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## EUROSCEPTICISM IN HUNGARY AND POLAND: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF JOBBIK AND THE LAW AND JUSTICE PARTIES

**ABSTRACT** Euroscepticism is one of the most contested concepts within political science discourse; its definitions, classifications and criteria are widespread. Using Szczerbiak & Taggart, Kopecký & Mudde as well as Chris Flood, this essay intends to describe the attitudes of citizens towards the European Union in Hungary and Poland ten years after accession to the EU. Two dominant parties from Central Eastern Europe, which are classified as Eurosceptic according to scientists and experts, represent dissatisfied and even hostile constituencies towards EU engagement within Hungary and Poland. A comparative analysis of the two parties shows their similarities at the national level, yet reveals important differences in terms of ideology as well as their classification of Euroscepticism.

**Keywords:** Euroscepticism, parties, European Union, Hungary, Poland

### INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF EUROSCEPTICISM

Due to the upcoming European Parliament elections, Euroscepticism is a central focus. The elections of 2014 will be special not only because this year the new MEPs will set the course of European policies for the next five years but they will also elect the leader of the EU's executive body, the President of the European Commission. According to

some experts, there is a real prospect that these elections will lead to the establishment of the most Eurosceptic Parliament ever.<sup>1</sup>

In the academic literature, Euroscepticism has a wide range of definitions. As Chris Flood stated in his core work: *On close inspection, Euroscepticism remains a somewhat elusive phenomenon with unclear contours and borderlines*.<sup>2</sup> Criteria and classifications are usually based on rhetoric (what the parties/governments communicate) and rarely on outcomes or real actions (votes in the European Parliament/Council). The two most widespread definitions of the phenomenon were coined by Szczerbiak & Taggart and Kopecký & Mudde. The former divide parties into two groups: soft- and hard-Eurosceptics. Soft Euroscepticism involves opposing all of the policies of the Union or the incompatibility of national interests with EU objectives. Hard Euroscepticism means withdrawal from the Union or opposing European integration.<sup>3</sup> According to this classification, the Law and Justice party (PiS) is a soft-Eurosceptic party and, although Jobbik is not the subject of analysis, it would definitely be ranked as a hard one.<sup>4</sup> Kopecky and Mudde classify parties into four groups based on their attitude towards European integration: Europhobes/Europhiles; and on the attitude towards the future of the EU: EU-optimists/pessimists. Within this framework, the authors created four categories: “Euroenthusiasts” (EU-optimists and Europhiles) “Eurorejects” (EU-pessimists and Europhobes), “Eurosceptics” (Europhiles but EU-pessimists) and “Europragmatists” (EU-optimists but Europhobes).<sup>5</sup> Eurorejects can be identified as Szczerbiak & Taggart’s hard-Eurosceptics and Eurosceptics as former soft-Eurosceptics. In this framework, PiS is a moderately Europhile party<sup>6</sup> with EU-pessimistic attitudes, so they belong in the Eurosceptic group, and in my opinion Jobbik is half-way between the Eurorejects and Eurosceptics, but closer to the latter. In addition to these approaches, there are many other classifications in the scientific discourse and I prefer Chris Flood’s because it can express differences in the best way:

- *Rejectionist*: positions opposed to either (i) the membership in the EU or (ii) participation in some particular institution or policy.

<sup>1</sup> O. Gergely, S. Gautier, *The Rise of Eurosceptic Ring-wing Parties and the 2014 European Parliament Elections*, MHP, at <<http://mhpc.com.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/brussels/files/2014/01/Rise-of-Eurosceptic-Parties.pdf>>.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Flood, *Euroscepticism: a Problematic Concept*. Paper presented at the “UACES 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference”, Queen’s University Belfast, 2-4 September 2002 (illustrated with a particular reference to France).

<sup>3</sup> A. Szczerbiak, P. Taggart, *Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism. Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality*, Brighton 2003 (*SEI Working Papers*, No. 69. *EPERN Working Paper*, No. 12).

<sup>4</sup> There is some softening visible nowadays in their attitude, but this will be discussed later

<sup>5</sup> S. Vasilopoulou, ‘Varieties of Euroscepticism: The Case of the European Extreme Right’, *Journal of Contemporary Political Research*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2009), pp. 3-23.

<sup>6</sup> P. Kopecký, C. Mudde, ‘The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe’, *European Union Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2002), pp. 297-326, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1465116502003003002>>.

- *Revisionist*: positions in favour of a return to the state of affairs before some major treaty revision, either (i) in relation to the entire configuration of the EU or (ii) in relation to one or more policy areas.
- *Minimalist*: positions accepting the status quo but resisting further integration either (i) of the entire structure or (ii) of some particular policy area(s).
- *Gradualist*: positions supporting further integration either (i) of the system as a whole or (ii) in some particular policy area(s), so long as the process is taken slowly and with great care.
- *Reformist*: positions of constructive engagement, emphasising the need to improve one or more existing institutions and/or practices.
- *Maximalist*: positions in favour of pushing forward with the existing process as rapidly as is practicable towards higher levels of integration either (i) of the over-all structure or (ii) in some particular policy areas.<sup>7</sup>

The Author sees PiS as a member of the Minimalist group and Jobbik would find its place half-way between the Revisionists and Rejectionists – it is difficult to classify them based on the fact that the parties' rhetoric and preferences tend to change over time e.g. owing to changes in the balance of power at the domestic level. Regarding the trends towards EU support both in Hungary and in Poland it is unequivocal that a hard-Euroscptic party could not come to power so in order to gain more electoral support it seems that a softening of their position is inevitable.

