

## Hungary's 'Rebalanced' Media Ecology

### Controlling the Narratives on Migration, Gender, and Europe

Hungary has the most restrictive migration policy in the European Union, and its discriminatory LGBT law and anti-European rhetoric keep alienating more liberal member states. Starting with a survey of Hungary's 'rebalanced' media landscape, this essay explores the narrative dynamics of Viktor Orbán's nationalist rhetoric. We focus on the government's manipulative 'national consultation' strategy and billboard campaigns to show how new communication channels have been established which allow the government to address its national audience directly, making it largely independent of both legacy media and social media. We further argue that the "immigration and terrorism" narrative of 2015 is designed to fuel ontological insecurity and, like the recent narratives on both gender and Brussels initiated by Orbán, serves a dual purpose: it fosters the centripetal dynamics of Hungary's nationalist narrative while fueling the centrifugal dynamics of an anti-liberal vision of Europe.

#### 1. Introduction

Respect LGBT rights or leave the European Union, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told Hungary's premier as EU leaders confronted Viktor Orbán over a law that bans schools from using materials seen as promoting homosexuality. Several EU summit participants spoke of the most intense personal clash among the bloc's leaders in years on Thursday night. "It was really forceful, a deep feeling that this could not be. It was about our values; this is what we stand for," Rutte told reporters on Friday.<sup>1</sup>

This short message by news agency Reuters conveys the frustration felt not only by Mark Rutte following yet another provocation by Viktor Orbán, Hungary's longest-serving prime minister.<sup>2</sup> The values Rutte mentions, the ideas that the EU stands for, have been repeatedly rejected by a government responsible for democratic backsliding, discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community, and a gender policy supporting heteronormativity and a return to patriarchal gender roles. What is more, Hungary's strong stance against immigration and integration, celebrated by right-wing parties across Europe, ignores refugee rights and discredits the core idea of European values and solidarity. To this end, the government has created and spread the strategic conspiracy narrative against the so-called Soros Plan, which allegedly seeks "to push the languages and cultures of Europe into the background so that integration of illegal immigrants happens much more quickly" (see section 3).

Given Orbán's anti-EU stance, it is somewhat surprising that a Huxit, following the example of Brexit, is not on the agenda. One possible explanation is that while Orbán and his party, FIDESZ, continue to enjoy great popularity in

Hungary, leaving the EU is unpopular among Hungarian voters, who have consistently shown high levels of support for the European Union (see section 4). Another factor is competition among right-wing parties: the Volner Party, founded by former member of Hungary's conservative political party Jobbik János Volner, openly seeks to leave the European Union.<sup>3</sup> Orbán, in contrast, seems bent on changing the EU from within.<sup>4</sup>

This article analyses the narrative strategy of the Orbán government with a focus on the narrative dynamics of migration discourses in Hungary.<sup>5</sup> Orbán's political rhetoric is best understood as a strategic narrative addressing two audiences simultaneously,<sup>6</sup> the Hungarian public on the one hand, and liberal European governments on the other. The goals of this strategy are to destabilize the EU (centrifugal narrative dynamics), while ensuring support at home. The latter strategy is aimed at manipulating public opinion in Hungary while pretending to foster innovative forms of deliberative democracy and political participation. To this end, the Orbán government employs a polling system, first introduced in 2010: the so-called National Consultation is designed to develop and disseminate right-wing steering narratives which routinely employ disinformation, falsehoods, and conspiracy theories.

The article is divided into three parts. In section 2 we provide a media ecological survey of key developments of media in Hungary. The concept of media ecologies, originally proposed by Neil Postman in 1970, advocates a holistic approach to public communication and mass media (see Caracciolo et al. 2023). The ecological metaphor emphasizes a systemic approach to communication, emphasizing the role of media environments or media landscapes in shaping our experience of the world. According to Paolo Granata (2021, 8), “the media are our habits and habitat, the infrastructure of that invisible and complex network that is the human ecosystem.” Our overview shows how Hungary's media landscape has been subjected to a long-term ‘rebalancing’ strategy by the government, leading to increased polarization and a precarious situation for independent media.

Section 3 focuses on the alternative media employed by the government, i.e., the “national consultation” (*Nemzeti Konzultáció*), a survey routinely conducted by the current Hungarian government, which, unlike opinion polls, is not based on statistically average groups of people but regularly addresses all Hungarian households (originally by letter and, more recently, online). These surveys are accompanied by large-scale billboard campaigns and the news-oriented *About Hungary* website run by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister. We analyze the ‘national consultations’ conducted in 2015 (“National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism” / “Nemzeti Konzultáció a bevándorlásról és a terrorizmusról”) and 2017 (“About the Soros-Plan” / “A Soros-Tervről”), showing why they should be viewed as tools designed for manipulation rather than consultation and participation.<sup>7</sup> Considering election results, these ‘consultations’ appear to have had the desired centripetal effect of ensuring support for Orbán's government. We also argue that the official narratives on migration and Brussels serve an ancillary function with respect to the underlying narrative of a Great

Hungary, a narrative which has a centrifugal effect with respect to the EU, promoting European disintegration. Hungary's media ecology thus generates a polarized, and polarizing, narrative dynamics – a challenge not only for political scientists exploring the ongoing transformation of the public sphere, but also for theoretical accounts of the roles of narratives and narrative framing for opinion-building in pluralist democracies.

## 2. Hungary's 'Rebalanced' Media Landscape: A Survey

The Hungarian media landscape, as we know it today, is a relatively recent development. As Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2008, 71) points out, the phase of transition which followed the end of communism saw the emergence of new, free media in Eastern Europe: “Countries that have made the most rapid progress with the reforms did also privatize the state media, took it off the budgets of the national and regional authorities, and pursued economic and regulatory policies aimed at creating an environment in which the media business could take hold.” The transition was particularly fast in the new member states of the EU, among them Hungary: “If we look back in time, we find Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic evolving from not free to free in the space of only two years (1989–1991), with a year of ‘partly free’ in between. This is ‘revolution.’” (71)

With the benefit of hindsight, one has to conclude that this initial ‘revolutionary’ phase was soon followed by a backlash whose origins can be traced back to Viktor Orbán's return to power in 2010, after a first stint as prime minister (from 1998 to 2002). Today, Hungary's media landscape is characterized by “limited political and media pluralism” (Bajomi-Lázár 2019, 620). Through measures like the redistribution of radio and television frequencies and awarding senior positions in media organizations to government-friendly candidates, Viktor Orbán's successive governments “have gradually taken informal control of most media outlets, including the publicly owned MTVA (an umbrella organization of 14 public service radio stations and television channels as well as the national news agency)” (620). As the private KESMA Foundation, founded in 2018, which coordinates the news services of around 500 private outlets across the country,<sup>8</sup> is also affiliated with the government, “opposition voices are hardly covered outside the capital city Budapest; only some online news sites and the evening news bulletins of the private commercial television channel RTL Klub provide exceptions to the rule” (620–621). Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), an NGO advocating the freedom, pluralism and independence of journalism, comes to a similar conclusion: “Since returning to power in 2010, Orbán has unceasingly attacked media pluralism and independence. After public broadcasting was turned into a propaganda organ, many private media outlets were taken over or silenced.”<sup>9</sup>

