

**VISEGRAD
COUNTRIES
AND
MULTISPEED
EUROPE:
PERCEPTIONS,
POSITIONS,
STRATEGIES**

Euro Policy

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FOREWORD

The concept of “multispeed integration” is a re-occurring theme, evoked periodically by both supporters and opponents of deeper integration, when the consensus on the speed and direction of the integration was weak. This also leads to a vagueness of the concept – especially when similar concepts, with partly overlapping meanings, are simultaneously used in the discussion.

This paper discusses the perception of “multispeed integration” in Visegrad countries. It does not have an ambition to provide comprehensive definitions, nor detailed description of the history of this concept. Instead, it focuses on the current debate on the future of the European integration, framed by the years 2014-2019.

The concept of “multispeed integration”, or “multispeed Europe” has a fluid meaning and is regularly used alongside similar, but not fully overlapping terms, such as Europe à la carte, integration core, variable geometry, etc. Our research of public and political discourses in Visegrad countries shows that these concepts are sometimes confused or consciously interchanged.

In order to prevent misunderstandings, we are opening our paper by a brief discussion on the history of the “multispeed integration” concept, and its comparison with similar notions. We proceed with a description of the positions of Visegrad countries vis-à-vis existing, or planned projects of deeper integration.

In the next four chapters we are analysing the use of these concepts in political and public debates in four Visegrad countries, along following lines:

1) Meanings:

What do they mean when they discuss multi-speed Europe / variable geometry of integration / core Europe in (the country)? What concepts dominate public discussions and expert / political discussions? Any development of concepts / focus over time?

2) Sentiments and positions:

How are these concepts perceived among public, in expert circles, by political actors? A threat / an opportunity; a way forward in integration / a step towards disintegration; a way towards stronger Europe / a road to insignificance; etc.? Are there any official positions to this or related issues?

3) Pathways:

In which areas could integration lead to creation of “integration core”? How is (the country) involved /plans to be involved in such cooperation? What processes could lead to such outcome and how do political actors in (the country) perceive it probability?

4) Prominence:

How much is this topic present in the public / expert / political discourse? How is it used?

In the closing part, we are comparing the use and perception of the “multispeed Europe” concept in Visegrad countries, highlighting some similarities and main differences.

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1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT

On March 6th, 2017, on the eve of the Rome summit, the French President François Hollande hosted a meeting of his fellow leaders from Germany, Spain and Italy in Versailles, near Paris. As the EU was preparing to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, leaders of the four largest EU member states (UK being on its way out, after the Brexit referendum), spoke about the need to reinvigorate the integration process by stronger cooperation of like-minded countries.¹

“Unity does not equal uniformity”, French President said to journalists ahead of the working dinner with leaders. He was calling for some member states to “go more quickly” and “further in areas such as defence and the euro-zone, by deepening the economic and monetary union, and by harmonizing fiscal and social policy”.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had previously resisted the idea of “Europe of various speeds” struck a similar chord: “A Europe of different speeds is necessary, otherwise we will probably get stuck. If Europe gets stuck and doesn’t develop further, then this work of peace may run into danger faster than one might think.”

In March 2017 the idea that not all EU member states need to move with the same speed (or even in the same direction) was very much part of the mainstream discourse on the future of the European integration.

In preparation for the Rome summit, the European Commission has published a White Paper on the Future of Europe².

The document proposed five scenarios for the EU by 2025, with differentiated integration (“allow groups of member states to advance at their own pace”) being one of them. In the European Parliament, the Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said that his personal preference would be “doing far more together” – a deeper integration that would involve all existing member states. But given the reluctance of some member states to engage in deeper cooperation he would support the Europe of various speeds.

The Rome summit and the White Book sparked also a more intensive debate in Visegrad countries about risks and opportunities of multispeed integration. Some governments denounced the idea as a danger to the EU (before the Rome summit, Polish government threatened to block the final declaration, if it included the idea of “multispeed Europe”), others were quick to subscribe to the “core Europe” idea (Slovak ex-PM Robert Fico). Before venturing into description of political / public debate in Visegrad countries, we shall briefly sketch the development of the concept.

1.1. From Mertes/ Prill to Macron

The idea that European countries do not have to proceed towards “ever closer union” with the same speed (and some may wish to remain on a wider orbit) emerged with growing diversification of the European communities. In 1989, Michael Mertes and Norbert J. Prill, advisors to the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, used the term “Europe of concentric circles”³ to describe a future possible architecture of the European Commu-

nities that would consist of the core of six original members (Benelux, France, Italy, Germany), surrounded by the second-tier Europe of twelve countries (or 14, if extended to Austria and Norway). This “economic and monetary union” would be surrounded by further European states, particularly EFTA members. The openness would have been an important feature of this structure: all states would have been invited to move to the higher stage of integration⁴.

At that time, this idea should have reconciled the need to deepen the integration (finalisation of the Single Market, plans for a monetary union), and the enlargement of the Communities, with changes in the Communist block opening new horizons.

