



Country Issue: Hungary



The Relaunch of Europe

Mapping Member States' Reform Interests

Europa

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Institut für Europäische Politik (Institute for European Politics, IEP) is one of the leading foreign and European policy research centres in the Federal Republic of Germany dedicated to the study of European integration.

Further information on the project can be found here:

www.relaunch-europe.eu

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Contents

2 THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

3 HUNGARY

Social Union

European Economic and Monetary Union

European Defence Union

Asylum and Migration

Polity

White Paper Process

6 LEGEND

7 REFERENCES

THE RELAUNCH OF EUROPE

MAPPING MEMBER STATES' REFORM INTERESTS

The Relaunch of Europe. Mapping Member States' Reform Interests (RelaunchEU) is a project conducted by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) on behalf of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) that surveys the implementation prospects for twelve concrete reform proposals. It covers the policy areas of Social Union, Economic and Monetary Union and Defence Union as well as asylum and migration policy and the EU's institutional set-up. Furthermore, it analyses the support for flexible integration and the positioning towards the five scenarios presented in the European Commission's »White Paper on the Future of Europe« of spring 2017. It covers the positions of national governments and of relevant progressive political parties, which received a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the previous European or national elections.¹

The study follows two main objectives: (1) It demonstrates the scope of action for prompt reforms of the EU in the selected policy areas while also taking into account which member states would, under certain conditions, be willing to implement the specific proposals. (2) It empirically determines which member states could belong to an avant-garde group willing to deepen integration.

Researchers from think tanks and research institutions in the member states of the EU-27 compiled information to determine the position of governments and progressive political parties towards the twelve reform proposals. This qualitative analysis reflects the country experts' views and is based on documents such as coalition agreements, government or party programmes, position papers, press releases, interviews, op-ed pieces, and official documents. It presents a snapshot of the discussions within the governments and parties. In order to keep the country issues short, internal debates and deviating opinions cannot be covered in detail. Positions are subject to change, especially following elections and the formation of new governments. The snapshot was taken at the end of September 2017. More recent developments could not be included. Notable exceptions are the country issues of Austria and Germany, which were updated following the latest coalition negotiations.

The study's results are published in English on the website www.relaunch-europe.eu. It presents maps for every actor and reform proposal, 27 country issues and an analytical paper. The paper compares the positions of all actors in all member states of the EU-27 on the twelve concrete reform proposals and presents five flagship-projects, which bear the chance for a relaunch of Europe.