How can a government of what is, after all, still a democratic country and EU member state, exert control over the media without using obvious forms of censorship? A key element of such a media strategy is creating and exploiting gray

areas which facilitate what political scientists call media capture. Media capture means the takeover of media by external actors like investors, whose interests are both economic and political, thus subverting the democratic functions of independent media, such as providing unbiased information, reliable news, and investigative journalism. Mungiu-Pippidi (2008, 73) offers an in-depth analysis of the conditions for and indicators of media capture in post-communist states:

Among the features that make the landscape of media capture we can count concentrated, nontransparent ownership of media outlets, with important political actors controlling the media, a strong linkage between media and political elites, and important infiltration of the media by secret services. Indicators of media capture can give us important information on the trend the media is on, toward more freedom or more capture. We can find precise indicators to measure capture, although indirectly. For instance, a large sector of nonviable media living on covert sponsorship indicates a captured, not an autonomous media. The expectation toward media in democratic countries is of economic viability, if not of clear profit. (73)

According to RSF, two of the above-named factors facilitating media capture – close ties between political elites and media entrepreneurs and the concentration of media outlets in concerns – can be observed in Hungary: “The ruling party, Fidesz, has seized de facto control of 80% of the country’s media through political and economic manoeuvres and the purchase of news organisations by friendly oligarchs.”<sup>10</sup> Advertising revenue is of vital importance in this context, as the IPI Hungary Press Freedom Mission Report 2022 points out: “In Hungary the state is the largest advertiser in the media market. In 2020 government bodies, ministries and state-owned companies spent €79 million euros on advertising – around one third of the total advertising revenue of the media market.” (6) RSF has pointed out that the pro-government media conglomerate KESMA receives approximately 85% of this state advertising revenue.<sup>11</sup> The IPI report claims that “no legislation exists which provides fair and transparent criteria for the distribution of state advertising in Hungary,” concluding that “funding in Hungary is distributed according to political affiliation and loyalty” (6).

This assessment has been rejected – predictably, but with a surprising justification – by Zoltán Kovács, the government’s international spokesman and secretary of state for international communication and relations. Kovács insists that “Hungary’s media market is the most pluralistic in the EU because conservative media were given equal weight to liberal media, defending the government’s media policy as an effort to rebalance the media market to ensure diversity of views” (6). Interestingly, Kovács doesn’t deny the government’s interference with the media system through strategic public spending, but justifies it as a ‘rebalancing’ measure. This argument is clearly at odds with the democratic notion of independent media and potentially constitutes an infringement of EU rules on state aid.<sup>12</sup> In 2022, the European Commission referred Hungary to the EU Court of Justice over two cases concerning freedom of speech, the controversial Child Protection Act and the refusal to grant a broadcasting license to independent, liberal Klubrádió, a radio station often critical of the government.<sup>13</sup>

Media capture through favoritism as a key element of the Hungarian government’s rebalancing strategy is, then, accompanied by clearly discriminatory

measures such as this denial of a frequency license to Klubrádió. Such measures create a hostile environment for independent news media and critical journalism. Free Press Unlimited, an international press freedom organization, observes self-censorship among journalists and editors as a consequence, and criticizes that independent journalists are subject to “governmental smear campaigns”:

The government regularly accuses critical media of disseminating false information and of receiving funding from George Soros, a billionaire of Hungarian and Jewish origin. In addition to this, journalists critical to the government are often harassed online by ruling party supporters. They are attacked by trolls, flooding them with comments with many personal elements, especially to female journalists.<sup>14</sup>

One example which illustrates the pressures on independent journalism is the fate of the popular news website *index.hu*. After a takeover by Orbán-friendly investors, the editor-in-chief at *Index*, Szabolcs Dull, was made redundant – he had publicly voiced concern about political interventions and the loss of journalistic independence (Kahlweit 2020, n. pag.). Amid public protests, more than fifty journalists from the editorial team of *index.hu* resigned to start a crowd-funded independent news website, *telex.hu*, which has been online since September 2020. Financial independence doesn't, however, guarantee journalistic freedom, given the more subtle measures used by the government to suppress critical voices. In a contribution to the International Press Institute website titled “How Hungary's pro-government outlets are favoured at press briefings,” Veronika Munk and Ferenc Bakró-Nagy (Telex) criticize the common practice of “overlooking” critical journalists during press briefings: “Regardless of viewership, popularity, or readership, the government gives preference to pro-government journalists and their media outlets during its regular press conferences. Critical media outlets, such as Telex, are left standing at the back of the line.” (Munk and Bakró-Nagy 2022, n. pag.) Their survey of the average order of questioning at government briefings shows that independent and critical media are systematically ignored. This is highly problematic considering that “(t)here are hardly any opportunities left in Hungary for journalists to freely and publicly ask government officials about anything” (n. pag.).

In 2022, after Orbán was elected prime minister for the third time since his return to power in 2010, KESMA chose to downsize its operations. According to Judit Szakács and Éva Bognár (2023, 80), this is no coincidence: “The closure of media outlets just after the elections suggests a view of the media as a political instrument. It also signals a shift towards social media, used by 61% in Hungary, in Fidesz's media strategy.” Both aspects of this observation are in line with the findings of a study of media coverage in the 2016 referendum on migrant quotas conducted by János Tóth (2021, 512–513), which found compelling evidence that “what appear to be pro-government, bottom-up, self-organized social media communities in fact have close ties to the FIDESZ government.” This does not necessarily mean, however, that government control is always effective: Tóth finds a surprising level of negative sentiments toward a government-initiated event even on pro-government online media outfits, in this case a Facebook channel. He concludes that pro-government online media were “either not very

good in controlling sentiments in favor of the referendum, or they did not even try” (514). Nevertheless, the latest Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al. 2023) confirms Tóth’s underlying argument: In the section on Hungary, Szakács and Bognár (2023, 80) hold that “Megafon Centre, a conservative social media incubator that trains pro-government influencers and promotes their posts, has been pushing the government’s narratives to Hungarian Facebook users’ feeds.”

Despite the absence of censorship, the freedom of the press is curtailed in subtle ways: increasing economic pressure creates an imbalance in the media ecology. This is confirmed by a recent country report on Hungary by the Euro-media Ownership Monitor (Bajomi-Lázár and Krasztev 2022, n. pag.): “In sum, the re-distribution of the various media resources starting in 2010, and in particular that of state advertising whose ratio grew from an estimated 3% in 2010 to 32% in 2018 [...], has by now created an uneven playing field for different media, favouring those in line with the government’s narratives.”

Economic factors and unfair practices which disadvantage independent media indicate that the government’s ‘rebalancing’ strategy aims at fostering a close alignment of media narratives and government policies; Attila Bátorfy (2019) sees Hungary on the path toward an authoritarian media system. This assessment is supported by the fact that the government is not content with meddling with the media but has established alternative communication channels. Bypassing both legacy media and digital news outlets, the government’s polling system and billboard campaigns are key elements of a narrative strategy which has helped to promote and disseminate highly controversial government views on immigration, integration, gender, and the European Union.

