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BECOMING MAINSTREAM? EUROSCEPTICISM AMONG ESTABLISHED PARTIES IN V4 COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The recent conflicts of the Hungarian and the Polish governments with the European Union as well as the cooperation between the Visegrád countries during the migrant crisis have drawn attention to this region. Eurosceptic parties in these countries have ensured significant reinforcement to the critics of the European Union since the Big Bang enlargement in 2004. Most of them (League of Polish Families and Self-Defence in Poland, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovak National Party and Movement for a Better Hungary) have had a populist profile and have profited from the general protest mood. However, in recent years more mainstream or established parties have started to criticize the European Union. Parties considered Eurosceptic are in governmental position in two out of the four countries (Hungary and Poland) while they play significant role in Slovakia (Freedom and Solidarity) and in the Czech Republic (Civic Democratic Party). The paper aims to explain the reasons lying behind the Euroscepticism of these mainly centre-right parties in the region, i.e. it examines if Euroscepticism is a consequence of the ideology or only a part of a broader party strategy

Keywords: Euroscepticism, Parties, Visegrád Countries, Fidesz, Law and Justice, Civic Democratic Party, Freedom and Solidarity

1. Introduction

The issue of the European integration has become more important in Central and Eastern Europe in recent years. It is a consequence of the various crises (i.e. refugee crisis) in Europe on the one hand. But on the other hand, parties in the region have also concentrated more on the European politics. In the Czech Republic, Václav Klaus – then head of state – tried to prevent the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008-09. The Freedom and Solidarity party in Slovakia caused the fall of the centre-right government in 2011 due to its strong opposition to the EFSF. The Hungarian government has had several conflicts with the European Commission since 2010 and the Polish government elected in 2015 seems to behave in a very similar way.

Despite these well-known cases, the literature has not drawn enough attention to the Euroscepticism of mainstream or established parties. It is a little bit surprising due to the fact that there are very detailed analyses about the Euroscepticism of these countries before the EU accession (e.g. Taggart and Szczepiński, 2008a; Kopecký and Mudde, 2002). This paper focuses on mainstream/established (i.e. not radical) parties' relation vis-à-vis the EU and would like to contribute to the better understanding of the phenomenon.

The theoretical framework of the paper is made up by a clear definition on Euroscepticism based on the classification of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2000; 2008a) and Kopecký and Mudde (2002). However, it needs to be emphasized that only acts against the integration process could be considered as Eurosceptic behavior. Party programs, parliamentary voting and statements of politicians are used to examine the party's positions and to confirm or undermine the literature.

The paper argues that criticism of the European Union has become very common among centre-right parties in the region; however, these parties do not oppose the European integration process in every case. As a consequence, it needs to be differentiated Euroscepticism from criticism of some policies of the EU. The paper concludes that despite its conflicts with the European Commission, Fidesz cannot be considered as Eurosceptic because it has always supported the deepening of the European Union despite its conflicts with the European Commission.

The first section of the paper gives a short literature review on Euroscepticism focusing on concepts which are used in this study. The second part contains a brief analysis of the Euroscepticism in Visegrád countries, concentrating on the changes of the phenomenon since the EU accession. At the end of the paper, conclusions and further research directions are presented.

2. Theoretical Framework

Euroscepticism in its current form emerged after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. The literature started to draw attention to the phenomenon at the end of the 90s. The concept of Euroscepticism was introduced by Paul Taggart (1998) as it 'expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration (Taggart 1998). This definition highlights the complex nature of Euroscepticism, i.e. it includes any criticism of the European integration without further distinction. To handle this problem, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2000) differentiated two kinds of Euroscepticism. Due to the fact that their definitions have been clarified since then, this paper only focuses on the very last designations.

Hard Euroscepticism is where there is a principled opposition to the EU or the European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a, p. 7).

It is important to underline that the concept of hard Euroscepticism implies the rejection of the intergovernmental form of the (economic) integration as well (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2000). Most Eurosceptic parties do not oppose the whole integration process and prefer the concept of Europe of Nations, i.e. a confederation, so these parties belong to the category of soft Euroscepticism.

Soft Euroscepticism is where there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008a, p. 8).

