

Who Else If Not Us?

Youth Political Participation in Light of the European Parliament Elections

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Tartalomjegyzék

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Introduction¹

The research conducted by the 21 Research Center is a collaborative initiative with the German Marshall Fund. Starting in the fall of 2023, the project aimed to increase political activity among young people, focusing particularly on the upcoming European Parliament elections. As part of this initiative, the Center conducted a multi-dimensional study to map the political attitudes of Hungarian youth aged 18 to 29. In addition to the research results, a Winter School on EP elections was organized for students in early March, followed by a conference in May. The research had three pillars: (I) content analysis, (II) quantitative research, and (III) qualitative research.

The content analysis focused on domestic political parties' most recent 2019 EP election campaigns, particularly how they addressed and mobilized young people. Following the content analysis, the study examined young people's views and attitudes towards political participation in the context of the EP elections using quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods. The empirical data collection provided the Research Center with a nuanced understanding of the opinions of the new generations entering political life regarding elections. The project's expected outcomes are multi-faceted: in the short term, to increase the awareness of Hungarian youth about the upcoming EP elections, and in the long term, to involve them in democratic processes.

The Context of the Research: Youth Participation in Politics

The context of the research: Youth participation in politics

One of Hungary's most pressing political issues is a trend observed throughout Europe: the declining interest and participation of the younger generation in political life and democratic processes. This is particularly true for the European Parliament elections. This phenomenon not only involves the younger generation's absence from elections but also raises long-term questions about the sustainability of democratic societies. Therefore, increasing political awareness among new generations and overcoming apathy toward participation is a critical political task today.

Research indicates that Hungarian youth are less interested in politics than older generations: the 18-29 age group is the least, while the 50-59 age group is the most interested. Other demographic factors also play an important role in the level of political participation and interest: men tend to be more interested, possibly due to traditional gender role socialization. Additionally, the higher someone's level of education and the

¹ This research was conducted within the framework of the German Marshall Fund Central Europe - Building Resilience in Civil Society (CEBRICS) grant.

higher the social class they belong to, the greater their interest in politics.² However, these latter two factors significantly correlate with older age.

The problem is not unique to Hungary, as similar patterns can be observed in other EU countries. According to the World Values Survey, the average youth participation in national elections worldwide is about 47.7%. Similar figures characterize Europe, where the participation rate of young people ranges between 40-50%.³ The low participation of European youth is due to several factors, including apathy, distrust, and dissatisfaction with the democratic process. Another factor is that European youth often feel that political actors do not specifically represent them. All of this suggests that the relationship between new generations and traditionally democratic mechanisms seems to be breaking down. Hungarian youth's political participation and willingness to participate are not only lower compared to older generations but also lower than their Central European peers.⁴ The electoral participation of domestic youth aged 18-29 has shown a declining trend in recent years.⁵

Although there is no exact data on electoral participation within this age group in Hungary, research by the NDI in 2020 found that political engagement among youth in Central Europe, including Hungary, is very low.⁶ The research highlighted that young people in the region do not feel that political institutions effectively represent them, resulting in a decreasing interest in participation. This means that interest in sustained political participation has declined among young people, along with support for democratic institutions. All of these raise the question of what can make young people interested. What topics and issues encourage them to participate in public life and express their opinions? What worldview underlies political apathy?

In recent years, the political participation of Hungarian youth has become a significant research topic, not only in domestic social sciences but also in international comparisons. András Bíró-Nagy and Andrea Szabó's research, *Hungarian Youth 2021 - Dissatisfaction, Polarization, EU-Friendliness*,⁷ conducted in the spring and summer of 2021 with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, is based on youth research conducted simultaneously in seven countries (the Visegrád and Baltic states). It aimed to explore the values, opinions, and preferences of the 15-29 age group using a common methodology and questions. The distinctive feature of the Hungarian Youth 2021 research

² http://real.mtak.hu/124199/1/ertek_identi_konyv_2021.pdf

³ <https://freedomhouse.org/article/why-are-youth-dissatisfied-democracy>

⁴ http://real.mtak.hu/134915/1/B%C3%ADr%C3%B3-Nagy%20Andr%C3%A1s%20-%20Szab%C3%B3%20Andrea_Magyar%20Fiatalok%202021_final_web.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ndi.org/publications/youth-attitudes-politics-and-democracy-hungary>

⁶ In Hungary, 750 people aged 16-29 participated in the survey using CAWI. The margin of error was $\pm 3.6\%$. Source: <https://www.ndi.org/publications/youth-attitudes-politics-and-democracy-hungary>

⁷ András Bíró-Nagy & Andrea Szabó (2021). *Magyar fiatalok 2021 - Elégedetlenség, polarizáció, EU-pártiság*. Budapest: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

was that it analyzed Hungarian data in the context of the other Visegrád countries. The specific context for Hungary was that the political socialization of the studied age group took place largely or entirely during the post-2010 Orbán governments.⁸

The main findings of the research indicate that although there has been a slight increase in the political interest of Hungarian youth in recent years, it still lags behind the average of the V4 countries. In 2021, 24.7% of them described themselves as "very" or "moderately" interested in politics, which is lower than the rates of Polish (28.5%), Czech (28.1%), and Slovak (26.9%) youth. The gender difference was significant: men's interest (26.8%) was higher than women's (22.5%). Additionally, the political interest of young people in Budapest (34%) was higher than that of those living in rural areas (22.6%). The research shows that cultural capital has a significant influence on interest. For example, higher parental education and higher personal educational attainment correlate with the level of interest. Political interest also correlates with the frequency of political discussions. Those who are more interested, generally talk about politics more often with their parents or acquaintances. However, only 17% of the surveyed Hungarian youth discuss political issues with their parents or acquaintances, the lowest rate among the V4 countries. In Poland, 23% of youth engage in such discussions, in the Czech Republic 21%, and in Slovakia 20%. In Hungary, the level of political agreement with parents is high (70%), but not the highest. In the V4 countries, it is 75% in Poland, 73% in the Czech Republic, and 72% in Slovakia. Political agreement with parents is more pronounced among women, the youngest, those living in urban environments, those in better financial situations, and those with higher cultural capital.

According to the research, 51% of Hungarian youth feel that their interests are not represented in politics. This is the highest rate among the V4 countries (Poland: 42%, Czech Republic: 40%, Slovakia: 38%). The perception of representation depends most on ideological orientation and political affiliation. Young people on the right, conservative, and supporters of the governing party are more likely to positively evaluate their representation. Socio-demographic characteristics also play a role in the perception of representation: those with higher educational attainment are more likely to negatively evaluate representation.

⁸ The target group of the research were Hungarian citizens aged between 15 and 29 who use the internet. The sample consisted of 1500 respondents recruited from the Ipsos Online Access Panel. In order to ensure representativeness, the sample was quota-sorted by age, gender and region. In this way, the sample reflected the target population in terms of these characteristics. Quotas were based on predefined sociodemographic data, which allowed respondents to be reached by email. Data collection took place between 10 June 2021 and 20 July 2021. Interviews were completed online by respondents via the Ipsos platform. The questionnaire was made available in English by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and translated into Hungarian by Ipsos. The average completion time of the survey was 17 minutes.

Hungarian youth's electoral participation is the lowest among the V4 countries. In the 2018 parliamentary elections, 62% of youth participated, compared to 70% in Poland, 67% in the Czech Republic, and 66% in Slovakia. Significant gender differences can also be observed in electoral participation. While 67% of men voted, only 57% of women did. Additionally, the participation of young people in Budapest (72%) was higher than that of their rural counterparts (58%). The authors observe a close correlation between electoral participation, political interest, activity, and the perception of representation.

The biggest societal problems perceived by youth are low wages and pensions, followed by poverty, corruption, the declining quality of public services, emigration, and unemployment. Climate change and labor market automation were less concerning to them in the 2021 research. They support the development of the social safety net and the reduction of inequalities but are less in favor of increasing the state's economic role. The support for unconditional basic income was notably high among them.

The ideological affiliation of Hungarian youth is complex. Unlike older generations, they are less bound by rigid ideological frameworks and are more open to different viewpoints. They can be described as centrist, as they do not feel strong commitments to either the left or the right. This orientation aligns with their peers in the Visegrád region. Liberal values such as tolerance, openness, equality, and democracy are strongly present in their value system. It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean support for traditional left-wing parties but rather reflects a modern, progressive mindset. This is evidenced by the fact that the respondents' value systems often proved to be inconsistent, not necessarily following the principles of a single ideology. This fragmentation reflects complex responses to the challenges posed by globalization, digitalization, and the rapidly changing social context.