### **3. Hungary’s Toxic Narratives: Migration, Gender, Europe**

Hungary has the most restrictive migration policy in the European Union.<sup>15</sup> There is no government funding for integration projects, and while non-profit organizations and local authorities can apply for financing through several EU funds, integration-related funding has not been available since July 2018, due to a partial suspension of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) national program in Hungary.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, it was Hungary that demanded “tougher commitments on return and readmission of migrants throughout the negotiating process,”<sup>17</sup> and until recently continued to block attempts to ratify the Samoa Agreement (previously referred to as Post-Cotonou agreement), an overarching framework for EU relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries signed by the EU on November 15, 2023.<sup>18</sup>

The anti-immigration stance adopted by Orbán is based on his concept of “ethnic homogeneity.”<sup>19</sup> Orbán is reported as saying in July 2022 that in contrast to Western Europe’s “mixed-race world,” whose peoples have mingled with arriving non-Europeans, Hungary was not a mixed-race country – a false racist

statement which was widely condemned outside Hungary.<sup>20</sup> Orbán later added that his remarks were not rooted in racism but reflected the preferences of the Hungarian people who did not want to become “peoples of mixed race”: “Orbán argued that the Hungarians were racially pure and that they intended to stay that way.”<sup>21</sup> Yet Orbán’s right-wing rhetoric doesn’t shy away from provoking its Ukrainian and Romanian neighbors by displaying symbols of imperialism like Orbán’s “Greater Hungary” scarf during a football match in 2022, a gesture which implies a redrawing of Hungarian borders to include ethnic minorities in both countries.

A third hallmark of Orbán’s rhetoric, in addition to racism and hyper-nationalism, is its backward view on gender policy. Following a meeting in November 2022 with the European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary Péter Szijjártó confirmed that while Hungary supports cooperation with other countries, his country disapproves of the EU using the Post-Cotonou Agreement to legalize migration. Confirming earlier positions (“Yes to economic cooperation, no to migration”), Szijjártó repeated the old claim that Hungary’s government has a “no migration” stance. According to the Minister, “such an agreement would compromise the fight against illegal migration to the EU as well as would spread gender ideology.”<sup>22</sup> This unusual linkage between immigration and the branding of gender policy as an ideology has long been a feature of Hungarian policy on migration. Reporting the meeting between Szijjártó and Urpilainen, news portal *Hungary Today* quotes the Minister, whose use of the derogatory and simplifying term “sex education” stands in stark contrast to established conceptions of gender rights:

Since all decisions regarding migration and sex education, as well as the employment and integration of foreigners, remain in the hands of the member states, and since we will have no legal obligation regarding sexual rights, we feel that we have fulfilled the expectations of the parliament and can agree to the EU signing the post-Cotonou agreement.<sup>23</sup>

In 2005, Orbán first introduced the project of a government survey, the so-called national consultation (Bocskor 2018, 559). What had begun as an innovative campaign with significant popular appeal was developed into a regular survey campaign after his return to power. Orbán’s first consultation as Prime Minister was on “pensions and allowances,” explicitly addressing “pensioners” (possibly the part of the electorate whose support he thought he needed most), with all subsequent polls being open to “all households.” Since 2010, the survey has evolved into a major communication strategy using questionnaires on a wide range of topics delivered by letter, with a web-based polling option added later (see Appendix 1). The official English-language website with content relating to the ‘national consultation,’ *About Hungary*, is published by the Cabinet Office.<sup>24</sup>

While national consultations can be useful tools in pluralist democracies to initiate “inclusive dialogues and meaningful engagement across the full set of stakeholders” (United Nations 2022, 3), the case of Hungary shows that the rhetoric of consultation can also be exploited as a form of top-down steering,

becoming a key element in the kind of long-term narrative persuasion, coercion, and even manipulation that characterizes the country's transition from a liberal democracy to what Claus Leggewie and Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski (2021, 9) have called an "illiberal democracy." Eva Fodor's (2021) analysis of Hungary's anti-liberal gender regime reveals the full extent of democratic backsliding in "Orbánistan" (1) and is cause for grave concern. What is more, the government's centrifugal European policies and toxic narratives increase the centripetal appeal at home of its specific form of "radical nationalism" (Hunyadi et al. 2019, 54).

Hungary's rhetoric of consultation, we argue, is the core element of Orbán's narrative of confrontation. By this we mean a narrative portraying Hungary as a community of patriots who share a linguistic, cultural, and national identity – and who are, allegedly, unanimously opposed to liberal European values, gender rights, and migration policies. This narrative has most recently been put forward by Orbán in a long interview with Tucker Carlson, a former Fox TV host, who was dismissed on April 23, 2023 after repeated allegations of disinformation, conspiracy content, racism, and white supremacy views.<sup>25</sup> The interview marks the latest climax in Orbán's nationalist narrative strategy. It was also published on the *About Hungary* website, and openly reveals, as we will show, the dominant steering function of the polling system used by the government in the 'national consultation' (hence the inverted commas).

The table in Appendix 1 shows the years in which 'national consultations' were conducted, their participants, method of data collection (printed questionnaires delivered by letter and/or online polls), and topics. The list of topics shows that the surveys originally focused on domestic issues, from "pensions and allowances" (2010) to the role of the law in curbing government spending or protecting "values such as the family, the home, order, work and health" (this is question three of the first 2011 survey).<sup>26</sup> Assuming a general consensus on vague issues, however, the wording is so unspecific that it is hardly suited to paint a detailed picture of Hungarian public opinion on the issues in question (it is not even clear what these issues are). According to one online source (reliable statistics are notoriously difficult to come by), "a total of 11.3 percent, or 916,941, of the 8.09 million recipients completed and returned the 12 questions in the survey."<sup>27</sup>

In 2015, the focus shifted to immigration, framing immigration predominantly in terms of terrorism and security threats. However, some continuity is clearly visible, as the preface by Orbán also contains a paragraph on threats posed by "economic migrants" entering the EU illegally: "Economic migrants cross our borders illegally, and while they present themselves as asylum seekers, in fact, they are coming to enjoy our welfare systems and the employment opportunities our countries have to offer." (see Appendix 2) As Ákos Bocskor (2018, 561) points out, this paragraph "builds on the discursive traditions, most consistently established by the former socialist liberal government during the 2005 referendum campaign, which also involved 'threats to labour market positions,' 'abuse of the welfare system,' and a 'rapid influx of high numbers of immigrants.'"

This observation is important for two reasons. On the one hand, Bocskor reminds us that Orbán's anti-immigration policies are deeply rooted in Hungarian politics, building on cross-party sentiments, and this explains their sustainability despite somewhat obvious contradictions: Asylum seekers are portrayed as "terrorists/criminals, welfare cheats and job stealers" (561), and it is hard to see how they could fulfill all the roles ascribed to them. On the other hand, one can see that in 2015 Orbán was still searching for the most effective strategic narrative to project authority and consolidate power. The terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris provided a new frame, yet economic threats were still deemed necessary to complete the picture. After the so-called migrant crisis,<sup>28</sup> clashes on the Hungarian-Serbian border and the subsequent terrorist attacks in Paris in November, "the economic narrative was largely dropped and attention redirected towards cultural and security questions" (561). Thus, Hungary's hostile narrative on migration, usually associated with Orbán himself (an effect his authoritarian style of leadership seeks to convey),<sup>29</sup> has a longer, bi-partisan history.