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) made some remarks about the weaknesses of the classification created by Taggart and Szczerbiak. Firstly, they find the category of soft Euroscepticism too inclusive because of the fact that every party which disagree with any EU policy decision fits into this group (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002). Taggart and Szczerbiak clarified that the subject of soft Euroscepticism is the deepening of the integration, i.e. the extension of

EU competencies (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2008b). Taggart and Szczerbiak made a crystal clear distinction between Eurosceptic and non-Eurosceptic parties by making this amendment.

Moreover, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) argue that there is no clear difference between hard and soft Euroscepticism in some cases. In addition, the authors note that it remains unclear whether Euroscepticism reflects on the idea of the European integration or concretely on the EU.

To solve these problems, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) introduced another classification of parties' attitudes towards the European Union. According to the authors, the relation to the idea of the European integration and to the EU itself shall be distinguished. They point out that the supporters of the EU are EU-optimists; the rejecters are EU-pessimists, while the supporters of the European integration are Europhiles, and the rejecters are Europhobes. These categories create four groups. Parties which combine Europhile and EU-optimist positions are Euroenthusiasts. Eurosceptics support the idea of the European integration but they are pessimistic about its embodied form. Those who oppose both the general idea and the current form of integration are Eurorejects, and finally, parties which do not support the idea, but they support the European Union are Europragmatists (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002).

Taggart and Szerbiak (2008b) also criticize the classification of Kopecký and Mudde in three ways. First of all, they find the group of 'Eurosceptics' too exclusive, i.e. parties opposing the whole European project do not fit into this group. Moreover, the category of "Europragmatists" is illogical according to Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008b). The authors also argue that the "Euroenthusiast" category is too inclusive because of the differences among parties supporting the integration process.

Accepting the criticism of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2008b), this paper argues that the group of Eurosceptics of Kopecký and Mudde is more or less the same as the category of soft Euroscepticism of Taggart and Szczerbiak. In parallel, Eurorejects can be categorized as hard Eurosceptics. Albeit both categorizations have their weaknesses, they could be used to classify parties' relationship vis-à-vis the European Union.

It needs to be emphasized that Taggart and Szczerbiak do not make any distinction between the pre-accession and post-accession situations. Nevertheless, a party which opposed joining the EU not necessarily wants to withdraw its country from the EU. As a consequence, if the status before and after the enlargement are not distinguished, the number of hard Eurosceptic parties could be overestimated which may cause wrong conclusion. This paper uses the classification of Taggart and Szczerbiak despite its weaknesses because it is simple and relatively easy to operationalize. However, Euroscepticism can be defined as an opposition to or criticism of the deepening or functioning of the European Union. In other words, criticism of a policy of the EU is not Eurosceptic. The study uses mainstream and established parties as synonyms and the category includes all the relevant conservative, liberal and social democratic parties.

As far as the methodology is concerned, the bases of the parties' relation vis-à-vis the Lisbon Treaty and the EU membership are the official party programs or manifestos. However, parliamentary and European parliamentary voting on the Lisbon Treaty is also examined to confirm or reject every ascertainment based on party programs. The paper focuses on established parties considered Eurosceptic in the literature, so it excludes radical left and radical right parties, i.e. Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovak National Party or Movement for a Better Hungary.

3. Case Studies

In this section party-based Euroscepticism in Visegrád countries are analyzed. Every subchapter contains a brief history of the phenomenon which helps the better understanding of Euroscepticism. The studies focus on the current situation and analyze parties' relation to the European Union on the basis of party programs, parliamentary voting and the statements of the literature.

3.1. Poland

Although there was a wide consensus over the question of the EU membership among the members of the political elite in Poland in the 90s, the country has also a relatively long tradition of Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak, 2008). The phenomenon has never been limited to populist/anti-establishment parties: the post-communist agrarian-based Polish People's Party (PSL) and the national conservative Law and Justice (PiS) are considered as Eurosceptic (Szczerbiak, 2008), even if the former party's Euroscepticism is doubted (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002).

Europe was not a relevant issue in the early 2000s (Szczerbiak, 2008) but the topic was raised at the time of the EU accession. Before Poland joined the EU (2004), populist parties – League of Polish Families (LPR) and Self-Defence of the Republic (SRP) – were categorised as hard Eurosceptic (Szczerbiak, 2008), albeit the Self-Defence's ambiguous attitude both to the EU membership and to the European Constitution (ECT). Basically, the party's criticism originated in the accession conditions and focused mainly on agrarian issues (Szczerbiak, 2008). In other words, SRP harshly criticised the circumstances of the Polish membership but not the European integration itself. As far as the Catholic-national LPR's Euroscepticism is concerned, it was clearly a principled opposition to the European project (Szczerbiak, 2008). The EU was depicted as a cosmopolitan, colonialist organisation serving foreign interests (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002).

