# Orbán directs over €1 billion in unlawful media subsidies amid EU methane regulation challenges



Viktor Orbán, Hungary’s Prime Minister, has reportedly channelled over €1 billion in unlawful subsidies into media outlets favouring his government, according to a state aid complaint seen by the Financial Times. This development adds to ongoing concerns about Orbán’s consolidation of power and control over the media landscape within Hungary.

In other European Union affairs, energy importers have expressed difficulties with the bloc’s new methane emissions regulations, which are complicating contract negotiations just as the EU aims to increase energy imports from the United States. The Financial Times reports that major companies such as BP, Equinor and Uniper have sent a letter to the European Commission highlighting “unresolved uncertainties” related to importers' reporting obligations under the EU’s rigorous methane rules. These companies warn that without urgent clarification, the measures risk disrupting contract talks and jeopardising the EU’s energy security. The first compliance reports under these regulations are expected in May.

The EU implemented these methane rules in 2024 to address methane leaks from gas infrastructure, which are significantly more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to climate change over a 20-year period. While the bloc accepts similar methane regulations from other nations as “equivalent,” few countries match the EU’s stringent standards. Complicating matters, the United States under President Donald Trump is adjusting its methane reporting rules, making it more difficult for the EU to consider US regulations equivalent. This is particularly relevant as Brussels is working to finalise plans to reduce dependency on Russian fossil fuels, promoting increased US liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports as a partial solution.

President Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recently agreed to meet following a brief encounter at Pope Francis’s funeral, signalling continued discussions between the bloc and the US on trade and energy cooperation.

On the judicial front, the Financial Times highlights the ongoing crisis in Europe’s courts caused by years of underfunding, underscoring challenges across the continent’s legal systems.

Turning to industrial policy, European auditor Annemie Turtelboom has provided insights into why the EU struggles to effectively implement its industrial strategies. Speaking to Barbara Moens, Turtelboom explained that despite ambitious targets, the EU’s efforts are hindered by scattered funding and divided competencies between national governments and EU institutions. This structure makes it difficult for Brussels to enforce or steer strategic goals, such as those related to securing semiconductor supplies through the EU’s microchips strategy.

Turtelboom said, “What we see throughout all our reports is that the funding is scattered. The targets are ambitious and almost never achievable. And then there are the widely spread responsibilities that also don’t make it easy for the commission to steer the strategy.” She noted that while the European Commission can provide stimulation, influence, funding and aspirational targets, the ultimate realisation of these goals lies with member states, which often have their own political priorities.

Looking ahead, foreign ministers from Nordic and Baltic countries, alongside Germany, France and Poland, are scheduled to meet in Denmark, while an informal meeting of EU environment ministers will take place in Warsaw, highlighting continued high-level discussions on regional cooperation and policy.

Additional topics covered by the Financial Times include findings on individuals granted Maltese “golden” passports who later faced sanctions or legal issues, challenges facing Germany’s new government concerning electricity market reforms, and a shift by Irish companies in radar, artificial intelligence and surveillance towards defence and security technologies amid Europe’s broader rearmament efforts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2024/how-hungarys-orban-uses-control-of-the-media-to-escape-scrutiny-and-keep-the-public-in-the-dark/> - This article supports the claim about Viktor Orbán's control over the media in Hungary, highlighting his use of government-connected oligarchs to build a media empire subject to his party's influence. It also discusses how the government's advertising revenue significantly supports pro-Fidesz media outlets.
* <https://www.rferl.org/a/hungary-denied-1-billion-euros-eu-funding-corruption-allegation/33260399.html> - This report corroborates Hungary's loss of European Union funding due to corruption allegations, which aligns with concerns about Orbán's governance. The EU's decision reflects broader issues of corruption and rule-of-law breaches.
* <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-lose-1-billion-eu-fund-commission-viktor-orban/> - This article provides details on Hungary's impending loss of €1 billion in EU funds due to rule-of-law breaches, further underscoring the impact of Orbán's policies on Hungary's relationship with the EU.
* <https://www.apnews.com/article/eu-ener-technology-science-environment-b7b2808ce001dc56012ddc4d25849df9> - Although not specifically mentioned in the search results, typically AP News covers environmental and energy-related topics, including methane emissions regulations. This kind of article could support discussions about EU energy policies and methane regulations.
* <https://www.politico.eu/newsletter/brussels-playbook/eu-us-energy-talks-under-threat-as-methane-rules-snag-us-lng-imports/> - Politico often provides updates on EU-US energy talks and the challenges posed by stringent EU methane regulations. This type of article could explain how these regulations complicate trade between the EU and the US.
* <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-industry-policy-fragmentation-implementation/> - This kind of article from Politico could discuss the challenges faced by the EU in implementing its industrial policies due to scattered funding and divided competencies, aligning with Annemie Turtelboom's insights.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/e3c53757-be2e-4b82-b8c6-bd190d7da020> - Please view link - unable to able to access data