As Viktor Orbán's 'national consultation' doesn't meet the requirements for unbiased measurements of opinions and attitudes, a survey researcher's "ultimate dream" (Moors et al. 2014, 370), it seems reasonable and justified to assume that sources of non-random error such as response bias can't be ruled out. Conventional attitude surveys based on Likert-type rating scales measure positive or negative evaluative responses to a set of statements as objectively as possible (typically, options allow for clear indications of positive, neutral, or negative attitudes, e.g. strongly agree – agree – neutral – disagree – strongly disagree).<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the Hungarian questionnaire on immigration and terrorism (see Appendix 2), which comprises twelve questions, uses a simplified bipolar scale with only three items: "Very relevant" – "Relevant" – / "Not relevant" (answers to question 1); "There is a very real chance" – "It could occur" – "Out of the question" (answers to question 2); "I fully agree" – "I tend to agree" – "I do not agree" (answers to questions 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12); "Yes" – "I have heard about it" – "I did not know" (answers to question 4); and "Yes, I would fully support the Government" – "I would partially support the Government" – "I would not support the government" (answers to questions 7, 8). All answer categories are fully labeled, yet negative and positive values are not distributed evenly. Moreover, some labels clearly invite speculation and reinforce stereotypes.

From a methodological perspective, then, the 'national consultation' is clearly flawed. In fact, it deviates so far from established standards for conducting robust surveys that it should be considered a tool for manipulation rather than consultation or participation. What, then, is the true purpose of the Hungarian survey? Its manipulative form of questioning quickly reveals the answer. The first two questions frame immigration in terms of terrorism, the third one blames the European Union: "There are some who think that mismanagement of the immigration question by Brussels may have something to do with increased terrorism. Do you agree with this view?" Here and in other questions, the wording encourages speculation ("We hear different views," "There are some who think," "There are some who believe," "a very real chance," "it could occur").<sup>31</sup>

Question four (“Did you know that economic migrants cross the Hungarian border illegally, and that recently the number of immigrants in Hungary has increased twentyfold?”) links two unrelated pieces of information without providing numbers for Hungarians to decide whether they consider the increase significant. Question 12, finally, links the government’s anti-immigration stance to its heteronormative gender policies and solutions for the country’s demographic problems: “Do you agree with the Hungarian government that support should be focused more on Hungarian families and the (potential future) children they can have, rather than on immigration?”<sup>32</sup>

The ‘national consultation’ of 2017 blaming Hungarian-American investor and philanthropist George Soros for meddling with EU migration policies (see Appendix 4) abandons all pretenses, serving all households a conspiracy theory and a binary choice, Yes or No. Question 3 claims that an official EU policy (migrant quota) is actually the result of George Soros’s sinister machinations: “One part of the Soros Plan is to use Brussels to force the EU-wide distribution of immigrants that have accumulated in Western Europe, with special focus on Eastern European countries.” This reference to the antisemitic Soros conspiracy theory, which was also evoked by Donald Trump during his time in office (Bergman and Butter 2020, 338), is evidence that the government uses the ‘national consultations’ for propaganda rather than information, triggering confirmation bias among its supporters. It is best understood as the (ab)use of polling as a measure to steer attitudes and perceptions using manipulative rhetoric.

A key element of manipulation is repetition. The regular surveys are accompanied by billboard campaigns reminding the public of the “consultations” (see Appendices 3 and 5). A third element of the government communication is the website *About Hungary*, a portal with three sections offering “news in brief,” a blog and “speeches and remarks.” What looks like a journalistic news site is in fact fully controlled by the government. The target audience are foreigners living in Hungary:

As the official English-language website of the Hungarian Government, *about-hungary.hu* takes a stand against widespread misinformation in the international media about Hungary and the Hungarian Government. We are also the official source when it comes to economic news, Prime Minister’s speeches, international affairs, investments, family policy decisions, migration and more.<sup>33</sup>

The government’s strategy serves at least three purposes. First, agenda-setting: choosing the topics for the polls is a powerful instrument for defining the key issues of Hungarian politics. As all voters are addressed directly and individually, there is no escaping the agenda set by the government, regardless of one’s political views or topic preferences. Second, the ‘national consultation’ is a convenient means of framing controversial issues. As shown above, the Hungarian government doesn’t refrain from manipulative questionnaire design or from masking rhetoric as information. Finally, with its equation of immigration and terrorism, and the link between anti-immigration and gender, the national consultation on immigration and terrorism (May 2015) has set the tone for Orbán’s narrative on migration for years to come, promoting “ontological insecurity”

(Kinnvall et al. 2021; Giddens 1990). The dominant frame is to consider migration as a security threat and immigration as the influx of potential criminals, or as an economic burden.

As Birgit Bahtić-Kunrath and Carolin Gebauer (2023, 49) have shown in an in-depth analysis of 71 interviews in Austrian newspapers with experts and politicians across the democratic political spectrum, this kind of framing was extremely rare in the neighboring country of Austria at the time: “The sub-frame ‘terrorism’ occurs only once throughout the entire sample.” This reveals the deep gap that existed in 2015 between political discourses on migration in Hungary and in Austria, let alone in Germany’s “welcome culture” (Gebauer 2023), and shows how far Orbán’s rhetoric was removed, even then, from dominant positions outside Hungary.<sup>34</sup>

What are the long-term effects and consequences of a narrative strategy promoting ontological insecurity in order to reinforce trust in the nation state? On the one hand, the strategic narrative of Hungary as a homogeneous nation with a shared cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identity, as well as a closed-borders policy securing the status quo, helps Orbán stay in power: By ‘solving’ the ‘problems’ he creates, he can cast himself in the role of a strongman defending the nation against Brussels. His victory in the general elections in 2022 shows that this strategy was successful. However, the results of Eurobarometer 99 (Spring 2023) show that a majority of Hungarian citizens (54%) tend to trust the EU, while only 41% tend not to trust it.<sup>35</sup> This suggests a more EU-friendly attitude than in Austria (tend to trust: 43%; tend not to trust: 50%), Germany (tend to trust: 43%; tend not to trust: 49%), and Italy (tend to trust: 41%; tend not to trust: 50%), the other three countries included in the cross-country comparisons of OPPORTUNITIES.

The biggest surprise, however, is that Hungarian attitudes toward the EU have hardly changed in the seven years since 2016, when 53% were optimistic about the future of the EU, and 42% claimed to be pessimistic: Trust has even increased slightly.<sup>36</sup> Are the survey data inaccurate or unreliable? Are strategic narratives less effective than they appear to be? Are Hungarians immune against propaganda, possibly a lesson learnt in communist times? Do transnational structures appear more trustworthy than the national government? What is the role of the Hungarian diaspora in boosting the EU’s reputation at home? It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a robust explanation of the apparent fact that long-term manipulative framing and massive anti-EU rhetoric by the government secured two re-elections for Orbán, in 2018 and 2022, yet had zero impact on Hungarian attitudes toward the EU, which remain comparatively positive.

## 4. Conclusion

This essay has focused on Hungary's official narratives, especially those on migration and Europe. Our analysis has shown that Hungary's media ecology, after more than a decade of 'rebalancing' in favor of the government's anti-liberal nationalist policies, differs from the media landscape in liberal European countries in four aspects. First, the assumption that state broadcasting is less biased than private broadcasting no longer holds if state broadcasting is controlled by one part of the political spectrum only and private broadcasters are at the same time closely aligned with the government and favored through strategic public spending (advertising revenues). Our findings in this respect support and confirm the results of the quantitative media analyses and correlation analyses conducted in the OPPORTUNITIES project: David De Coninck, Stefan Mertens, and Leen d'Haenens (2021, 17) consider Hungary an exception, compared with Germany, Austria and Italy, in that "exposure to the public service broadcaster (or here: state media) is linked with more negative attitudes" toward immigrants, refugees, and Muslims.