The research results also highlight that Hungarian youth trust the European Union the most, while they trust political institutions and the media the least. Two-thirds (66%) of Hungarian youth do not support Hungary's exit from the EU. This is the lowest rate among the V4 countries, yet it indicates their commitment to European values. Among young Fidesz voters, the proportion of those supporting HUXIT is higher than among opposition supporters, consistent with the party's Eurosceptic rhetoric.

Bíró-Nagy and Szabó argue that the low political participation of Hungarian youth can be attributed to complex reasons. The main challenges include distrust towards politics, apathy, lack of knowledge, lack of effective representation, and cynicism, which hinder their engagement. There are several potential solutions to address these challenges. It is important to increase young people's political awareness and activity, remove barriers to political participation, involve young people in political

decision-making, and promote constructive dialogue between political parties and civil society. Political education and the development of critical thinking in schools, reconsidering the media's role in political information, and developing attractive and credible political communication strategies for young people are also necessary.

The joint project of the 21 Research Center and the German Marshall Fund aimed to facilitate the mobilization of young people, preceded by a study similar to Bíró-Nagy and Szabó's research. As part of this, the research center conducted content analysis and focus group research, the results of which are presented in the following sections.

Content Analysis of the 2019 Hungarian EP Election Campaigns

As noted in the research by Bíró-Nagy and Szabó, the 15-29 age group does not feel addressed in domestic politics. Starting from this premise, this content analysis sought to determine how much each political party addressed young people during the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections. Content analysis is a research method used to identify patterns in various types of recorded communications. Sources can include books, newspaper articles, speeches, web content, and social media posts. Data collected from these sources are categorized or coded based on a predefined and refined scheme, focusing on words, themes, and concepts. The method can be applied in both quantitative research (quantifying occurrences of specific content) and qualitative research (understanding content within context). The interpretation of analysis results was done in connection with the research question, and conclusions are drawn in light of this and the relevant literature.⁹

The 21 Research Center conducted a content analysis from November 10 to December 8, 2023, seeking to understand how different political parties address young people in their statements. The 2019 EP election campaigns serve as significant empirical data, as it was the last national campaign where parties ran independently, allowing them to formulate their messages. The primary sources for this study were the programs of the participating parties and online news articles published during the campaign period.¹⁰ The programs were sourced from the parties' official websites,¹¹ and the articles were downloaded using the Imedia media monitoring platform. The parties examined were the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance and Christian Democratic People's Party's coalition (Fidesz-KDNP), Democratic Coalition (DK), Jobbik-Conservatives (Jobbik), LMP-Hungary's Green Party (LMP), Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), Hungarian Socialist Party and Dialogue for Hungary's coalition (MSZP-PM), Momentum Movement (Momentum Mozgalom), and the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (MKKP). During the research, 4,139 relevant articles from April and May 2019 were coded, including duplicates.

⁹ Weber, Robert Phillip (1990). *Basic Content Analysis*. Sage University Papers Series. Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences.

¹⁰ 2019.04.06 - 2019.05.26.

¹¹ The only exception is the Fidesz programme, which was only published on the party's Facebook page.

European Parliament Elections in Hungary

In Hungary, the peculiarities of the electoral system encourage the opposition to unite in parliamentary elections, but the EP elections emphasize individual competition. In the EP electoral system, Hungary is considered a single large constituency where smaller parties can also succeed independently due to the proportional electoral system.¹² Therefore, fewer parties choose to unite. In 2019, Fidesz-KDNP and MSZP-Párbeszéd ran in a coalition, while DK, Momentum, Jobbik, Mi Hazánk, MKKP, and LMP competed separately.

The main topic of the 2019 EP election campaign was undoubtedly the migration crisis, likely due to the success of Fidesz's anti-migration campaign since 2015. The ruling party centered its EP election program on this successful message to such an extent that other political forces were unable to come up with a more dominant message. Consequently, the opposition was forced to shape its program and campaign strategy in light of migration, even if it did not wish to focus on it overall.

Content Analysis Based on Online Articles

This content analysis had two main sources: coding of online available articles and analysis of party programs. For online coding, articles related to the EP election were first selected based on keywords,¹³ then coded based on three criteria: (I) whether the article mentioned a party program, (II) whether it included policy proposals for young or elderly people,¹⁴ and (III) how the proposal was framed. The elderly were included to create a control group, making it possible to compare the number and content characteristics of messages aimed at young people.

During the research, 4,139 articles were coded, including duplicates. Out of these, 1,034 contained party programs, 226 included policy proposals for young people and 268 for the elderly. The coding also revealed that parties campaigned by repeating a single overarching message, primarily communicated to the public by the list leaders. However, even in interviews, they did not detail these messages, instead speaking generally about the domestic political situation, which varied depending on party affiliation.

¹² See Momentum's two electoral seats.

¹³ The key words were: ep party program, ep election program, ep election program lmp, ep election program mkkp, ep election program mi hazánk, ep election program dk, ep election program democratic coalition, ep election program momentum, ep election program mszp, ep election program jobbik, ep election program dialogue, ep election program fidesz, ep party program fidesz, ep party program lmp, ep party program dk, program ep party momentum, program ep party mszp, program ep party mkkp, program ep party jobbik, program ep young election, program ep old election, program ep donáth anna, program ep vágó gábor, ep election toroczka lászló, ep election döme zsuzsanna, ep election cseh katalin, ep election trócsányi lászló, ep election jávor benedek, ep election tóth bertalan, ep election gyöngyösi márton.

¹⁴ The issue of health was not clearly included in the measures for the elderly, unless that is what the political actor was trying to say.

During the coding of online available articles, 16 categories were established: one generally related to EP election programs, then one for each party (Fidesz, DK, MSZP, PM, LMP, Mi Hazánk, Momentum, Jobbik, MKKP), and additional groups for list candidates (László Toroczkai, Anna Donáth, Katalin Cseh, Gábor Vágó, Benedek Jávor, Zsuzsa Döme, Márton Gyöngyösi, Bertalan Tóth, László Trócsányi). The following two tables contain the number of coded articles, broken down by parties or figures in terms of numbers and percentages.

Category	Number of Related Articles	Contains Election program	Mentions the Youth	Mentions the elderly
EP Election Program in General	474	74	28	29
Parties				
Fidesz	249	70	25	20
DK	123	29	22	14
MSZP	180	45	32	27
PM	38	6	1	1
LMP	91	31	21	10
Mi Hazánk	36	5	0	0
Momentum	118	18	13	5
Jobbik	136	13	5	2
MKKP	15	11	0	0
List of Candidates				
László Toroczkai	91	2	0	0
Anna Donáth	74	5	5	5
Katalin Cseh	210	1	0	0
Gábor Vágó	478	15	11	11
Benedek Jávor	500	147	7	21
Zsuzsa Döme	37	3	1	1
Márton Gyöngyösi	437	219	18	6
Bertalan Tóth	500	255	37	116
László Trócsányi	352	85	0	0
Total	4139	1034	226	268

Table 1 - Coded articles by categories (number)

During the coding process, it sometimes happened that a single article contained program points for both young and elderly people, so the total percentages do not necessarily add up to 100. In the case of party-specific search terms, we see similar proportions, with only 10-34% of the articles collected by Imedia being relevant, the rest only reacted to daily events without referring to party programs. In terms of the number of articles, Fidesz-KDNP communicated the most online about its party program (70 articles) or its details. Next in line was MSZP, followed by LMP. In percentage terms, compared to all articles containing party programs, MKKP would be first (73%), but due to the low number of observations, it is more appropriate to place LMP at the top of the list (34%), followed by Fidesz (28%) and MSZP (25%). When examining program points and policies aimed at young people, DK (76%), Momentum (72%), and MSZP (71%) communicated most frequently to this target group. For messages aimed at the elderly, the order is MSZP (60%), DK (48%),

and LMP (32%). In both cases, the parties did not raise entirely new topics in the examined articles; they communicated messages consistent with their programs to both voter groups.

