

Hard Euroscepticism in the Shadow of Fidesz: the Our Homeland Movement in Hungary

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Abstract

The article investigates manifestations of hard Euroscepticism in Hungary, with a particular focus on the Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), a radical right-wing populist party founded in 2018. While the party's manifestos articulate a deeply critical position on the European Union and explicitly propose holding a Huxit referendum within approximately five years – justifying its classification as hard Eurosceptic – an analysis of its online communication and parliamentary activity reveals a notable absence of EU-related contestation. The study also considers the case of Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség), which has, since coming to power in 2010, exhibited traits that transcend the soft Eurosceptic category. The article contends that the conventional hard/soft Euroscepticism dichotomy is insufficient for capturing the complex and evolving nature of Hungary's ruling party's relationship with the European Union.

Keywords: Hungary; Our Homeland Movement; hard euroscepticism, Fidesz; soft euroscepticism; 2024 EP election

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1. Introduction

Despite Hungary being regarded as one of the most pro-EU countries in Eastern Central Europe during the 1990s (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002; Fölsz & Tóka, 2006; Batory, 2008), the country has not been immune to the presence of Eurosceptic voices. Although hard Euroscepticism has always been marginal to soft Euroscepticism, there have been three (parliamentary) parties since the fall of communism that can unreservedly be classified in the former category. The study demonstrates that these three far-right parties, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP), peaked between 1998–2002, followed by the Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarorszáért Mozgalom*) and most recently, the Our Homeland Movement in Hungary (*Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*) have been successively at the vanguard of hard Euroscepticism, occupying this position in a rotating pattern.

As the *Mi Hazánk* is currently Hungary's only genuinely hard Eurosceptic force, our case study focuses on this party. Not only does *Mi Hazánk* have a devastating view of the EU, but the party also calls for a Huxit referendum, earning it the label of hard Eurosceptic. The use of the adverb 'genuinely' above is not accidental: as will be demonstrated in greater detail, since assuming power in 2010, Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance¹ (*Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség*, Fidesz) has exhibited a number of characteristics that extend beyond mere soft Euroscepticism. In light of the aforementioned considerations, the study not only presents *Mi Hazánk* but also examines the differences between the Eurosceptic stances of the two parties.

This article aims to contribute to the theoretical discourse on hard Euroscepticism in two ways. First, we examine how the concept of Huxit appears in the party manifestos and communication of *Mi Hazánk* and whether this case supports the narrative suggesting that the rhetoric of hard Eurosceptic parties is becoming softer or more ambiguous (Havlík & Hloušek, 2025). To assess *Mi Hazánk's* stance toward the EU, we analysed not only party manifestos and statements by leading politicians but also conducted a content analysis of more than 800 Facebook posts from 2024. Additionally, we examined the parliamentary activity of *Mi Hazánk's* MPs between 2022 and 2024. By analysing more than 500 parliamentary submissions, we assessed the salience of the EU in the party's agenda – specifically, whether it urges the government to prepare for Huxit or otherwise criticises the EU. Mapping the party's communication and parliamentary activity contributes to the analysis of 'issue salience', which is 'the Achilles heel of Euroscepticism studies' (Mudde, 2012). As Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p. 253) underscored, even a Eurosceptic party may barely mention the EU issue in its programme, and it may hardly feature either as an election campaign issue. More recently, Down and Han (2021, p. 75) concluded, 'Despite far right parties being closely associated with an anti-EU orientation, there remains substantial

variation both in the extent of their opposition and the extent to which they emphasise the issue’.

Secondly, the article also addresses the terminological challenges surrounding Euroscepticism and seeks to validate, using the example of Fidesz, Taggart and Szczerbiak’s (2008b) assertion that the terms hard and soft Euroscepticism are not ‘universally applicable conceptual tools for explaining the phenomenon of Euroscepticism’ (pp. 361–362). In parallel, also in relation to Fidesz, we discuss the concept of ‘equivocal Euroscepticism’ (Heinisch, McDonnell, and Werner, 2021). Since our article seeks to provide an in-depth scrutiny of a single party (Mi Hazánk), it is fundamentally structured as a case study (Hague & Harrop, 2010, pp. 79–82), complemented by a comparative analysis with Fidesz.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly outlines the story of hard Euroscepticism in Hungary, demonstrating that the idea of not joining or leaving the EU has a decades-long tradition in Hungary. The following section provides a closer overview of Mi Hazánk, which we term a populist radical right ‘purifier’. Although ‘not all radical right parties put forward extreme Eurosceptic positions’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p. 127), Mi Hazánk does not fall within the exceptions. Section 4 is devoted to the underpinning of the anti-EU stance of the party: as evidenced by the party’s election manifestos and the statements of its leading politicians, Huxit is perceived as a viable and, in some instances, preferable (although not an immediately feasible) alternative to Mi Hazánk. Then we highlight the background of the 2024 European Parliamentary election, which was predominantly shaped by the Russia–Ukraine war, largely due to Fidesz’s notably intensive campaign. As the content analysis of Mi Hazánk’s Facebook activity confirms, the party concentrated its efforts primarily on domestic issues, and the criticism of the EU was largely embedded in a broader anti-globalist perspective. Section 6 seeks to delineate Fidesz’s attitude towards the EU, drawing on a range of terminologies associated with Euroscepticism. It will be argued that none of the terms proposed by researchers can adequately capture the stance of the Hungarian governing party towards the EU.

2. Antecedents: the story of hard Euroscepticism in Hungary

It is no exaggeration to assert that Euroscepticism has been a persistent feature of Hungarian politics since the country began its European integration process. However, hard Euroscepticism has consistently remained marginal compared to soft Euroscepticism. Following the democratic transition, the European Union was widely regarded as a ‘promised land’ by both politicians and citizens. Consequently, in the 1990s, no major political party opposed integration outright, although some voiced cautious reservations as the integration process advanced.

As accession drew closer, 'the previous, and to some extent romantic and illusory, consensus concerning Europe has evaporated' (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002, p. 298), and positions explicitly opposing EU membership began to surface (Batory, 2008). During the 2003 membership referendum campaign, only one political party, the far-right nationalist MIÉP – represented in parliament from 1998 to 2002 – encouraged voters to reject accession. MIÉP argued that joining the EU would compromise Hungary's national sovereignty and subject the country to neo-colonial subjugation: 'We should not join an organisation that, in contradiction to its own constitution, treats our country, the Hungarians, as second-class citizens (...)' (Csurka, 2003).

Even the minor extra-parliamentary orthodox communists Workers' Party (*Munkáspárt*) claimed that 'Hungary's accession to the EU is inevitable', meanwhile also expressed significant reservations: 'The EU is not an alliance of workers and wage earners, but an organisation of capital and monopolies' (*Munkáspárt*, 2003). By this time in opposition, Fidesz exhibited ambivalence toward Hungary's EU accession. While the party formally supported Hungary's entry, it made minimal efforts to mobilise its voters to participate in the referendum (Ilonszki & Kurtán, 2004, p. 1023). This approach was primarily driven by tactical considerations, as Fidesz sought to avoid bolstering the legitimacy of the left-wing government through a high voter turnout.