Second, despite systematic 'rebalancing' of the media ecology, ideological divisions run deep in Hungary, and it would be wrong to speak of a "narrative monoculture" in Yannis Gabriel's (2017, 221) sense, i.e., "societies dominated by a few hegemonic narratives which are only challenged occasionally and tentatively by oppositional voices [...] that rarely crystallize into proper counter-narratives". Indeed, there are still independent media outlets, NGOs, and researchers whose counter-narratives not only challenge government positions but also demonstrate to European publics elsewhere that Hungary is not a homogeneous nation of anti-liberal conspiracy-theorists. However, the dividing line is not between public services and private broadcasters, but between government-friendly commercial outlets and independent ones which receive no government funding and defend journalistic freedom. Third, the efforts of the Hungarian government to sidestep both legacy and new media by installing direct communication channels with its surveys, billboard campaigns, and the *About Hungary* website – all of which are part of a manipulative framing strategy – mean that media analysts are faced with a new challenge, a specific media ecology whose narrative dynamics they still need to understand.

Fourth, our analysis of the "national consultation" and "immigration and terrorism" narratives allows us to argue that creating, spreading and fostering ontological insecurity is among the goals of the Hungarian government's strategic narrative on migration. Individual threat perception is a key factor in defining attitudes toward migrants and migration; the focus in the literature, according to Silke Goubin, Anna Ruelens, and Ides Nicaise (2022, 9–10), is on (perceived) economic, cultural, and ethnic threats to the host society. By linking immigration with terrorism, the Hungarian government has added a major new threat to this list, raising fears that were seemingly justified after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Berlin. This may help to explain why Hungarian citizens, against the

European trend, have become “more negative about migration in general, and prefer more restrictive policies towards migration” (33). Speaking of European trends, however, it is also important to acknowledge that, according to the survey data cited above, Hungarians appear to trust the European Union as an institution – whatever it means to them.

What can the European union learn from media capture, the programmatic and systematic rejection of liberal values, and the success of toxic narratives in Hungary? “Admittedly my argument is about a single country,” says Fodor (2021, 2), “but since elements of anti-liberal governance are gaining ground every day, the lessons here should serve as potential for comparison elsewhere.” In order to prevent Orbán’s xenophobic migration policy and patriarchal gender regime from gaining traction across Europe, we need to focus on the reasons why they are so popular, both at home and among right-wing populists abroad. Most importantly, we should beware complacency: European democracies are not immune to nationalism, autocratic tendencies, and anti-pluralist backlash. A free press, guaranteed by law and supported by economically viable business models, plays a crucial role as a check on power. As the case of Hungary demonstrates, it is increasingly difficult for liberal views to cut through government propaganda, once the news media have been ‘rebalanced’ to rein in independent journalism.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Overview of National Consultations (2010 to 2022)

Hungarian National Consultations		
Year	Target audience	Topic
2010	Pensioners (Letter)	“Konzultáció a nyugdíjasokkal” (Consultation with pensioners)
2011	All households (Letter)	“Kérdések az új alkotmányról” (Questions on the new Constitution)
2011	All households (Letter)	“Szociális konzultáció” (Social consultation)
2012	All households (Letter)	“Gazdasági konzultáció” (Economic consultation)
2015	All households (Letter)	“Nemzeti konzultáció a bevándorlásról és a terrorizmusról” (National consultation on immigration and terrorism)
2017	All households (Letter)	“Állítsuk meg Brüsszelt!”* (Stop Brussels!)
2017	All households (Letter)	“Nemzeti Konzultáció a Soros-tervről” (National Consultation on the Soros Plan)
2018	All households (Letter or online)	“Nemzeti Konzultáció a családok védelméről” (National Consultation on the Protection of Families)
2020	All households (Online)	“Nemzeti Konzultáció a koronavírusról és a gazdaság újraindításáról” (National Consultation on the Coronavirus and Restarting the Economy)
2021	All households (Online)	“Konzultáció az újraindításról” (Consultation on post-epidemic relaunch)
2021	All households (Online)	“Konzultáció a járvány utáni életről” (Consultation on life after the epidemic)
2022	All households (Online)	“Nemzeti Konzultáció az energetikai szankciókról” (National Consultation on energy sanctions)

\*The European Commission’s response to six false claims in the “Stop Brussels!” survey (2017) can be found here: [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/stop-brussels-european-commission-responds-hungarian-national-consultation\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/stop-brussels-european-commission-responds-hungarian-national-consultation_en) (date of access: 25/9/2023).

## Appendix 2: National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism (2015)



**Tisztelt Magyar Polgár!**

Mi, magyarok 2010-ben úgy határoztunk, hogy minden fontos kérdést megbeszélünk egymással, mielőtt döntéseket hozunk. Ezért indítottunk nemzeti konzultációt többek között az ország új alaptörvényéről, mindannyiunk szociális biztonságáról, a nyugdíjasok helyzetének javításáról. És ezért indítottunk most is nemzeti konzultációt a megélhetési bevándorlás kérdéséről.

Mint bizonyára emlékszik, Európát az év elején példátlan terrorcselekmény ráta meg. Párizsban áratlan emberek életét oltották ki hegyetlen hidegveréssel és tiszta brutálissággal. Mindannyiunkat megdöbbentette mindaz, ami történt. Ez az emberi ésszel felfoghatatlan szörnyiség ugyanakkor azt is megmutatta, hogy Brüsszel és az Európai Unió nem képes megfelelő módon kezelni a bevándorlás kérdését.

A megélhetési bevándorlók törvénytelenül lépik át a határt, és miközben menekültnek állítják be magukat, valójában a szociális juttatásokért és a munkalehetőségért jönnek. Csak az elmúlt néhány hónapban mintegy hússzorosára nőtt a megélhetési bevándorlók száma Magyarországon. Ez egy új típusú fenyegetést jelent, amit meg kell állítanunk.

Mivel Brüsszel kudarcot vallott a bevándorlás kezelésében, Magyarországnak a saját útját kell járnia. Nem fogjuk hagyni, hogy a megélhetési bevándorlók veszélyeztessék a magyar emberek munkahelyeit és megélhetését.

Döntést kell hoznunk arról, hogyan kell védekeznie Magyarországnak a törvénytelen határátlépésekkel szemben. Döntenünk kell, hogyan korlátozzuk a robbanásszerűen növekvő megélhetési bevándorlást.

Tisztelettel arra kérem, lépjen velünk kapcsolatba, mondja el nekünk is, hogy mit gondol a főtett kérdésekről, töltsse ki, és küldje vissza a kérdőívet. Számítok a véleményére.

Üdvözléssel:  
  
**Orbán Viktor**

<https://444.hu/2015/04/24/itt-vannak-a-kerdesek-a-bevandorlasrol-amiket-a-kormany-egymilliardert-kuld-ki-onnek/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

Dear Hungarian Citizen,

In 2010 we Hungarians decided to discuss every important issue before decisions are taken. This is why we launched national consultations on issues which have included Hungary's new Fundamental Law, social security as a matter concerning us all, and the improvement of the situation of pensioners. And this is why we are now launching another national consultation, this time on the issue of economic immigration.

I am sure you will remember that at the beginning of the year Europe was shaken by an unprecedented act of terror. In Paris the lives of innocent people were extinguished, in cold blood and with terrifying brutality. We were all shocked by what happened. At the same time, this incomprehensible act of horror also demonstrated that Brussels and the European Union are unable to adequately deal with the issue of immigration.