Fidesz focused on solving and managing the migration issue. DK most frequently communicated the desire to retain European membership, European child benefits, European minimum pensions, a European “multi-tax,” and European minimum wages. For MSZP-Párbeszéd, the most emphasized idea was the European minimum pension. LMP most frequently raised the fight against climate change, focusing on protecting future generations. The focus of Mi Hazánk’s campaign in the media was the issue of Roma-Hungarian coexistence and helping Hungarian workers. Jobbik supported the introduction of a wage union and the establishment of an independent Hungarian border guard. MKKP appeared most in the media with the ideas of free beer and a four-day workweek. Momentum most frequently appeared in the press with the details of its educational program and criticism of corruption.

Regarding the list of leader candidates, Imedia detected a higher number of articles in each case. The articles were mostly in the form of interviews or opinion pieces, with the proportion of relevant articles varying widely (0-51%). The most relevant articles were detected for Bertalan Tóth (MSZP-P), Márton Gyöngyösi (Jobbik), and Gábor Vágó (LMP). Besides them, although many politicians’ names were mentioned, the number of observations was very low.¹⁵ In these cases, the candidates also communicated messages consistent with their party programs. László Toroczkai (Mi Hazánk) emphasized his anti-immigration stance, and Anna Donáth and Katalin Cseh (Momentum) highlighted the importance of European politics and European commitment. Gábor Vágó (LMP) advocated for promoting a common climate policy, and Benedek Jávor (PM) talked about energy policy. Zsuzsa Döme (MKKP) remained on humorous topics, while Márton Gyöngyösi (Jobbik) also stood out with his migration-critical attitude. Bertalan Tóth (MSZP) talked the most about the social Europe program, and László Trócsányi (Fidesz-KDNP) criticized migration and the bureaucracy of the European Union.

Content Analysis - Based on Party Programs

We examined a total of eight party programs. During our analysis, we not only focused on whether a given program point affects the elderly or the young but also on how it frames the issue and the narrative in which it discusses the proposal. For example, healthcare was

¹⁵ In terms of messages for young people, Anna Donáth would be the first, but we identified so few relevant articles that a 100% detection rate means only 5 articles. Gábor Vágó (73%) would be second, but he also has 15 relevant articles. Zsuzsanna Döme (33%) would be third, but the dilemma of low number of items (3 articles) also applies to her. For messages to the elderly, Donáth would also be first, Vágó would be second and Bertalan Tóth (45%) third.

often not included as a program point targeting the elderly or the young if the parties addressed it in a general manner concerning the entire society.

FIDESZ-KDNP Coalition

For Fidesz-KDNP, the main themes were handling the migration crisis, national sovereignty issues, and criticism of the European Union.¹⁶ The most vocal spokespersons were László Trócsányi and Péter Szijjártó. The program consisted of seven sentence-length points, six of which addressed migration, and one focused on Christian identity. Consequently, there were no specific policy proposals targeting the elderly or the young, nor did their statements specifically address these demographic groups. Instead, they spoke more generally about the "interests of the Hungarian population."

Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)

The Demokratikus Koalíció's program, with Klára Dobrev as a prominent figure, emphasized the importance of European cooperation, opposition to the far-right, economic and social justice, and criticism of the ruling party.¹⁷ Based on media appearances, the core of their campaign centered on ideas such as a European minimum wage and minimum European pension, as well as a European multinational tax. Proposals specifically targeting the young included the introduction of a European family allowance, which would be an entitlement for every European child, funded by the EU. Although education appeared in the program as an issue affecting the young, it had much less emphasis.

DK highlights the importance of bilingual education for all European students and the teaching of European studies in schools across member states. The program also mentions EU programs aimed at the development of the most underdeveloped regions and supports the Youth Guarantee program, which assists in the employment and further training of young people under 25.¹⁸ They also emphasize the elimination of digital illiteracy among the younger generation and increasing the use of digital technologies in education. The program includes investments in education and scientific research, thereby expanding opportunities for young people. For the elderly, the party proposes a system that guarantees a minimum old-age pension in all member states, covering basic living costs, to be financed through the European Solidarity Fund.

Jobbik

¹⁶https://www.facebook.com/FideszHU/photos/a.10150098801139307/10158263229214307/?type=3&ref=embed_post

¹⁷ <https://dkp.hu/uploads/docs/10/176/dk-ep-program-fuzet-web.pdf>

¹⁸ The Youth Guarantee Programme is an EU support programme for young workers that has been in operation since 2013. Read more: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=hu>

In 2019, Jobbik, led by Márton Gyöngyösi, advocated for the establishment of a European wage union and a review of agreements with the European Union. Their program also includes issues of environmental and border protection and the representation of Hungarians beyond the borders. Accordingly, the issue of migration frequently appeared in their media appearances. Their program suggested protecting borders not with police and military but by reinstating the border guard.¹⁹

Neither the program nor the examined articles mentioned specific policy programs targeting the young or the elderly. However, the wage union initiative could be significant for young workers entering the labor market and reducing emigration. The party advocated for the principle of "equal pay for equal work" to eliminate labor market inequalities based on nationality, age, and gender. The program aimed to eliminate wage disparities between Hungarian workers and their Western European counterparts. Jobbik also emphasized the importance of education and knowledge to make Hungary "a country of modern technology and research." The program did not contain specific proposals for the older generation.

LMP

Gábor Vágó was the most vocal for LMP during the campaign period. Their program focused on sustainability, social justice, and strengthening European Union values.²⁰ In their media appearances, they primarily drew attention to concerns related to climate change. For a more climate-sensitive Europe and Hungary, their program emphasized measures such as taxing multinational corporations. They did not make statements about specific proposals affecting the young or the elderly, either in their program or in the media, instead focusing on broader societal goals and general political guidelines. These included sustainable energy policy, increasing social cohesion, protecting minority rights, and more active participation in the European Union.

Mi Hazánk

In the 2019 EP campaign period, László Toroczkai was the face of Mi Hazánk. Their program generally dealt with migration, support for SMEs, population decline, and demographic issues, criticism of the EU, and the so-called "Roma question." The program emphasized that EU funding should only be given to Hungarian employers and businesses to promote wage convergence, alongside their definition of the "Roma question."²¹

The party's program and media appearances did not primarily target either the young or the elderly. In education, Mi Hazánk drew attention to the advantages of

¹⁹ https://blob.jobbik.hu/programs/biztonsagos_europat_szabad_magyarorszagot.pdf

²⁰ https://lmp.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Ep-program_2019.pdf

²¹ https://mihazank.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ep_fuzet_WEB-1.pdf

segregation in certain cases instead of integration and mentioned the importance of lifelong learning and the continuous further training of teachers. They also emphasized the importance of language learning and developing basic skills, as well as the need to raise educational standards to achieve better PISA results. The program did not include specific proposals for the elderly.

MSZP-Párbeszéd Coalition

For the MSZP-Párbeszéd coalition, the main communicators were Benedek Jávor, Bertalan Tóth, István Ujhelyi, and Tibor Szanyi. In their statements, the introduction of a European minimum pension was the most prominent. They aimed to address the young with more general tools: better education and higher wage levels. The coalition's proposals focused on the protection of EU citizens and borders, neighborhood policy, and the defense of European ideas and values. Their goals included increasing the EU budget, bank market regulation, taxation and revenue arrangements, agricultural support, the Smart Village program, uniform European VAT rates, combating tax evasion, research and development, and joining the Eurozone.²²

There was no shortage of policy messages targeting the young. The party, similar to DK, emphasized the Youth Guarantee Program to eliminate youth unemployment. MSZP also advocated for strengthening social security, including unemployment insurance systems, internship programs, and measures aimed at integrating young people into the labor market. They also supported the expansion of the Erasmus+ program to increase the mobility and training opportunities of young people. MSZP highlighted the problem of emigration, particularly the departure of young and skilled labor, identifying it as an issue to be addressed at the European level. In this context, the party mentioned the "Hazaváró" program, which would provide solutions for emigration. The program also included proposals to increase the rights of European women, thereby reducing child poverty.

The document also highlighted the importance of education, emphasizing its role in economic competitiveness and social cohesion. They believed that developing the Hungarian education system and supporting the acquisition of 21st-century knowledge and skills—particularly in IT and foreign language training—directly impacts the labor market integration of young people. For the elderly, the most important proposal was the introduction of a European minimum wage and minimum pension, which would directly affect the elderly and young workers, ensuring financial stability for them.

