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## Changing Attitudes of Hungarian Political Elites Towards the EU (2007-2014)

*Borbála Göncz & György Lengyel*\*

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**Abstract:** »Die sich wandelnden Einstellungen der ungarischen politischen Eliten gegenüber der EU (2007-2014)«. One of the main determinants of general attitudes towards the EU is the perception of the domestic economic and political performance while national elites also play an important role. The Hungarian economic crisis, paired with the erosion of the support for the political power in government started earlier (in 2006) than the global financial and economic crisis that further deteriorated the economic and political situation. Hungary was one of the first EU countries that had to rely on an IMF loan. The change in governance in 2010 meant a change in the parliamentary elite and a significant shift in public discourses about the EU. The raising dissatisfaction of citizens also resulted in the rise of a right wing extremist party. The purpose of this paper is to examine the evolution of attitudes of the Hungarian political (parliamentarian) elite towards the EU in this changing political context in times of economic recession and changing public discourses on the EU. The paper investigates the changing perception of the role the EU played during the crisis, the changes in the perception of European social solidarity and how the European construct should look like taking into account the changed party structure of the Hungarian Parliament. The paper builds on survey data collected among MPs in 2007 and 2009 within the IntUne project as well as in 2014 within the ENEC project.

**Keywords:** European Union, political elites, attitudes, Hungary, social solidarity, nationalism, federalism, crisis management, illiberal democracy, tax redistribution, populism.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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The post-socialist transformation of Hungary was paved by a broad elite consent concerning the peaceful character of transformation, respect of human- and property rights, parliamentary democracy and Euro-Atlantic orientation.

Before Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004 there was a consensus among the political elites about the benefits of the membership as well. At that time, only FIDESZ, then in opposition, expressed some reservations, nevertheless, the vote on the accession in the Hungarian Parliament was unanimous.

Since then, the Hungarian political landscape has gone through important changes. Although simulation of democratic rules of the game and signs of a weakening elite consensus around the liberal democratic model started already in the 1990s, these have become more apparent since the mid-2000s (Lengyel and Ilonszki 2010, Ilonszki and Lengyel 2012).

The economic crisis, paired with the erosion of the support for the political power in government started earlier than the global financial and economic crisis that further deteriorated the economic and political situation. Hungary was one of the first EU countries that had to rely on an IMF loan in this period. This and the collapse of former elite consent lead to a change in government at the 2010 elections, also called landslide elections due to the resulting changes, when the conservative FIDESZ won two-third majority, became a party of constitutionalizing capability and managed to keep its position at the next, 2014, elections within a changed legal context and a shrunk Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

The change in governance in 2010 was accompanied with a change in the parliamentary elite as well. The raising dissatisfaction of citizens resulted in the rise of a right wing extremist party, Jobbik, while parties of the transition like the liberal SZDSZ and the conservative MDF disappeared. The change of the political and economic context resulted in a significant shift in public discourses about the EU. While the economic benefits of Hungary's EU membership cannot be ignored, the EU increasingly appears in a symbolic discourse, where it is often attributed a negative role, or there is a double communication from the governing party with different messages to the Hungarian general public and to the international community.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the evolution of attitudes of the Hungarian political (parliamentarian) elite towards the EU in this changing political context in times of economic recession and changing public discourses on the EU. The paper investigates the changing perception of the role the EU

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<sup>2</sup> The electoral law CCIII/2011 decreased the number of MPs from 389 to 199.

played during the crisis, the changes in the perception of European social solidarity and how the European construct should look like taking into account the changed party structure of the Hungarian Parliament. The objective of the paper is to explore how the changing attitudes are linked to the economic crisis and the changed structure of the Parliament. The analysis builds on survey data collected among MPs in 2007 and 2009 within the INTUNE project and in 2014 within the ENEC project. Changing perceptions will be dealt with through the comparison of the three waves of the research.

The paper is structured as follows. The first part will sum up the theoretical frame and the main goals of the paper. It is followed by a descriptive analysis of the changing perceptions. Then the factors influencing attitudes will be addressed through multivariate regression models. Finally the main findings will be summarized.

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## 2. Background

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One of the main determinants of general attitudes towards the EU is the perception of economic and political performance of national elites (Gabel 1998, Best et al. 2012). People usually lack information and even interest to some extent in European Union matters. The perception of the domestic political arena seems to be an important driver of general attitudes (Anderson 1998, Sánchez-Cuenca 2000, Gabel and Scheve 2007 and Rohrschneider 2002): political elites are part of this context being able to influence public opinion. What further gives the importance of the analysis of national elite's opinion is that they are key actors deciding about EU-issues determining this way not only the public opinion on the matter but also the future of the European integration process.

Furthermore, this paper focuses on the effect of the crisis on national political elites' opinions. Changes in economic environments might result in stress to political systems which might lead to the erosion of support (Easton 1965). The economic crisis within the European Union can be considered to be such a type of stressor. Although this approach holds for the general public, the effect of the crisis on national elite's opinion is of particular interest. Growing stress might lead to deepening elite conflicts or distortion of the political regime. In this paper two effects of the crisis will be dealt with: changing perceptions of social solidarity and the changes along the kind of European Union political elites would be in favour of.

The concept of solidarity usually appears attached to the concept of social cohesion or social integration. Willingness to show solidarity with society (in terms of social and fiscal contribution) is one of the three constituting elements of social cohesion defined by Therborn (1999) besides trust in institutions and a feeling of belonging based on one's social integration.

Solidarity is organizing the discourse about European integration since the 1950s, the main aim being to increase social cohesion within and across Member States. However, lately the focus of the general discourse has changed putting the concept of democracy at the center (Niznik 2012). Nevertheless, the question of European social solidarity gained importance again because of the crisis which is in a certain way testing solidarity across the EU. The process involving emerging solidarities within and across national settings has an integrative role and manifesting in certain social policies. At the EU level solidarity can be seen as shared values as well as policy programmes (Ellison 2012). Social solidarity involves responsibility for the well-being of group members and the readiness to give up autonomy (Niznik 2012), which are all dependent on the feeling of unity of a certain group. Solidarity at the EU level, this way, is linked to the issue of legitimacy of the EU, the theories about the emergence of a European society and also to the formation of collective identities. At the policy level, solidarity is decisive for the cohesion policy and enlargement questions of the EU.