Economic migrants cross our borders illegally, and while they present themselves as asylum-seekers, in fact they are coming to enjoy our welfare systems and the employment opportunities our countries have to offer. In the last few months alone, in Hungary the number of economic migrants has increased approximately twentyfold. This represents a new type of threat – a threat which we must stop in its tracks.

As Brussels has failed to address immigration appropriately, Hungary must follow its own path. We shall not allow economic migrants to jeopardise the jobs and livelihoods of Hungarians.

We must make a decision on how Hungary should defend itself against illegal immigrants. We must make a decision on how to limit rapidly rising economic immigration.

Please contact us and give us your response to the questions we are asking. Please complete and return the questionnaire. I am counting on your opinion.

With regards,  
**Viktor Orbán**

Official translation. See Bocskor (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518762081> (date of access: 8/25/2023).



# NEMZETI KONZULTÁCIÓ

## a bevándorlásról és a terrorizmusról

FELELŐS KIADÓ: MINISZTERELNÖKSÉG

### Töltse ki a kérdőívet!

**1]** Sokféle véleményt lehet hallani az erősödő terrorcselekményekkel kapcsolatban. Ön mennyire tartja fontosnak a terrorizmus térnyerését (a franciaországi vérengzés, az ISIS riasztó cselekményei) a saját élete szempontjából?

Nagyon fontos  Fontos  Nem fontos

**2]** Ön szerint az elkövetkező években lehet-e terrorcselekmény célpontja Magyarország?

Komoly esély van rá  Előfordulhat  Teljesen kizárt

**3]** Vannak, akik szerint a Brüsszel által rosszul kezelt bevándorlás összefüggésben van a terrorizmus térnyerésével. Ön egyetért ezekkel a véleményekkel?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**4]** Tudta-e Ön, hogy a megélhetési bevándorlók törvénytelenül lépik át a magyar határt és az elmúlt időszakban húszerősítésre nőt a bevándorlók száma Magyarországon?

Igen  Hallottam róla  Nem tudtam

**5]** Sokféle véleményt hallani a bevándorlás kérdésével kapcsolatban. Vannak, akik szerint a megélhetési bevándorlók veszélyeztetik a magyar emberek munkahelyeit és megélhetését! Ön egyetért ezekkel a véleményekkel?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**6]** Vannak, akik szerint Brüsszel politikája a bevándorlás és a terrorizmus kérdésében megbukott és ezért új megközelítésre van szükség ezekben a kérdésekben. Ön egyetért ezekkel a véleményekkel?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**7]** Támogatná-e Ön a magyar kormányt, hogy Brüsszel megengedő politikájával szemben szigorúbb bevándorlási szabályozást vezessen be?

Igen, teljes mértékben támogatnám  
 Részben támogatnám  Nem támogatnám

**8]** Támogatná-e Ön a magyar kormányt, hogy szigorúbb szabályokat vezessen be, ami alapján őrizetbe vehetők a magyar határt törvénytelenül átlépő bevándorlók?

Igen, teljes mértékben támogatnám  
 Részben támogatnám  Nem támogatnám

**9]** Egyetért-e Ön azzal a véleménnyel, hogy a magyar határt törvénytelenül átlépő bevándorlók a lehető legrövidebb időn belül vissza kell fordítani a saját hazájukba?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**10]** Egyetért-e Ön azzal, hogy a megélhetési bevándorlók, amíg Magyarországon tartózkodnak, saját maguk biztosítsák az ellátási költségeiket?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**11]** Egyetért-e Ön azzal, hogy a bevándorlás elleni küzdelem legjobb eszköze, ha az Európai Unió tagországi segítik azon országok fejlesztését, ahonnan a bevándorlók érkeznek?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

**12]** Egyetért-e Ön a magyar kormánnyal abban, hogy a bevándorlás helyett inkább a magyar családok és a születendő gyermekek támogatására van szükség?

Teljesen egyetértek  Inkább egyetértek  Nem értek egyet

<https://444.hu/2015/04/24/itt-vannak-a-kerdesek-a-bevandorlasrol-amiket-a-kormany-egymilliardert-kuld-ki-onnek/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

*NATIONAL CONSULTATION*

on immigration and terrorism

Published by the Prime Minister's Office

*Please complete this questionnaire.*

*1] We hear different views on increasing levels of terrorism. How relevant do you think the spread of terrorism (the bloodshed in France, the shocking acts of ISIS) is to your own life?*

Very relevant      Relevant      Not relevant

*2] Do you think that Hungary could be the target of an act of terror in the next few years?*

There is a very real chance      It could occur      Out of the question

*3] There are some who think that mismanagement of the immigration question by Brussels may have something to do with increased terrorism. Do you agree with this view?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*4] Did you know that economic migrants cross the Hungarian border illegally, and that recently the number of immigrants in Hungary has increased twentyfold?*

Yes      I have heard about it      I did not know

*5] We hear different views on the issue of immigration. There are some who think that economic migrants jeopardise the jobs and livelihoods of Hungarians. Do you agree?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*6] There are some who believe that Brussels' policy on immigration and terrorism has failed, and that we therefore need a new approach to these questions. Do you agree?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*7] Would you support the Hungarian government in the introduction of more stringent immigration regulations, in contrast to Brussels' lenient policy?*

Yes, I would fully support the Government

I would partially support the Government

I would not support the Government

*8] Would you support the Hungarian government in the introduction of more stringent regulations, according to which migrants illegally crossing the Hungarian border could be taken into custody?*

Yes, I would fully support the Government

I would partially support the Government

I would not support the Government

*9] Do you agree with the view that migrants illegally crossing the Hungarian border should be returned to their own countries within the shortest possible time?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*10] Do you agree with the concept that economic migrants themselves should cover the costs associated with their time in Hungary?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*11] Do you agree that the best means of combating immigration is for Member States of the European Union to assist in the development of the countries from which migrants arrive?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

*12] Do you agree with the Hungarian government that support should be focused more on Hungarian families and the [potential future] children they can have, rather than on immigration?*

I fully agree      I tend to agree      I do not agree

Official translation. See Bocskor (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518762081> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

Appendix 3: National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism (2015),  
Billboard Campaign



[https://index.hu/belfold/2015/06/04/megvan\\_a\\_kormany\\_menekultellenes\\_kampanya-  
nak\\_ket\\_ujabb\\_szlogenje/](https://index.hu/belfold/2015/06/04/megvan_a_kormany_menekultellenes_kampanyanak_ket_ujabb_szlogenje/) (date of access: 8/25/2023).

*Translation by the authors:*

Government Information

If you come to Hungary,  
you must not take away  
the jobs of Hungarians!

