

Visions of Europe

Five Hungarian perspectives

Centre for Fair Political Analysis has been interested in the relationship between Hungary and Europe for a long time. Previously, in our [Forty Leaders – Forty speeches](#) study we examined speeches of Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, Viktor Orbán and Vladimir Putin through context analyses which shed light to some interesting conclusions. It is also the relationship between Europe and Hungary that interests us in [our newest e-book](#), but from a different perspective. We were curious to see what Hungarians ideas and perspectives were/are about Europe.

It was evident that we must look at the world of politics first. Zoltán Novák and Gergely Rajnai studied what the perspectives of Hungarian political parties were of Europe, and how this has changed. We were interested in finding out, to what extent was the topic of Europe present in their party programs. One of our findings was that Fidesz and Jobbik have clearly switched places in their communication. By 2019 Fidesz had navigated towards the 2009 program of Jobbik while during the same time period Jobbik had come to very similar conclusions as Fidesz in 2009. Another important finding concerning the party programs is that it is not just anti-Orbán sentiments that serve as a cohesive force for the opposition but also the idea of a social Europe. By 2019, the three completely different opposition parties that we looked at shared a platform with one another along the social fault line,

emphasizing the importance of the social integration of Europe.

In the second chapter of our book Péter Zsolt, Dávid Reichert, and Zsombor Báthy explored the perspective of the press about the European Union through two national newspapers (Magyar Nemzet and Népszabadság. Later when Népszabadság ceases to exist they looked at Népszava.) As a result they arrived at the conclusion that within Magyar Nemzet EU scepticism and fear over the loss of sovereignty received more and more attention throughout the years while within Népszabadság and Népszava displeasure over the weak representation of the values of the European Union were reoccurring. Hungary's role in the European Union was seen in the dichotomy of "dare to be big – dare to be small". The right wing preferring the first option while the left wing the latter.

In the third chapter, Ádám Paár looked at how Europe was present within the Hungarian National Curriculum before and after accession. He came to the conclusion that we cannot say that European cultural heritage was more present in the curriculums adopted by center-right governments. Nor can we say that there is a significant difference between the recognition of the importance of the influence of the Enlightenment and Judeo-Christian heritage. It is another question though what they mean by these terms. As for civic education, at least on the level of objectives there have been positive steps taken in the curriculums concerning the promotion of a democratic culture and the competencies necessary for upholding it.

The author of the fourth chapter, Júlia Lakatos, focused on the political history of the European Union accession. Based on the

fifteen years that have passed since, she posits that Hungary is not (complete-ly) a Western-style liberal democracy. She also states that the conflict which has recently flared up between the European Union and Hungary was waiting to happen from the moment the country be-came a member. At the time of the accession both sides failed to see the fact that Hungary is not com-pletely a Western country, or rather they thought that they could overcome the existing cultural, histor-ical differences. The older member states, as well as the pro-accession politicians in Hungary thought that time would erase differences and the positive effects of membership would outweigh the possible difficulties. By now we know that the European Union never had a strategy for positive integration and that they thought the new member states should be responsible for becoming more Western. As a result, these countries were free to interpret the definition of Westernization which in turn led to mutu-al incomprehension.

The last chapter was written by Ervin Csizmadia. It posits that in the Hungary of today it is not pro-Europeans (the current opposition) and anti-Europeans (the current governing coalition) that are facing each other but those who represent two different attitudes towards Europe. The author introduces the categories of model adaptation and model formation. The first one was created by the elites of the late Kádár-regime who could use their newfound Western mentality to dismantle the regime, which basically meant the will to adapt Western-European institutions and norms. For a while, these left wing and liberal elites and the generationally younger Fidesz were on the same platform. Later, the younger gen-eration created its non adapting mentality which is aimed at shaping Europe turning it against their ri-vals. The essay analyses the creation of these two elites and their basic differences to explain how



Viktor Orbán could have become a defining politician of Europe.

One of the most important aims of the book is to show that while we like to think that in the past fifteen years Europe has become a part of our lives this is only partly true. Whichever essay we read, we can see that thinking about or even debating about Europe was not present in society, not even in the realm of politics. We do not speak of these registered anomalies with disillusionment. We are merely stating facts. We were interested in presenting a more complex view about our ambivalent relationship to Europe in hopes that we can further our understanding of the current political situation.