²² https://mszp.hu/hir/haza_szeretet_europa_20190329

Momentum

For Momentum, the two leading candidates, Katalin Cseh and Anna Donáth, spoke most frequently. The party primarily advocated for the strengthening and renewal of the European Union, the development of a unified refugee program, and the introduction of the euro.²³ The issue of education frequently appeared in the party's program, with a particular emphasis on the teacher shortage and school developments. They fundamentally expected help from the EU in this regard.

Additionally, they would provide Interrail train tickets to graduating students to help them get to know the European Union. They also mentioned the expansion of the Erasmus scholarship program, proposing not only to increase the amount of support but to extend it to high school students. The program also touched on teaching the basics of the European Union in high schools and requiring MEPs to finance a student group's annual visit to Brussels. In 2019, Momentum did not make specific proposals for the elderly, nor did it target messages to this demographic in the media.

MKKP

For MKKP, Gergely Kovács and Zsuzsanna Döme were the most vocal. Their program highlighted the necessity of public holidays and the importance of addressing local issues.²⁴ The MKKP program, however, did not contain proposals specifically affecting the young or the elderly. Instead, it included sarcastic points such as free beer, more public holidays, creating family reserves, or reclaiming Atlantis.

Conclusions

The content analysis highlighted how Hungarian political parties addressed the youth in their 2019 EP campaigns. Among the examined parties, Demokratikus Koalíció, Momentum, and the MSZP-Párbeszéd coalition communicated the most policy proposals targeting the youth. DK's program prominently featured the introduction of a European family allowance as an entitlement for every European child. Momentum emphasized the importance of education, particularly the expansion of the Erasmus program and teaching about the EU. The MSZP-Párbeszéd coalition focused on eliminating youth unemployment and expanding the Erasmus+ program.

The content analysis also pointed out that party programs were the main channels for voter group-related political messages rather than the leading politicians. Parties

²³<https://dev3.momentum.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Ne-adjuk-a-j%C3%B6v%C5%91nket-Momentum-EP-Program.pdf>

²⁴<https://ketfarkukutya.mkkp.party/ep-valasztas-program/>

aimed to appear in the media with one distinctive message, but this strategy limited the specific messages targeting the youth. In cases where parties did target the youth, most chose to address them with broader, more general themes. Fidesz-KDNP focused on migration, and LMP emphasized the fight against climate change and sustainability, which are important issues for young people but do not contain specific measures targeting this age group.

Comparing messages targeting the elderly and the youth, we see that the youth are mainly addressed by parties campaigning with more liberal or green policies, while the elderly are targeted by more traditional left-wing parties. The content of the messages was mainly economic, promising better pay, livelihood, and prosperity, but there were also more abstract offers such as a better education system or a green future. The idea of a minimum pension appeared in the programs of two parties (DK and MSZP-Párbeszéd).

Party communication was largely built on the statements of leading candidates, who repeated the party's overarching messages in their interviews and opinion pieces. However, during interviews, they rarely detailed the programs, speaking more generally about the political situation. This strategy limited the opportunity to convey specific messages intended for the youth. The political inactivity towards the youth can be explained by the fact that the youth, as a group, are small in size and have a low level of political activity, making it "unprofitable" for parties to target them.

In the 2019 EP campaign, Hungarian political parties addressed the youth to varying degrees and with varying effectiveness. Demokratikus Koalíció and Momentum were the most committed to addressing the problems of the youth, while Fidesz-KDNP and other parties operated with more general messages. The success of targeting the youth largely depended on the presence of specific policy proposals and the targeted nature of the communication. The results suggest that targeting the youth poses a challenge for Hungarian political parties, particularly because the return on investment in terms of votes is least assured among the inherently apathetic youth.

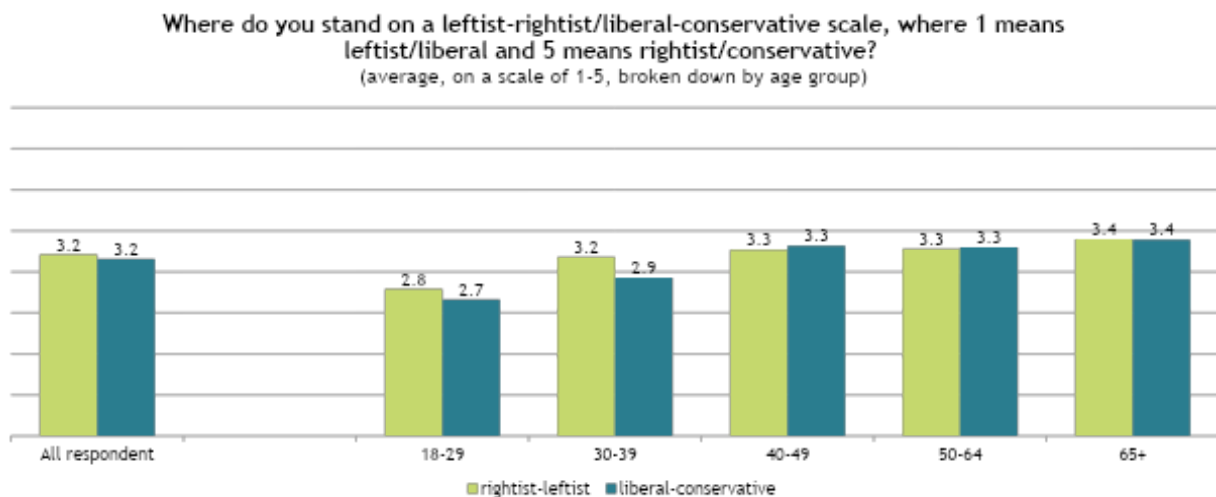
Quantitative Results

The quantitative data for this project was collected through a survey conducted from December 4, 2023, to January 4, 2024. A total of 1,400 respondents were reached via social media. The sample is representative of the Hungarian population by gender, age, education level, and place of residence: 16% are under 30, another 16% are between 30-40, 20% are in their 40s, and 24-25% are between 50-64 years old or over 65.

Youth and Politics: What Mobilizes Them?

Firstly, respondents were asked to position themselves on left-right and liberal-conservative scales, ranging from one to five, where one represented left-wing and liberal. The youngest age group considers themselves more left-wing and liberal compared to older groups: 18-29-year-olds have an average score of 2.8 on the left-right scale, slightly to the left of center, while other age groups score between 3.2 and 3.4, slightly to the right.²⁵ The youngest group also shows lower dispersion, indicating more homogeneous opinions.

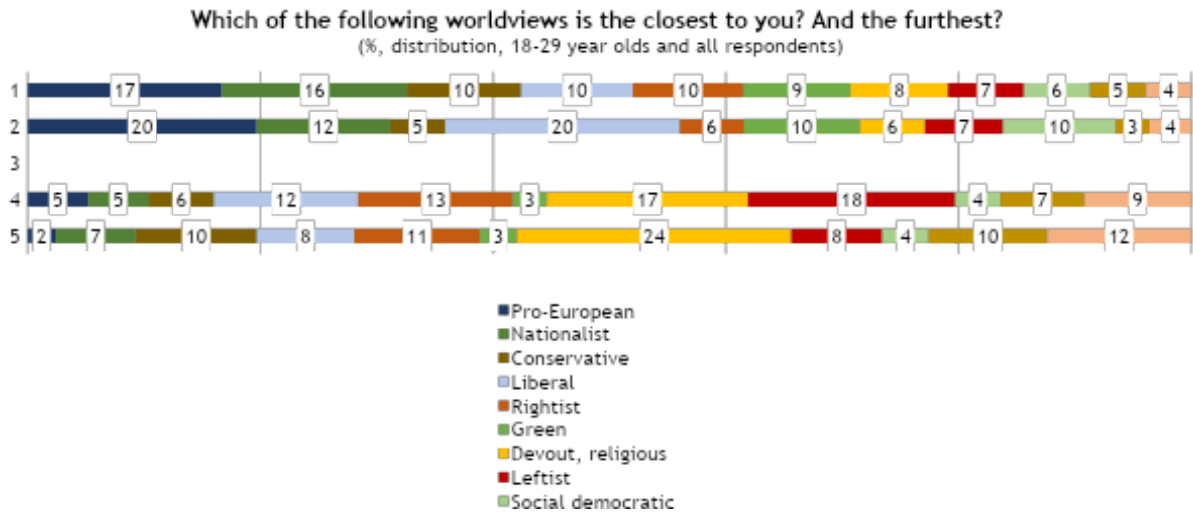
On the liberal-conservative scale, young people have a similar average score (2.7) as on the left-right scale. The most significant difference is between those under and over forty; those under thirty and in their thirties lean slightly towards liberalism, while their older counterparts lean towards conservatism.