## I. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EUROSCEPTICISM IN POLAND

After the transition period of 1989/1990 the countries' accession to the EU was beyond dispute in Hungary as well as in Poland and it was one of the few issues in which the new political elites could reach any consensus. In the pre-accession period European Union referred to the vision "return to Europe". The idea of European commitment has one of its most important origins in the Polish *émigré* circle after the Second World War namely in the works of Jerzy Giedroyc and Juliusz Mieroszewski. However, the main focus of the "Giedroyc doctrine" is connected to the Eastern policy and it is based on the need for democracy and modernisation (plus anti-communist opposition) it presumes Poland's European commitment.<sup>8</sup> Shortly after the transition to a market economy and democracy, European identity and EU integration was connected to Western prosperity, higher living standards and spread of democratic values so "return to Europe" in this sense means mainly modernisation and westernisation of the country, additionally joining the Union was seen as a fulfilment of the transition process. Regarding centre-periphery relations and the "between East and West"

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Flood, *Euroscpticism...*

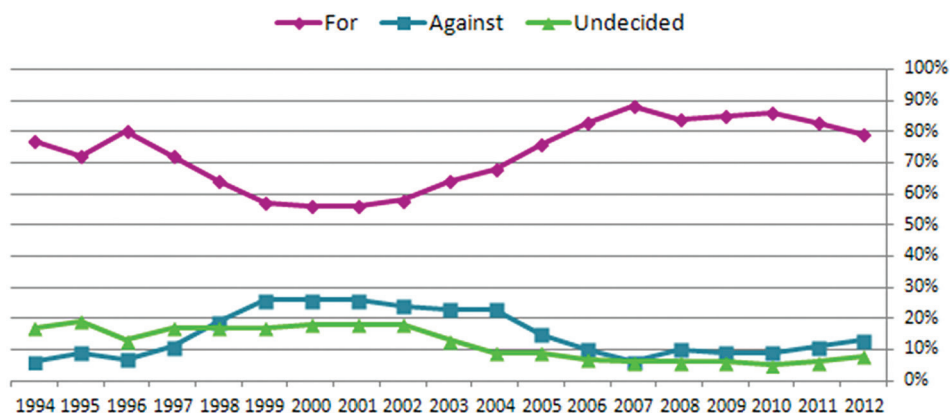
<sup>8</sup> A. Szczerbiak, *Poland within the European Union. New Awkward Partner or New Heart of Europe?*, Abingdon 2012 (*Routledge Advances in European Politics*, 76).

geopolitical realities of CEE “return to Europe” could be interpreted as an endeavour for belonging to the centre.<sup>9</sup> Above the economic and political aspects of European integration it has a cultural/identity side also. Even under the communist regime, Poland preserved its European roots and values and after the transition period it could prevail again.

Naturally the different aspects were assessed at different weights for the different groups of society for as Zdzisław Mach stated: *For the educated elites Europe was a mythical paradise of freedom, market economy and democracy. For the majority of society, farmers and workers Europe was a mythical paradise of prosperity, where everyone enjoyed an abundance of goods. For most uneducated Poles was less so an ideological centre of traditions and values, but rather a mythical paradise which they wanted to belong – a paradise of wealth known from stories told by relatives living abroad, accounts of those few who had the opportunity to travel, or from Western films...*<sup>10</sup>

Public support for the EU shows a quietly consistent picture in Poland from the beginning of the negotiation process.

Figure 1. Support for joining the European Union



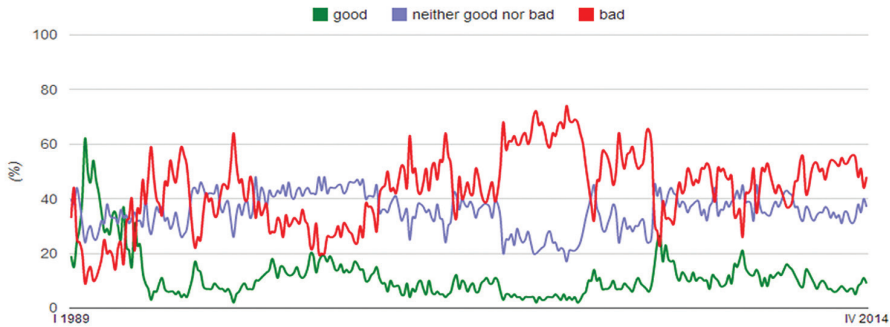
Source: CBOS in: <http://deconspirator.com/2013/02/07/eurosepticism-and-the-rise-of-right-wing-parties-in-poland/>.

At the beginning of the 1990s’ – shortly after the transition period, public support for the EU was around 80%. In addition to the factors mentioned above it was regarded publicly as a kind of guarantee of stability in a volatile political environment.

<sup>9</sup> P. Cichocki, ‘Polish Attitudes Towards the European Union’, *Przegląd Zachodni*, No. 2 (2011), at <[http://www.iz.poznan.pl/pz/news/9\\_13.%20Cichocki.pdf](http://www.iz.poznan.pl/pz/news/9_13.%20Cichocki.pdf)>.

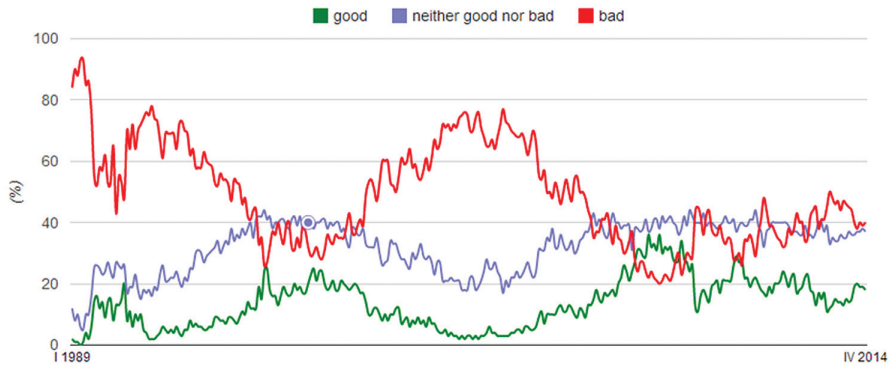
<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Figure 2. How do you generally evaluate the current economic situation in Poland?