With the decline of MIÉP, the prominence of hard Eurosceptic sentiment in Hungarian politics also diminished. A significant turning point occurred with the emergence of Jobbik, a radical far-right party that originated from a university student association. By the late 2000s, Jobbik had gained attention primarily for its anti-Roma rhetoric and activities (Kovács, 2013; Bíró-Nagy, Boros, & Vasali, 2013; Varga, 2014). The party achieved notable electoral success, securing 14.77% of the vote and three seats in the 2009 European Parliament elections, followed by its entry into the Hungarian Parliament in 2010 with 16.67% of the vote. In its 2009 manifesto, Jobbik characterised the EU as an 'empire run from Brussels' and asserted that 'national sovereignty lost by joining the EU must be regained, primarily by changing the current rules of the Union, and if that fails, then ultimately by withdrawing from the EU' (Jobbik, 2009, p. 26). The party manifesto prepared for the 2010 parliamentary elections confirmed the party's anti-EU position ('We firmly believe that Hungary's long-term future cannot be envisioned within the framework of an EU following its current trajectory' [Jobbik, 2010, p. 75]). Four years later, the referendum as a means to exit was also included in the party's manifesto (Jobbik, 2014, p. 81).

In light of the aforementioned quotations, it is unsurprising that in the early 2010s, Jobbik was identified as one of the most anti-EU parties in Europe, according to Chapel Hill expert surveys (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp. 127–128). However, since the end of 2013, mainly for strategic reasons, there has been a marked change in Jobbik's position, which may be termed as 'process of becoming a people's party'²

(Mandák, 2015; Róna & Molnár, 2017) or ‘deradicalisation’ (Hyttinen, 2022). This shift is also reflected in the party’s approach to the EU: party leader Gábor Vona has already made the statement in 2016 that ‘leaving the EU is not on the agenda’ (24.hu, 2016); thus, the party’s attention was directed towards the ‘enhancement of Hungary’s bargaining position’ *within the EU* (Jobbik, 2018, p. 58). In sum, the initial fierce anti-EU sentiment (manifested, among other things, in the public burning of an EU flag in 2012) has been tamed into a soft Euroscepticism by the end of the 2014–2018 cycle.

3. The rise of Mi Hazánk: a populist radical right ‘purifier’

The deradicalisation strategy employed by Jobbik in the 2018 elections proved unsuccessful. Not only did the party fail to achieve the anticipated breakthrough, but its electoral performance (19.06%) was more than 1% below its share of the vote four years earlier. (Nevertheless, the party managed to secure three additional seats compared to 2014.) Following the failure of Jobbik in 2018, party leader Gábor Vona resigned. Subsequently, the radical faction within Jobbik sought to assume control of the party. When this endeavour proved unsuccessful, a number of politicians (including one MP) departed from Jobbik and subsequently established a new party, the Our Homeland Movement. Studying the factors to which the foundation and electoral success of a new party can be attributed, Lucardie (2000, p. 175) distinguished the so-called ‘purifiers’, ‘which refer to an ideology that has been betrayed or diluted by established parties’. In our view, Mi Hazánk perfectly fits into this category, as the party’s main aim was to return to the radical roots which, in their opinion, were ‘betrayed’ by Jobbik. Although Mi Hazánk was hardly a ‘genuinely new’ in the sense developed by Sikk (2005), it brought a new colour to Hungarian politics, or in other words, brought back the ideology of the ‘original Jobbik’, including the ultranationalism, traditionalist conservatism, the fierce anti-LGBTQ, anti-immigration and anti-roma sentiment, and most importantly for our topic, the hard Euroscepticism. According to Mudde (2007, p. 22), nativism, authoritarianism, and populism are the core ideologies of populist radical right parties – and these labels align seamlessly with the ethos of Mi Hazánk (e.g. Goldstein, 2021). The nativism manifests itself in the party’s strident nationalism (e.g. revision of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon [Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 9]) on the one hand, and its xenophobia (e.g. one of the headlines of the 2022 election manifesto reads as follows: ‘0% immigrant, 100% Hungarian country’ [Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 38]). As for authoritarianism, the party takes a strong law-and-order stance; penal populism, which has a long tradition in Hungary (Boda, Szabó, Bartha, Medve-Bálint, & Vidra, 2015), can also be mentioned: among others, the party urges to establish labour camps and calls for the death

penalty to be restored (Mi Hazánk, 2022, pp. 37–38). The party's manifesto and the rhetoric of its politicians also bear the hallmarks of populism, especially the opposition between 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (Mudde, 2007, p. 23). Mi Hazánk holds the view that the governments that have been in power over the past decades have 'embezzled the regime change and sold out our homeland' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 9), in addition, the party tries to lump together former left and right governments, claiming that both political sides are cut from the same cloth (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 9). The anti-political stance is also reflected in the party's submission of several bills to restrict certain privileges of MPs (e.g. abolition of parliamentary immunity, tightening of housing allowances). In line with several radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Bušítková, 2018), Mi Hazánk is rather left-leaning on the economy, calling for the protection of 'Hungarian interest' and clamping down the multinational corporations. It is noteworthy that the voter base of the party does not align with the characteristics typically associated with radical right parties. Less than half of Mi Hazánk voters (42%) identify as moderate right-wing or right-wing (compared to 77% for Fidesz). Additionally, 29% of Mi Hazánk voters surveyed indicated that they align with liberal or moderate liberal ideologies (Fidesz: 13%) (Policy Solutions, 2022, pp. 18–19).

The party's first contest was the 2019 European Parliament elections, in which it secured 3.29% of the vote, failing to win a seat (Table 1). Mi Hazánk was not far behind Jobbik, which exhibited a notable decline in electoral strength compared to the 2018 parliamentary elections (6.34%). Four years later, however, Mi Hazánk achieved 5.88%, winning six seats in the Hungarian parliament. Meanwhile, Jobbik stood in the 2022 elections as a member of the six-party opposition alliance, cooperating with the left-wing parties. This latter fact has indeed been for many Jobbik voters tantamount to a 'betrayal' of Jobbik's ideology, and it opened the way for the further strengthening of the 'purifiers'. Various studies have indicated that a not insignificant number of former Jobbik voters, who were unable to align themselves with the party's deradicalisation, have subsequently joined the Mi Hazánk camp (Republikon, 2022; Böcskei, 2022a). During the campaign, there was one issue that the party effectively thematised: the anti-Covid measures, primarily the compulsory vaccinations. The party, similarly to other far-right social movement organizations (cf. Volk & Weisskircher, 2023) constantly talked about a 'Covid dictatorship', meanwhile party president László Toroczkai repeatedly referred to himself as 'Hungary's only unvaccinated candidate for prime minister' (Hungary Today, 2022).

The 2024 European Parliament elections demonstrated the relative positions of the two parties with considerable clarity. While Mi Hazánk received almost seven times as many votes as Jobbik (thereby gaining one seat), with a result of less than 1%, Jobbik was on the verge of being entirely eliminated from the political landscape (for the details, see Section 5).

Table 1:
Election results for Mi Hazánk and Jobbik

Elections	Mi Hazánk		Jobbik	
	Votes	%	Votes	%
2018 parliamentary	did not exist		1 092 806	19,06%
2019 EP	114 156	3,29%	220 184	6,34%
2022 parliamentary	332 487	5,88%	n. a.*	
2024 EP	306 404	6,71%	45 404	0,99%

* Run as part of a broad opposition coalition

Source: Author based on <https://www.valasztas.hu/>

A review of the party splits led Ibenskas (2019, p. 57) to the conclusion that ‘most parties withstand the electoral competition after party splits relatively unscathed’. While it is not accurate to assert that Jobbik’s free fall is wholly attributable to the party split, it is evident that numerous prominent Jobbik politicians have continued their activities in Mi Hazánk. Finally, the joint candidacy with the left-liberal opposition in 2022 proved to be a fatal mistake for Jobbik.

4. Mi Hazánk’s hard Euroscepticism: Huxit, but not immediately

It is relatively straightforward to ascertain Mi Hazánk’s stance on European integration by examining its manifestos and statements made by its leading politicians. In line with Szczerbiak and Taggart’s (2008a, p. 7) seminal definition (which, however, had been reformulated later [Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008a, p. 3]), it could be argued that the party represents a textbook case of hard Euroscepticism. In the author’s view, the key element of the hard Euroscepticism is ‘a principled opposition to the EU and European integration’, which can manifest itself in two beliefs (which are of course not mutually exclusive): ‘withdraw from membership’ or policies towards the EU that is tantamount ‘to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived’.

