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Hungary and Russia Agreed to Strengthen Economic and Cultural Ties in December Cooperation Plan – Politico

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Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó (right) and Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko (left).
Zsolt Szigetvary / EPA / TASS

Russia and Hungary signed a 12-point cooperation plan in December covering energy, infrastructure, trade and cultural ties, Politico reported Wednesday.

The report comes days before a closely watched election in Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is seeking re-election amid a campaign marred by leaks and accusations of foreign interference.

According to a Russian document cited by Politico, the Dec. 9 agreement commits Moscow and Budapest to "reverse the negative trend" in bilateral trade and expand cooperation in sectors including energy, industry, healthcare, agriculture and construction.

The document also calls for "developing long-term, mutually beneficial ties" and could pave

the way for closer collaboration on oil, gas and nuclear fuel, as well as Russian involvement in Hungary's electricity and hydrogen projects.

The contents of the plan, which include instructions to Russian government agencies on implementation, had not been previously disclosed. It was signed during the first meeting of the Russian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

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Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, who signed the document alongside Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko, defended cooperation with Moscow as being driven by national interests rather than "pressure to conform to the extremely biased liberal mainstream media."

Orbán met with Putin at the Kremlin on Nov. 28 for energy talks less than two weeks before the agreement was signed.

Separately, Bloomberg reported Tuesday that Orbán offered to help Putin "in any way" during an Oct. 17 phone call, likening himself to "a mouse that helps a lion" in a Hungarian folk story, which appears based on one of Aesop's fables.

The Kremlin on Wednesday said the report portrayed Orbán as "pragmatic and effective" and dismissed suggestions it could hurt his electoral prospects.

"I would even see it as material in support of Orbán," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that Moscow takes a "very sensitive approach" to high-level conversations and does not welcome their disclosure.

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