From: CBOS, *Trends*, at <<http://cbos.pl/EN/trends/trends.php>>.

Figure 3. How do you generally evaluate the current economic situation in Poland?



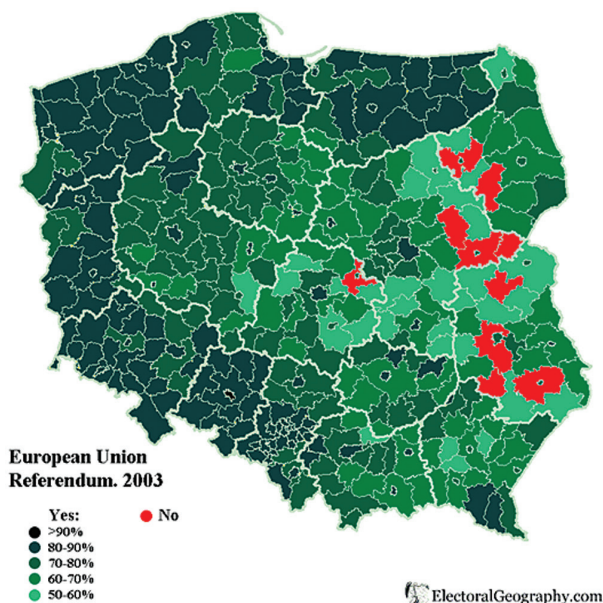
Source: <http://cbos.pl/EN/trends/trends.php>.

It is visible from the charts that the evaluation of the EU remains high despite domestic political and economic circumstances. From 1997 enthusiasm slightly decreased because earlier polls overstated real support on one hand and, secondly, it was the start of the accession process and because of this a public debate emerged about EU membership together with the disadvantages and costs of accession. Another reason is that from the beginning of the accession negotiations that a split in the former exaggerated consensus over EU membership amongst social and political elites emerged.<sup>11</sup> Public opinion towards EU membership reached its peak around 2000-2001, a few years before the real accession, but support remained above 50%. The phenomenon can be explained by the intensifying debate about membership mainly about the possible disadvantages of the accession for Polish agriculture, the sale of Polish land and other threats

<sup>11</sup> A. Szczerbiak, 'Opposing Europe or Problematising Europe? Euroscepticism and "Eurorealism" in the Polish Party System' in P. Taggart, A. Szczerbiak (eds.), *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Vol. 1: *Case Studies and Country Surveys*, Oxford 2008, pp. 221-242.

to Polish national sovereignty. On the other hand, the economic situation in those years was in a poor condition, with around 70% of citizens evaluating the situation as poor. In 2001, the parliamentary elections were also held where two hard-Euro sceptic parties the Self-Defence (SRP) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) won almost 20% of the seats.<sup>12</sup> Besides the rhetoric of these parties, the Law and Justice and the Polish People's Party also criticized the negotiations. From 2003, public support started to increase probably due to the advent of the real accession. In the referendum about EU membership in 2003, with a 58,85% turnout, the yes vote was 77,45%.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 4. Percentage of YES votes – EU referenda 2003



A. Kireev, 'Poland. European Union Referendum 2003', Electoral Geography 2.0, at <<http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/p/poland/poland-european-union-referendum-2003.html>>.

Regarding the results of the elections after the accession, I suppose that the stronger pro-European attitudes are replicated in the party preferences of the voters. The Civic Platform (PO) is a pro-European centre-right party and PiS is a soft-Euro sceptic one. (The

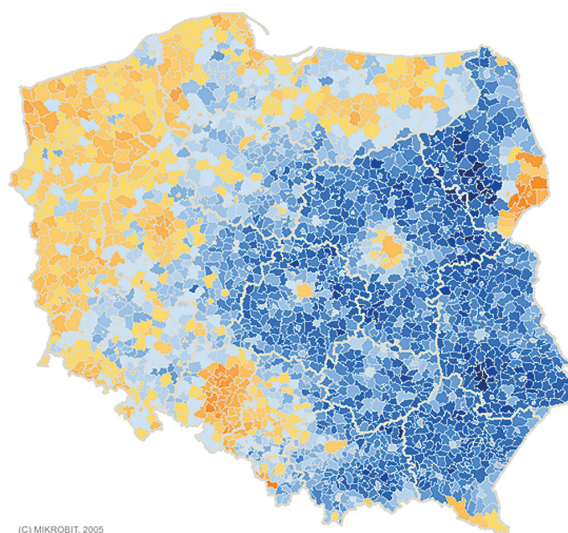
<sup>12</sup> A. Stefaniak, A. Haska, 'Euro scepticism and the Rise of Right-wing Parties in Poland', Deconspirator, at <<http://deconspirator.com/2013/02/07/euro-scepticism-and-the-rise-of-right-wing-parties-in-poland/>>.

<sup>13</sup> PKW, *Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 9 czerwca 2003 r. o wyniku ogólnokrajowego referendum w sprawie wyrażenia zgody na ratyfikację Traktatu dotyczącego przystąpienia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej do Unii Europejskiej*, at <<http://pkw.gov.pl/2003/obwieszczenie-panstwowej-komisji-wyborczej-o-wyniku-ogolnokrajowego-referendum-w-sprawie-wyrazenia-zgody-na-ratyfikacje-traktatu-dotyczacego-przystapienia-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej-do-unii-europejskiej-dz-u-z-dnia-11-czerwca-2003-r-nr-103-poz-953-.html>>.