As for the latter criterion, Mi Hazánk has a devastating view of the EU: in its 2022 parliamentary election manifesto, the party states that ‘The EU currently functions as a globalist empire, pushed into a colonial status’, and its aim is ‘the complete elimination of the European nation-states and thus of resistance’ (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 51). The party is not immune to the influence of conspiracy theories: ‘It is practically irrelevant whether there is [...] a People’s Party or a Social Democrat-Liberal politician at the top of the European Commission, the real leadership is always in the hands of the Deep State, and the financial, economic and political processes are controlled by this globalist power, the Deep State,

according to its own interests' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 52). As is widely acknowledged, 'radical right parties tend to articulate their anti-EU argument primarily from a sovereignty perspective' (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p. 124; cf. Sørensen, 2008). In this respect, Mi Hazánk is no exception: 'For the sake of Hungary's sovereignty, we need to end the subordinate role we have been in since our accession to the European Union' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 53). At this point, the manifesto poses the question: 'Should we be members or free?', which recalls the lines of the famous 19th-century Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi: 'Should we be prisoners or free?'.

In addition to the particularly critical view of the European Union, the party openly raises the possibility of leaving the EU, since 'The goals set by Mi Hazánk could not be achieved in the current EU'. In the party's view, 'There are two ways forward if we want to restore Hungary's independence: 1. change the current European Union, 2. exit' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 54). In its manifesto, the party emphasises that Mi Hazánk is the only party that would hold a referendum on our EU membership:

If the EU's spiritual, economic and moral destruction proves irreversible once and for all, Mi Hazánk would hold a referendum in 2029 – as was the case with Brexit – on whether we should remain in the EU. In case of a negative majority, the exit process could start in 2030 (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 55).

To complete the picture, it should be noted that the party also makes some very vague 'pro-European' references, claiming that 'We are not against sensible cooperation within Europe', 'We are happy to work in an alliance of equal, peer countries, in a Europe of nations' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 55) and 'Of course, there is still some chance to change the current EU' (Mi Hazánk, 2022, p. 54). The 2024 European Parliament election manifesto provides further insight into the nature of European cooperation that the party advocates:

Mi Hazánk also considers a 'Europe of Nations' type of EU to be the goal to be pursued, in which countries retain their independence, sovereignty and free decision-making rights in as many issues as possible. The nature of the alliance is such that it can only be a win-win situation, i.e. one that does not force any party to make humiliating compromises. Instead of a centralised, Soviet-style system, which the current EU leadership is fully committed to, a European federal system should be operated in which national self-determination is fully preserved (Mi Hazánk, 2024a, p. 4).

Despite Mi Hazánk's staunch opposition to the EU, it cannot be claimed that the party would 'immediately' withdraw Hungary from the EU. Firstly, the party is willing to give the EU one 'last chance'. As noted above, Mi Hazánk posits that 'there is still some chance to change the current EU', although it is rather sceptic-

tical about whether the EU can be put on the right track. Secondly, the party has consistently taken the position that EU membership should be decided by referendum. (It is noteworthy that the Brexit referendum is often used as a reference point for the party when it comes to Huxit.) According to party vice-president Előd Novák, the Fundamental Law (the Constitution of Hungary) should first be amended to allow for a referendum on the country's EU membership,³ and then a review of the eighteen years since 2004 should be held, followed by a referendum (Presinszky, 2022). Thirdly, the party itself does not envisage Huxit in the short term. As president Toroczkai declared shortly after the party was founded, 'If we left the EU tomorrow, we would be bankrupt. And we have so much responsibility that we cannot bankrupt our country' (Baranya, 2019). The party leader maintained this statement in May 2024: 'It is indisputable that if Hungary were to leave the EU tomorrow, the country would collapse, and bankruptcy would ensue' (Czene, 2024). Novák also made it clear that the referendum should be preceded by years of public debate (Czene, 2023). Zsuzsanna Borvendég, the quasi-leader⁴ of the party's list in the European Parliamentary election 2024, also acknowledged that 'There is no reality for Huxit *at the moment*' (Ultrahang plusz, 2024, emphasis added). In a more recent interview, she admitted that

If I had to vote today, it would be with a heavy but responsible heart that I could only vote to remain, but there is also a scenario in which the processes that seriously threaten national self-determination accelerate and there is no other option but to escape – in a well-prepared way – from an increasingly dictatorial EU (Márton, 2024).

In conclusion, the party has consistently maintained that Huxit is not a pressing issue that must be carried out immediately, nor within a few years. Mi Hazánk's stance aligns with the assertion made by Havlík and Hloušek (2025, p. 351) that 'political parties in the post-Brexit period are less likely to call for an immediate exit from the EU'.

While Szczerbiak and Taggart's hard/soft distinction (elaborated in 2001) remains the most influential conceptualisation of Euroscepticism, a number of alternative frameworks have been developed to capture the diverse anti-EU positions held by political parties. Kopecký and Mudde (2002) set up two dimensions ('support for the ideas of European integration' and 'support for the European Union') to distinguish four ideal-type categories of party positions on Europe ('Euroenthusiast', 'Eurosceptics', 'Eurorejects' and 'Europragmatists'). As for the first dimension, Mi Hazánk may be marked as 'Europhobe' as not only does the party not support the general ideas of European integration, but it is outright opposed to it. Concerning the second dimension, the label of 'EU-pessimist' fits the party perfectly, given its devastating view of the direction of the EU's development. In the authors' framework, the combination of Europhobe

and EU-pessimist positions results in the Euroreject category, which denotes that ‘They subscribe neither to the ideas underlying the process of European integration nor to the EU’ (p. 302).

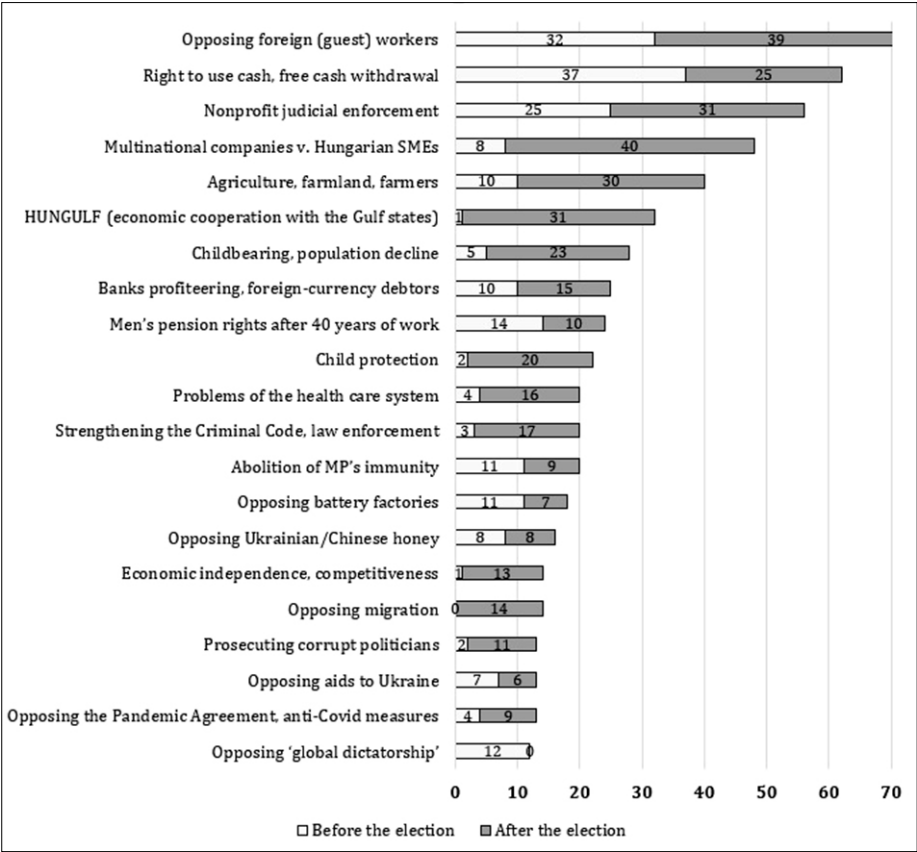
Rovny (2004) expanded upon the conceptualisation of the hard/soft distinction proposed by Szczerbiak and Taggart by incorporating the internal party motivations for the adoption of Eurosceptic stances. In his view, ‘predominantly ideologically driven Eurosceptics are likely to take up Euroscepticism because it is somehow implied in their original ideological positions’ (p. 36), while ‘predominantly strategically driven Eurosceptic parties use Euroscepticism as a pragmatic addition to their original program’ (p. 37). In light of the party’s historical origins, its election manifestos, and the statements of its prominent politicians, there is no doubt that Mi Hazánk takes up Euroscepticism because it is firmly implied in its original ideological positions.