However, on the left-right scale, party preference (everyone is to the left compared to government party supporters) and gender (men are more right-wing than women) have stronger explanatory power than age. In contrast, on the liberal-conservative scale, age is

²⁵ http://real.mtak.hu/154706/1/poltuk2022_book.pdf

significant alongside gender and party preference: those in their forties and over 65 are significantly more conservative than 18-29-year-olds.²⁶ Beyond these scales, the under-thirties most identify with the labels liberal and pro-European and most reject the religious label.



Their party preferences also reflect this: the proportion of government party supporters among those under 30 is much lower (15%) than in the overall sample (31%). This youngest age group particularly favors the newest parties: Momentum (23%), Kétfarkú Kutypárt (14%), Mi Hazánk (12%), and Második Reformkor (8%).

Who and Why Would Protest?

As part of the survey, we conducted an experiment to examine what most influences the willingness to participate in a protest. We varied three factors: the organizer (party or civil organization), the protest's topic (environment, education, pension), and whether the respondent's friends would attend. Respondents received different combinations of organizer, topic, and friends' participation, creating various sub-samples. Overall, 9% said they would definitely attend, and another 27% said they would likely attend such a protest. The likelihood of attending is higher among opposition supporters and men, especially if the topic is the environment or education (compared to pensions) and if friends are also attending.

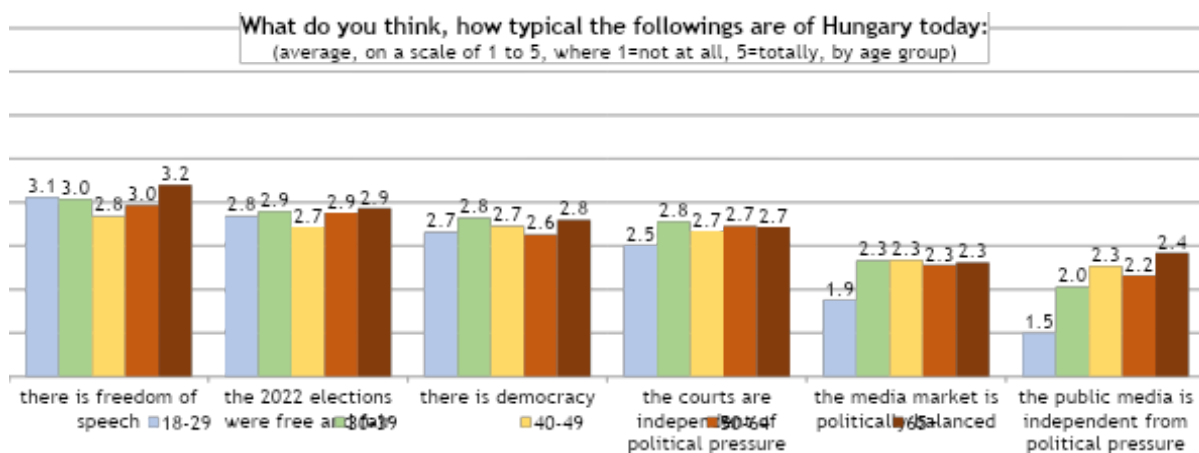
For those under 30, friends' participation and the topic significantly change the likelihood of attending. They are more likely to attend an education-themed protest than one about pensions, which is not surprising given their concerns. The likelihood of a young

²⁶ Regression analysis was conducted for both scales, with gender, age, settlement type, party preference, education, marital status and household income as independent variables.

person attending a protest increases from 23% to 56% if their friends also attend. This effect diminishes with age, indicating that group pressure or social incentives are strongest among those under 30. For those aged 50-64 and over 65, the protest topic has more influence on participation than friends' presence. The third variable, whether a political party or civil organization organizes the protest, does not significantly change the likelihood of participation. This suggests that political party involvement does not deter participation, despite the frequent argument in public discourse that parties should stay out of certain movements and not politicize social issues.

What Concerns Young People?

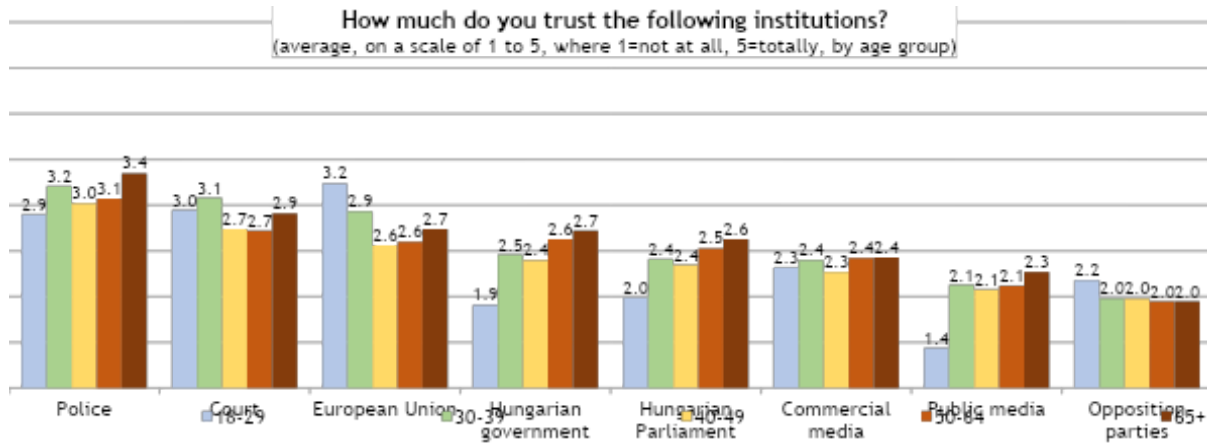
We also asked respondents about their views on democracy. Those aged 18-29 are much more critical of the media compared to older age groups, which may be linked to their radically different media consumption habits in the social media age. In contrast, their views on freedom of speech, the judiciary, and elections differ less.



When examining all dimensions of democracy together and controlling for other demographic variables like gender, place of residence, marital status, education level, income, and party preference, party preference and income are the most significant.²⁷ There is no clear link between democratic criticism and age. However, it is evident that 18-29-year-olds are most concerned about the political independence of public media and the political diversity of the media market. They are also more critical of the political independence of the judiciary than their older counterparts, but their views on the 2022

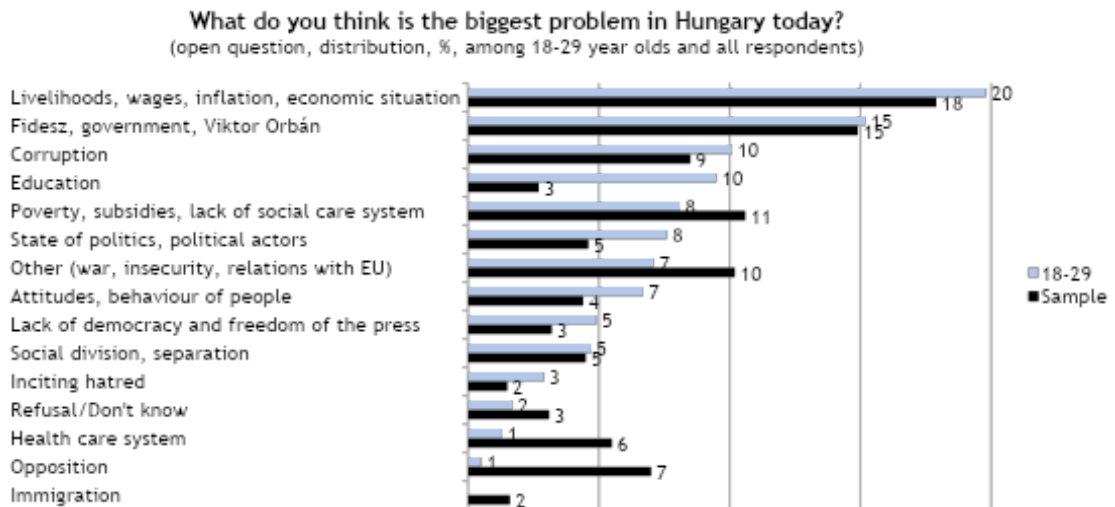
²⁷ From the six statement on the different aspects of democracy, we created a latent variable through a factor analysis, which together measures the perception of democracy. Subsequently, a regression analysis was conducted, where the dependent variable was this latent variable and the independent variables were gender, residence, marital status, educational attainment, household income status and party preference.

elections and democracy in general do not differ significantly. They are among the most optimistic age groups regarding freedom of speech, likely because they consume traditional media the least and social media the most, where regulatory control varies and there are platforms not heavily regulated by the state or tech companies.