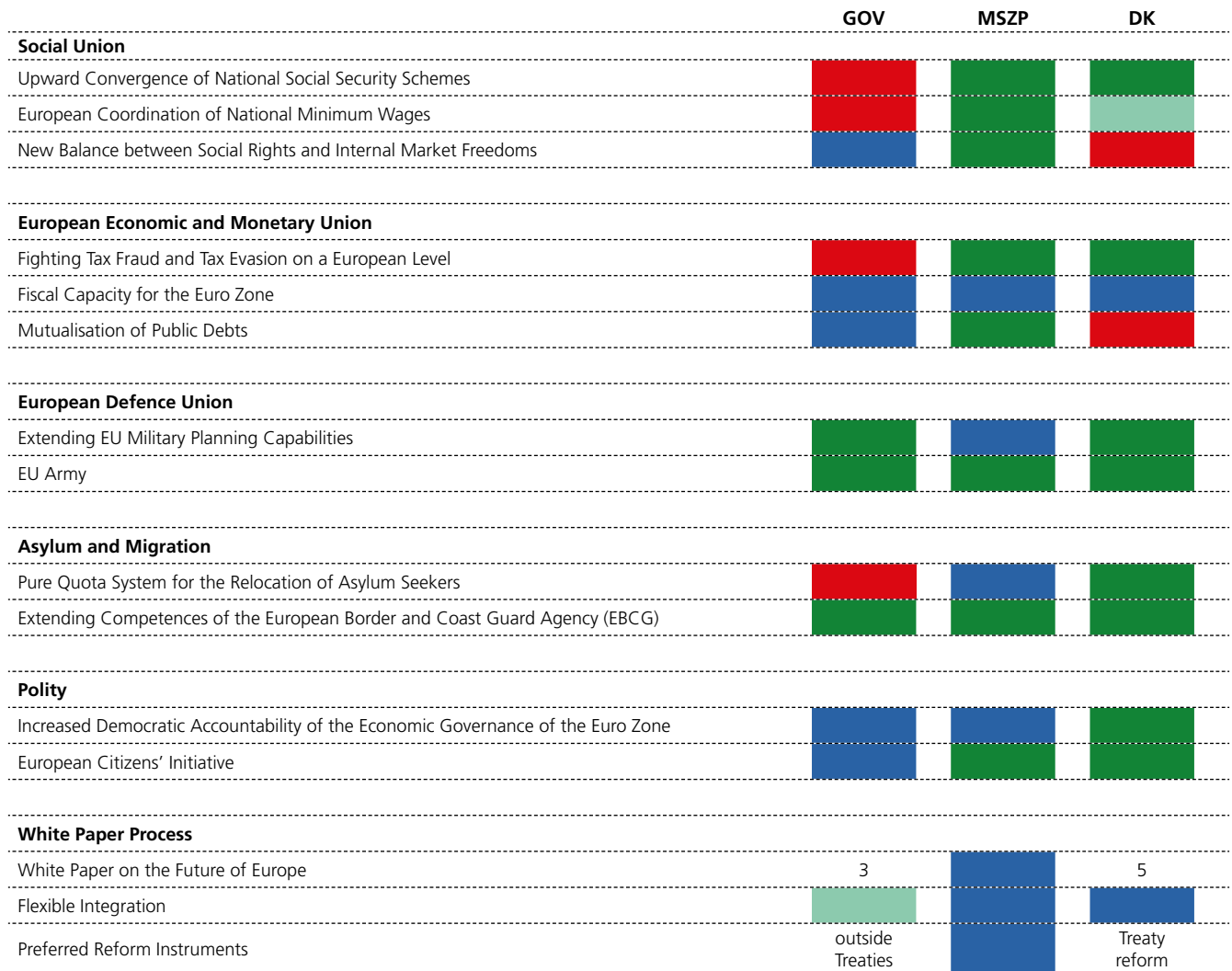
¹ If a party fulfills this criterion, but is not a relevant actor in the national public debate anymore, it was deleted from the sample based on the judgement of the projects' country expert.

HUNGARY

In the parliamentary elections of 2014, the ruling national conservative Fidesz-KDNP coalition won 44.5 % of the votes, while the centre-left coalition Unity received 26 %. Next to the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt, MSZP*), Unity

includes the Democratic Coalition (*Demokratikus Koalíció, DK*), and three other small parties. As a new constitution established a new electoral system in 2012, Fidesz-KDNP received 133 parliamentary seats, while Unity obtained only 38 seats.

Support of the Hungarian Government, the MSZP and the DK for Deepening EU Integration



Legend

- support for
- support under conditions
- against
- neutral

- GOV** National Government
- MSZP** Hungarian Socialist Party
- DK** Democratic Coalition

- 1 – Scenario 1: »Carrying on«
- 2 – Scenario 2: »Nothing but the single market«
- 3 – Scenario 3: »Those who want more do more«
- 4 – Scenario 4: »Doing less more efficiently«
- 5 – Scenario 5: »Doing much more together«