Turning to the established parties, the Polish People's Party criticised the agricultural conditions of the EU accession and threatened the senior coalition partner Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) to leave the governing coalition if the conditions was not improved (Szczerbiak, 2008). The communication of PSL was built on the message of 'defending the national interest' (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002). However, the party's criticism was policy-based which could be a result of the presence of a radical competitor in the political scene (Self-Defence). On the other hand, People's Party has never questioned the integration process and abandoned its critical stance after the 2004 enlargement (Markowski and Tucker, 2010).

The EU accession was among the top priorities in the foreign policy of the Law and Justice (PiS), though the party harshly attacked the negotiation strategy of the centre-left government. Jarosław Kaczyński, one of the founders and most important personalities of the party (party chairman since 2003) had also reservations to the accession conditions (Szczerbiak, 2008). Basically, PiS prefers the Europe of Nations concept (an inter-governmentalist form of the integration) (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002) and is in favour of strong nation-states. Lech Kaczyński – twin-brother of Jarosław and Polish president from 2005 until his death in 2010 – pointed out that he is not against the European Union but against federalism (Szczerbiak, 2008).

This EU-critical behaviour of the party has been fundamentally strategic. The purpose of Kaczyński's rhetoric was to send unequivocal message to the voters of the populist parties. On the other hand, PiS had to be careful not to alienate its more moderate voters (Szczerbiak, 2008). This Eurosceptic – and in some extent populist turn of the party – was quite rational (Markowski and Tucker, 2010) after the first European Parliamentary election in 2004 when PiS was only third behind the hard Eurosceptic League of Polish Families. This strategy was successful in the long run due to the collapse of populist parties in governmental position in 2007.

The European Constitution was rejected not only by Eurosceptic parties but also by the Civic Platform (PO), a centre-right pro-EU party. PO opposed the ECT because of the new voting weights and – similarly to the Law and Justice party – due to the lack of Christian values (Gaisbauer, 2007). However, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty – which was negotiated by the Kaczyński cabinet – was opposed by the Law and Justice due to the fact that the party was forced into opposition after the early elections in 2007. Moreover, PiS had to prevent the (re-)emergence of radical right parties. On the other hand, rejecting the treaty was a risky strategy because the ratification needed a constitutional (two-third) majority in the Sejm (lower house). Finally, a compromise was achieved and most PiS MPs voted in favour of the treaty (Table 1) demonstrating the image of a pragmatic party (Dakowska, 2010). Nonetheless, the party joined

the Eurosceptic ECR group in the EP in 2009 which is a clear sign of the party's Eurosceptic nature.

Table 1. Voting results on the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Sejm and in the European Parliament

Party	Sejm				EP			
	Yes	No	Abst	Abs	Yes	No	Abst	Abs
PO	206	0	0	3	13	0	0	0
PiS	89	56	12	2	0	0	8	0
SLD+UP	37	0	0	3	4	0	0	1
SdPL	10	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
PD	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
PSL	31	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
LPR	-	-	-	-	0	2	0	0
SRP	-	-	-	-	2	0	0	0
PSL Piast	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	0
NP	-	-	-	-	0	3	0	0
SD	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	1
MN	1	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
Ind.	7	0	0	0	3	5	0	1
Total	384	56	12	8	29	12	9	4

Source: Sejm (2008); European Parliament (2008)

After the death of president Lech Kaczyński, his twin-brother launched a more pro-European campaign in the run-off of the 2010 presidential election (Rosset, 2011). It illustrates clearly the pragmatist attitude of the party vis-à-vis the European Union. On the other hand, PiS changed its strategy after the 2010 Hungarian election and became more conflictual. It rejects the consensual nature of the Round Table legacy of the regime change (Harper 2010) which is a common feature with the Hungarian governing party (Fidesz).

The party programme contains only a few of concretes except that Poland should remain outside the Eurozone according to the party. Naturally, it emphasises the defence of the national sovereignty and wants to bring Europe back to its roots but the form of this reformed EU remains almost totally unclear. On the one hand, the party wants to introduce the supervision of transferring powers and regards the EU membership as a tool to implement the Polish national interests (PiS, 2014). On the other hand, the party has been in favour of larger fiscal transfer and has supported supranational solutions on several occasions (Bale *et al.* 2010).