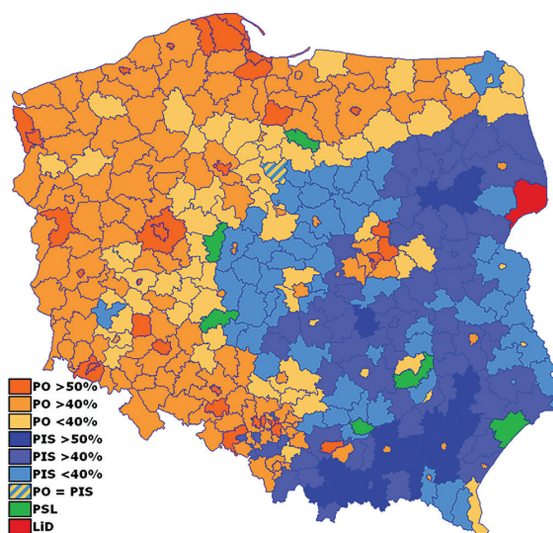
Self-Defence dropped out from Parliament in 2007.) The further analysis of the parties' different attitudes towards the Union unfortunately exceeds the scope of the paper.

**Figure 5.** Results of the first round of the 2005 presidential elections



A. Kireev, 'Poland. European Union Referendum 2003'; Electoral Geography 2.0, at <<http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/p/poland/poland-european-union-referendum-2003.html>>.

**Figure 6.** Results of the 2007 parliamentary elections



A. Kireev, 'Poland. Presidential Election 2005'; Electoral Geography 2.0, at <<http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/p/poland/poland-presidential-election-2005.html>>.

Immediately after Poland's accession to the EU, a temporary weakening of EU-enthusiasm was perceived. One reason for these perceptions was the so-called "accession-shock" which is connected to the confrontation of the realities and expectations. Besides the "accession-shock", the majority of the Poles were concerned that membership would mainly be demonstrated in the distant future, so their choices were ideal for their children and grandchildren.<sup>14</sup> After the "return to Europe" the attitudes became more pragmatic than idealistic, citizens paid attention to the gains and costs of the accession. As Piotr Cichocki argues: *As the benefits gained by Poland and Poles from EU integration became relatively obvious, this new, pragmatically oriented mode of narration quickly became a fairly permanent basis for social support of the EU integration process.*<sup>15</sup> From the end of 2004 a consistent increase has been occurring in the EU's evaluation which reached a peak in 2007 and in 2014 with 89% supporting membership. Despite the pro-EU tendencies, the turnouts of the EP elections remained low<sup>16</sup> in Poland. The public support towards the EU did not sway dominantly at the times of the crisis and recession in 2009-2010 as in the majority of European countries. It can be justifiable with the fact the crisis did not hit Poland as much as the other countries, they were able to enforce their will in the Union effectively and which is evidenced for example in the distribution of certain funds. Nowadays positive attitudes are quiet stable and, according the Eurobarometer, 66% of Poles are optimistic about the future of the EU, 70% feel that they are citizens of the EU, but only 35% prefer the euro as a currency.<sup>17</sup>

To conclude, it can be said that the majority of the Poles have positive/supportive attitudes towards the EU, but on the other hand there is a significant Eurosceptic minority which largely does not question the membership itself but focuses on the question of role and presence of Poland in Europe. However, even though most sceptics do not advocate the withdrawal of the country's membership, the opponents of membership reached 21% in 2013.<sup>18</sup> The origins of Euroscepticism can be traced back to the fear of damage to Polish national sovereignty, identity and land caused by the accession. Before membership one of the main arguments against the accession originated in historical grievances, namely the fear of German occupation, a revision of borders and loss of independence. Moreover, with the spread of Western values and culture, Polish identity and culture would be suppressed and marginalised. It was also a commonly voiced opinion that EU/the Western liberal thoughts could be harmful to Christian values. Another main reason against membership was connected to the threat to the national economy; mainly, to Polish agriculture and the high costs of adaptation of the

<sup>14</sup> P. Cichocki, 'Polish Attitudes...'

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *European Parliament. Results of the 2014 European elections. Final results*, at <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-\(2009\).html?tab=20#result\\_turnout](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00082fcd21/Results-by-country-(2009).html?tab=20#result_turnout)>.

<sup>17</sup> *Standard Eurobarometer 79. First results – Spring 2013*, at <[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_first_en.pdf)>.

<sup>18</sup> CBOS, *Trends...*



country. It was also a widespread idea that due to accession foreign capital would buy up Polish land, unemployment would rise and many SMEs would collapse. Additionally during the negotiations Poland was a kind of “difficult” state to accommodate in many policy-fields and it was a common fear that the country could not cope with the prerequisites and had to pay a lot for the membership or would be admitted to the EU as a “second-class” member.<sup>19</sup> After 2004, as mentioned above, public support for the Union started to increase mainly because of pragmatic reasons. The basis of the sceptical voices remained similar after the accession mainly in the ideological field. The most cardinal aspect of opposition has been decreasing national sovereignty and the need for a stronger Poland. The bureaucratised and malfunctioning EU political system can be mentioned as the subject of criticism as well. Connected to the pragmatic approach those citizens who are dissatisfied highlight the costs of membership which in their opinion are higher than the advantages.

Before 2004 Eurosceptic opinions were manifested by four parties: the Self-Defence (SRP), the League of Polish Families (LPR), the Polish People's Party (PSL) and the Law and Justice (PiS). According to the classification of Szczerbiak & Taggart, the first two can be identified as hard-Eurosceptic parties and the last two as soft ones but with time the SRP became a more moderate soft one.<sup>20</sup> During the 2001-2005 and 2005-2007 parliamentary terms the LPR and the SRP were quite dominant actors of the Polish politics<sup>21</sup> but they lost their parliamentary representation in 2007 elections and became marginalised. After 2007, Law and Justice became the most crucial representative of Euroscepticism, PSL lost many of its voters and also signed a coalition with the pro-European ruling Civic Platform party. The empowerment of these parties could suggest that the critical attitude towards the EU can be a cardinal factor of success of the right-wing parties as well as an opportunity to enter to the political mainstream.<sup>22</sup> After the collapse of the left-wing, the parties' European policy and attitudes towards the Union became one of the most important divisions in the political sphere and one of the most crucial cleavages between the Civic Platform and Law and Justice parties.