SOCIAL UNION

As the Hungarian government believes harmonising social standards would lower competitiveness, it does not support initiatives on **upward convergence of national social security schemes**. According to the Unity parties, social standards could be improved through efforts financed by taxes that create jobs, harmonise market demands, and monitor social transfers. As Europe needs a comprehensive economic investment plan, the MSZP is in favour of extending the current Juncker plan. However, it should be used more effectively in the future. In addition, the party asks for the introduction of a unified and transparent European statistical method to calculate how many people actually live below the poverty line, as the party mistrusts the government's statistics. The DK supports more convergence of national social security schemes, but more importantly, it would support a transfer of competences to the EU in order to restrict the way member states spend EU cohesion funds intended to strengthen social security. With regard to its concerns on competitiveness, the government also opposed the idea of a **European coordination of national minimum wages**. The MSZP, however, believes that the minimum wage should be harmonised and coordinated on the EU level and recommends implementing a minimum wage mechanism in the cohesion system. The DK would support some level of EU-harmonisation in the long run, depending on the economic development of the respective countries. While the government has no specific position on a **new balance between social rights and internal market freedoms**, the DK rejects it fearing further unnecessary bureaucratization and reduced effectiveness. The MSZP is generally supportive of a social Europe by adding a social protocol to the treaties, but insists that Europe has to avoid causing a competitive disadvantage leading to the loss of jobs when improving social equality.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

In general, the Fidesz-KDNP government does not support **fighting tax fraud and tax evasion on a European level**, nor the idea of a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) or the recently established European Public Prosecutor's Office, fearing such transfers would be disadvantageous for Hungary. Although the CCCTB proposal does not include a harmonisation of tax rates, the Prime Minister (Fidesz) warned that such EU policies would endanger the Hungarian tax system and »Brussels« would attempt taking over new competences in the economic policy, social policy and taxation under the pretext of the »social pillar«. The MSZP is in favour of the implementation of a common EU VAT-rate in order to strengthen the fight against VAT-fraud. The DK also calls for closer cooperation in the field of taxation, namely increasing transparency by supporting the European Public Prosecutor and allowing supranational authorities to investigate and prosecute fraud relating to the EU budget and other crimes against the EU interest such as cross-border VAT-fraud. Neither the government, nor MSZP or DK hold any concrete propositions relating to the creation of a **fiscal capacity for the euro zone**. However, while the

government is rather undecided, it is not totally against it, claiming that deeper economic and fiscal cooperation has to be based on intergovernmental agreements in order to improve the competitiveness of the euro zone. Yet, this potential support would be conditional, depending on its ability to ensure the unity of the single market, equal competition, and free accession of those outside the euro zone at a later date. The MSZP believes that Europe needs a comprehensive, targeted economic investment plan such as the current Juncker investment plan, but with a longer financial cycle. Its continuation is seen as necessary, but must be used more effectively, e. g. by making funding available to local levels. While the government has no concrete position with regard to the mutualisation of public debts, the DK is in opposition. However, the party could reconsider if Germany were to push forward on the creation of a joint debt vehicle. The MSZP position depends on whether Hungary would belong to a core Europe, but the party is generally supportive of a **mutualisation of public debts**, demanding full joint liability.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNION

The Hungarian government and the DK are both in favour of **extending EU military planning capabilities**. Furthermore, the government supported the introduction of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). The Prime Minister described a related European Council decision in June 2017 to strengthen the defence capabilities as historic, as this could eventually lead to a common European military force. The DK endorses the establishment of EU headquarters for executive military missions that is also open to non-EU member states and funded by the EU budget. In addition, the headquarters should have competences in the area of migration, including tasks such as the promotion of democracy in the Middle East. The party does not mind structures parallel to NATO, but calls for a close cooperation of both organisations. Accordingly, the Hungarian Prime Minister has been advocating for the establishment of an **EU army** led by Germany and France since summer 2016, mainly as part of his anti-refugee rhetoric focusing on the protection of the EU's external borders. As the government is in favour of an EU army, it argues that the political and economic power of the EU should be underpinned by a military dimension, though not as an alternative to NATO. Thus, more integration in the defence industry is needed. The MSZP is in favour of a common defence policy and an EU army in the long run, too, as nation states are not capable anymore of responding to global threats on their own and to maintain peace and security in Europe. Additionally, the MSZP asks for centrally coordinated intelligence agency cooperation or even the creation of a European secret service. While the DK has not yet adopted an official stance, its chairman has underlined his support for the establishment of an EU army.

ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

The Hungarian government is a strong opponent of the idea of further deepening the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Its firm rejection of the EU's 2015 mandatory relocation

scheme, legal actions before the European Court of Justice, organising a national referendum and two consultations with regard to the issue make clear that the government is strictly against a **pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers**. Instead, the externalisation of the so-called migration crisis and the establishment of hotspots outside of the Schengen area are the preferred solutions. While the MSZP is in favour of a common EU strategy to solve the migration crisis and to improve the European Neighbourhood Policy, it has given rather mixed signals regarding a mandatory quota system. Though the party has highlighted the need for a solidarity-based refugee and repatriation procedure in the past, it was not supportive of it during the referendum campaign. However, it insists that the peculiarities of member states need to be taken into consideration, as there is an individual limit to welcoming refugees, incompatible with solidarity meant to be unlimited. Thus, the current Dublin regulation has failed and cannot be upheld. A supranational institution such as an EU asylum agency could assist to protect EU external borders and to ensure humane asylum procedures every time. By contrast, the DK has openly supported a pure quota system for the relocation of asylum seekers and has, therefore, harshly criticised the government. According to the DK, migration can help to boost Hungary's work force and Europe can only move forward if it defends multiculturalism. The further integration of the control of the Schengen area's external borders is of great relevance for the government, the MSZP and the DK. In the past, the Prime Minister has already argued that Frontex needs to be empowered for swift and determined action. In accordance with its strategy of »security comes first«, the government supports **extending competence for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)** with more assets, capabilities and legal powers and by deploying officers and vehicles to the Bulgarian-Turkish border and implementing more thorough electronic checks for those crossing the EU's external borders. However, it insists that the EBCG can only be deployed with the consent of the member state(s) concerned. According to the MSZP, the Schengen area is one of the most important results of European integration and must be protected at all costs. Thus, the MSZP would like to have more integrated EU external border controls and to see Frontex strengthened in the future. The DK would like to give more competences to the EBCG in order to strengthen the EU's external border controls and to participate in sea rescue missions. The EBCG should be staffed with national and EU officers and funded by a common budget.

POLITY

The government could support deeper economic cooperation to strengthen the euro zone if equal competition conditions and the unity of the Single Market were ensured and if those outside of the euro zone could later join easily. Although Fidesz argues that further integration should take place if it is useful, it has no particular vision on **increasing democratic accountability of the economic governance of the euro zone**. The government even declared that it will not ask for an observer seat in the Eurogroup, which points towards an overall lack of interest in the Economic and Monetary Union. The DK

is generally in favour of the establishment of a European economic government with a separate EU budget and a European finance minister – a position that the MSZP might also support, even though it has not given an indication of its position on the issue. Both the DK and the MSZP want to adopt the euro as soon as possible in order to be able to be part of a core Europe. While the government has not yet taken a stance on the **European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)**, both the DK and the MSZP are in favour of it in principle. Thus, the MSZP has supported the Minority SafePack ECI initiated by RMDSZ, a party representing Hungarian minorities in Romania. However, there was an ECI launched against the Fidesz government in 2015 (Wake Up Europe!), proposing the application of Art. 7 TEU when Hungary breaches the EU's fundamental values. It was withdrawn before the deadline had ended.