To sum up, Law and Justice is basically a Eurosceptic party fundamentally rejecting the idea of a federalist super-state. The party has not softened its Euroscepticism in governmental position and – unlike the Orbán cabinet which modified the criticised acts after confrontation with the European Commission – risks not only the reputation of the country but some possible sanctions. Moreover, the new Polish government led by Beata Szydło (PiS) rejects the EU's proposal about the introduction of the refugee quota (Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier, 2016).

3.2. Czech Republic

The Czech Euroscepticism has been determined by the permanent presence of Václav Klaus in political life on the one hand, and the existence of the strongest communist party in the region on the other hand. Although the EU accession was a key priority of the Czech foreign policy after 1989 (Hanley, 2004a), the integration was criticized by Klaus (prime minister between

1992 and 1997) from a Thatcherite point of view (Hanley, 2008) and by the communist and nationalist parties (Hanley, 2004a). This phenomenon means that – in opposite to Poland and Hungary – Euroscepticism among mainstream parties has always been present in Czechia. Klaus' harsh criticism finally resulted a split and pro-EU members of his Civic Democratic Party (ODS) established a new Euro-federalist free-market liberal organization called Freedom Union (US) (Hanley, 2008).

After ODS lost the 1998 legislative election, its Euroscepticism also changed. The party started to focus on national interest and sovereignty (Hanley, 2008) with some anti-German comments (Hanley, 2004b) in its criticism. After the second consecutive electoral defeat in 2002, Klaus resigned from party leadership. Mirek Topolánek became the new chairman against Klaus' will; however Jan Zahradil – spokesperson for foreign affairs – was elected for First Deputy of the party (Hanley, 2008).

Although the EU accession was supported by ODS (Hanley, 2008) during the referendum campaign in 2003, the party was divided (Hanley, 2004a). Klaus himself – as president of the country – did not question the membership (Hanley, 2008), however, he refused to express his voting intention during the referendum campaign. Moreover, some politician of the party openly opposed the membership (Hanley, 2004a). As far as the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) is concerned, it was also against the membership but accepted it after the referendum (Hanley, 2008). It is important to emphasize that the communist party has never been a real competitor of the Civic Democrats and has not had any major impact on the ODS' European policy.

Klaus' Euroscepticism has been based on three pillars since the enlargement. First of all, he has kept the neo-liberal critique, i.e. he has attacked the 'bureaucratic' and 'overregulated' European Union. In addition, he has also used the sovereigntist argument. Thirdly, his Euroscepticism has been clearly 'Central European' in the sense that he has harshly criticized the conditions of the Czech membership stating that the newly accessed countries are only secondary members of the EU (Hanley, 2004b).

Naturally, both the party and Klaus were against the European Constitution (Rakusanova, 2007). Though Klaus' influence remained very strong within the party, Topolánek tried to moderate ODS' Euroscepticism (Neumayer, 2008) and drove it to the acceptance of a flexible integration (Bale *et al.* 2010). It was clearly demonstrated at the time of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (Table 2). Even if Topolánek himself had his reservations about the treaty (over-integrationist), he found it the best possible compromise. However, he called it a 'dead document' after the fall of his government in 2009 (Bale *et al.* 2010) which opinion demonstrates the difference between the ODS' Euroscepticism in governmental position and in opposition. The party criticized the democracy in the European Union, the system of regional and structural funds and considered the common defense policy unnecessary (Hanley, 2008).

Topolánek resigned in the 2010 legislative election campaign and was replaced by Petr Necas. Necas formed a centre-right coalition government with two pro-EU parties after the election; however, joining the Eurozone was not a priority of the cabinet. Furthermore, the Czech Republic (along with Britain) was one out of the two member states which did not ratify the Fiscal Compact in 2012. The coalition government collapsed due to political scandals and ODS lost voters to a new protest movement called ANO 2011 (Stegmaier and Linek, 2014). The appearance of new political parties is not a new phenomenon in the Czech Republic, two of them gained parliamentary representation in the 2010 elections, and another two reached the electoral threshold in 2013. This process could be explained by the corruption scandals and deepened political crisis (Havlik, 2015).