Vasilopoulou (2011) argues that radical right Euroscepticism can be categorised into three patterns. While each stance implies acceptance of common cultural, historical and religious European characteristics, they oppose some other aspects of European integration. The ‘compromising’ Euroscepticism supports the principle and the practice of integration but opposes the future building of a European polity. The ‘conditional’ Euroscepticism is one step more ‘stringent’ as it approves only the principle of European cooperation but expresses hostility to the current policy practice as well as the future building of a European polity. Finally, the ‘rejecting’ Euroscepticism comprises rejection of the principle of cooperation within the EU framework, disagreement with the European institutional and policy status quo and resistance to the future building of a European polity. A closer review of Vasilopoulou’s criteria indicates that Mi Hazánk can be classified with reasonable certainty in the latter ‘rejecting’ category. As noted above, the party is not against ‘sensible cooperation within Europe’, and they are ‘happy to work in an alliance of equal, peer countries, in a Europe of nations’. The 2024 European Parliament election manifesto puts the founding of the European Economic Community and its *initial* objectives (mainly economic and trade agreements for the benefit of all member states) in a positive context, but things went wrong in the 1990s, as ‘after the earlier economic and security cooperation, the member states gave up their political sovereignty in more and more areas and transferred it to the Community (Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice Treaties)’ (Mi Hazánk, 2024a, p. 3). However, in one respect, Mi Hazánk does not fit into the ‘rejecting’ Euroscepticism, as the party has no intention to ‘withdraw from the EU at any cost’, which is one of Vasilopoulou’s (2011, p. 232) criteria for this kind of Euroscepticism.

As discussed above, Mi Hazánk’s hard Euroscepticism is nuanced by the fact that both the party’s programs and its leading politicians express caution regarding a potential Huxit. However, how does the party engage with the EU issue in its online communication and parliamentary activities? To identify the most salient issues promoted by Mi Hazánk, we examined the party’s Facebook posts between

1 January and 31 December 2024. We employed the method of content analysis for our study, as it is particularly well-suited for the systematic, objective, and quantitative examination of message characteristics (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1). From the Facebook posts within the analysed period, we excluded those without policy-related content (e.g., holiday greetings or general calls to vote). The remaining 864 posts were then categorised based on their content, specifically their main message. Posts with similar content (e.g., encouraging childbirth and addressing population decline) were assigned to the same category to avoid an unmanageably high number of categories.⁵ The examined period, the year 2024, was divided into two phases, separately analysing the periods before and after the European Parliament elections. This approach allowed us to identify which topics were most emphasised during the pre-election campaign. To interpret the results, we utilised the most common method of presentation: simple descriptive frequencies (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 172). Topics mentioned 12 or more times are summarised in Chart 1.

Chart 1:
Frequency of mention of issues in Mi Hazánk's Facebook post



Source: Author based on <https://www.facebook.com/mihazankmozgalom2022/>

As the chart shows, domestic issues clearly dominated the party's Facebook posts, even before the election. However, the most prevalent issue, that of foreign (guest) workers, has some connection to the EU and is more aligned with the ideologies of far-right political parties. In the party's view,

Liberal political forces at home and in Europe are seeking to respond to the problems of a Europe hurtling towards demographic catastrophe with masses of illegal migrants and legal immigrants disguised as guest workers (Mi Hazánk, 2024a, p. 21).

When browsing the results, it is striking that the second and the third most frequently mentioned topics may be regarded as 'niche issues'. The guarantee of cash use/free cash withdrawal was the most salient issue for the party in the four months preceding the election, while this topic came second overall. In the autumn of 2023, the party initiated an amendment of the Fundamental Law to include the right to use cash. The submitters of the bill advanced the argument that, among others, 'cash is the last bastion of human freedom' and that it is the only means of avoiding 'total surveillance' (Bill No. T/5907).⁶ As for nonprofit judicial enforcement, Mi Hazánk constantly maintains that court bailiffs operate like a mafia and in their greed for profit, have on numerous occasions collected unjust or time-barred claims from citizens (including evictions).

The topic most closely related to the EU ranked only 21st. The party has consistently referred to the EU as a 'globalist dictatorship', which was also reflected in the party's election slogan: 'A Hungarian future instead of a globalist dictatorship!'. As is widely acknowledged, the issue of globalisation is a central theme of propaganda and agitation for far-right parties worldwide (Zaslove, 2008; Bornschier, 2018), and globalisation fuels right-wing populism (Rodrik, 2021). As Grumke (2013, p. 17) puts it, 'Right-wing extremists thus see the process of globalisation as a deliberately controlled destruction of cultures, traditions and values (and, ultimately, of nations and peoples) by the above-described powerful "globalists"'. Mi Hazánk's narrative fits perfectly into this framework: the term 'global' and its derivatives are referenced on more than 20 occasions within the party's 2024 European Parliament election manifesto (and 57 times in the 2022 manifesto), all of which are presented in a negative context. In the party's ideology, anti-globalism and Euroscepticism are intertwined, as the EU is a 'neoliberal political organisation where real decisions are made behind the scenes by globalist companies and transmitted through their lobbyists to the Brussels bureaucrats chinovniks who claim to be the leaders of Europe' (Mi Hazánk, 2024a, p. 3). The party's anti-globalist stance was also reflected in other issues during the campaign:

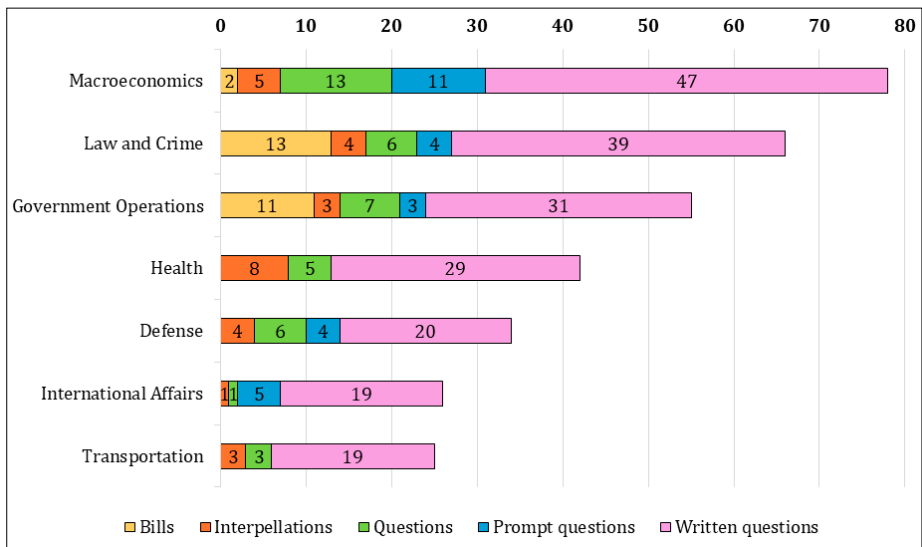
- opposition to foreign investment (especially battery factories)
- opposition to imports of Ukrainian and Chinese honey

- strong criticism of multinational companies and banks
- opposition to the pandemic agreement to be concluded under the auspices of the WHO

On the Russia–Ukraine war, the party has taken a soft pro-Russian stance, criticising aid to Ukraine and opposing the country’s accession to NATO and the EU.