Young people's concerns about the media also reflect their trust in various institutions: those under 30 have the least trust in public media, scoring it an average of 1.4 on a scale from one to five, where higher values indicate greater trust. In contrast, older age groups give public media an average score above two (though still indicating low trust). They trust commercial media to a similar extent across age groups, suggesting that young people are particularly distrustful of public media compared to older generations. This is linked to their low trust in the Hungarian government and parliament and the higher proportion of opposition supporters among them. While 18-29-year-olds are more distrustful of the Hungarian government and parliament than other age groups, they have significantly higher trust in the European Union, which receives the highest score (3.2) among the listed institutions.

Finally, we asked respondents an open question about the biggest problem in Hungary today, without providing answer options. Among those under 30, 20% mentioned livelihood and inflation, 15% the government or Viktor Orbán, 10% corruption, and 10% education. Only 5% of young people spontaneously mentioned the lack of democracy and press freedom as the most pressing issues, but these topics are on their mental map. Overall, 38% of those under 30 mentioned political issues, similar to the proportion in the total sample.



Thus, education and the political independence of public media are key issues for the youngest age group compared to older people - these topics could potentially mobilize them for political participation.

Conclusions

The aim of the survey was to examine how Hungarian young people relate to politics, their political attitudes, and what motivates them to participate politically. The data show that Hungarian young people, especially those aged 18-29, hold more liberal and left-wing political views than older generations. Their average score on the left-right scale is 2.8, while older groups score between 3.2 and 3.4. On the liberal-conservative scale, their average score is 2.7. This suggests that young people tend to favor political values that emphasize social equality, personal freedom, and the necessity of state intervention. This trend can be partly explained by psychological and sociological research suggesting that young adults are inclined towards radical and innovative ideas while seeking their identity and place in society.²⁸ As a result, modern, progressive ideas that emphasize social justice, environmental protection, and human rights are more attractive to young people.

The lower support for the government party (15%) and greater commitment to younger, opposition parties (e.g., Momentum 23%) indicate that young people do not feel represented by current government policies. This preference difference also stems from their dissatisfaction and openness to alternative political directions. The presence in

²⁸ Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton & Co.

educational institutions further reinforces this, as these institutions are more likely to emphasize critical thinking, which fosters liberal and left-wing views.²⁹

One of the main drivers of young people's political participation is social relationships and the relevance of topics. Friends' participation in protests significantly increases young people's willingness to participate, demonstrating the strong influence of social influence in this age group. This suggests that young people are more likely to participate in community-based movements where they can experience social support and community involvement. The significance of education and environmental issues indicates that young people are primarily willing to protest for issues that directly affect them or their future prospects. Concerns about the state of education are particularly strong, reflecting young people's fears about their future and career opportunities.

Concerns about the political independence of public media and the diversity of the media market emphasize young people's critical attitude towards current official media providers. The low trust in public media (average score of 1.4) suggests that young people do not find state media reliable, viewing it as under governmental influence. Consequently, they are more open to alternative media sources. Social media platforms are fundamentally more popular sources of information, offering less regulated, diverse, and less controlled information. The openness and diversity of social media allow young people to encounter different perspectives and alternative information sources, contributing to their critical thinking.

The data suggest that Hungarian young people are more liberal, left-wing, and open to new, progressive political movements. Social relationships and relevant topics play a significant role in their political activity, highlighting the importance of community-based mobilization. Education and the political independence of public media are particularly significant for them and could be crucial for their future political participation and activity. Understanding and considering young people's political attitudes and preferences is essential for planning political strategies and campaigns, especially if the goal is to involve and activate younger generations in political processes.

²⁹ Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*. University of Chicago Press.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative research explored the political participation, commitment, and attitudes of university students in Hungary through focus group interviews. Three focus groups, each consisting of 6-8 participants, were conducted: the first two on February 18-19, 2024, and the third on March 20. Participants were selected from applicants to the 21 Research Center's winter university on European Union elections. The interviews aimed to investigate how educational and community initiatives influence young people's political thinking and activity.

Two group interviews were conducted before the Winter University and one afterward. Before the event, participants were asked about their previous experiences with political participation, their views on the EU, and their sense of representation in domestic politics. After the event, we explored whether their opinions, sense of political activity, and commitment had changed and how they evaluated the Winter University itself. The group composition was designed to be demographically representative of Hungarian university students (age, gender, residence). Participants were university students aged 18-29 from various Hungarian regions, with equal gender distribution. This group likely has higher political interest than average since they applied for a thematic program. Therefore, the interpretation of results should consider the group's higher level of political activity.

Analysis

Question Group 1: Political Awareness and Opinions

Participants mentioned various factors influencing their political interest, such as family background and school/university environment. For example, one participant, initially apolitical, developed interest through online and school stimuli. Another source of interest was specific issues and policies (e.g., student protests). None of the respondents were convinced by a particular party, politician, or program. Key political formative experiences included the 2006 protests, the NOLIMPIA campaign, the 2018 "slave law," teacher issues, and migration questions, which elicited strong emotional reactions. Several participants mentioned the 2022 coalition and elections as moments when they actively researched political actors' programs.

For information, participants predominantly cited independent and opposition media (e.g., 444, Telex, HVG, 24.hu, Magyar Hang), as well as international news portals (e.g., Guardian, BBC). This broader scope of political awareness indicates that they view politics in a global context. Many rely on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Twitter,

podcasts, YouTube) for news. Most participants strive to follow multiple sources to critically examine different political narratives. Political activity among participants varied in form and level, including online activity, news following and analysis, participation in significant movements, and alternative formats like college membership. Most feel more politically active compared to their peers and seek company that shares political interests.

Question Group 2: Politics and Youth

Participants view the domestic political situation as a hybrid regime, a transition between democracy and dictatorship. Corruption, propaganda, and manipulation are frequently mentioned in evaluations of the government, alongside general apathy toward domestic politics. Polarization and division, associated with the Orbán-Gyurcsány conflict, are recurring themes. The state of rural media, where Fidesz dominates with scant alternative sources, particularly troubles some participants. Key issues of interest include healthcare, education, and environmental protection. Human rights, especially LGBTQ rights, and the obstruction of civil society are also frequent topics. Participants feel that domestic parties often employ communication tricks without substantial content and do not specifically target young people. However, they mentioned Orbán's TikTok page and the opposition's swift response to the Erasmus scandal as positive examples.

Participants believe that the older generation currently has more influence over politics, noting Hungary's aging society and Fidesz's older voter base. They view youth organizations like Diákfront positively but do not believe they will achieve breakthroughs. They highlight the importance of education, local communities, and demonstrations in mobilizing young people, citing influencer protests as an example. They think education, local communities, and demonstrations play the most significant role in engaging young people, with social media also having substantial mobilizing power. They believe memes can play a role in this mobilization.

Question Group 3: The European Union and its Functioning

Most focus group participants intend to participate in the European Parliament (EP) elections. They emphasize the importance of being informed before voting and express a commitment to the significance of EP elections. They believe the more people participate, the more impactful the election message is, and they find it important who will represent the country in the EP. Many admitted to initially being unaware of how the EP functions or its significance due to educational gaps. Participants generally have a positive view of the EU, highlighting economic benefits such as Erasmus programs, volunteering opportunities,

and travel freedom. They see the role of EU institutions and laws as crucial in avoiding dictatorships. However, they also note power imbalances within the political alliance, although they still view the EU as advantageous for Hungary. Human rights protection is another positive aspect. Participants mentioned that the EP is insufficiently present in domestic discourse, and opposition parties do not communicate enough about their work in the EP.

