

Ursula von der Leyen

President

European Commission

Rue de la Loi/ Wetstraat 200

BE-1049 Brussels 1

Dear President Von der Leyen,

The governments of Hungary and Poland have yet again showed their utter disregard for the core values of our union by rejecting the rule of law conditionality and thereby blocking the EU's next long-term budget, including the allocation of badly needed COVID-19 recovery aid. Under the disguise of anti-immigration ideology and nationalistic rhetoric, they seek to protect a political system based on unlimited power, cronyism and a wholly manipulated public sphere.

We, mayors of Polish and Hungarian cities condemn Mr. Orbán's and Mr. Morawiecki's actions. Representing xx millions of Hungarians and Poles, we express our support for rule of law safeguards and for thorough oversight of EU funds to ensure that our common resources serve the public good, and not antidemocratic and corrupt interests.

While we still hope that our governments will at last concede to the original budget proposal and acquiesce to the rule of law mechanism, we believe that an intergovernmental agreement without Hungary and Poland on NextGenerationEU is now a real alternative. For that unfortunate turn of events, let us offer a prospective solution that would not only provide badly needed EU-assistance to our countries, but would also offer a prospective remedy to the challenge that our increasingly authoritarian governments represent.

In case of an intergovernmental agreement without Hungary and Poland, we propose that the EU uses the resources originally allocated in the NextGenerationEU for Hungary and Poland to create a Recovery and Resilience Fund for Polish and Hungarian Municipalities so that they can drive forward a sustainable and socially just economic recovery. We will guarantee full transparency and accountability, as well as full alignment with the values and stated objectives of the European Union.

The current crisis has painfully highlighted Europe's decade-long untreated illness: democratic backsliding and authoritarianism in certain member states.

Europe must not let increasingly autocratic governments hold our future hostage. At this time of multiple crises, the European Union has a duty to safeguard the well-being of all its citizens and drive a sustainable economic recovery. We, Hungarian and Polish municipalities stand ready to play a constructive role.

Rafał Trzaskowski, Mayor of Warsaw, Gergely Karácsony, Mayor of Budapest.

Other mayors of Hungarian and Polish cities TBD.