Furthermore, social solidarity might not only be directed towards group members, i.e. towards other Europeans. Social solidarity conceived as shared values and understood as an inclusive concept might also be extended towards non group members, i.e. non-Europeans. The perception of the phenomenon of migration from third country was always a test of solidarity and a measure of one's Europeanness – whether it is inclusive or exclusive. This way the perception of immigrants is also a measure of social solidarity and is linked to the formation of collective identities.

Different models of ideology or contestation exist on the European integration process, different ideas exist about how the construction of the European Union should look like. There are different perceptions of European integration regarding to what extent national sovereignty should be preserved or to what extent delegation of political power would be favoured and in what domain. One obvious cleavage is related to the traditional intergovernmentalist vs. federalist approach with different role attributed to the Member States or nations and the delegation of policy competences and decisions to the European Union. Another cleavage is between left and right within the political continuum which can relate to the perception of the integration process in several ways according to several authors where four basic approaches have been identified (Steenbergen and Marks 2004). A left-right position may be irrelevant for the attitudes towards integration: liberal intergovernmentalists, in a functionalist logic, argue that integration is a rational choice of governments for solving problems of international trade (e.g. Moravcsik 1998). Attitudes towards integration may be independent from the left-right positions as national sovereignty issues are cross-cutting political parties (e.g. Hix and Lord 1997). An opposite view suggests that attitudes towards integration may be fused in left-right positions (e.g. Tsebelis and Garrett 2000) where the left would stand for common

economic regulation across the EU, while the right would favour less EU regulations. And finally attitudes towards integration and left-right positions are linked but not necessarily fused with each other (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 1999). In Hooghe and Marks's model contestation happens between those for a regulated capitalism and those favouring neoliberalism. The previous group is more likely to be found among leftist social democrats favouring supranational regulation, while the latter is rather characterizing the political right rejecting supranational authority. The aim in this paper is to follow how attitudes towards European integration in terms of the favoured kind of EU, measured along the nation vs. EU dimension, have changed due to the crisis.

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### 3. Changes in Attitudes

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#### 3.1 Changing Perception of the Benefits of the EU and the Role the EU Played During the Crisis

In 2007 more than four out of five Hungarian MPs gave positive answer on the question whether taking everything into consideration the country has on balance benefited from being a member of the European Union (see Table 1). Their proportion grew nine to ten in 2009 and decreased back four to five after the landslide elections of 2010. Due to the original ceiling effect these changes proved to be statistically insignificant. The overwhelming majority has thought and still thinks that the country has benefited from the membership.

Although the former governing party, the socialist MSZP has always been more positive in this respect than the current party in governance, FIDESZ, there seemed to be a consensus among the political elites regarding the outcome of EU membership: differences among the parties were not significant in 2007 and in 2009. In 2014 this tendency has changed, mainly due to the newly emerging far-right party, Jobbik. MPs of the latter have doubts about the benefits, they declared that they are against asymmetric internal relations of the EU, although not against membership as such. With these tendencies the Hungarian political elites' enthusiasm was slightly below the average of other countries included in the research<sup>3</sup> all over the studied period.

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<sup>3</sup> Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain.

**Table 1: Changes in the Perception of Benefits from EU Membership, 2007-2014 (%)<sup>4</sup>**

		All parties	Party		Cramer's V (comparison across parties)	p-value
			FIDESZ	MSZP		
2007	Has benefited	85.0	68.0	92.7		n.s.
	Has not benefited	12.5	28.0	4.9		
	Refused	2.5	4.0	2.4		
	n	80	25	41		
2009	Has benefited	88.9	68.4	95.0	.301	.075
	Has not benefited	8.3	31.6	0.0		
	Don't know	1.4	0.0	2.5		
	Refused	1.4	0.0	2.5		
	N	72	19	40		
2014	Has benefited	78.9	93.8	100.0	.654	.000
	Has not benefited	17.5	6.3	0.0		
	Don't know	1.8	0.0	0.0		
	Refused	1.8	0.0	0.0		
	n	57	32	8		

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (YOUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union? (1) Has benefited, (2) Has not benefited, (3) Don't know, (4) Refused".

Table 2 shows the impact of the landslide elections of 2010 concerning crisis management mechanisms. In 2009 supranational intervention of financial institutions and federalist EU-intervention options were more popular among Hungarian MPs than intergovernmentalist or nationalist solutions. The distribution of the opinions in 2009 was more balanced, only the least popular solution: the autonomous national action got significantly less weight than the other three. The impact of the landslide election of 2010 was twofold: it did reshape the *composition* of the Parliament providing 2/3 majority for the right-wing FIDESZ (and the satellite Christian Democratic Party). The other impact was the change in *discourse*. By 2014 the opinions became more polarized. In 2014 economic nationalism (*autonomous action of national government*) became the most popular option to reduce economic crisis followed by the intergovernmentalist solution (*coordinated action of national governments*). Supranational institutional and federalist solutions – intervention of the international financial organizations and of the EU – became the least popular solutions.

It seems that both Parliament's composition and the discourse had their impact on perception of crisis management solutions, but changing composition was more important in this respect than changing ideological rhetoric. Socialist

<sup>4</sup> Here and in the following tables we present the breakdowns of the two major parties: FIDESZ and MSZP. Satellites and newly emerging small party formations are not detailed in the tables, but are taken into account in the 'All parties' column and briefly mentioned in the text where appropriate.