Table 2. Voting results on the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the Chamber of Deputies and in the European Parliament

Party	Chamber of Deputies				EP			
	Yes	No	Abst	Abs	Yes	No	Abst	Abs
ODS	33	37	9	0	0	0	8	1
ČSSD	71	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
KSČM	0	23	2	1	0	4	0	2
KDU-ČSL	12	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
SZ	4	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
SNK-ED	-	-	-	-	2	0	0	1
NEZ	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	0
NEZ/DEM	-	-	-	-	0	1	0	0
Ind.	5	1	0	1	-	-	-	-
Total	125	61	11	3	5	6	9	4

Source: Chamber of Deputies (2009); European Parliament (2008)

ODS' European policy has not changed in recent years. According to its party program, Civic Democrats reject the euro as a currency and are committed to a more flexible, multi-speed EU (ODS, 2014) with strong emphasis on national interests (ODS, 2016). This clearly illustrates that the party's opposition to the EU origins in its ideology.

3.3. Slovakia

Slovakia differs from the other three Visegrád countries in some ways. First of all, the cabinets of Vladimír Mečiar had conflicts with the EU in the 90s due to the nature of the Slovak democracy. Despite these disagreements, the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) – a populist party led by Mečiar – was in favor of the EU accession for strategic reasons (Henderson, 2008). Albeit HZDS won every Slovak parliamentary election between 1990 and 2002, the party itself can be hardly considered as mainstream in the sense that it failed to integrate into one of the largest party families. Moreover, the categorization of the party is not easy because in its rhetoric HZDS was committed to the EU accession and became clearly pro-EU in opposition (1998-2006) (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002). This ambiguous attitude of the party is perfectly highlighted by the fact that it was categorized as “phoney Europhile” (Henderson, 2008) and “Europragmatist” (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002).

This unclear relation to the EU appeared in the European policy of the Smer in the early 2000s, too. Smer – replaced HZDS as the strongest opposition force during the Dzurinda era – has also been in favor of Slovakia's EU membership, however, it positioned itself as the protector of national interests and demanded to re-open some closed chapters during the accession negotiations. This pragmatist attitude characterized the party line at the time of the first Fico cabinet (2006–10), when Smer formed a coalition government with Mečiar's HZDS and the nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS).

All the centre-right parties – Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Party of the Hungarian Coalition (MKP/SMK) – supported the EU accession of the country. Nevertheless, after Mikulas Dzurinda (then-PM) established SDKU, KDH moved to a more rural and Catholic way and became soft Eurosceptic due to moral issues (Henderson, 2008) (e.g. lack of Christianity) and considered the EU a left-liberal integration (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002). The party surprisingly lost its parliamentary representation in 2016.

The nationalist or sovereignist Euroscepticism has a long history in Slovakia (Henderson, 2008) due to the presence of a radical right party (SNS). The National Party –

similarly to Smer – showed a very pragmatist behavior in governmental position and vote in favor of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (Table 3). On the other hand, the party joined the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group led by hard Eurosceptic Nigel Farage in the EP in 2009. Nationalism has also been represented by the more extremist Our Slovakia party (ĽSNS) since the 2016 legislative election.

Table 3. Voting results on the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the National Council and in the European Parliament

Party	National Council				EP			
	Yes	No	Abst	Abs	Yes	No	Abst	Abs
Smer	50	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
SDKÚ	0	0	0	30	3	0	0	0
MKP	19	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
SNS	18	0	0	1	-	-	-	-
HZDS	14	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
KDH	0	0	0	9	0	0	3	0
KDS	0	4	0	0	-	-	-	-
Ind.	2	1	0	0	-	-	-	-
Total	103	5	1	41	11	0	3	0

Source: National Council (2008); European Parliament (2008)

The salience of the European issue was raised by the Greek bailout and the Slovak contribution to the European Financial and Stability Facility (EFSF) (Haughton, 2014) in autumn of 2011. The four-party centre-right government led by Iveta Radicova (SDKU) had a very narrow majority in the National Council so the vote on the ratification of the EFSF was a vote of confidence in parallel. However, the liberal Freedom and Solidarity Party (SaS) as part of the governing coalition openly opposed the ratification which caused the fall of the government (Meseznikov, 2013)

It is a question whether SaS can be considered as a mainstream or established party. The party was founded in 2009 and has had a protest party nature, however, it has been represented in the parliament since 2010, i.e. it is a relatively 'old' party in the unstable Slovak party system (Haughton, 2014). This paper argues that the only established party among the Eurosceptic ones is the Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) because it is not only a potential participant of a governing coalition (so is the Slovak National Party) but also belongs to one of the four largest European political group (SaS joined the ALDE group originally but changed its affiliation and became a member of the ECR group).