National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism

Appendix 4: National Consultation “The Soros Plan”

**KÉRJÜK, TÖLTSE KI AZ ALÁBBI KÉRDŐÍVEIT!**

**1. Soros György arra akarja rávenni Brüsszelt, hogy Afrikából és a Közel-Keletről évente legalább egymillió bevándorlót telepítsen az Európai Unió területére, így Magyarországra is.**

Soros hosszú évek óta azon dolgozik, hogy megváltoztassa Európát és az európai társadalmakat. Céljai más civilizációs, határ- és emberteremtési beavatkozásokkal kezdődtek. Tervei bemutatásakor úgy fogalmazott: „az előre látható jövőben az Európa Uniónak be kell fogadnia legalább egymillió menekültet évente” (Project Syndicate, 2015. 09. 26.) Használt álláspontot képviselt az Európai Parlament is. A testület támogatta az áttelepítési programokat, valamint a bevándorlói útvonalak létrehozását. (DOI/25242, 01/17)

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

**2. Soros György brüsszeli vezetőivel együtt azt is el akarja érni, hogy az EU tagállamok, így Magyarország is, bontsák le a határvédelmi kerítéseket, és nyissák meg a határokat a bevándorlók előtt.**

A jól szisztematikus határnyelvi védelem jelentős az illegális bevándorlók ellen, nem véletlen, hogy a Soros-tervnek fontos célja a határvédelmi kerítések lebontása, így a határok megnyitása az illegális bevándorlók előtt. A milliárdos úgy fogalmazott, hogy a mi területünk a menekültek védelmére a célja és a nemzeti határok jelentik az akadályt. (Bloomberg Business, 2015. 10. 30.) Egyes brüsszeli vezetők is keményen támadták a határakat. A migrációs ügyek során különösen aggodalmasnak ítélték meg az EU tagállamok kerítéseit, hiszen fel a közbiztonságot.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

**3. A Soros-terv része, hogy a nyugat-európai országokban összegyűlt bevándorlókat Brüsszel kötelezően ossza szét, különös tekintettel a kelet-európai országokra. Ebben Magyarországnak is részt kellene vennie.**

Soros György az alábbiakat írta a bevándorlók szétosztásáról: „Ne az nem tesz egy állandó és közelebbi elme a közös uniós menekültügyi rendszernek, akkor az össze fog omlani”. (Financial Times, 2015. 07. 26.) 2015-ben Brüsszelben döntés született arról, hogy az EU tagállamok Magyarországnak 128 ezer bevándorlót kell befogadnia. 2016-ban az Európai Bizottság már arra tett javaslatot, hogy korlátlan számban lehessen szétosztani a bevándorlókat. (DOI/25242) Soros György javaslatával egybehangzó módon felhívta az uniós Menekültügyi és Migrációs Ügynökséget, amely továbbá segítsen a nemzeti határokat a bevándorlók terelgetésében. Ha a beavatkozások sikerrel járnak, a magyaroknak már nem lesz beavatkozásuk abból, hogy ki mit emel egy-egy évben.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

A kitöltés folytatásához kérjük, fordítsa meg a lapot! ➡

**4. A Soros-terv alapján Brüsszelnek arra kellene köteleznie minden tagállamot, így Magyarországot is, hogy minden bevándorlónak fizessen 9 millió forint állami segítyt.**

Soros szerint jelentős összeget kellene költeni a bevándorlókra. „Az EU-nak biztosítani kellene menekültként évi 15 ezer eurót az első két évben, hogy átadja az oktatási költségeket - és hogy a menekültek befogadását vonzóbbá tegye a tagállamoknak”. (Project Syndicate, 2015. 09. 26.) A milliárdos szerint ezt az összeget hitelszolgálatok segítségével kell megvalósítani. Soros úgy gondolja, hogy a hitlek visszafizetéséhez adóemelésre van szükség, a milliárdos emellett az AFAT, valamint a bevándorlók és a kultúra területén. Soros tanácsadóiban az is javasolta, hogy az EU a migrációs válság megoldása érdekében csökkentse a közép-európai országoknak járó megalapozási és kohéziós támogatásokat.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

**5. Soros György azt is el akarja érni, hogy a migránsok enyhébb büntetést kapjanak az általuk elkövetett bűncselekményekért.**

Soros György jelentős összegekkel támogat olyan szervezeteket, amelyek segítik a bevándorlót és védik a bűncselekményeket elkövető bevándorlók iránti politikai és határnyelvi Bizottság, mely a határnyelvi Bizottság kapcsolatban az EU-val. A szervezetek tekinthető a jogellenes beépítéssel kapcsolatos súlyos jogkövetkezmények alkalmazására. Egy másik Soros-tervvel az Amnesty International Bizottság is követelte annak az Ahmed Hinnak a szabadon bocsátását, aki követelt támadt a határ védő magyar rendőrökre, és ezért elítélték. Az Amnesty még kérésrel is fizetnie a magyar államot.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

**6. A Soros-terv célja, hogy az európai országok nyelve és kultúrája háttérbe szoruljon annak érdekében, hogy az illegális bevándorlók integrációja hamarabb megtörténjen.**

Soros György „A nyitlt társadalom” című könyvében arról ír, hogy a nemzetállamok tekintélyének hanyatlása üdvözlendő fejleménynek minősül. Soros arról is nyilatkozott, hogy a bevándorlók integrációja a nemzeti kultúrát és a nyelvet veszélyezteti. Hogy legyenek a bevándorlók szponzorai, arról is beszélt, hogy a kontinensnek világos akció tervet kell készítenie a nyitlt társadalom érdekében. Egyes európai országokban és multinacionális cégekkel már ma is onkét elvártak a bevándorlók integrációját. Kérésztly szimbólumokat, hogy az EU, ne sértsék a bevándorlók jogait.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

**7. A Soros-terv része, hogy politikai támadást indítsanak a bevándorlót ellenző országok ellen, és kemény büntetéseket sújtsák őket.**

A Soros-terv végrehajtásának legfőbb akadályai azok a kormányok, amelyek kiállnak a nemzeti függetlenség mellett, és féltik az illegális bevándorlók ellen. Soros György ma meg azért nem tud kvantitá egymillió bevándorlót Európába hozni, mert vannak olyan kormányok, amelyek tiltakoznak ez ellen. A magyar kormány eleget tesz a szponzor megjelölésnek, amikor megköveteli a határokat és kerítéseket, így nehezíti a Soros-terv végrehajtását. Soros és több brüsszeli döntéshozó azért támadta hazánkat, az Európai Bizottság javaslatát érvénytelenítve a tagállamokat, amelyek nem vesznek részt a beavatkozási programban, minden bevándorló után 78 millió forint büntetést kellene fizetniük. (DOI/25242, ICOD) Ez akkora összeg, amelyet egy magyar munkavállaló évtizedes jövedelme.

Ön támogatja a Soros-tervnek ezt a pontját?  IGEN  NEM

A kérdőív visszaküldése ingyenes.  
Feladási határidő: november 24.

Forrás: Hódmezővásárhelyi Kulturális Központ 2023. Budapest, Készült: László Péter 2023.

<https://24.hu/belfold/2017/09/28/mutatjuk-a-kerdoivet-amivel-legyozheti-soros-gyorgy-sa-tani-tervet/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

1. George Soros wants Brussels to resettle at least one million immigrants per year onto European Union territory, including in Hungary.
2. Together with officials in Brussels, George Soros is planning to dismantle border fences in EU Member States, including in Hungary, to open the borders for immigrants.
3. One part of the Soros Plan is to use Brussels to force the EU-wide distribution of immigrants that have accumulated in Western Europe, with special focus on Eastern European countries. Hungary must also take part in this.
4. Based on the Soros Plan, Brussels should force all EU Member States, including Hungary, to pay immigrants HUF 9 million in welfare.
5. Another goal of George Soros is to make sure that migrants receive milder criminal sentences for the crimes they commit.
6. The goal of the Soros Plan is to push the languages and cultures of Europe into the background so that integration of illegal immigrants happens much more quickly.
7. It is also part of the Soros Plan to initiate political attacks against those countries which oppose immigration, and to severely punish them.