MPs didn't change their mind in terms of favourable crisis management alternatives, their number however decreased significantly. The size of the FIDESZ fraction grew and their opinion has changed in parallel with this: they don't support the intervention of the EU and put emphasis on economic nationalism and intergovernmentalism. The rhetoric turn of FIDESZ and its satellite, the Christian Democratic KDNP started immediately after winning the landslide 2010 elections. The essence of the turn is not the strengthening of economic nationalism alone. The decreasing popularity of intervention of the EU could be witnessed at the same time. In the case of intervention of supranational financial institutions these were the least popular among FIDESZ MPs previously, its' acceptance further decreased but the change was not significant. Change in another direction characterized the intergovernmentalist solution: its' original popularity grew further, but the change proved to be insignificant. The newly emerging far-right Jobbik opted against supranational, federalist and intergovernmentalist solutions in 2014 (the party was not in the Parliament in 2009). One of the other new formations (around the threshold) the green LMP in this respect behaved similarly, except that they opted for the intergovernmentalist solution and against economic nationalism. The new left-liberal fragments (Együtt, DK) opted for the federalist solution over average.

**Table 2:** Alternatives to Reduce Economic Crisis: Opinion of Hungarian MPs in 2009 and 2014 (%)

		2009	n	2014	n	Phi	p-value		
Intervention of the international financial institutions	All parties	58.2	72	23.2	57	-.357	0.00		
	FIDESZ	31.6	19	15.0	40			n.s.	
	MSZP	70.0	37	66.7	9			n.s.	
Intervention of the EU	All parties	59.7	72	27.1	57	-.329	0.00		
	FIDESZ	47.9	19	22.0	41			-.258	0.05
	MSZP	64.9	37	66.7	9				
Coordinated action of national governments	All parties	51.4	72	71.0	57	.201	0.18		
	FIDESZ	52.6	19	75.0	40			n.s.	
	MSZP	52,6	38	33,0	9				n.s.
Autonomous action of national government	All parties	35.2	72	77.1	57	.422	0.00		
	FIDESZ	47.4	19	87.5	40			.431	0.00
	MSZP	35.6	39	33.3	9				

Percent of those who think that the solutions below are the first two options out of four.

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "In view of the current financial crisis and of the need to reduce its impact upon the economy of your country place the following alternatives in decreasing order of preference: first/ second/ third/ fourth choice/ none of them/ Don't know/ Don't answer".

Compared to other countries included in the research the Hungarian MPs' opinion change shows the characteristics of over-average falling interest in international intervention and growing need of national solutions. In the case of falling trust in the intervention of the EU Hungarian changes are against the general tendency: while in Hungary this solution did drop to more than half,



it's popularity remained unchanged in the rest of the countries on the average (and in most of the comparable country cases even grew – except for Greece). An intergovernmentalist solution became more popular in Hungary, but the opposite happened in the rest of the countries. In most of the countries federalist and intergovernmentalist solutions were and remained the most popular ones (in spite of internal changes: federalist solutions gained and intergovernmentalist coordinated action lost from popularity).

In Hungary the supranational and federalist solutions used to be the most and became the least popular ones. The Hungarian changes differ from the rest of the countries in terms of intensity as well. Falling popularity of supranational intervention of financial institutions is a general tendency, what is specific in the case of Hungary, it is the size of the change: from three to five below a quarter. In the opposite direction the same is true in the case of growing popularity of economic nationalism: this solution became more popular in most of the countries, but it more than doubled among Hungarian MPs.

### 3.2 Changes in Perception of European Social Solidarity

Perception of social solidarity in the European Union will be dealt with through different aspects. As Ellison (2012) puts it, it has a normative aspect, i.e. represents shared values while it's also manifested through concrete policies. The measure chosen to represent social solidarity is a variable about the preferred main aim, or the principle of the European Union, whether it has to enhance economic competitiveness of its Member States or represent social security. The latter answer was considered to be a valid proxy to measure the preference for social solidarity across the European Union trying to grasp the normative aspect of the term. To measure the manifestation of social solidarity we have taken two policy areas into account: social security and cohesion policy at the EU level. Elite members had to evaluate whether they would approve of these policy areas within 10 years. A common social security system is showing a responsibility for the well-being of other Europeans and the readiness to give up autonomy as Niznik puts it (2012). They are also representing a supranational approach as opposed to intergovernmentalism. A common system of social security and cohesion policy, i.e. increased help for regions in difficulties are manifestations of caring for other group members. Responsibility and caring for others involves the feeling of unity among Europeans, the perception that they form one common group. Identification with Europe or European identity is a widely debated concept, nevertheless, for the purpose of our analysis we have chosen to include the aspect of belonging or attachment to Europe without wanting to enter much in this debate.

Taking the idea of Europe as a common group further, it is interesting to see how elites react if an 'out-group' is in question. This way social solidarity will

also be addressed through the perception of immigration, to what extent it is considered as a threat for the European Union.

Changes in the perception of the EU's main role over the studied period proved to be significant. The majority of the Hungarian parliamentary elite (59-60%) think that preserving economic competitiveness should be the EU's main objectives both in 2007 and 2014 with a slight drop following the crisis in 2009 (53%). Whereas social security is considered to be the principle aim by 29% in 2007, which significantly dropped by 2014 to 9%. On the other hand, the share of those considering both important has risen from 13% to 26% (see Table 3). It seems that the crisis pushed Hungarian MPs to think that social security was also an important aim beside economic competitiveness.

**Table 3:** Changes in the Perception of the EU's Main Aim: Competitiveness vs. Social Security (%)

		All parties	Party		Cramer's V (comparison across parties)	p-value
			FIDESZ	MSZP		
2007	More competitive	58.8	52.0	58.5	.300	.072
	Better social security	28.8	44.0	24.4		
	Both	12.5	4.0	17.1		
	n	80	25	41		
2009	More competitive	52.8	57.9	47.5	n.s.	n.s.
	Better social security	20.8	21.1	22.5		
	Both	22.2	21.1	25.0		
	n	72	19	40		
2014	More competitive	64.8	78.1	14.3	.514	.000
	Better social security	9.3	3.1	0.0		
	Both	25.8	18.8	85.7		
	n	54	32	7		
Cramer's V (comparison across waves)		.179	.333	.311		
p-value		.038	.010	.009		

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "I'm going to read you two statements. Please tell me which of them comes closest to your view: (1) The main aim of the EU should be to make the European economy more competitive in world markets, (2)The main aim of the EU should be to provide better social security for all its citizens".

