



Threats to EU values

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Highlights

- European Union members enjoy impunity even when their own domestic laws seem incompatible with the bloc's core values, as Poland and Hungary show.
- The latest infringement proceedings against the two countries underscore the EU's limits in enforcing compliance with common democratic standards, given the bloc's stringent requirement of unanimity among all member states to punish offending members.

In June, both countries were brought under the scanner of the European Parliament, again for flouting democratic values.

- The European Commission sent the Hungarian government a letter of formal notice over the "Stop Soros" law, among other things, for breach of the EU's charter of fundamental rights.
- The law makes it a criminal offence to help asylum seekers, in contravention of international humanitarian laws.
- It takes aim at the pro-EU stance of the financier George Soros and is also viewed as anti-Semitic.
- In Poland, the violations relate, among others, to the ruling conservative Law and Justice Party's forced retirement of a swathe of judges in July.
- The move mirrors a provision in Hungary's 2011 constitution to lower the age of retirement of judges which led to the instant removal of many judges.

Possible Outcome

- In theory, both states could be stripped of their voting rights in the EU and face financial sanctions.
- But each also knows that a unanimous decision by the bloc, under Article 7 of the Lisbon Treaty, could be vetoed by the other.
- In fact, the British member of the centre-right European People's Party in the European Parliament voted in June to oppose the move to launch proceedings against Budapest.

The conservative group's refusal so far to act against an errant member is a tacit endorsement of the Eurosceptic position against EU meddling with the internal laws of states.

Source: [The Hindu](#)