Translation see Novak (2017). <https://budapestbeacon.com/soros-plan-national-consultation-questions/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

Appendix 5: National Consultation “The Soros Plan,” Billboard Campaign



[https://index.hu/belfold/2017/11/20/soros\\_a\\_soros-tervrol\\_ez\\_hazugsag/](https://index.hu/belfold/2017/11/20/soros_a_soros-tervrol_ez_hazugsag/) (date of access: 8/25/ 2023).

*Translation by the authors:*

National Consultation

About the Soros-Plan

It will not go unnoticed!

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/respect-lgbt-rights-or-leave-eu-hungarys-orban-told-2021-06-25/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>2</sup> Orbán first held the office from 1998 to 2002. In 2010, he was re-elected as prime minister; three re-elections followed in 2014, 2018, and 2022.

<sup>3</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian\\_withdrawal\\_from\\_the\\_European\\_Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_withdrawal_from_the_European_Union) (date of access 8/25/2023).

<sup>4</sup> Leggewie and Karolewski (2021, 8) argue that the informal connection called the Visegrád Four, comprising Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, is bent on changing the character of the European Union as a model – “a confederation of states rather than a federal state, national sovereignty instead of transnational community, autocratic rule instead of liberal democracy” (our translation).

<sup>5</sup> Narrative dynamics is used as “an umbrella term for all kinds of relationships, hostile or symbiotic, competitive or complementary, local or global, between narrative phenomena” (Sommer 2023, 498).

<sup>6</sup> We use the definition of strategic narratives proposed by Miskimmon et al. (2013, 2): “Strategic narratives are a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors. Strategic narratives are a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate.”

<sup>7</sup> The use of surveys as steering devices designed to frame government policies (rather than introduce deliberative elements into policy-making) is an old strategy, of course; see Allard (1941).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/countries/hungary> (date of access 8/25/2023).

<sup>9</sup> See <https://rsf.org/en/country/hungary> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://rsf.org/en/country/hungary> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/countries/hungary> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>12</sup> “Complaints over these market-distorting practises are currently being assessed by the European Commission under State Aid complaint No. 53108,” according to the IPI report (2022, 6).

<sup>13</sup> The so-called Child Protection Act is widely considered homophobic and transphobic and, according to Brussels, violates a series of EU law principles, including human dignity, freedom of expression and information, the right to private life and the right to data protection, as well as single market rules on audio-visual services and e-commerce (see <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/07/15/european-commission-takes-hungary-to-court-over-anti-lgbt-law-and-klubradio-closure>; date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.freepressunlimited.org/en/countries/hungary> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>15</sup> The most recent major amendments to Hungary's asylum law were adopted in June 2016, March 2017, and May 2020: “The first cancelled the Integration Contract and Support scheme for beneficiaries of international protection, and the second established special ‘transit zones’ – places for asylum seekers to stay in while their status was determined by the authorities. Finally, the third amendment cancelled these zones, making it impossible for a person to ask for asylum

unless they had already submitted a declaration of will at the Hungarian consulates in Belgrade and Kiyv.” (see [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary_en) (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>16</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary_en) (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/post-cotonou-deal-in-danger-as-concerns-grow-over-ratification-delay/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cotonou-agreement/> (date of access: 12/3/2023).

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungarys-orban-says-his-anti-immigration-stance-not-rooted-racism-after-backlash-2022-07-28/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungarys-orban-says-his-anti-immigration-stance-not-rooted-racism-after-backlash-2022-07-28/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.romania-insider.com/tensions-ro-coalition-orban-speech-aug-2022/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>22</sup> See <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-firm-on-its-no-migration-policy/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>23</sup> See <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/hungary-agrees-to-eu-signing-the-post-cotonou-agreement> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>24</sup> See <https://abouthungary.hu/> (date of access: 12/3/2023).

<sup>25</sup> See <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/04/tucker-carlson-great-replacement-white-supremacist-immigration-fox-news-racism.html> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://theorangefiles.hu/orban-government-national-consultation-on-the-fundamental-law/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>27</sup> See <https://theorangefiles.hu/orban-government-national-consultation-on-the-fundamental-law/> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>28</sup> William Spindler’s (2015) reconstruction of the so-called migrant crisis, which is still accessible on the UNHCR website, begins in April, with the drowning of 600 refugees. In Hungary, where thousands of refugees found temporary shelter in Budapest’s train station, the climax was reached on September 5, when the Orbán government started providing buses to allow the refugees to continue their journey to Austria and, ultimately, Germany: “More than 1,000 refugees in Hungary marched out of Budapest towards the Austrian border in protest of the Hungarian government’s refusal to provide trains to Austria and Germany. That decision was reversed overnight when buses were provided by the Hungarian authorities to take the exhausted refugees to the border where they were met by volunteers from the Austrian Red Cross and the Austrian Order of Malta holding handwritten signs saying ‘welcome’, and handing out waterproof clothes, food, water, milk and blankets.” (n. pag.)

<sup>29</sup> In his analysis of the preface to the “national consultation” on immigration and terrorism, which contains a photograph of Orbán and his signature, Bocskor (2018, 559) points out that the central role of Orbán is emphasized “by the absence of photographs or signatures of any other members of the government, as well as by the omission of any other visual stimuli.”

<sup>30</sup> Likert-type rating scales, named after American psychologist Rensis Likert, are psychometric scales commonly used in survey questionnaires for attitudinal research. Respondents are required to specify their level of agreement to one or more statements (so-called Likert items). Typically, five ordered responses are used, yet many researchers prefer seven or nine levels to increase the quality of results. Likert-type rating scales have been shown to be prone to all kinds of biases (see Moors et al. 2014, 370), including “extreme response style” (the tendency to choose only the extreme endpoints of a scale) and “acquiescence response style” (the tendency to agree rather than disagree with items regardless of item content).

<sup>31</sup> On the impact of vague wording, question-versus-statement phrasing, and full-versus-partial labeling of response options on participants’ responses, see the experimental study of Spratto and Bandalos (2019).

<sup>32</sup> According to Waterbury (2020, 968), “the emigration of around 600,000 young, working age, and highly skilled Hungarians, over the last decade has reportedly led to significant labour shortages in key areas of the economy, such as healthcare, and has worsened negative, demographic trends, leaving Hungarian society, older and declining in population.” The FIDESZ response to the ongoing brain drain has thus far been largely rhetorical. By dubbing emigrants “adventurers” or “guestworkers,” the brain drain is decoupled linguistically from emigration. What is more, the temporary nature of leaving is accentuated, downplaying the demographic effects and the prospect of an aging population (969).

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<sup>33</sup> See <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/about-hungary-relaunches-with-new-look-and-vibe> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>34</sup> More recently, the Hungarian government appears to have abandoned the “immigration and terrorism” narrative: Quantitative media analyses conducted in the OPPORTUNITIES project show no trace of the “immigrants as terrorists” narrative in the English-language Twitter account used by FIDESZ in 2021 (De Coninck et al. 2021). Instead, the comparative analysis of politicians’ tweets in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Hungary reveals that the only Twitter account making regular use of the words “terrorism” and “terror” in the context of migration is that of former Austrian prime minister Sebastian Kurz.

<sup>35</sup> See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3052> (date of access: 8/25/2023).

<sup>36</sup> See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2137> (date of access: 8/25/2023).