Compared to other countries included in the research, Hungarian MPs are the ones with the highest share of preference for increasing economic competitiveness both in 2009 and 2014. In this respect the change in governance did not have an overall impact. The elites with the highest share preferring better social security over economic competitiveness were those in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Germany both in 2009 and 2014. While Hungarian parliamentarians were clearly the last in this respect in 2014, in 2009 this was still not the case.

Changes were significant both among FIDESZ and MSZP MPs, however, with different trends. In opposition FIDESZ MPs showed the highest share of

preference for social security (44%) which reduced to 3% by 2014 with increasing share of preference for competitiveness. On the contrary, the preference for competitiveness on its own among MSZP MPs lost of its importance and 86% of them expressed the preference for both competitiveness and social security in 2014 when in opposition. It seems that a party being in governance enhances economic pragmatism.

MPs were also asked about the different manifestation of social solidarity in the European Union, whether they would approve a common system of social security and more help for regions in difficulties within 10 years. As an immediate effect of the crisis, the preference for these increased from 2007 to 2009, however, enthusiasm significantly dropped by 2014 within the new Parliament. In this regard, MSZP MPs differed from FIDESZ MPs as the change in their attitudes was not significant in terms of social security and the help for the regions when they went from being in governance to opposition (see Table 4). Overall, differences between the positions of the MPs of the two parties were not significant over the different waves.

In the case of a common system of social security and an increased cohesion policy the change was not so dramatic, Hungarian political elites showing a moderate position compared to elites in other European countries both in 2009 and 2014. Nevertheless, in 2009, Hungary was one of the most devoted supporters of a common system of social security.

Table 4: Perception of the Character of the EU in 10 years

		2007		2009		2014		2007>2009		2009>2014	
			n		n		n	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value
Common system of social security	All parties	4.1	79	4.2	71	3.4	56		n.s.	3.796	.000
	FIDESZ	4.2	25	4.2	19	3.3	31		n.s.	2.497	.016
	MSZP	4.2	40	4.2	39	4.3	8		n.s.		n.s.
	t-test					-3.601					
	p-value	n.s.		n.s.			.001				
More help for regions with economic or social difficulties	All parties	4.7	80	4.7	72	4.5	57		n.s.	2.204	.030
	FIDESZ	4.6	25	4.7	19	4.5	32		n.s.		n.s.
	MSZP	4.7	41	4.8	40	4.6	8		n.s.		n.s.
	t-test										
	p-value	n.s.		n.s.			n.s.				

Mean values on a 1-5 scale where 1 is 'strongly against', 5 is 'strongly in favour'.

Note: the exact wording of the question was: "Thinking about the European Union over the next 10 years, can you tell me whether you are in favour or against the following: Common social security// More help for regions in economic or social difficulties. (5) Strongly in favour, (4) Somewhat in favour, (3) Neither in favour or against, (2) Somewhat against, (1) Strongly against".

Attachment to Europe is not an immanent indicator of European social solidarity, but it might be closely related (Örkény 2011), so it is worth to briefly present its trends as well. As opposed to previous measures, in this regard the

changes in attitudes did not prove to be significant. This is an important result because it implies that in symbolic terms European affiliation remained an important value for Hungarian political forces. Nevertheless attachment has been slightly decreasing in 2014 compared to previous waves, first of all due to FIDESZ (and Jobbik) MPs. MSZP MPs on the other hand showed signs of increasing attachment to Europe over the period. The difference between left and right party MPs became significant in 2014. What is important here is the *change in intensity*. Hungarian MPs were among the most attached to Europe in 2009, right after Germany, while they were rather among the moderately attached in 2014 when Spanish, Italian and Portuguese elites were the most enthusiastic.

**Table 5: Attachment to Europe**

	2007	n	2009	n	2014	n	2007>2009	2009>2014
							t-test	p-value
All parties	3.4	80	3.4	72	3.2	56	n.s.	-1.86
FIDESZ	3.3	25	3.2	19	3.2	31	n.s.	n.s.
MSZP	3.4	41	3.5	40	3.6	8	n.s.	n.s.
t-test					2.05			
Sign.	n.s.		n.s.		0.048			

Mean values of a 1-4 scale where 1 is 'not at all attached', 4 is 'very attached'.

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "People feel different degrees of attachment to their region, to their country and to Europe. What about you? Are you (4) very attached, (3) somewhat attached, (2) not very attached or (1) not at all attached to Europe?"

As already mentioned, the perception of third-country immigration can be linked to the feeling of belonging to a European common group, how people are reacting to a potential threat to the common group coming from outside of the group – having this way an indirect impact on European social solidarity that grasps the level of 'exclusive' Europeanness (immigration is considered to be a threat). However, the perception of migration is also a direct measure of social solidarity in general and could also grasp the level of 'inclusive' Europeanness (immigration is not considered to be a threat).

Results of the different waves of the research show that fear decreased significantly from 2007 to 2009 (first of all due to the changes in the opinions of the MSZP MPs), while it increased by 2014 to a level higher than that of 2007 (see Table 6). It is worth to note that the survey took place *before* the first wave of refugees arrived, nevertheless, it shows that the very negative context already existed. It is also important to note that FIDESZ MPs did not change their opinion from 2007 to 2009, but there was a negative change once in government. FIDESZ MPs were also more to consider non-EU immigrants as a threat than their MSZP counterparts.