The Euroscepticism of Freedom and Solidarity is very similar to the ODS' one in economic issues. SaS – as a liberal party – is pro-European in cultural and ethical issues; nonetheless, it has a Eurosceptic position in economic affairs (Meseznikov, 2013). The party criticizes the bureaucracy and overregulation of the EU, which is – according to the party program – far from the original values of the integration, and the current European Union lacks a clear vision (SaS, 2016). This criticism perfectly shows that the Euroscepticism of the Freedom and Solidarity origins in the party's core ideology which can override pragmatism (e.g. in the case of the ratification of the EFSF).

3.4. Hungary

In Hungary, all parliamentary parties agreed over the question of the EU membership. This consensus was broken by the appearance of the nationalist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life

(MIÉP) in 1998. A small change could be observed in the European policy of Fidesz as well: while the party urged the quickest possible EU accession in 1994, it emphasized the national interests in 1998 (Batory, 2008). However, the party cannot be considered Eurosceptic that time because Orban (leader of Fidesz and then PM) criticized slow speed of the negotiations (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002).

Fidesz' Euroscepticism is usually explained by Orban's statement (there is life outside the EU). However, the speech was about to urge faster EU accession and not to delay or reject it. No tragedy, if the [EU] accession won't be realized in 2003. We are not now a member of the [European] Union and we can see there is life outside the EU as well. But it is not what we are up to. We urge the integration process because it would give another boost to the economic development (Gazda and Mucsanyi, 1999).

The quote also shows Fidesz' pragmatist approach to the question of the European integration, namely, the party is in favor of the EU accession due to its economic benefits. By the collapse of the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKgP) – an agrarian-populist coalition partner of Fidesz between 1998 and 2002 –, winning the election alone became the main target of the Fidesz-MDF joint list in 2002. During the 2002 election campaign the alliance and mainly Fidesz needed to balance between the centrist voters and the sympathizers of the nationalist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life. Although MIÉP supported the governing coalition in several issues during the parliamentary term (1998-2002), some of the most important politicians of Fidesz (e.g. Laszlo Kover then-leader of the party and Zoltan Pokorni who succeeded Kover in 2001 as party chairman) excluded the possibility to form a coalition with the nationalists. On the other hand, Fidesz had to gain voters from MIÉP to form a government alone. To achieve this goal Fidesz started to emphasize the importance of the national interests.

Some politicians made ambiguous statements about the European Union after the electoral defeat of the party in 2002 but this criticism was rhetorical and was based on cultural disagreements. On the other hand, politicians of Fidesz avoided anti-EU stances and were in favor of more integration in several issues (Enyedi, 2006). The party supported the EU accession during the referendum campaign in 2003. For tactical reasons it seemed to be not Eurosceptic but less pro-EU than the centre-left governing parties (Toth and Torok, 2015) because Fidesz wanted to collect the voters of MIÉP which was the only party rejecting the membership (Batory, 2008).

Table 4. Voting results on the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in the National Assembly and in the European Parliament

Party	National Assembly				EP			
	Yes	No	Abst	Abs	Yes	No	Abst	Abs
MSZP	184	0	0	6	8	0	0	1
Fidesz	114	1	5	19	12	0	0	0
KDNP*	1	3	8	11	-	-	-	-
SZDSZ	19	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
MDF	6	1	1	3	1	0	0	0
Ind.	1	0	0	2	-	-	-	-
Total	325	5	14	42	23	0	0	1

Source: National Assembly (2007); European Parliament (2008)

The campaign of the first European Parliamentary election in Hungary (2004) was silent and based on internal issues. Fidesz attacked some policies of the government (Toth and Torok, 2015) and sent strongly pro-European messages (Enyedi, 2006). The main purpose of the party was punishing the governing parties. The result was a huge success for Fidesz; it received more than 47 per cent of the votes and gained half of the mandates of the country. The

pro-European behavior of Fidesz could be easily observed by the fact that its MPs and MEPs supported both the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty (Duro, 2010). However, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty was among the first issues where Fidesz tried to position its new ally – the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) – on the right of the centre-right alliance (Table 4).