Regarding the party’s parliamentary activity, our analysis draws on the examination of agenda-setting and policy agenda dynamics (Sebők & Boda, 2021). We analyzed 37 legislative proposals (bills), 47 interpellations, 66 questions, 50 prompt questions, and 312 written questions submitted by the party’s MPs between May 2022 and December 2024 to identify the policy issues on which the party is most vocal.⁷ Chart 2 presents the topics the party has addressed most frequently.

Chart 2:
The most frequent topics of Mi Hazánk’s parliamentary submissions (2022–2024)



Source: Author based on the dataset of the HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences poltextLAB

As the chart indicates, Mi Hazánk has not been particularly active in international affairs (which, according to the Comparative Agendas Project codebook, also includes the EU). Moreover, the majority of the 26 submissions related to international affairs focus on NATO, Ukraine, and ethnic Hungarians beyond Hungary’s borders, with the EU appearing only tangentially. Overall, it can be concluded that not only did Mi Hazánk fail to raise the issue of Huxit in any of its more than 500 submissions, but its MPs also addressed the EU only in a very marginal manner.

5. The 2024 European Parliamentary election: 'A Hungarian future instead of a globalist dictatorship!'

Thanks to an amendment of the Hungarian Fundamental Law in 2022, the European Parliamentary election and the election of local councillors and mayors must be held on the same day from 2024. The confluence of the two elections and a particularly intense campaign resulted in a record-breaking voter turnout (59,46%), significantly higher than in 2019 (43,48%) (and the fifth highest in the EU).

Fidesz has built its entire campaign on the Russia–Ukraine war, strongly emphasising that the stakes of the elections are nothing less than war or peace. The ruling party's campaign suggested that only Prime Minister Viktor Orbán could end the war, meanwhile 'Brussels is in a war spiral, and the decisive issue in the European parliamentary elections will be who is pro-peace and who is pro-war' (Miniszterelnok.hu, 2024). As the joint report of research institute Political Capital, the fact-checking site Lakmusz, and the media watchdog Mérték Media pointed out, the key narrative was that 'European pro-war politicians and their Hungarian servants want to start World War III'. This narrative gradually grew in importance as the elections approached, overtaking all other narratives in the final weeks (Political Capital, 2024). As Csehi (2024, p. 213) puts it,

The campaign of the governing party appealed to the most basic fear of the population and constantly pictured the European Parliamentary elections as a decisive battle where people had to decide about war or peace, life or death, whether one was willing to send his/her sons, grandchildren into the war.

The intensity of the campaign was also increased by the emergence of a new player: Péter Magyar, ex-husband of former Justice Minister Judit Varga, came to the stage after Katalin Novák's (President of the Republic until her resignation in February 2024) pardon scandal. Magyar extensively criticised the government, accusing key Fidesz politicians of serious abuse of power, and organised mass demonstrations against the regime. In April he joined the hitherto utterly unknown dormant party, the Respect and Freedom Party (*Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt, Tisza*),⁸ which became Fidesz's main challenger in the elections.⁹ Magyar went on a tour around the country and visited nearly 200 municipalities in less than two months, successfully mobilising anti-Fidesz voters who had become disillusioned with the opposition parties.

Under these circumstances, the remaining parties received limited attention during the campaign, and Mi Hazánk was no exception. Despite publishing a comprehensive manifesto titled '*Mi Hazánk's Europe*' for the 2024 European

Parliament elections – a nearly 30-page document – its content largely mirrored an extended version of the party's 2019 programme. The simultaneous scheduling of the European Parliament and municipal elections made it difficult to clearly distinguish between EU-related and local issues. This overlap, combined with the party's primary focus on the municipal elections, contributed to a greater emphasis on domestic topics (Csehi, 2024, p. 214). As Chart 1 revealed, during the campaign, the party's most prominent issues were the protection of cash, opposition to foreign guest workers, and the reform of judicial enforcement.

In May 2024, Mi Hazánk organised its biggest political demonstration of the campaign under the name 'anti-globalist protest'. The slogan of the mass rally was the following: 'Say NO to the WHO treaty! NO to guest workers! YES to the use of cash!'. Dóra Dúró, vice-president, stated that

The globalists' local governors in Hungary and the Hungarian government, which continually submits to them, are financing Ukraine with our money, bringing in immigrants under the guise of guest workers, handing over Hungary's precious land to fetus-poisoning battery factories, surrendering our freedom to digital tech giants, and attempting to dismantle the last bastions of our self-determination and liberty (Németh, 2024).

Asked by a journalist, 'What is the difference between the anti-globalism of Mi Hazánk and Fidesz?', Toroczkai replied a few days before the elections that of the parties that have a chance of getting into the European Parliament, 'we are the only anti-globalist party'. According to the party leader, 'Fidesz has always supported global corporations. [...] Fidesz is perfectly implementing the demands of the global agenda while doing its own business' (Czene, 2024).

The outcome of the 2024 European Parliamentary election is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2:
Results of the 2024 European Parliamentary election in Hungary

	Votes		Votes		Seats	
	N	Change compared to 2019	%	Change compared to 2019	N	Change compared to 2019
Fidesz-KDNP	2 048 211	+223 991	44,82%	-7,74%	11	-2
Tisza	1 352 699	new	29,60%	new	7	new
DK-MSZP-Párbeszéd	367 162	-419 470	8,03%	-14,63%	2	-3
Mi Hazánk	306 404	+192 248	6,71%	+3,42%	1	+1
Momentum	169 082	-175 430	3,70%	-6,23%	-	-2
MKKP	163 960	+73 048	3,59%	+0,97%	-	0
Jobbik	45 404	-174 780	0,99%	-5,35%	-	-1
LMP	39 646	-35 852	0,87%	-1,31%	-	0

Source: Author based on <https://vtr.valasztas.hu/ep2024>

Compared to the 2019 election, Fidesz expanded its voter base and achieved the highest number of votes ever recorded in Hungary’s European Parliament elections. However, its share of the vote declined significantly from 2019, resulting in the loss of two seats. The Tisza party, under the leadership of Péter Magyar, garnered nearly 30% of the vote despite Magyar entering the political arena only four months before the elections and the party commencing substantive operations in April. While the left-liberal opposition parties and Jobbik suffered significant setbacks, Mi Hazánk nearly tripled its voter base compared to 2019, securing its first-ever seat in the European Parliament. The party also saw substantial gains in the local elections, achieving the second-highest vote share in 18 of 19 counties (typically ranging between 15–20%) and increasing its representation in county and municipal assemblies approximately fivefold. In its post-election

communication, Mi Hazánk notably prioritised its local government successes, overshadowing the significance of its European Parliament results.