Hungarian parliamentarians were neither amongst those most feeling threatened nor amongst those least feeling threatened in 2007 and 2009, they were rather in the middle compared to other countries included in the research. The

significant negative change in the opinions by 2014, however, made Hungarian political elites the most threatened by immigration coming from non-EU countries.

**Table 6:** Perception of Immigration from non EU Countries

	2007		2009		2014		2007>2009		2009>2014	
		n		n		n	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value
All parties	2.5	79	2.9	68	2.1	55	-2.762	0.006	5.054	0.000
FIDESZ	2.3	24	2.2	17	1.8	31		n.s.	2.186	0.034
MSZP	2.6	41	3.1	39	2.4	8	-2.267	0.026	2.218	0.032
t-test			-3.708		-2.098					
Sign.	n.s.		0.00		.043					

Mean values on a 1-4 scale where 1 is 'big threat', 4 is 'no threat at all'.

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "Do you think that (ITEM) is a threat or not a threat for the EU: Immigration from non EU countries? (1) a big threat, (2) quite a big threat, (3) not that big a threat, (4) not a threat at all, Don't know/can't say, Refuse".

The presented measures of European social solidarity were summed up in one additive index where the normative aspect of the concept and its policy manifestation were taken into account. The additive index was created from the standardized values of three different measures (main aim of the EU is economic competitiveness or social security, approve of a common system of social security and increased help for regions in difficulties within 10 years), the index was based on measures that correlate well with the final index. Attachment to Europe and the perception of third-country immigrants were not included in the index due to low correlation. The index shows that European solidarity of Hungarian MPs remained relatively unchanged from 2007 to 2009 while it significantly decreased by 2014 in the changed Parliament (see Table 7). The decreasing solidarity was probably due to important decline among FIDESZ parliamentarians while MSZP MPs did not change their position significantly.

**Table 7:** Social Solidarity Index

	2007		2009		2014		2007>2009		2009>2014	
		n		n		n	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value
All parties	0.28	79	0.40	71	-0.91	56		n.s.	3.771	.000
FIDESZ	0.54	25	0.26	19	-1.28	31		n.s.	2.737	.009
MSZP	0.35	40	0.61	39	0.38	8		n.s.		n.s.
t-test					-2.400					
p-value	n.s.		n.s.		.022					

Note: The index ranged between -5.35 and 3.21 with a mean value of 0. Higher values mean higher support for solidarity at the European level. Nonparametric correlations with the final construct: main aim of the EU should be economic competitiveness or social security (0.704), approve of a common system of social security (0.723), increased help for regions in difficulties (0.593).

There was no significant difference in solidarity between the governing and the biggest opposition party in the Parliament before 2010. The gap between the two parties became noticeable after the elections when FIDESZ became a governing party.

### 3.3 Changes in the Perception along the Nation vs. EU Dimension

In terms of the attitudes towards the European integration process favouring further European unification is a good proxy for the kind of European Union one wishes. There was and still there is a solid majority of further unification's support in the investigated countries. The growing standard deviation in some cases, including Hungary suggests that in the Parliaments of these countries a growing polarization could have been observed concerning the issue of European unification. But Hungary is the only among the investigated countries where the average on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is that unification has gone too far and 10 means that further unification is to be supported) did fall below 5, that is, where the dominant opinion moved to the Eurosceptic side.

Hungarian opinions concerning unification were similar to the majority of the countries included in the research in 2009: two-third majority supported further unification. These opinions haven't been changed on the average in the rest of the countries as opposed to Hungary. Until 2010 the overwhelming majority of the Hungarian political elite supported further unification of the European Union. A telling sign of the changing structure and changing mood of the elite is that the proportion of supporters did drop dramatically (from the previous two-third to a quarter) while the proportion of those who have no characteristic opinion and of those who are against unification grew. The proportion of those who oppose further unification is almost six times higher than it used to be in 2009.

Looking at the breakdowns according to party structure (see Table 8) it becomes clear that the newly emerging far-right Jobbik is totally against further unification while the governing FIDESZ moved from supporter to hesitant and opposing position. Socialists' opinion remained supportive but their proportion did drop significantly. Although there were differences between parties in 2007 and 2009 in terms of supporting further unification, these differences proved to be insignificant. In 2014 however differences between party positions became significantly polarized.

Another element of the attitudes towards the EU and the kind of European construct one would imagine is the perception of the role of the member state. These attitudes are also good proxies for the intergovernmentalist vs. federalist attitudes. Two-third of Hungarian MPs thought in 2007 and 2009 that Member States ought to remain the central actors of the EU and their proportion grew significantly, over four-fifth in the meantime. In 2009 the Hungarian elite was slightly below the investigated countries' average (70%) in sharing the 'nation

state as central actor' view. For 2014 the average grew and Hungary did out-grow this change.

**Table 8:** Unification has Already Gone too far or Should be Strengthened: Changes of Opinions (%)

		Unification has already gone too far (0-3)	In between (4-6)	Unification should be strengthened (7-10)	n	Cramer's V (p-value)
2007	All parties	13.9	30.4	55.7	79	n.s.
	FIDESZ	16.7	41.7	41.7	24	
	MSZP	9.8	29.3	61.0	41	
2009	All parties	5.8	27.5	66.7	69	n.s.
	FIDESZ	5.6	33.3	61.1	18	
	MSZP	2.6	25.6	71.8	39	
2014	All parties	34.5	40	25.5	55	.69 (.000)
	FIDESZ	29	64.5	6.5	32	
	MSZP	14.3	0.0	85.7	7	

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "Some say European unification should be strengthened. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point-scale. On this scale, '0' means unification 'has already gone too far' and '10' means it 'should be strengthened'. What number on this scale best describes your position?"

As for the two main parties in the Hungarian Parliament (see Table 9), FIDESZ MPs showed a significantly more pronounced intergovernmentalist attitude than MSZP parliamentarians both in 2007 and 2014. Over time, while there was a significant move towards perceptions of Member States as central actors both among the Hungarian Parliament in general and FIDESZ in particular from 2009 to 2014, MSZP parliamentarians did not significantly change their opinion.