Fidesz introduced a silent campaign for the European Parliamentary elections (Toth and Torok, 2015) and avoided to send concrete messages to keep its large voter base. Although its program contained some statements on the EU such as deepening the cooperation among the member states, increasing the inner cohesion, solitary union focusing on problems and stepping toward the political integration (Fidesz, 2009), the strategy of the party was built on 'economic populism' as anti-restraint politics. Unfortunately, the party has not published any programs containing the European issue since 2009.

The Hungarian party system fundamentally transformed in 2010. The collapse of the leftist parties and the breakthrough of the nationalist Jobbik resulted a three-pole system with the dominance of Fidesz. After election it became clear that Fidesz needed to deal with the phenomenon of not only the weak socialist party but also of the strengthening of Jobbik. Due to this new situation Fidesz changed its strategy to keep its voters and gain back more of them from Jobbik (Toth and Torok, 2015). To achieve this goal, the party introduced unorthodox economic policy to avoid stipulations on the one hand, and approved some symbolic acts (e.g. act on dual citizenship, day of National Cohesion etc.) on the other hand. Additionally, it entered into conflict with the European Union. Nevertheless, the nature of these conflicts was either policy-based (e.g. overhead reduction, distilling home-made spirits) or rested on controversial measures of the Hungarian government (e.g. media law, fourth amendment of the constitution etc.). All the conflicts ended with either the modification or the abolishment of the criticized acts which demonstrates the pragmatist behavior of the party.

By and large, Fidesz cannot be considered as Eurosceptic but rather pragmatist due to its clear pro-European policy in practice, i.e. it has always supported the deepening of the European integration. The reason of its more confrontational rhetoric is a strong and relatively large (over 10 percent of the active voters) group of Eurosceptic voters. This strategy of 'dual speech' has become more relevant since the presence of a strong and clearly Eurosceptic party (Jobbik). This new tripolar party system has helped the Fidesz to prove itself to be the centrist force (Orban himself has used the phrase of 'centripetal force field' many times) which is neither the too pro-EU left nor the Eurosceptic radical right.

4. Conclusion

The target of this study was to give a comprehensive picture about the mainstream parties relation vis-à-vis the European Union in Poland, in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia and in Hungary. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to partly rethink or even clarify the definitions of hard and soft Euroscepticism carried out by Taggart and Szczerbak (2008). Moreover, it also needed to examine not only the mainstream or established parties but also the protest or radical ones because of the logic of the party systems.

In Poland, Law and Justice (PiS), the most powerful Eurosceptic party has been in governmental position since 2015. The party and its leaders (Kaczynski brothers) has always been Eurosceptic, however, it had strategic reasons before the EU accession. Later the party wanted to seem to be the protector of national interests and sovereignty, so it joined Eurosceptic party alliances in the European Parliament and acted as a Eurosceptic party (e.g. it was not supportive in the case of the Lisbon Treaty and Lech Kaczynski as head of state rejected to sign the document until every other member state ratified). Nowadays the party is less flexible or pragmatic than its 'exemplar' (Fidesz in Hungary).

In the Czech Republic Euroscepticism of the mainstream parties all but disappeared due to the collapse of the support of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in 2013. In addition, the party's Euroscepticism was moderated by Mirek Topolánek who led the party between 2003 and

2009. However, influential political actors such as former president Vaclav Klaus remained relevant and powerful players in the political arena.

The difficulty of the Slovak case – in opposite to the Czech, Polish and Hungarian ones – was not to classify the Eurosceptic parties but to define mainstream parties because of the volatile party system. Although there have always been relevant Eurosceptic parties in the party system, most of them belonged to the group of protest and/or radical parties (e.g. Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Slovak National Party or Our Slovakia People's Party). Other EU-critical parties cannot be considered as Eurosceptic due to their policy-based criticism (e.g. Smer). The only relevant mainstream Eurosceptic party is the liberal Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS) which not only opposed the EFSF (causing the fall of the centre-right government) but also joined the Eurosceptic ECR group in the European Parliament instead of the liberal one.

In Hungary, the motive of a more EU-critical rhetoric of Fidesz was strategic after the electoral defeat in 2002 to gain voters from the nationalist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life and it has been strategic to keep the party's electorate since the emergence of a new radical right party. The party is not Eurosceptic because its criticism is mainly policy-based and does not reflect on the very idea of the European integration.

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