WHITE PAPER PROCESS

The Hungarian government has been giving mixed messages regarding the five scenarios of the **»White Paper on the Future of Europe«**. Although Hungary, together with the Visegrád countries, issued a joint declaration in March 2017 in which they found the idea of a multi-speed Europe unacceptable, the Hungarian governments' representatives have followed a more nuanced approach since then. For instance a Deputy State Secretary for EU affairs stressed that while the model of two-speed EU is unacceptable for the Hungarian government, its multi-speed operation – which is an already existing format – would be supported. The State Secretary for EU affairs also admitted that the EU could set up a kind of matrix of co-operations of different strength with the overarching goal and principle of competitiveness. The abovementioned statements could lead to the conclusion that in the debate on the future of the EU, Budapest – although it rhetorically mainly supports uniform integration – considers the institutionalisation of multi-speed Europe acceptable as long as it strengthens national sovereignty. Additionally, the Hungarian government has given no indication that Hungary should strive to be at the core of the EU in the case of a multi-speed Europe. Instead, Fidesz's long-term interest is the maintenance of opt-in or opt-out politics at EU level, but avoiding the formation of any institutional inner core with veto potential. The MSZP has not come out in support of any of the proposed future scenarios, but has emphasised their pro-European stance repeatedly. The DK on the other hand clearly prefers a federal Europe, thus scenario 5, »doing much more together« is the only acceptable option. Accordingly, the model of **flexible integration**, especially in the form of »cherry picking«, is only supported by the government in order to strengthen Hungary's national sovereignty. Deeper cooperation within the EU would be acceptable if it is done outside the EU treaties. Treaty reform, however, was of great importance for the Prime Minister before the Brexit vote, but without any further competence transfer to the EU level. While MSZP and the DK have no official position on the model of flexible integration, the socialist party has no preference regarding the mode of future integration, either, which could partially be due to discord within the party. The DK, however, aims at treaty change in order to steer the EU on the path of federalisation.

Legend

Actors Covered by the Study in each EU Member State

- *National Government*: including its members from one or more political parties, the Head of State or Government, relevant executive ministers and administration.
- *Progressive Parties*: They include all parties that are represented either in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) or that are members of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and have gained a minimum share of 5 % of the votes in the last national or European elections. They also include La République en Marche (REM) in France.

Concrete Reform Options in Different Policy Areas

Social Union

1. *Upward Convergence of National Social Security Schemes* to provide Europe-wide protection against social risks and to ensure a decent standard of living for EU citizens.
2. *European Coordination of National Minimum Wages* to ensure a decent income within the EU to prevent in-work poverty, to promote social convergence and to avoid social dumping across the EU.
3. *New Balance of Social Rights and Internal Market Freedoms* to compensate the current precedence of internal market freedoms over national social rights.

European Economic and Monetary Union

4. *Fighting Tax Fraud and Tax Evasion on a European Level* for a fair allocation of tax burdens among natural and judicial persons.
5. *Fiscal Capacity for the Euro Zone* to provide stabilisation against economic shocks through public expenditure in the euro zone.
6. *Mutualisation of Public Debts* to tackle the problem of a sharp increase in public debts in some member states as a result of the euro zone crisis.

European Defence Union

7. *Extending EU Military Planning Capabilities* also for executive military missions and operations.
8. *EU Army* establishing a permanent multinational military force under European command.

Asylum and Migration

9. *Pure Quota System for the Relocation of Asylum Seekers* which would replace the Dublin system.
10. *More Competences for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG)* expanding the current EBCG tasks in terms of »shared responsibility« between the EBCG and national authorities.

Polity

11. *Increase Democratic Accountability of the Economic Governance of the Euro Zone* to make its institutions more responsive to EU citizens.
12. *European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)*: revision of the ECI regulation to make the instrument more citizen-friendly and effective in order to strengthen the participative democracy in the EU.

White Paper Process

13. *The White Paper on the Future of Europe* by the European Commission presents five possible scenarios for the future course of European integration.
14. *Flexible Integration*: limiting the application of certain rules to certain EU member states.
15. *Preferred Reform Instrument*: Treaty reform, reforms inside or outside the Treaties.

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