<sup>19</sup> A. Szczerbiak, 'Polish Euroscepticism in the Run-up to EU Accession' in R. Harmsen, M. Spiering (eds.), *Euroscepticism. Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration*, Amsterdam 2004, pp. 247-268 (*European Studies*).

<sup>20</sup> A. Stefaniak, A. Haska, 'Euroscepticism...'

<sup>21</sup> PKW, *Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 26 września 2001 r. o wynikach wyborów do Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej przeprowadzonych w dniu 23 września 2001 r.*, at <<http://pkw.gov.pl/2001/obwieszczenie-panstwowej-komisji-wyborczej-z-dnia-26-wrzesnia-2001-r-o-wynikach-wyborow-do-sejmu-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej-przeprowadzonych-w-dniu-23-wrzesnia-2001-r.-html>>; PKW, *Wybory 2005*, at <<http://pkw.gov.pl/2005/>>.

<sup>22</sup> A. Stefaniak, A. Haska, 'Euroscepticism...'

## II. THE LAW AND JUSTICE PARTY

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) is a national-conservative party and the second largest club of the Polish Parliament. It consists of approximately 22,000 members. It was founded in 2001 by Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński from part of the Solidarity Electoral Action and the Centre Agreement. After convincing appearances in 2001, they won the 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections but were defeated in 2007 by the Civic Platform. Due to the tragic air crash in Smolensk several leaders, including Lech Kaczyński, died in 2010.<sup>23</sup>

Ideologically, PiS is a conservative, nationalistic ring-wing party. It protects Christian values and has the support of the church. They are strong anti-communists, fighting against corruption and believe in law and order. The party programmes are built on the belief of a strong and sovereign Poland with a strong leader and a paternalistic state. They oppose abortion, same sex marriage, in vitro fertilisation and euthanasia. Their economic policy is based on state intervention, they support families and are opposed to the neoliberal model. In the European Parliament the party is a member of the ECR group.

Attitudes towards the EU:

The soft-Euro sceptic attitudes have their origins in the ideology of the party mainly in the need for a strong and sovereign Poland as well as in the protection of national interest. In the beginning of the 2000s' they supported EU membership in principle, but were against the EU Convention's proposal for a new Constitution. They demanded a referendum about the new treaty and spoken strongly in favour of a "Europe of nation states". Shortly before the real accession they intended to say no to the EU referendum, but a few days before changed their minds and said yes.<sup>24</sup> When Lech Kaczyński was asked in 2001 about the future membership he answered that *he would vote for accession but as a politician would accept a different decision by the nation. I would vote against if Poland was to be a second-class member.*<sup>25</sup> Despite this kind of rhetoric, the real debate was not about the necessity of membership but much more about the Polish presence and their actions in it. After 2004, the positive attitude towards Poland's EU membership became the dominant one in society with even the majority of PiS voters satisfied with the membership itself, mostly because of practical reasons. Although membership has not been a point of political disagreement, the attitudes towards the EU are crucial divisions in the political field (PO-PiS cleavage).

The European policy of PiS was mostly visible during their governmental period between 2005 and 2007. Due to their nationalistic attitude they put Polish sovereignty and interests at the top of the agenda. The Euro sceptic rhetoric became sharper when the Kaczyński twins got both the presidential and PM positions. They declared that the

<sup>23</sup> <<http://europe.demsoc.org/2014/05/13/law-and-justice-pis/>>.

<sup>24</sup> S. Riishoj, 'Europeanisation and Euro-scepticism. Experiences from Poland and the Czech Republic', *Středoevropské politické studie*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2004), at <<http://www.cepsr.com/clanek.php?ID=211>>.

<sup>25</sup> A. Szerbiak, 'Polish Euro scepticism...', pp. 247-268.

interests of Poland were paramount, they would not give ground and would fight every power which threatened Polish interests. In their opinion deeper European integration could be harmful for Polish interests and values and help the great European powers (mainly Germany) to influence the country. The opposition towards EU became stronger after the coalition agreement with the hard-Eurosceptic LPR and SRP. It was said that the EU had no right to dictate Polish internal affairs, the belief of the party is more important than EU principles. It was also clear that in the sceptical voices of the party the personal negative attitudes of the twins towards Germany played a great role. In Polish society the historical grievances are alive mainly in the aspect of German and Russian relations. It was a common belief that Germans want to annex the country again under the auspices of the EU. PiS also represent those anti-EU attitudes which are connected to the preference of Christian-conservative values versus the liberal West. The defence of Polish identity and values are crucial for the party but the defence of Polish agriculture could not be dominant in the PiS programme mostly because the PSL dominates this issue. The marginalisation of LPR and SRP had two main consequences for the political sphere. Firstly their voters remained without political representation and the majority became supporters of PiS. The second result was the weakening of Eurosceptic views and rhetoric.<sup>26</sup> The slogans of "Poland in Europe" and "independent country" fit to the idea "Europe of nations" presented by the party intended to convince the hard conservative part of the electorate.<sup>27</sup> After losing two parliamentary elections against the pro-European PO, the party tried to oppose the further integration initiated by mainly the Civic Platform which fits clearly to their national-conservative sovereignty-based ideology and rhetoric. In 2011, when foreign minister Radosław Sikorski called on Germany to save the Eurozone and proposed creating a European federation, Jarosław Kaczyński stated: *That man had no right to offer Germany leadership in the European Union. What he did is offer Poland an inferior position, the kind we had for decades, but that should not be the aim of Polish foreign policy, to return to a pre-1989 situation.*<sup>28</sup> Another quote of his about the deeper integration from 2011: *What we are faced with is an attempt to limit Poland's sovereignty and ultimately its democracy.*<sup>29</sup> Before the 2014 EP elections it can be perceived that the parties are concentrating on the upcoming parliamentary elections and the programmes are dominated by domestic issues such as new jobs and health care reform.<sup>30</sup> The attitude remains the same as before; they want a strong and independent Poland in the European Union.