**Table 9:** Perception of Member States as Central Actors

	2007		2009		2014		2007>2009		2009>2014	
	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value
All parties	2.08	.79	2.11	.71	1.49	.57	n.s.		3.935	.000
FIDESZ	1.48	.25	1.89	.19	1.16	.32	n.s.		3.498	.002
MSZP	2.45	.40	2.25	.40	2.50	.8	n.s.			n.s.
t-test	-4.182				-4.885					
p-value	.000		n.s.		.001					

Mean values on a 1-4 scale where 1 is 'Agree strongly' and 4 is 'Disagree strongly'.

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "How much do you agree with the following statement: The Member States ought to remain the central actors of the European Union. (1) Agree strongly, (2) Agree somewhat, (3) Disagree somewhat, (4) Disagree strongly, Don't know, Refuse".

Tax redistribution is another important element and measure of attitudes towards European integration and the kind of EU one would favour. Eventual

federalist attitudes could be grasped through the delegation of tax redistribution to the European level (see Table 10). In international comparison Hungarian MPs put the greatest emphasis on national level redistribution and they are below the average in terms of fair sub- and supranational redistribution proportions in 2014. A clear tendency in the evaluation of the optimal combination of levels of redistribution is that the Hungarian MPs gradually put more emphasis on the national level and less on the sub- and supranational ones. It is striking that the sub-national level's proportion decreased significantly: from the original two-fifth to less than one-quarter. In this respect the opinions about fair redistribution breakdowns do coincide with centralization efforts of the government. The proportion of European level redistribution decreased from one to six to one-eights between 2007 and 2014. The decreasing mean value jointly appeared with a significantly growing standard deviation, which means that the opinions became more polarized in this respect. Nevertheless, in terms of EU-level redistribution changes over time were not statistically significant, neither were party differences despite the general tendency that FIDESZ MPs would less favour EU-level redistribution than MSZP parliamentarians.

**Table 10:** Out of Hundred Euro of Tax a Citizen Pays, how much Should be Allocated on Regional, National and European Level

	regional level	national level	European level	n
2007	38.3 (17.5)	44.6 (18.1)	17.1 (9.2)	77
2009	34.7 (17.7)	49.8 (19.6)	15.5 (10.7)	62
2014	21.9 (20.4)	65.3 (26.3)	12.8 (16.4)	53

Mean on a 0-100 scale and (standard deviation).

Note: The exact wording of the question was: "Out of one hundred Euro [ / national currency when relevant] of tax money a citizen pays, how much should be allocated on the regional, national and European level?"

In order to sum up attitudes towards the EU along the nation vs. EU dimension, similarly to European solidarity, an additive index was created based on the standardized values of the measures included. The created index was based on those variables available for the three years that correlated well with the final construct (unification should be strengthened, (disagreement with) nation state should remain the central actor, proportion of tax to be allocated on European level). In this sense, this index aims at to grasp at the different ideas that might exist about the construction of the European Union. It entails the perception of national sovereignty or supranational regulation but also elements of the traditional intergovernmentalist vs. federalist approach with different role attributed to the Member States or nations and the delegation of competences in terms of redistribution to the European Union.

The index indeed shows that a significant shift happened between 2009 and 2014 in the attitudes of the parliamentarians in general favouring the nation as opposed to the EU (see Table 11). This was mainly due to the change in the



structure of the Parliament after the 2010 elections when FIDESZ got the two third majority: there was a significant difference between FIDESZ and MSZP MPs all over the three waves the formers favouring the nation over the EU as opposed to the latters. Furthermore, while the FIDESZ MPs further turned to the national level by 2014, their MSZP counterparts followed the opposite tendency favouring even more the EU level<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 11:** The Index on the Nation vs. EU Dimension

	2007		2009		2014		2007>2009		2009>2014	
	t-test	n	t-test	n	t-test	n	t-test	p-value	t-test	p-value
All parties	0.39	75	0.57	60.	-1.14	51	n.s.		3.758	0.000
FIDESZ	-0.44	22	-0.26	16	-1.79	28	n.s.		2.918	0.006
MSZP	0.78	39	0.78	35	2.41	6	n.s.		-2.041	0.048
t-test	-2.933		-2.415		-5.108					
p-value	0.005		0.020		0.000					

Note: The index ranged between -4.63 and 6.43 with a mean value of 0.03. Higher values mean higher support for the EU on the nation vs. EU dimension. Nonparametric correlations with the final construct: unification should be strengthened (0.775), (disagreement with) nation state should remain the central actor(0.774), proportion of tax distributed on European level (0.673).

#### 4. Correlates of the Attitudes

In the following we are presenting models on the different factors influencing perceptions and attitudes towards the EU among Hungarian MPs. First the correlates of the perception of European social solidarity will be analyzed followed by the analysis of the nation vs. European Union dimension. The analysis will be based on the previously presented indices. The two indices had a weak (0.13) correlation with each other which means that they are measuring different phenomena and are this way presenting different aspects of the attitudes towards the EU.

When it comes to the determinants of the perception of European social solidarity and the nation vs. European Union dimension our aim was to see the effect of the crisis, the change in government and the subsequent change in the structure of the Parliament. These were measured through the effect of the different waves, comparing wave 2009 and 2014 to 2007: the first (change from 2007 to 2009) was supposed to indicate the effect of the crisis, while the second the (change from 2007 to 2014) was supposed to grasp the effect of the changed Parliament. In order to control for the changed party structure, we have also included party affiliation in the models. Nevertheless, only FIDESZ

<sup>5</sup> Although the 2014 sample size for MSZP MPs giving a valid answer for the three measures of the index was very low (6).

and MSZP are directly measured due to comparability issues over the waves, but they are also the two parties that changed their position as government or opposition over the period.

