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The Hungarian right is rebuilding the electoral system

On 22 May, the right-wing coalition Fidesz-KDNP, which won a constitutional majority in the April elections, presented a programme of the new government led by Viktor Orban. No clear concept for resolving the country's key problems was presented in the programme. At the same time, the right is pushing through changes in voting regulations concerning both parliamentary and local elections.

Fidesz has presented to parliament a package of bills regarding amendment of the constitution. Parliament has already accepted the proposal for reducing the number of MPs from the current 386 to a maximum of 200, and a guarantee for the representation of national and ethnic minorities (13 MPs). Fidesz has also proposed reducing the numbers of local authority members.

On 26 May, in spite of strong protests from Slovakia, the citizenship act was amended, thus facilitating ethnic Hungarians who live abroad to obtain Hungarian citizenship. Although electoral rights are vested only in registered residents of Hungary, in future, Fidesz-KDNP may also wish to grant the right to vote to Hungarians living abroad and thus strengthen its electorate.

The new government will be sworn in on 29 May. However, the governmental programme, in which the number of ministries has been reduced to eight, is rather vague. It focuses on challenges related to the recovery of the Hungarian economy, promises a reduction in and simplification of taxes, which is aimed at stimulating the creation of new jobs, and support for Hungarian businesses. Reduction of the unemployment rate, which currently stands at nearly 10.8%, has also been identified as an important goal.

Fidesz, which won a strong public mandate in the April election (52% support), wants to demonstrate its determination in implementing reforms. Spectacular changes in the voting system are to symbolise the will for a reconstruction of the state and are to be used for maintaining the high level of public support, on which the right intends to capitalise during the local elections this autumn. <boc>