Question Group 4: Winter University

Participants had various reasons for applying to the Winter University, with social togetherness being a dominant factor. Many mentioned the Covid pandemic previously limiting attendance at similar events, with some having their first university years during quarantine. Education and preference for workshop-style information acquisition were strong motivations. Political interest and learning expert perspectives appeared secondary among participants. The follow-up focus groups post-event reflected positively on the Winter University. Participants appreciated that the event met their expectations, particularly valuing community activities, workshops, games, and creative problem-solving opportunities. They mentioned the lectures and the political topics discussed. Shared meals and conversations were also highlighted as positives. The camp was well-liked for its balanced mix of informal and professional activities. Negatives included the camp's short duration and a desire for more interactive lectures. Participants felt that the lectures and group work furthered their interest in politics. Many reported a positive impact from the camp, expressing interest in attending similar public events in the future. They believed the camp programs helped them understand the functioning of the EP, both politically and economically.

Conclusions

The focus groups differed from previous public opinion surveys in that participants were already interested in politics, motivating their application to the Research Center's Winter Camp. Additionally, applicants were current or former members of higher education institutions, influencing their awareness and knowledge. Discussions revealed that university students' political awareness and interest are significantly influenced by their school and university environment and information from independent media.

Participants cited diverse backgrounds and motivations for their political commitment, including family background and school/university environment. Their primary information sources were independent and opposition media (e.g., 444, Telex,

HVG, 24.hu, Magyar Hang) and international news portals (e.g., Guardian, BBC), indicating a global political perspective and critical thinking efforts. Their wide-ranging information sources and critical examination of different political narratives show an effort to monitor sources they find more credible than government-affiliated ones. Social media platforms also play a significant role in information acquisition, where young people follow current political events in various formats (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, podcasts, YouTube).

Hungarian university students' political activity manifests at different levels and forms, such as online participation, sharing and commenting on political news, and physical participation in various movements. Alternative forms of political participation, such as college membership, also appeared in responses. Participants feel more politically active compared to their peers and seek out politically interested companies. Thus, their immediate environment significantly influences their political activity, as relationships with similarly interested people strengthen their participation willingness and commitment. Political participation also depends significantly on issues that directly affect them, such as education, healthcare, and environmental protection. These topics encourage higher political activity, while dissatisfaction with the political situation and the domestic governance system induces apathy.

Regarding the evaluation of the domestic political system, most participants interpret it as a hybrid regime, transitioning between democracy and dictatorship. Corruption, propaganda, and manipulation are frequently mentioned topics in evaluations of the government. Political division and polarization are significant issues for respondents, identified with the Orbán-Gyurcsány conflict. Interest in healthcare, education, and environmental protection stands out among young people, while human rights, especially LGBTQ rights, and the hindrance of civil society were also frequent topics. Participants often evaluate domestic party communication strategies as empty tricks and do not feel targeted by them. Nevertheless, they mention Orbán's TikTok page and the opposition's quick response to the Erasmus scandal as positive examples.

Respondents believe that the older generation has more influence on political processes, particularly due to Hungary's aging society and Fidesz's older voter base. They positively view the efforts of youth organizations but do not believe they will achieve breakthroughs. They think that education, local communities, and demonstrations play the most significant role in engaging young people, with social media's mobilizing power also being substantial. Opinions on the European Union are generally positive among respondents. Most intend to participate in the European Parliamentary elections and emphasize the importance of being informed before voting. They believe the more people participate, the more impactful the election message is to the public, and they find it

important who will represent the country in the EP. They highlight the economic benefits of the EU, such as Erasmus programs and volunteering opportunities, as well as travel freedom. They view the role of EU institutions and laws as crucial in avoiding dictatorships but also note power imbalances between countries. Criticisms include the EP's low presence in domestic discourse and the lack of information from opposition parties about their work in the EP.

Focus group participants believe that educational and community programs like the Winter University significantly impact young people's political interest and activity. Application motivations included social togetherness and educational opportunities, with political interest and learning expert perspectives being secondary. According to follow-up focus groups, the programs helped participants expand their political and economic knowledge, especially about the EU. Participants positively evaluated the Winter University, particularly the community events, workshops, and creative problem-solving opportunities. Negatives included the camp's short duration and a desire for more interactive lectures. Many participants reported a positive impact on their political interests and expressed willingness to attend similar events in the future.

Conclusion

The low levels of political participation and interest among young people in Hungary, as well as globally, present a significant challenge but also offer opportunities to enhance democratic processes. This political apathy and distrust are deeply rooted in dissatisfaction with the effectiveness and representativeness of political institutions, as evidenced by both previous and current research. Content analysis and focus group interviews conducted during this study reveal that contemporary political communication fails to engage younger generations effectively. In contrast, parties that have focused on issues directly affecting young people, such as Momentum, have garnered substantial support from this demographic. **This suggests that targeted communication and specific policy proposals can substantially increase young people's political engagement.**

Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the two most significant factors influencing young people's political interest and activity are education and social media. The school and university environment, as well as information from independent media, play a crucial role in shaping this age group's political activity. Respondents particularly valued independent media, finding it more credible than direct party communication, which they often view as empty and manipulative. Throughout the research, participants consistently expressed a lack of trust in official media, such as public service television, due to concerns about its independence. Conversely, social media provides a platform for political information, allowing simultaneous examination of multiple sources and engagement through comment sections and forums. However, focus groups noted that social media cannot fully replace the experience of personal interactions and community events.

The need for social connections is vital for boosting young people's political participation. Both the survey and focus group interviews identified community experience as a key motivator for political involvement. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated quarantine measures had particularly negative effects on communities, with online education and isolation impeding the formation of peer relationships. The preliminary focus group of Winter University participants also highlighted that they were primarily motivated by the sense of community in their application, with political considerations being secondary. The follow-up focus group after the camp similarly emphasized the importance of community aspects of the event, such as workshops and games.

Overall, the research findings suggest that increasing the political participation and interest of Hungarian youth will require political parties and civil society to adopt more targeted communication strategies and specific policy proposals. Promoting independent media and fostering community experiences are also crucial. Enhancing

political awareness and engagement in the long term can contribute to strengthening and stabilizing democratic processes and mitigating the generational apathy and distrust currently observed.

Appendices

Quantitative Questionnaire

Gender:

- Female
- Male

Where is your permanent residence?

- Capital city
- County seat/city with county rights
- Other city
- Municipality

Which region of Hungary do you live in?

- Central Hungary (Budapest, Pest County)
- Central Transdanubia (Fejér County, Komárom-Esztergom County, Veszprém County)
- Western Transdanubia (Győr-Moson-Sopron County, Vas County, Zala County)
- Southern Transdanubia (Baranya County, Somogy County, Tolna County)
- Northern Hungary (Heves County, Nógrád County, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County)
- Northern Great Plain (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Hajdú-Bihar County, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County)
- Southern Great Plain (Bács-Kiskun County, Békés County, Csongrád-Csanád County)

What year were you born? (dropdown) (if under 18 or over 30, end of questionnaire)

What is your highest completed level of education?

- 8 years of primary school or less
- Vocational training without secondary school certificate
- Secondary school certificate
- College or university degree

What is your employment status?

- Student
- Unemployed

- On maternity leave/housewife
- Employee
- Self-employed/producer
- Entrepreneur

What is your marital status?

- Single
- In a partnership
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

Do you have children?

- No
- Yes, one
- Yes, two
- Yes, more than two

Which description best fits your household's current financial situation?

- We live comfortably on our current income.
- We live on our current income.
- We struggle to live on our current income.
- We find it very difficult to live on our current income.
- No response
- Don't know

Where do you place yourself on a left-right political scale, where 1 means left-wing and 5 means right-wing?

- Left-wing
-
-
-
- Right-wing

Which worldview is closest to you? And which is the furthest?

- Green
- Left-wing
- Liberal
- Right-wing
- Orderly
- European
- Conservative
- Strong national sentiment
- Christian democratic
- Social democratic
- Believer, religious

How often do you discuss public affairs, social issues?

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Never
- With your family
- With your friends, acquaintances

During high school, how often did you discuss public affairs, social issues?

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Never
- With your family
- With your friends, acquaintances
- At school, e.g., in history, homeroom classes, breaks, etc.

What was the most important political or public event for you in the past year?
(open-ended)

Overall, how interested are you in politics?