In order to control for some potential other effects we have included the gender and the year of birth as socio-demographic variables. Foreign contacts might also have an implication on attitudes and perceptions of the EU, this is why we have included two variables controlling for this effect: whether one has lived in the EU and the frequency of professional contacts with the EU. In addition to these factors, in Model 2 and 4 (see Table 12 and 13) attachment to Europe and the perception of immigration were also included. As previously presented the feeling of belonging to a group enhance solidarity with group members and the capability to give up autonomy for the sake of the group, while the perception of the threat that third-country immigrants might represent can be either directly or (through the attachment) indirectly linked to the perception of social solidarity, however, these measures did not correlate well with the final index grasping social solidarity. In our analysis we wanted to see if these elements had an impact on our other, the nation vs. the EU dimension as well.

It has to be noted, however, that, although our methodology is a regression approach, the reported links do not necessarily represent causal relations.

#### 4.1 Correlates of the Perception of Social Solidarity

The results of the OLS regression models show that the described variables explain about 8.5% of the variance of the support for European social solidarity, while the inclusion of the attachment to Europe did not significantly changed neither the explanatory power of the model nor the parameters. The inclusion of the perception of the threat third-country immigrants lead to similar results: besides not having a significant impact, the explaining power of the model was not improved either (see Table 12).

The change in Parliament, on the other hand, had a significant impact on how much Hungarian MPs are in favour of social solidarity at the EU level. Perceptions in 2007 and in 2009 are not significantly differing from each other (within the same Parliament), 2014 perceptions, however, are significantly less positive even after controlling for party affiliation. MSZP MPs seem to be more enthusiastic about social solidarity at the EU level. Furthermore, women are also more positive towards solidarity than men. This is also an important indicator to be controlled for as with the 2010 elections gender structure of the Parliament changed as well: the share of women dropped. On the other hand, the general left-right political preferences, if this is included in the model instead of party

affiliation<sup>6</sup>, do not have a significant impact on the perception of solidarity despite expectations that leftist self-positioning would favour solidarity.

**Table 12:** Explanations for the Perception of a European Social Solidarity (OLS regression)

	Model 1					Model 2				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta			B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.35	28.57		0.01	0.99	-2.65	30.05		-0.09	0.93
Female	0.88	0.44	0.14	2.00	0.05	0.82	0.44	0.14	1.84	0.07
Year of Birth	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.98	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.04	0.97
Has lived in another EU country	-0.55	0.36	-0.11	-1.52	0.13	-0.53	0.39	-0.10	-1.37	0.17
EU contacts once a week	0.27	0.37	0.06	0.74	0.46	0.03	0.38	0.01	0.09	0.93
EU contacts once a month	0.31	0.32	0.07	0.97	0.33	0.27	0.33	0.06	0.82	0.42
MP First term	-0.36	0.33	-0.08	-1.10	0.27	-0.44	0.34	-0.10	-1.29	0.20
FIDESZ	0.41	0.38	0.10	1.09	0.28	0.36	0.40	0.09	0.89	0.37
MSZP	0.69	0.37	0.17	1.86	0.06	0.56	0.38	0.14	1.48	0.14
wave2009	0.13	0.32	0.03	0.39	0.69	0.00	0.33	0.00	-0.01	0.99
wave2014	-1.07	0.40	-0.24	-2.65	0.01	-0.95	0.42	-0.21	-2.29	0.02
Attachment to Europe						0.26	0.21	0.09	1.27	0.21
Immigrants: threat (disagree)						0.24	0.17	0.11	1.39	0.17
Adjusted R Square	.085					.087				

Reference categories: male, EU contacts less often than once a month, other parties, wave 2007.

This way, there has been a significant drop in the support for social solidarity at the EU level from 2007 to 2014. This is partly explained by the changed government: the share of MSZP MPs, representing more positive perceptions, decreased within the new Parliament, while similar tendencies applied to wom-

<sup>6</sup> Left-right political self-positioning and party affiliation were included in separate models due to redundancy. Only models including party affiliation are presented here, however, results of the models were very similar.

en. This way, the change in perceptions might indeed be attributed to the change in the structure of the Parliament, however, after controlling for these variables, the significant impact of 2014 still persists. This might suggest that there are other factors behind this tendency, not just party affiliation. The decreasing enthusiasm in terms of solidarity might be a more general phenomenon, perhaps due to the effect of crisis that appeared later and not immediately after.

#### 4.2 The "Nation vs. EU" Dimension

Models run for the "nation vs. EU" dimension had a higher explaining power than those run for the perception of social solidarity (with 22-29% of the variance explained). It seems that the variables included are more correlating with this aspect of the opinions. Gender and age proved to be insignificant just as parliamentary experience, while foreign contacts and having lived abroad have negative impact on nationalist attitude (see Model 3&4 in Table 13). Similarly to European embeddedness (frequent contacts with the EU and having lived in another EU country), attachment to Europe also significantly reduces nationalist attitudes (see Model 4). As opposed to support for social solidarity at the EU level, the inclusion of the attachment to Europe and the perception of third-country immigrants are having a significant impact: they increase the model's (Model 4, see Table 13) explanatory power to 29%; lower level of attachment to Europe and perceiving immigration as a threat are also strongly associated with nationalist attitudes.

Taking the three years together the "nation vs. EU" index has strong significant correlation with the left-right scale and with the position of the investigated parties as well (FIDESZ and MSZP). In general left self-positioning favours pro-EU attitudes. This finding seems to confirm previous suggestions that attitudes towards integration and left-right positions are linked (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 1999).

In terms of party affiliation there are however specificities to be taken into account according to periods. In 2007 Jobbik was not in the Parliament yet and FIDESZ, in opposition had a strong economic nationalist position. The same was the case in 2009, MSZP affiliation and the left-right scale had no significant correlation with the nation vs. EU dimension. For 2014 the situation has been changed in the sense that Jobbik was already in the Parliament and MSZP was in opposition. To understand this clearly it does need a short explanation. Just before the 2010 landslide elections FIDESZ started to realize a party program of the so called "central field of force": giving up the consensual model of democracy and pushing left-and right wing competitors to the margin via establishing a super-majority. They did succeed and the results are a new constitution, new media law, new code of labor underpinning a workfare regime and a new ideology of illiberalism.