Prior to the 2024 European parliamentary election, the far right was expected to be the big winner (Mudde, 2024a). Events subsequently bore out this expectation, as far-right parties won roughly a quarter of the vote across the EU, yet it does not appear that the elections were the game-changer many feared (Mudde, 2024b, p. 132). Although the ‘continued trend’ in party-based Euroscepticism has been clearly detected (Jeong, 2024), the unified right-wing Eurosceptic front has not been formed this time either, as Eurosceptic parties (be they either hard or soft) are clustered in three political groups (Becker & von Ondarza, 2024). Mi Hazánk made its intention to cooperate with the German *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) clear weeks before the elections (after AfD MEPs had been expelled from the Identity and Democracy Group) with the objective of creating ‘a new anti-globalist’ group in the European Parliament (Mi Hazánk, 2024b). Against this background, it was only natural that the only MEP from Mi Hazánk should join the Europe of Sovereign Nations Group (ESN), the smallest and most extreme faction. As Becker and von Ondarza (2024, p. 5) put it, ‘the ESN currently seems to be a catch-all for those right-wing MEPs who, for various reasons, have not joined the ECR or PFE’. Indeed, 14 of the group’s 25 total MEPs come from the AfD, while the remaining 11 seats are shared by seven other parties. Regarding the activities of MEP Borvendég, her contributions to plenary debates are in line with the ideology of Mi Hazánk. Her speeches centred on the sovereignty of Hungary, meanwhile demonstrating a pro-Russia and an anti-LGBTQ stance.¹⁰

In conclusion, it can be stated that Mi Hazánk’s influence on the European stage will be limited, as it is a member of the smallest group, with only one MEP.

6. Mi Hazánk and Fidesz: who is harder?

Although the present study focuses on Mi Hazánk as the sole ‘genuine’ hard Eurosceptic party in Hungary, it would be erroneous to view the party as operating in a vacuum. From the outset, it has had to compete for political space on the right of the political spectrum with Fidesz, Hungary’s largest party, and Jobbik, which has meanwhile been completely marginalised. In the following, we try to capture the Eurosceptic nature of Fidesz and outline the relationship between Mi Hazánk and Fidesz, emphasising the challenges in determining which party serves as the more outspoken critic of the EU.

While no author or research definitively classifies Fidesz as a hard Eurosceptic party, two aspects suggest the governing party should be included in our study. Firstly, over the past 15 years, Fidesz has been engaged in a persistent and ongoing clash with the European Union, which centres on contrasting positions on the status of national sovereignty (Furedi, 2017). This conflict is not limited

to policy debates but is also evident in a sustained ideological confrontation that could sometimes be perceived as ‘a principled opposition to the EU and European integration’, at least at the level of communication. Csehi and Zgut (2020) apply the term ‘Eurosceptic populism’ to grasp Prime Minister Orbán’s stance towards the EU, arguing that ‘Eurosceptic populism is a distinct type of populism where critique against the EU is used to crystallise anti-elitism and people-centrism’ (p. 54). As Havlík and Hloušek (2025, pp. 357–358) demonstrated, even leading Fidesz politicians (e.g., Orbán’s former chancellor minister or the speaker of the parliament) regularly take up the topic of Huxit. In December 2023, however, Orbán stated ‘We don’t want to leave the EU, we want to occupy it’ (Portfolio, 2023). During the 2024 European Parliament election campaign, the Prime Minister maintained his plan to overtake Brussels (Scheppele, 2024).

In light of the party’s markedly adversarial stance towards the EU for a decade and a half now, particularly evident in the strongly anti-EU government-funded questionnaires sent to every Hungarian citizen on behalf of the government known as ‘national consultations’ (Bocskor, 2018; Oross & Tap, 2021), the question arises as to what categories could be employed to characterise Fidesz’s Euroscepticism? Prior to assuming power in 2010, Batory (2008) had already designated Fidesz as a party with a soft Eurosceptic stance. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013) maintained this label in their comparative study, and a similar view was articulated by Arató (2020) with respect to the 2010–2014 period, while, as she argues, ‘in the post-2014 period Fidesz has definitely turned towards hard Euroscepticism in its views and actions’ (p. 113). Somewhat surprisingly, Dúró (2016, p. 44) claims that ‘By and large, Fidesz cannot be considered as Eurosceptic but rather pragmatist due to its clear pro-European policy in practice, i.e. it has always supported the deepening of the European integration’. Taggart (2019) himself, the father of the term ‘hard Euroscepticism’, did not classify Fidesz as a hard Eurosceptic party in the wake of the 2019 European Parliament elections. In Hargitai’s (2020) view, Fidesz is not only Eurosceptic; but there is a form of ‘inverted soft Euroscepticism’ characterising the party’s vision and policies towards the EU.

However, despite the harsh rhetoric and the rock-bottom Hungary–EU relations, Huxit is not included in the *official* agenda of the Fidesz. At first glance, the term ‘equivocal Euroscepticism’ offered by Heinisch, McDonnell and Werner (2021) seems suitable for grasping Fidesz’s ambiguous stance. According to the authors, equivocal Eurosceptics ‘espouse an inherently ambivalent stance that, in terms of rhetoric and behaviour, includes aspects that are both hard and soft eurosceptical’. The ‘equivocality’ manifests itself in the fact that on the one hand, there is the criticism of ‘European integration, the EU, its officials and policies in ways that are often as harsh in tone and even substance as that of hard eurosceptics’, while, on the other hand, equivocal eurosceptics ‘are careful to avoid the most extreme manifestation of these positions, such as calling either for an outright exit or for the unambiguous acceptance of the EU and its competencies

in their current form' (p. 191). However, Havlík and Hloušek (2025) have reservations about the applicability of equivocal Euroscepticism to Fidesz, as they find it impossible to disentangle the party's strategy, i.e. 'gradual preparation for withdrawal and testing the public through placed party representatives or a purely pragmatic strategy of threatening the EU with eventual Huxit' (p. 362). At this point it is important to note that the 2010 parliamentary election was the last time the party published an official election manifesto (Dobos, Gyulai, & Horváth, 2018); since then, no such document has been made available, meaning that the party's 'official' position regarding the EU/Huxit cannot be ascertained in this manner. In the absence of an election manifesto, it is necessary to rely on the statements of politicians and the pursued politics of Fidesz (i.e. the Hungarian government), which are often inconsistent with each other. As Heinisch, McDonnell and Werner (2021, p. 191) put it, 'behavioural inconsistencies or perceived gaps between rhetoric and position are typically expressions of the ambivalence of equivocal eurosceptics' position'. In terms of rhetoric, Fidesz probably meets the criteria for hard Euroscepticism (cf. Agoston, 2024; for the rhetorical de-Europeanization of Hungarian foreign policy, see Hettzey, 2021), but can the party be labelled as hard Eurosceptic regarding its position?