- Very
- Quite
- Somewhat
- Not at all

**Which of the following online portals did you visit at least once in the past week?
Please only consider Facebook-shared content as a visit if you opened it.**

- Index
- Telex
- 24.hu
- Origo
- 444
- Blikk
- HVG
- Portfolio
- Mandiner
- Magyar Nemzet

What do you think is the biggest problem in Hungary today? (open-ended)

How characteristic is it of Hungary today that:

- Not at all
- Rather not
- Both yes and no
- Rather yes
- Completely
- There is democracy
- There is freedom of speech
- Public media is independent of political pressure
- The media market is politically balanced
- The courts are independent of political pressure
- The 2022 election was free and fair

How much do you agree with the following statements?

- Not at all
- Rather not
- Both yes and no
- Rather yes
- Completely
- Voting is a civic duty.
- It's pointless to vote because my vote doesn't count.

- I'm not interested in politics because it doesn't affect my life.
- All politicians lie.
- No one represents the interests of young people in politics.
- Ordinary people have no influence on politics.
- It is important to be well-informed about public affairs.
- Corruption has no impact on my life.
- I think it is important to participate in demonstrations for causes important to me.
- Demonstrating is pointless because it has no effect.

Are you a member of any organization that can be categorized as follows? (You can mark more than one)

- Cultural, heritage-preserving, artistic group, organization
- Sports club or sports association
- Church organization, religious community
- Human rights movement or organization
- Youth organization of a political party
- Environmental, nature conservation, animal protection organization
- Organization helping the sick, elderly, disadvantaged, children
- Professional, scientific organization
- Organization dealing with public issues that is not a political party
- Political party
- University student organization, student government (HÖK)

In the past year, have you participated in any of the following activities? (You can mark more than one)

- Collecting signatures
- Signing a petition, referendum initiative, political statement → IF YES, about what?
- Participating in a demonstration, protest → IF YES, about what?
- Campaign activities (e.g., collecting recommendations, putting up posters, distributing flyers, etc.)
- Wearing badges or symbols with a political message
- Contacting a national politician
- Contacting a local politician
- Attending an event of a political party
- Donating money to a civil organization
- Donating money to a political party

- Discussing politics with acquaintances
- Sharing a post about politics or social issues on social media
- Liking a post about politics or social issues on social media
- Commenting on a post about politics or social issues on social media
- Attending an event of a civil organization
- Boycotting products, avoiding retail chains
- Doing volunteer work

Imagine the following situation. A political party/civil organization organizes a demonstration at a location near your residence on a topic related to environmental protection/education/pensions. You learn that several of your friends are going to this demonstration/you know that your friends will not be at this demonstration. In this case, how likely are you to participate in the event?

How likely are you to attend a demonstration if:

- A political party / a civil organization organizes the demonstration
- On a topic related to environmental protection/education/pensions
- Your friends also attend/your friends do not attend the demonstration?
- Not at all likely
- Rather unlikely
- Rather likely
- Definitely would attend

How much do you trust the following institutions?

- Not at all
- Rather not
- Both yes and no
- Rather yes
- Completely
- Hungarian government
- Hungarian parliament
- Opposition parties
- Police
- Courts
- Public media
- Commercial media

- European Union

Below we list political parties. Which do you think have a distinct position on the following areas? You can mark more than one!

- Fidesz-KDNP
- DK
- Momentum
- Mi Hazánk
- MKKP
- Education
- Environmental protection
- Economic situation, livelihood
- Healthcare
- Corruption
- State of democracy

If there were parliamentary elections this Sunday, would you:

- Definitely go,
- Probably go,
- Probably not go or
- Definitely not go to vote?
 - 98 - Don't know
 - 99 - No response

If there were parliamentary elections this Sunday in Hungary, which party would you vote for?

1 - Demokratikus Koalíció (DK) 2 - Fidesz-KDNP 3 - Jobbik 5 - Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt (MKKP) 6 - LMP 9 - MSZP 10 - Mi Hazánk 11 - Momentum 12 - Párbeszéd 13 - Mindenki Magyarországa Mozgalom 14 - a Nép Pártján Mozgalom 15 - Második Reformkor 16 - Megoldás Mozgalom 33 - Would vote invalidly 55 - Would vote for a minority list 96 - Other party 97 - Would not go to vote 98 - Don't know 99 - No response

Do you know when the next European Parliament elections will be held in Hungary?

And the next local government elections?

Last year, in the 2022 parliamentary elections, which list did you vote for?

- The Fidesz-KDNP list,
- The joint list of the cooperating opposition,
- The Mi Hazánk Mozgalom list, or
- The Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt list
- Another list
- Did not have voting rights
- Did not go to vote
 - 0 - Don't know
 - X - No response

Qualitative Guidelines

Questions Before the Winter Camp

Introduction (10 minutes, entry time: 0 minutes, exit time: 10 minutes)

- **Introduction of Moderator:**
 - The moderator introduces themselves: first name, age, occupation, and one hobby.
- **Introduction of Topic:**
 - Political participation of young people in the EU context.
- **Clarification of Basic Rules:**
 - GDPR (anonymity), Moderation is in place. No right/wrong answers.

1. Political Awareness and Opinions (20 minutes, entry: 10 minutes, exit: 30 minutes)

- Are you interested in politics? Why?
 - Is politics a common topic in your environment (friends, family)?
- Is there an event or a defining moment that made you start following politics?
 - Where do you get your information from?
- Do you think your environment is more or less politically active compared to you? Why?
- How do you see the current political situation in Hungary? Why?
- What topics or events interest you the most? Why?
- How much do you feel that politics affects your daily life?

- What are the specific areas of life? Why? (Areas: Education, Environmental protection, Economic situation, Livelihood, Healthcare, Corruption, State of Democracy)

2. Politics and Youth (20 minutes, entry time: 30 minutes, exit time: 50 minutes)

- What do you think about how much domestic political parties/politicians deal with young people?
- How represented do you feel by the various political parties and their campaigns?
- Can you recall a political message or program that influenced you? Why?
- What do you think are the main factors influencing young people's political activity?
- Do you think young people are generally interested in politics or not?
- In your opinion, what issues or topics would better motivate young people to participate in politics? Why?
- Which age group do you think can influence politics more? Young people? Older people?
 - Who is politics for? (future generations, perpetual incumbents, problems of the elderly) Why?

3. European Union and its Functioning (20 minutes, entry time: 50 minutes, exit time: 70 minutes)

- Will you participate in the EP elections on June 9th?
 - If yes, on what basis will you decide? Why?
 - If not, why not? What could change your stance?
- What do you think about the European Union? Why?
- What knowledge do you have about the European Union and its functioning?
 - What sources or events contributed to your knowledge about the EU?
- What do you think about Hungary's relationship with the EU? Why?
- Are there any (Hungarian) MEPs whose work you know? Why (specific case)?

Conclusion

- Why did you apply to the Winter University?
 - How did you hear about it?
- What do you expect from participating in the Winter University? Why?
- Is there anything you would like to add to the previous topics?

Questions After the Winter Camp

Introduction (10 minutes, entry time: 0 minutes, exit time: 10 minutes)

- **Warm-up:**
 - The moderator briefly summarizes the lessons of the previous focus group (nothing specific).
- **Introduction of Topic:**
 - Exploring if their opinions have changed due to the Winter University.
- **Clarification of Basic Rules:**
 - GDPR (anonymity), Moderation is in place. No right/wrong answers.

Association

- **Moderator Instructions:**
 - Direct associations briefly: Elections, Campaign, Activism.

1. Reflection on the Winter University (20 minutes, entry: 10 minutes, exit: 30 minutes)

- How did you feel at the Winter University? Why?
- What was it like to discuss political issues with peers?
 - Do you often experience this?
 - How was it different from discussing with your friends?
- What was your favorite program? Why?
- Which program appealed to you the least? Why?
- Do you feel more or less interested in politics as a result of the discussions?
- Did you gain any new perspectives or sources during the event?

2. European Union and its Functioning (30 minutes, entry time: 30 minutes, exit time: 60 minutes)

- Do you think international politics became more understandable to you due to the event? Why?
- Based on your experiences, what tools can help increase young people's political participation?
- What prevents young people from being more interested in politics?
- Has your opinion on the EP elections changed? What influenced it?

Conclusion (10 minutes, entry time: 60 minutes, exit time: 70 minutes)

- In light of the camp, would you participate in a similar program again? Why?
- Overall, do you feel the Winter University changed your political attitude? How? Why?
- Is there anything you would like to add to the previous topics?