Table 13: Explanations for the “Nation vs. EU” Dimension (OLS Regressions)

	Model 3					Model 4				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta			B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-11.59	30.68		-0.38	0.71	-39.91	30.90		-1.29	0.20
Female	-0.51	0.48	-0.07	-1.06	0.29	-0.72	0.47	-0.10	-1.54	0.12
Year of Birth	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.37	0.71	0.02	0.02	0.09	1.19	0.24
Has lived in another EU country	1.14	0.40	0.19	2.88	0.00	1.04	0.39	0.18	2.69	0.01
EU contacts once a week	0.89	0.39	0.17	2.27	0.02	0.73	0.38	0.14	1.91	0.06
EU contacts once a month	0.52	0.35	0.10	1.47	0.14	0.48	0.35	0.09	1.38	0.17
MP First term	0.44	0.36	0.09	1.20	0.23	0.29	0.35	0.06	0.83	0.41
FIDESZ	-0.95	0.41	-0.20	-2.32	0.02	-0.74	0.42	-0.16	-1.76	0.08
MSZP	0.39	0.41	0.09	0.97	0.33	0.37	0.40	0.08	0.93	0.35
wave2009	0.25	0.35	0.05	0.71	0.48	0.00	0.34	0.00	0.00	1.00
wave2014	-1.19	0.44	-0.24	-2.72	0.01	-1.09	0.44	-0.22	-2.50	0.01
Attachment to Europe						0.67	0.22	0.21	3.09	0.00
Immigrants: threat (disagree)						0.43	0.17	0.18	2.46	0.01
Adjusted R Square	.224					.291				

Reference categories: male, EU contacts less often than once a month, other parties, wave 2007.

Being the dominant actors of the “central field of force”<sup>7</sup>, however, they have lost from the efficiency of vote maximizing nationalist populism especially in EU-issues. In government FIDESZ is under double pressure: on the one hand it faces competition from the far-right, while being on government on the other hand it does realize the complexity of EU-issues more intensively. There is a difference between media position of the party and the opinion of MPs belong-

<sup>7</sup> A concept first used in 2009 by Viktor Orbán. Refers to a governance structure where the country is led by a dominant political force with high public support having smaller parties in opposition both on the left and on the right of it.

ing to it. One has to do with mobilizing ideology, the other one is closer to the terrain of “realpolitik”.

In terms of the effect of time, only the 2014 wave shows a significantly increased nationalist attitude, there is no significant difference between 2007 and 2009. This seems to be consistent with the fact that the Parliament and its composition was the same in 2007 and 2009, the change occurred with the 2010 elections. This also means that the crisis did not have a significant impact on parliamentarians’ attitudes, the change was rather due to the altered composition of the new Parliament. However, this impact still persists after controlling for party affiliation which means that increasing nationalist attitudes are not only due to the increased FIDESZ presence in the Parliament.

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## 5. Concluding Remarks

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This paper has an exploratory character. We intended to investigate how Hungarian parliamentary elites’ attitudes changed toward European solidarity and nationalism between 2007 and 2014. This way we intended to measure the impacts of the 2008 economic crisis and that of the 2010 landslide elections in Hungary. While there were no robust immediate impacts of the crisis between 2007 and 2009, longer term effects proved to be important. Erosion of elite consensus started already in the first decade of post-socialism and the signs of simulated democracy became apparent before the economic crisis of 2008. During the 2010 elections the conservative FIDESZ won supermajority and an extreme right party (Jobbik) got into the Parliament, while the former left parties lost positions and became fragmented.

Fundamental changes, including new constitution, new media law, centralization of resources did follow the 2/3rd majority which did put an end to the period of consensual liberal democracy envisaged during the post-socialist transformation. Current governing elites describe the regime in terms of illiberal democracy, while critics (Martin 2016, Körösnéyi and Patkós 2015, Enyedi 2015, Kis 2014, Lengyel 2014, Zakaria 2014) draw attention on clientelism, populism and features of an electoral authoritarian regime in the making.

The results of this investigation by and large are consonant with these tendencies. During the studied period the views of economic nationalism and intergovernmentalism grew in popularity and became predominant among Hungarian elites. Both changing elite composition and changing discourse might have played a role in this. The support for European social solidarity decreased and the need for competition grew in the mind of Hungarian elites. They want to centralize revenues on the national level and distribute less on the levels on the sub-national regions and on the EU. They turned from enthusiast to sceptic about the further unification of the EU due to changes both in terms

of composition and mood. On the other hand the majority is still attached to Europe and feels that the country has benefited from the EU-membership.

Models built on the explanation of solidarity and nationalism prove the importance of party affiliation and of the time factor after 2010. Whereas being a FIDESZ MP increases nationalist attitudes, being an MSZP MP increases the wish for social solidarity at the European level – this latter being a socialist party, results follow the ideological stand of these parties. Another difference between the correlates of the perception of social solidarity and the correlates of nationalist attitudes is that while nationalist attitudes are clearly influenced by social and cultural resources of MPs (contacts and attachment, having lived in another country), the perception of social solidarity does not depend on these factors. In this sense attachment to Europe seems to be less an indicator of common identity formation but rather an experience of the EU. These results suggest that support for solidarity at the EU level has a more general character, it might represent a more abstract value that is not so much influenced by concrete experiences or problems while having a strong gender character.

This way, the initial elite consensus on the need for Hungary to become a member of the EU seems to have been eroded by 2014, or at least MPs opinions differ regarding the ideal kind of EU Hungary should be member of. Differences are the most visible in 2014: MPs of the governing party are less attached to Europe than representatives of the previous governing party and they also imagine an EU that aims at increasing economic competition as opposed to social solidarity.

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