In Taggart and Szczerbiak's (2008a, p. 7) (original) concept, a party does not necessarily have to advocate leaving the EU to be labelled a hard Eurosceptic. It is crucial to underscore this point, as there is a tendency to assess the degree of Fidesz's (and maybe other party's) Euroscepticism based (solely) on its stance on the potential departure of Hungary from the EU. Even Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) have conceded that too much importance has been attached to the withdrawal from EU membership in the assessment of hard/soft Euroscepticism: 'a party's stance on its country's EU membership is not, in fact, such a caesura as described in our original Hard-Soft conceptualization' (p. 243). According to the authors' definition, even parties 'whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived' may be qualified as hard Euroscepticists.¹¹ If we move beyond Fidesz's strident anti-EU rhetoric (which includes the vilification of the two most recent Commission Presidents, Jean-Claude Juncker and Ursula von der Leyen, on billboards, as well as the permanent removal of the EU flag from the Hungarian Parliament) and direct our attention to the actions and measures undertaken by Fidesz (i.e. the government) over the past decade and a half, it seems reasonable to conclude that the hard Euroscepticism still stands. Although it would go well beyond the scope of the current study to analyse the Hungary-EU relationship, it is worth recalling Végh's (2016, p. 73) insight that 'the common perception of Hungary is that it is a troublemaker, reaping the benefits of its EU membership while undermining the EU's unity and cohesion'. While more than eight years have passed since this statement, the Hungarian government has continued its disruptive activities in the EU, including provoking further infringement pro-

cedures, taking a pro-Russia stance in the Russia-Ukraine war or sacrificing EU funds to Hungary on the altar of sovereignty politics. The ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union of June 2024 marks another low point in EU-Hungary relations: the Court imposed a €200 million fine on Hungary since the government deliberately refused to comply with the judgment of the Court on asylum rules. As the Court noted, ‘this failure to fulfil obligations constitutes an *unprecedented and exceptionally serious breach* of EU law’ (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2024, emphasis added).

Whether or not it can be concluded from the above that Fidesz opposes ‘the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived’, is partly a matter of interpretation. However, if one emphasises the phrase ‘as it is *currently* conceived’, we tend to think that hard Euroscepticism is a better description of Fidesz’s politics than soft Euroscepticism. Yet, it must be stressed once again that despite the robust nature of Fidesz and Orbán’s anti-EU sentiments, their objective is not to expel Hungary from the EU, but rather to pursue fundamental reforms within the Union. As Orbán often states, ‘Hungary is not only a member of the EU, it has an interest in remaining a member’ (Bíró-Nagy, 2021, p. 221). Mos (2020), based on an analysis of 36 Orbán’s speeches delivered on matters related to European integration, concluded that the Prime Minister styles himself as a pro-European statesman who is ready to steer the Union back to its moral roots. Similarly, while contextualising the Hungarian antipolitics of Europe as an element of radical conservative nation-building, Scott (2018, p. 659) argues in his essay that ‘Hungary’s official Euroscepticism has taken shape not as an attempt to dismantle or exit from the EU, but rather as a form of anti-politics that challenges liberal and cosmopolitan understandings of European Union’. The inapplicability of the dichotomy is also a problem for Agoston (2024): having investigated how Orbán uses Eurosceptic rhetoric to move the largely pro-EU Hungarian public towards an EU-critical position, he concluded that ‘the soft/hard heuristic cannot fully capture Orbán’s position and dynamic positioning’ (p. 271). As he points out, ‘Orbán takes a “not at all” or hard Eurosceptic position on political integration but remains economically pro-integrationist’ (Agoston, 2024, p. 271).

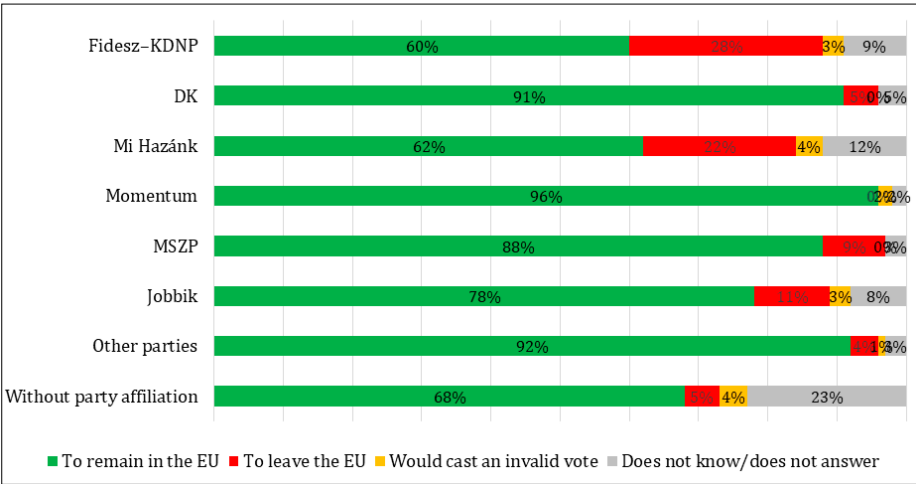
The second reason for examining Fidesz in this study lies in its relationship with Mi Hazánk. This dynamic bears similarities to the earlier relationship between Jobbik and Fidesz before Jobbik’s ‘deradicalisation’. Krekó and Mayer (2015) argued that Fidesz deliberately utilised Jobbik as a strategic tool – a ‘pioneer’ – to explore new ideological and political directions that Viktor Orbán could later adopt. A similar narrative holds nowadays, with Fidesz allegedly using Mi Hazánk as a ‘litmus test’ to gauge public reception to controversial issues, such as extreme anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, that might initially seem too radical (Dezső, 2022).¹² Furthermore, as Goldstein (2021) highlights, some opposition politicians perceive a tacit collaboration between Fidesz and Mi Hazánk. This perception is

reinforced by the apparent reluctance of both Fidesz and Fidesz-controlled public media to openly criticise Mi Hazánk.

To answer the question posed in the title of this section, it should be pointed out that the two parties are not in the same league: Fidesz is a political force with essentially infinite resources and has been running the country with full control for 15 years, while Mi Hazánk is a party with 6-7% support and no real influence on the future of the country. In these circumstances, we believe that it is not unfounded to speak of a kind of ‘magnifying effect’ in the case of Fidesz. Although official agendas suggest that Mi Hazánk has taken a harder stance by calling for (not instant) Huxit, the Euroscepticism of Fidesz is significantly exaggerated by the fact that the party is a dominant force in Hungarian politics without a significant counterweight, whose anti-EU stance has increased significantly since coming to power in 2010 – i.e. Fidesz does not show the ‘moderating effect’, which is precisely the concept that government participation tames a party’s Euroscepticism (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2013; Treib, 2021, p. 180). To sum up, as far as the official party positions are taken as a point of departure, Mi Hazánk takes a harder stance against the EU as a result of the proposed Huxit, whereas Fidesz is considerably more vocal in expressing its Euroscepticism.

When comparing the two parties, it is also worth noting their voters’ attitudes towards the EU. Research conducted in 2023 by Policy Solutions, a Hungarian political research institute, on Hungarian society’s attitudes towards the EU yielded unexpected results: Fidesz voters were more likely to support Huxit than those of Mi Hazánk (see Chart 3)

Chart 3:
If a referendum were held tomorrow on Hungary’s membership of the European Union, what would you vote for? (All respondents, %)



Source: Policy Solutions (2023, p. 16)

It is notable that in 2021, only 17% of Fidesz voters indicated support for leaving the EU in a hypothetical referendum, whereas by 2023, this figure had risen to 28%. Additionally, Fidesz voters display greater scepticism toward the adoption of the euro compared to Mi Hazánk voters. Specifically, 40% of Fidesz voters oppose joining the eurozone, compared to 29% of Mi Hazánk voters (Policy Solutions, 2023, p. 80). These findings suggest that Fidesz voters hold more negative attitudes toward the EU than Mi Hazánk voters.

7. Summary

As this study has demonstrated, Mi Hazánk can be regarded as a kind of third-generation far-right party in Hungary. In the 1990s, MIÉP was the dominant force on the far right, followed by Jobbik from the second half of the 2000s. Mi Hazánk, by contrast, was founded only seven years ago and has been a parliamentary party only since 2022. The analysis of the party's programs, statements by its leading politicians, online communication, and parliamentary activity reveals an interesting duality. Based on its manifestos, the party can be unequivocally categorised as a hard Eurosceptic party, as it not only expresses outright condemnation of the EU ('opposing to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived') but has also explicitly embraced the goal of EU withdrawal. However, three factors nuance the party's strong anti-EU stance.