<sup>26</sup> P. Cichocki, 'Polish Attitudes...'

<sup>27</sup> Gluchowski P., 'Debt crisis hardens Eurosceptics' antipathy in Poland', *The Guardian Online*, 26 January 2012, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/26/debt-crisis-eurosceptics-antipathy-poland>>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> <<http://www.wbj.pl/article-57306-polands-sovereignty-under-threat-from-european-integration-says-kaczynski.html?typ=ise>>.

<sup>30</sup> 'PiS Pledges New Jobs, Better Healthcare', *The Warsaw Voice Online*, 3 March 2014, at <<http://www.warsawvoice.pl/WVpage/pages/article.php/27133/article>>.

### III. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EU AND EUROSCEPTICISM IN HUNGARY

After the transition period of 1989/1990 the aspects of “return to Europe” were quite similar in Hungary to those in Poland. The country’s European integration was regarded as modernisation, the spread of Western values, coming of the Western “brave new world” with high living standards and European wages as well as lifestyle. It was also a natural fulfilment of the economic and political transition. There was a unique consensus among the political elites about the necessity of European commitment thus the NATO and EU membership was beyond dispute. The European policy of Hungary became one of the most important priorities of the Hungarian foreign policy after the change of regime. After forty years of communism/socialism and Soviet occupation, both Hungary’s and Poland’s European integration have a cardinal aspect in security policy and could be seen as a guarantee of stability and protection mainly from Russia. The cultural and identity dimension of Europeanisation was also an integral part of the process but in Hungary the pragmatic and material elements were much more dominant than in Poland. The reasons for this phenomenon are rooted in the Hungarian political culture. In the Hungarian public thinking the concept of democracy is identified with freedom and social welfare. Compared to other European countries, a much higher number of citizens equate democracy and welfare in Hungary. The reasons can be found in the past. The last approximately twenty years of the socialist system were regarded socially as a not particularly repressive regime where freedom existed in some ways so the average citizen waited for the transition mainly because of the coming of social welfare and Western living standards. After the transition period, when the people faced with the realities, the evaluation of democracy and democratic institutions started to fall sharply. The interconnection of the economic situation and democratic institution has remained in the society and it is visible for example in the evaluation of the government.<sup>31</sup> The preponderance of material elements also influences the attitudes towards the EU.

In the 1990s’ – one-third of the Hungarians had positive attitudes towards the Union, one-third were neutral, 21-34% could not answer the question and 6-11% had negative attitudes.<sup>32</sup>

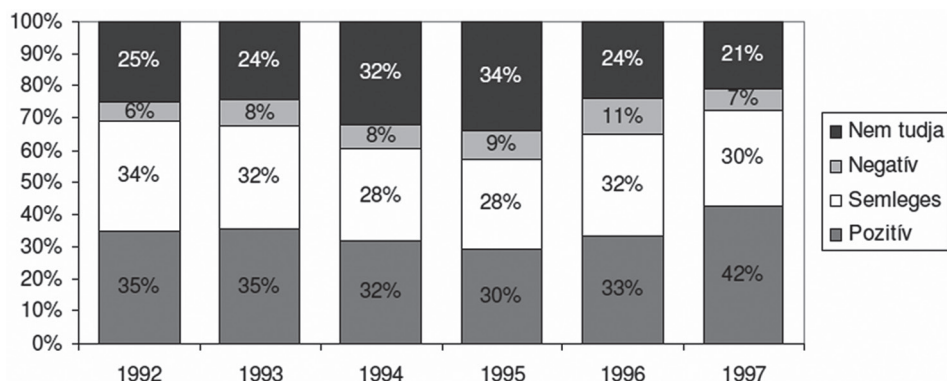
Comparing these results to the Polish ones it is visible that the Poles were much more optimistic about the future European integration. Before the accession the most optimistic year was in 2002, after then the evaluation began to diminish continuously. In the accession referenda with a 45,62% turnout, 83,76% of the voters said yes and 16,24% voted no.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> A. Körösenyi, Cs. Tóth, G. Török, *A magyar politikai rendszer*, Budapest 2007, pp. 64-69 (*Osiris tankönyvek*).

<sup>32</sup> B. Göncz, *Az Európai Unió megítélése Magyarországon*, PhD, Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem, Szociológia Doktori Iskola, 2010, at <[http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/542/1/goncz\\_borbala.pdf](http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/542/1/goncz_borbala.pdf)>.

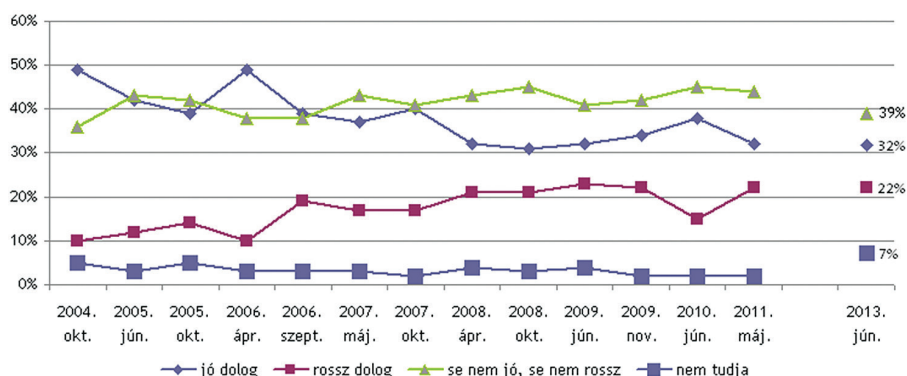
<sup>33</sup> Nemzeti Választási Iroda, *EU népszavazás 2003*, ‘A 2003. április 12-i népszavazás jogi eredménye’, at <[http://valasztas.hu/nepszav03/outroot/hu/10\\_0.html](http://valasztas.hu/nepszav03/outroot/hu/10_0.html)>.

