

Country Profile Hungary

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Since 2010, Hungary's government has placed an emphasis on getting support from the population by communicating populist messages and appealing to emotions, through highlighting the need for a homogenous Hungarian nation (Körtvélyesi 2012; Novak 2017). In doing so, it stigmatized many minorities and individuals (for example, members of the LGBTQ community, drug addicts, the Roma, the poor, and also members of small churches) as well as those who oppose or disagree with official governmental approaches and policies. The refugee crisis has also been used for fearmongering and incitement to hatred against migrants.

Attitudes towards diversity: Hungarians rate civil liberties as less important than national and economic security (Hunyadi/Molnár/Wessenauer 2019). Additionally, while civic and political engagement is generally very low in Hungary, younger respondents participate in public life even less than their older counterparts, except for their readiness to take part in public demonstrations. According to the report of the European Youth prepared in 2017 only 2% of Hungarian respondents aged 15-30 have been involved in an activity of a political organization or a political party. Diversity and, in general, increase of diversity receives very little support from Hungarians (National Democratic Institute 2018).

Party preferences: According to the poll conducted by Závecz Research in October 2020, the ruling, populist right-wing, Fidesz party has the support of 32% of the population eligible to vote, while the biggest opposition party is the leftist Democratic Coalition with 10% support; followed by the former extreme right, nationalist party, Jobbik with 7%; the progressive, centrist-liberal Momentum 6%; the socialist Party, MSZP 5%; and other left-wing and green opposition parties with 2% each. The right-wing extremist Mi Hazánk party also has the support of 2% of the adult population.

Opposition and resistance to right-wing radicalization in the political arena: Currently, opposition against radicalization in Hungary can be noted within the National Assembly on the side of both the traditionally leftist parties such as Hungarian Socialist Party and Democratic Coalition, and the "new", so called 21st century political parties such as Momentum. The voice of these parties, however, is concentrated mainly in the capital city, as their influence in the counties, particularly in small communities is rather weak.

Right-wing extremist groups: Under hate groups we include organizations that, based on hatred, perform verbal, symbolic, or physical aggression on behalf of any ideology. While neither significant far-left, nor religious extremist groups exist in Hungary, there are various far-right groups with

diverging followership and foci. Political Capital's study from 2017 is the latest one to provide an overview of the landscape of far-right organisations, also pointing to the relationships between individual groups as well as the international connections of the Hungarian far-right scene (Juhász 2017: 63-80).

Anti-democratic and right-wing attitudes among the population: The trends of radicalization, particularly the enmity against foreigners, refugees and migrants can be divided into several stages. There was a rapid increase in xenophobia in the first half of the 1990s, that after a short-lived wave, began to stabilize in the 2000s (Bernát 2010). The degree of rejection and alienation from a bird's eye view was fairly stable, meaning that larger swings were not detectable due to political or social changes. However, the data indicates a slow but continuous rearrangement has occurred under the surface (Messing/Ságvári 2016).

The Eurobarometer and World Values Survey (European Social Survey 2015) conducted in EU Member States looked into the anti-Roma and anti-Jewish databases in Hungary and drew the following conclusions: anti-Roma attitudes in all European countries under investigation are much stronger than anti-Semitism. The Hungarian attitude either to the Roma or to Jews is not outstanding within the EU. In the spring of 2015, according to the Eurobarometer survey, the majority of Hungarians asked about how comfortable they would feel if a colleague or child/ partner would belong to a "particular" group of people, and Roma and Muslims were found to cause the strongest discomfort. In case of 'workplace relationships' the three groups that are most likely to cause discomfort are transgender people, gays, and Muslims. The level of comfort is lower among the people in the center, while people on the right side of the political spectrum would feel most uncomfortable in these situations. People in middle positions show the highest level of comfort (Kende/Boglárka-Hadarics/Veszna-Hunyadi 2018: 6-7).

Majority of the Hungarian public have traditionally negative attitudes towards foreigners and certain ethnic groups. Prejudice is clearly the strongest against the Roma, and its prevalence has been remarkably stable in the past two decades. According to the latest extensive poll (Bernát/Krekó/Juhász et al. 2012) conducted in 2011, 82 percent of the Hungarian population thought that "the problems of the Roma would be solved if they started to work at last", 60 percent agreed with the statement that "the inclination to criminality is in the blood of Gypsies", and 42 percent considered that "it is just right that there are still pubs, clubs and discos where Gypsies are not let in".

Despite the low level of immigration (especially from culturally distant countries), xenophobia and anti-immigration sentiments are extremely strong in the Hungarian society. Social attitudes towards immigration are mainly shaped by the fear of the Unknown, the abstract image of the immigrants presented in the media, and the strong anti-immigrant political rhetoric (Hunyadi/Barna 2015: pp. 40).

According to the latest poll on anti-Semitism conducted by the Median Institute in 2018 (Endre/Daniel 2019) roughly one-third of the Hungarian population is characterized by anti-Semitism (33%), 20% of which can be considered to be strong anti-Semites and 13% moderate anti-Semites. After an increase of anti-Semitism between 2006 and 2011, anti-Jewish sentiments have slightly decreased since then but generally remained on a higher level than before 2006. According to the researchers, the main manifestation of anti-Semitism in Hungary are anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, with the ratio of people who believe in such ideas constantly increasing since 2013. This development is most likely closely connected to the fact that conspiracy theories with an anti-Semitic touch have become widespread in Hungary mainly due to mainstream political forces, especially the governing Fidesz party, and their media outlets openly disseminating them.

Situation of the media: Since coming to power in 2010, the ruling Fidesz party has established an increasingly anti-democratic political system, which is completely tailored to the party's interests and ensures its control over politics, a broad segment of the economy and the public discourse. Domination of the political agenda has been achieved by the systematic erosion of media pluralism. Hungary has gradually fallen back on the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders (2019) from rank 56 in 2013 to rank 87 in 2019. Many international reports have identified substantial issues with media pluralism in Hungary. The Rule of Law Report on Hungary (European Commission 2020; Political Capital 2020), published in September 2020, draws a fair picture of the systemic problems, including the unipartisan composition of the Media Council, the government's indirect political influence over the media through the biased distribution of state advertising, the increasing limitation of accessing public interest data, and the obstruction of the work of independent media outlets and the intimidation of journalists. Moreover, the control over the media and, thus, the public discourse has mainly been established through the creation of a huge pro-government media network, which is centrally organized and echoes the party's political messages. The media landscape is dominated by the Central European Press and Media Foundation (abbreviated as KESMA in Hungarian), which was created in November 2018 and includes hundreds of pro-government media outlets, including 112 news media outlets (Bátorfy 2019).

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