Firstly, the party has exhibited a degree of pragmatism, recognising that a referendum on Huxit would only be realistic several years from now, as even its leaders acknowledge that an immediate Huxit would lead to the country's economic collapse. Secondly, in its online communication throughout 2024, the party devoted remarkably little attention to the EU. Although our empirical analysis focused exclusively on the party's Facebook posts, it clearly emerged that neither Huxit nor general EU opposition ranked among its key topics. It is noteworthy that during the European Parliament election campaign, the party produced significantly more posts on issues such as the right to use cash, foreign guest workers, judicial enforcement, and men's retirement than on EU-related topics. Importantly, Mi Hazánk's criticism of the EU is largely framed within a broader anti-globalist narrative. Rather than targeting specific shortcomings of the European Union, the party's critique is directed at globalism as a whole, encapsulated in the slogan, 'We are the only anti-globalist party'. Consistent with its anti-globalist position, Mi Hazánk grounds its anti-EU rhetoric primarily in arguments about sovereignty. As its manifestos repeatedly stress, the party views the EU as eroding Hungary's national sovereignty to an unacceptable extent. Thirdly, an analysis of the parliamentary activity of Mi Hazánk's MPs further confirms that neither Hungary's EU membership nor the EU more broadly is a central issue for the party in parliament – so much so that none of the more than 500 examined

submissions directly addressed the EU. Overall, it can be concluded that in the nearly three years since entering parliament, the party, to borrow the phrase of Down and Han (2021, p. 66), has not sought to ‘exploit the EU for electoral gain’. Our research revealed that Mi Hazánk has its own ‘well-established’ issues that it prominently represents both in its online communication and in parliament; however, the EU is not among them. (The party’s efforts to play down the Huxit issue are probably also influenced by the fact that 62% of its voters would vote to remain in the EU in a possible referendum.)

While Mi Hazánk can be unambiguously classified as a hard Eurosceptic party, identifying an appropriate categorisation for Fidesz is more complex. The characterisation of ‘national interest is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory’, often used as a criterion for soft Euroscepticism, does not fully encapsulate the nuances of Fidesz’s (and by extension, the Hungarian government’s) anti-EU stance, which is evident in both rhetoric discourse *and* policy actions. The term ‘equivocal Euroscepticism’ could arguably apply to Fidesz, but this categorisation is not without its challenges (cf. Havlík & Hloušek, 2025, p. 362). The ‘behavioral inconsistencies’ and ‘perceived gaps between rhetoric and position’ that Heinisch, McDonnell, and Werner (2021, p. 191) associate with equivocal Euroscepticism are not uniformly applicable, as Fidesz’s harsh rhetoric is often matched by decisive political actions – thus, we can talk more about *consistency*. Whether Fidesz is classified as a hard or soft Eurosceptic party – or described using terms such as ‘phoney Europhiles’ (Henderson, 2008) or ‘disguised hard Euroscepticism’ (Havlík & Hloušek, 2025, p. 362) – it is clear that the party’s anti-EU stance is significantly reinforced by its unparalleled political dominance, having been in government for 15 years, and by Viktor Orbán’s considerable influence within the EU arena.

In the view of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008a), an analysis of Euroscepticism must consider not only the broad underlying position that political parties take on Europe but also ‘whether they use the European project as an issue of contestation’ (p. 9). Mi Hazánk’s hard Euroscepticism is somewhat dampened by the fact that the EU is not a prominent issue for the party and, as shown above, the European Parliament election campaign was no exception in this regard. To put it another way, whereas the potential for Huxit is explicitly outlined in the party’s manifesto and the statements of its politicians, it would be a significant overstatement to suggest that Mi Hazánk use the Huxit (or Europe in general) as an issue of contestation. On the other hand, Fidesz, partly due to its governmental position, uses the EU much more forcefully as an issue of contestation. The rhetorical strategy employed by Fidesz over the past 15 years has been largely based on ‘enemy construction’ (Hegedüs, 2019; Csehi & Zgut, 2020; Böcskei, 2022b; Gerő & Sík, 2022). Fidesz’s anti-EU stance has also altered the pattern of contestation over Europe in Hungary. While Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008b) identified Hungary as an example of constrained contestation (‘European issues play a role and where Euroscepticism is certainly present, but where there appears to be less

likelihood of European issues affecting domestic party competition directly'), it is more accurate to describe the current situation as one of open contestation. The first two of the authors' three criteria are undoubtedly met: Fidesz, which has governed the country for nearly 15 years, is undeniably Eurosceptic (be it either hard or soft), and the issue of European integration is a much more significant component of party competition than it was in 2008 (see e.g. Vachudova, 2019). This shift is not surprising given that Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008b, p. 361) initially assumed that 'the category of constrained contestation may well be a transitional category itself'.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008b) themselves acknowledged the need for caution when applying the terms hard and soft Euroscepticism, stating that 'we do not now believe them to be universally applicable conceptual tools for fully explaining or illuminating the phenomenon of Euroscepticism' (pp. 361–362). We believe that the case of Fidesz supports the caution advised by the authors, as discussed above, since the hard/soft Euroscepticism dichotomy appears to be inapplicable to the Hungarian governing party. From this perspective, the Hungarian party system presents a certain paradox. Although Fidesz is not typically classified as a hard Eurosceptic party, its outspoken opposition to the EU – extending beyond mere rhetoric – has been one of its most distinctive features for over a decade. In contrast, Mi Hazánk, at least judging by its party manifestos, can be seen as a paradigmatic example of hard Euroscepticism; yet its political strategy shows little evidence of a fiercely anti-EU stance.

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Endnotes:

- 1 Although the Hungarian governing party is usually referred to as Fidesz, since 2006 Fidesz has been running for parliament together with the Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*), which is nothing more than a satellite party lacking any political autonomy. For the sake of simplicity, we use the term Fidesz, instead of Fidesz-KDNP.
- 2 Here, by a people's party we mean 'a political party representing or claiming to represent the great majority of the inhabitants of a territorial unit (as a nation) as opposed to a particular class or group' (Merriam-Webster, n. d.).
- 3 According to the current wording of the Fundamental Law, no national referendum may be held on any obligation arising from international treaties.
- 4 Despite the fact that Borvendég (a non-party historian and researcher, previously unknown in the political sphere) came only third on the party's list, the two candidates placed first and second had made it clear from the outset that they would not take up their seats.
- 5 The categories applied were developed inductively, based on a review of the Facebook posts – that is, there was no predefined coding scheme.
- 6 It is noteworthy that the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) takes a very similar position, and in the summer of 2003 launched an online petition with the slogan 'Cash is freedom in printed form and prevents the control and surveillance of people!' (OTS, 2023).
- 7 The dataset was manually annotated using the adapted Comparative Agendas Project codebook. For the current version of the codebook see <https://www.comparativeagendas.net/pages/master-codebook>.
- 8 Tisza is also the name of Hungary's second-largest river.
- 9 This was an improvised solution from Magyar, as only parties registered by the day the elections were announced (12 March 2024) were eligible to participate in the European Parliament elections.
- 10 For the speeches made during the plenary session see the website of the European Parliament: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/257457/ZSUZSANNA_BORVENDEG/main-activities/plenary-speeches#detailedcardmep.
- 11 In their reformulation of the definition, the authors have accorded greater emphasis to this criterion (Szczepiak & Taggart, 2008a, p. 3).
- 12 The role of Mi Hazánk as a 'litmus test' is further reinforced by a recent development: in February 2025, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced that the right to use cash would be constitutionally guaranteed and that the Budapest Pride, scheduled for June 2025, would be banned – thus fulfilling two of Mi Hazánk's key demands.