Figure 7. Evaluation of EU membership:



Source: 2004-2011 Eurobarometer, 2013. júniusi omnibusz TÁRKI.

Figure 8. Evaluation of EU membership



Source: 2004-2011 Eurobarometer, 2013. júniusi omnibusz TÁRKI.

After the accession Hungary was one of the most pessimistic countries in the union, with the evaluation under the EU average. The year 2006 and 2010 broke the tendency; these were the years of parliamentary elections so in Hungary there is a correlation between attitudes towards the EU and domestic politics. Before the parliamentary elections citizens are usually optimistic and the positive expectations have an effect on the evaluation of the EU. In the 2001-2009 period, the rate of those citizens who regarded the EU as a bad thing increased from 7% to 22%, the neutrals from 23% to 42% and the rate of those ones who thought the membership to be disadvantageous also increased from 13% to 52%.<sup>34</sup> With these results the Hungarian attitudes reached the traditionally Eurosceptic British level of pessimism towards the EU in 2009. It is

<sup>34</sup> B. Göncz, *Az Európai Unió...*

important to note that although the pragmatic/utilitarian opinions diminished crucially, the symbolic bonding towards the Union stayed above the EU average. Due to the coexistence of these two tendencies it can be said that soft-Euroscepticism is a widespread phenomenon in public discourse but hard-Euroscepticism, although it exists, is not dominant.

The reasons for the Hungarian Euroscepticism have both ideological and more significantly pragmatic aspects. There is a group of citizens who oppose the EU because it threatens the country's sovereignty, independence and repels it to a "colonial" status. Similar to Poland they want to protect Hungarian values and regard Western ideologies as harmful. They also want to protect the Hungarian land from foreign investors and Hungarian agriculture which in their opinion is suppressed by the EU (mainly France). A more determinative aspect of Euroscepticism is the above mentioned pragmatic side of the coin. After the accession when the "brave new world" did not come with the Western living standards the disillusionment grew significantly. Connected to the pragmatic aspect it is visible that the economic crisis, (which hit the Hungarian economy substantially) also plays a cardinal role in scepticism. The inefficient crisis management of the Union gives ground to Eurosceptic voices. It is also a common belief in Hungarian society that "Europe is not our business", "it is far away from here" and "We are a too small nation". The mechanisms of the EU are complicated for Hungarians; they do not understand it and they do not trust it. They regard the EP elections as a kind of domestic election. As the evaluation of the EU correlates with the evaluation of the government and other domestic institutions (plus the economic situation), when the former starts to diminish the latter follows.<sup>35</sup>

Before the appearance of Jobbik, the question of EU was not on the agenda. There was only one party, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP), which attacked the European integration but its support was not as significant as the LPR in Poland. Some kind of Eurosceptic rhetoric could be heard from Fidesz but it fitted the national-conservative programme, appealing to the "hard-Fidesz voters" and was not visible in the outcomes. After Jobbik's unexpected success in 2009, the situation changed gradually. In the 2010 parliamentary elections Fidesz won a 2/3 majority<sup>36</sup> but Jobbik also claimed 12,18% of the mandates.<sup>37</sup> With this victory Fidesz had the right to made crucial reforms and changes and it took advantage of the chance. They took a strong, sovereign, independent Hungary to the centre of their programme which does not question the EU membership but opens to the East and fights the EU if it threatens Hungarian interests. On the other hand with the emergence of Jobbik the political map of the country has changed as well. Next to the left-wing opposition

<sup>35</sup> A. Bíró Nagy, T. Boros, Á. Varga, 'Euroszepticismus Magyarországon', Policy Solutions – Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012, at <<http://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzesek/Euroszepticismus%20Magyarorsz%C3%A1gon.pdf>>.

<sup>36</sup> Nemzeti Választási Iroda, *Országgyűlési választások 2010*, '2010. évi Országgyűlési Képviselő Választás 2. fordulójá – 2010. április 25.', at <[http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/parval2010/354/354\\_0\\_index.html](http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/parval2010/354/354_0_index.html)>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



Fidesz found a right-wing challenger which is able to win voters over. Jobbik's new powerful, radical voice, nationalistic attitudes and hard-Euroscpticism could appeal to the "harder Fidesz voters" so Fidesz started to use a more sceptical rhetoric towards the EU. The popularity of Jobbik is a growing tendency, almost overtaking the left-wing alliance in the 2014 parliamentary elections.<sup>38</sup> But for Jobbik it is trivial that in order to enter power they have to become more moderate. In order to call more voters in the 2014 elections the party rhetoric softened, visible in their attitudes towards the EU.

