

## Ambassador of Hungary to the United States, Dr. Szabo Speaks at UVU



*Ambassador of Hungary, Dr. Laszlo Szabo speaks at UVU*

The Utah Valley University Office of Global Engagement hosted the Hungarian Ambassador to the United States Laszlo Szabo on November 6, 2018. Ambassador Szabo gave a very insightful presentation about Hungary, this was mostly an informational session on Hungarian history, wars, revolutions, inventions, food, immigration policy, and notable figures and inventors and their influence in American culture. Ambassador Szabo wanted to consistently emphasize Hungary's business friendly economy, supporting and providing incentives toward businesses is evident by their 9% corporate tax rate, one of the lowest rates in the world.<sup>1</sup> According to Ambassador Szabo Hungary has a strong legacy of inventors and entrepreneurs, he linked many well know modern inventions as having roots with Hungarian inventor. Ambassador Szabo said that "Hungarians are good at ideas and inventions but are not good at commercializing their ideas and goods," this is explaining the corporate tax rate, and the reason there are 1700 US based companies in Hungary.

---

<sup>1</sup> Elkins, Kathleen. "12 Countries That Pay Less in Taxes than the US." CNBC. March 02, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/02/countries-that-pay-less-in-taxes-than-the-us.html>.

At the beginning of his lecture Ambassador Szabo stated that “I am not a politician” in a light-hearted fashion. But I cannot say that I was a little disappointed that we did not discuss or hear from the Ambassador about some of the tensions surrounding Hungarian policy and of the views of Viktor Orban their Prime Minister and government. Despite that, we did get a good taste for the views and politics of Hungary, especially surrounding the topic of immigration and illegal immigration, and media coverage. Regarding immigration the Ambassador shared a few facts with us, first that the Hungarian people were polled to be 93% against uncontrolled migration, second that at the height of the migration crises, on the Hungarian border there were 10,000 illegal entrant trials a day, and the third the Hungarian government was forced to build barriers such as walls or fences on its borders under a EU mandated Schengen treaty, although being mandated by the treaty it was viewed in the media as a sign of xenophobia in Hungary. Ambassador Szabo reaffirmed the difference between and migrant and a refugee, what they want to curb is illegal migration they want to create a solution in their home country.

The Ambassador of Hungary brought some energy into the meeting once the topic of western media coverage of Hungary was brought up by a member of the audience. The question was focused on the media and wanted a response to the mostly negative coverage media has placed on the country, using terms like xenophobes, or illiberal democracy, or anti-Semitic. Ambassador Szabo responded by saying that this was the result of leftist leaning media corporations who share the news in a titled manner towards a leftist viewpoint and in many cases are not the “free press” highlighting the ownership of corporations. He shared examples of how the media has been dishonest in its portrayal of Hungary and its political culture. Ambassador Szabo has shared these viewpoints quite clearly on news interviews and meetings that Hungary understands they have a different viewpoint than what the west believes is the right approach.<sup>2</sup> This was a good answer and an important topic in our current political climate, however we need a clearer understanding and answers on claims of illiberalism, and autocracy within the government lead by Viktor Orban and Hungary’s response to these claims. This is an important subject because even though Hungary may be relatively small in terms of size it still has a strong voice in Europe and influences on its neighbors, and we must understand where the government of Hungary is along that spectrum. This was a topic I wish we had more time to discuss with the Ambassador.

---

<sup>2</sup> EWTN. “World Over - 2018-04-19 - Hungarian Ambassador to the U.S. Laszlo Szabo with Raymond Arroyo.” YouTube, YouTube, 20 Apr. 2018, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdDZ9jsxjWo&t=634s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdDZ9jsxjWo&t=634s).



*Cody Conklin speaks to Ambassador Szabo*

Economically the country holds strong ties with the US with the abundance of US firms invested in Hungary. Energy wise the US relationship is going to be important going forward as Hungary is moving towards energy independence and diversity, this country has no rich natural resources and relies on imports in its landlocked state. I thought it was interesting to see the Ambassador highlight that they are “not” friends with Russia. Hungary is a partner of the Three Seas Initiative<sup>3</sup> between 12 Eastern European countries in order to reduce energy dependence on Russia and focus on trade and ties with United States seeking other investment sources. Not only is Eastern European building stronger economic ties we are also seeing an apparent divide<sup>4</sup> in political and ideological leanings these recent years between the West and East. The lecture helped us understand Hungary’s viewpoint and its stance on many controversial issues, but also where it sits among the interesting developments in Europe.

*Cody Conklin, UVU student*

---

<sup>3</sup> The Heritage Foundation, [www.heritage.org/europe/event/advancing-liberty-and-economic-freedom-through-the-three-seas-initiative](http://www.heritage.org/europe/event/advancing-liberty-and-economic-freedom-through-the-three-seas-initiative). Explained by; Krzysztof Szczerski Secretary of State and Chief of the Cabinet of the President, Republic of Poland

<sup>4</sup> Sherwood, Harriet. "Stark East-west Divide in Attitudes towards Minorities in Europe." *The Guardian*. October 29, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/29/stark-east-west-divide-attitudes-towards-minorities-europe-report>.