Czech Republic (5th and 6th October) – and already claiming that migration will be the main topic of the European elections next year and that he will be personally leading the campaign of ANO (however not running himself).

The Pirate movement stands for protection of human rights, democracy and freedoms, including the freedom of speech. Thus the Pirates are voicing their concerns about both Orbán's and Babiš' steps against these values. And as of this moment, after hegemony of ANO (oscillating around 30 % across the Czech republic) there is a chance for a change. According to recent polls, the Pirates may be able to beat ANO in Prague and in some other cities. After placing third last year in the national elections, this rise shows that the Pirates are a relevant movement delivering their promises. And even though the municipal level doesn't have a great impact on the national politics, they can prove there even more to the voters and citizens that they are capable of defending their interests and rights – and possibly win in the next national elections and disrupt this Babiš-Orbán tandem.

'Aim of the Pirate Party is an educated, well-connected and free society: complete antithesis of what authoritarians like Orbán or Babiš want,' says Mikuláš Peksa, vice-chairman of the Czech Pirates. They are clearly relevant antagonist to Orbán and Babiš.

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