#### IV. INTRODUCTION OF JOBBIK

The Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), which means both "the more preferable choice" and "more to the right" in Hungarian, is a radical, nationalist party. The party describes itself as a *principled, conservative and radically patriotic Christian party*, whose *fundamental purpose* is the protection of *Hungarian values and interests*. They want to put into effect a real change of regime and want to represent a third way in Hungarian politics. One aim of the party is to create a fairer society.<sup>39</sup> They are strongly anti-communist, anti-globalist, have anti-establishment views and regard liberalism as an enemy of the "natural communities", the nation, families and historical churches. They want to eliminate corruption and cleanse the Hungarian political system. They want to represent the whole nation because those Hungarians who are living outside the borders (after the Treaty of Trianon) are natural members of Hungarian society. The party is usually described as a far-right, populist, ethno-nationalist organization with anti-Semitic, homophobic and anti-Roma rhetoric. Their economic policy is based on a paternalistic-, intervening state, they oppose globalised capitalism and the influence of foreign investors. They also protect the Hungarian land. The party announced a programme of order and security with the strengthening of the national police and with the setting up of a gendarmerie. They have connections with the banned Magyar Gárda militia. One of the most important issues of the party is their solution to the "Roma-question" and "Roma-crime". The party opposes abortion, same sex marriage, and euthanasia and supports the death penalty. Jobbik has very strong support amongst the country's youth.<sup>40</sup>

It was founded in 2003 after the collapse of the MIÉP. They intended to soak up the former MIÉP voters and to give an alternative to radical voters. Between 2006 and 2009 the party strengthened crucially. In the 2009 EP elections they exceeded the estimated results and became a dominant power in the Hungarian political sphere. They

<sup>38</sup> Nemzeti Választási Iroda, *Országgyűlési választás 2014*, 'Országgyűlési képviselők választása, 2014. április 6', at <[http://valasztas.hu/hu/ogvy2014/861/861\\_0\\_index.html](http://valasztas.hu/hu/ogvy2014/861/861_0_index.html)>.

<sup>39</sup> *Alapító Nyilatkozat*, Jobbik, 24 October 2003, at <<http://jobbik.hu/jobbikrol/alapito-nyilatkozat>>.

<sup>40</sup> <<http://europe.demsoc.org/2014/04/11/jobbik-movement-for-a-better-hungary/>>; Jobbik, at <<http://jobbik.hu>>.

are not members of any political group in the EP; however the party regards Ruch Narodowy as a “brother-party”.<sup>41</sup>

Attitudes towards the EU:

Jobbik is a hard-Euro sceptic party which according to their founding document opposes EU membership if it harms national independence.<sup>42</sup> They would withdraw Hungary from the EU if the country does not create an appropriate law to stop the buying up of Hungarian land by foreign investors. The party criticizes the current EU mechanism and the European integration after the Lisbon Treaty. They questioned the necessity of the Lisbon Treaty as a whole and do not agree with a deeper European integration because it threatens Hungarian sovereignty. According to the party programme, if Europe is moving in this way the country should rethink membership or build relations in the framework of “Europe of nation states”. Connected to the enlargement, they oppose Romanian membership without any “condition”. Jobbik is not afraid to use radical means connected the EU, they have burnt the EU flag<sup>43</sup> and one MP threw the flag out of the window of the Hungarian Parliament (now he is not a member of the party).<sup>44</sup> The party programmes for the 2014 EP elections highlight the “Europe of nation states” concept. They intend to protect the Hungarian interests and the SME’s against the multinational companies and banks. They oppose the deeper integration, the common currency and federalism. The party tries to avoid a situation in which Hungary would become a “second-class” member. According to this vision the countries would cooperate in a flexible structure regarding their national interests, protecting their sovereignty and independence. In economic policy Jobbik tries to reach full-employment with small farms, an opening to the East and export-oriented Hungarian companies to the fore. The basis of the party’s European policy is the protection of the Hungarian land above all. In energy policy, they highlight the national authority, they support regional cooperation to decrease energy dependency, support the alternative energy supplies and want Hungarian utility companies<sup>45</sup>

To conclude: the party’s attitudes towards the EU are based on the protection of Hungarian interest and sovereignty. They believe in the concept “Europe of nation states” but sometimes beg the question of withdrawal. They oppose further integration but take advantage of the benefits. The party intends to build relations with Eastern partners. Their European commitment is much more pragmatic than symbolic.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Külföldi is van a Jobbik EP-listáján’, Origo, 16 April 2014, at <<http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20140416-kulfoldi-is-van-a-jobbik-ep-listajan.html>>.

<sup>42</sup> *Alapító Nyilatkozat...*

<sup>43</sup> ‘Unió zászlót égetett a Jobbik’, Index, 14 January 2014, at <[http://index.hu/belfold/2012/01/14/unios\\_zaszlot\\_egetett\\_a\\_jobbik/](http://index.hu/belfold/2012/01/14/unios_zaszlot_egetett_a_jobbik/)>.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Fotó: Gaudi-Nagy uniós zászlókat dobált ki a Parlament ablakán’ HVG, 13 February 2014, at <[http://hvg.hu/itthon/20140213\\_Foto\\_GaudiNagy\\_unios\\_zaszlokat\\_dobalt\\_ki](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20140213_Foto_GaudiNagy_unios_zaszlokat_dobalt_ki)>.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Nemzetek Európája. A Jobbik programja a magyar önrendelkezésért és a társadalmi felemelkedésért’, 2014, at <[http://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/ep\\_program\\_a5\\_jav.pdf](http://jobbik.hu/sites/default/files/cikkcsatolmany/ep_program_a5_jav.pdf)>.

## CONCLUSION

After ten years of EU membership, Euroscpticism is a widespread phenomenon both in Hungary and in Poland. The attitudes towards the EU in general are more positive in Poland. Despite the fact that the symbolic support of the Union is high in Hungary, due to pragmatic reasons (materialistic beliefs) as well as the correlation of the EU's and domestic political/economic situation, scepticism could reach a quiet marked level. The voice of disillusioned voters can be represented by the soft-Euroscptic national-conservative of the more moderate PiS in Poland and by the hard-Euroscptic radical right Jobbik in Hungary. All of the parties are dominant at the domestic level, PiS is the main challenger to the ruling Civic Platform and Jobbik is the main challenger of Fidesz. It is obvious that to be able to come to power, the parties should soften and become more moderate. Both of the parties believe in a strong, sovereign and independent state, they want to protect national interests, the land and oppose European integration which threatens national interests. The "Europe of nation states" appears in the rhetoric of both countries.

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