Mertens and Prill have later re-formulated their idea, arguing for a more flexible structure of overlapping integration projects. For the post-Cold World Europe, a “Europe of Olympic Rings” makes more sense, allowing integration of countries which do not want to enter the monetary union, or the post-Communist countries.⁵

In the same year, 1994, two influential members of the CDU Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers published the paper Reflections on European Politics (in original: Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik)⁶. The institutional, political and economic challenges of widening European Communities – from institutional overstretch, through diversifying interests and perceptions, structural changes in the economies, rise of the regressive nationalism, to the need to integrate post-Communist

1 See for example Goodbye Old EU, Hello New Multi-Speed Europe, in Strategic Culture online journal, 14.03.2017 <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2017/03/14/goodbye-old-eu-hello-new-multi-speed-europe.html> (visited: November 30th, 2018), also Two-speed Europe highlights East-West divide, EURACTIV.com, March 8th, 2017, available at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/two-speed-europe-highlights-east-west-divide/>, visited on November 30th, 2018

2 European Commission: White Paper on the Future of

Europe. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf (visited: October 12th, 2018)

3 Michael Mertes, Norbert Prill: Eine Vision für Europa. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, July 19th, 1989, p. 8.

4 See for example: „An EC Commissioner from the GDR?” Spiegel, October 30th 1989. Available at https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/5d-6fb375-642e-485e-8a6c-8e213d03ab29/publishable_en.pdf, visited on September 30th, 2018.

5 Michael Mertes, Norbert J. Prill: Es wächst zusammen, was zusammengehören will. “Maastricht Zwei” muss die Europäische Union flexibel machen, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, December 9th, 1994, p. 11

6 Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik. Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20160318173446/https://www.cdcsu.de/upload/schaublelamers94.pdf>, accessed on October 12th, 2018.

states of the Central and Eastern Europe – called for a new approach, which would include strengthening of the core (Festigung des Kerns) that would act as an vanguard attracting more states into deeper integration in the future.⁷

Fast forward, the creation of the single currency, the Treaty of Amsterdam, a re-opened discussion on the defence cooperation, and progressive waves of enlargement in the 1990s and 2000s seemed to indicate that the deepening of the integration (albeit with a slower pace) could go hand-in-hand with its widening. Paradoxically, at the same time the “multispeed Europe” became a political reality with opt-outs from Euro, cooperation in JHA, etc., and the EEA agreement creating a sort of “outer ring” around the EU member countries.

It took another integration crisis to return to the same debate about different speeds of integration. The Constitutional Treaty should have been a qualitative step in the European integration. A growing threat of its rejection in one or sever-

al countries reinvigorated the talk about multispeed integration (if voted down by peripheral country/ies), or Europe à la carte (if rejected in core country/ies – which had been the case, in the end)⁸.

From the negative referendums in France and Netherlands on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, European Union is muddling through consecutive (and self-reinforcing) crisis. First, the institutional crisis, partly resolved by the Lisbon Treaty (ratified only after a repeated referendum in Ireland, and against objections of Polish government, and Czech President Klaus); financial crisis of 2007, economic crisis, sovereign debt crisis that developed into an institutional and political crisis of the EMU, the migration crisis, deteriorating security in the close neighbourhoods, etc.

These challenges did not lead to major changes in the EU primary law but initiated institutional and legislative developments within the framework of the existing Treaties, or even outside them. At the time of the publication of

the EC White Paper, the Europe of various speeds (and ambitions) has already been in place.

When the newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron announced in summer 2017 that he would put on table some concrete proposals for the EU reform, which would include strengthening the Eurozone, integration in social policies, defence, migration, etc., among the “coalition of the willing”, he was partly stating the obvious, and partly proposing to formalise the emerging two (or more) -tier structure of the EU.

Besides the “enhanced cooperation” enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty, European Union has a plethora of instruments for strengthened cooperation of a smaller group of countries. Before describing those legal instruments and detailing the participation of the Visegrad countries on existing or planned projects of closer cooperation of less-than-all member states, let’s summarise the definitions of the concepts that are overlapping with the “multispeed Europe”, and which are (or were) used in the debates – sometimes as synonyms, sometimes as alternative approaches.

⁷ See also Gilles Andréani: What future for federalism?, Centre for European Reform Essays, September 2002, ISBN 1-901229-33-5, p. 7-8

⁸ See for example: Europe à la carte. Special Report. The Economist, September 23rd, 2004. Available at <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2004/09/23/europe-a-la-carte>. Visited on September 25th, 2018.

2. DEFINITIONS

The term **Multispeed Europe** is usually used to describe the idea of a method of differentiated integration whereby common objectives are pursued by a group of Member States both able and willing to advance, it being implied that the others will follow later. This term might either have a similar meaning as the “**two-tier Europe**” or “**Europe core vs. Europe periphery**”, if it describes a situation, when a group of “core countries” is integrating at faster speed, with the rest following (if at all) on a later stage (hence the “**two-speed Europe**” term, used as a synonym), or it would be more similar to the “Europe à la carte” model, if the hierarchy of integration speeds could not be easily established.

Concentric circles concept describes a Europe made up of subsets of states

with different levels of integration. The concept does not need to be related to the integration structures, or membership of the European Union. As described in the previous section, in the past the concept has also included countries of the European Free Trade Association, integrated in a wider circle of the EEA, and possibly other non-member states, participating on the cooperation in selected areas (research, defence, etc.)

Europe of Olympic Rings was formulated by Mertens and Prill in 1994; it describes a flexible structure of overlapping integration projects.

Europe à la carte refers to the idea of a method of integration which allows Member States to select policy areas

/ policies where they engage in closer cooperation or deeper integration, while a minimum number of common objectives of all members remains.

Hard core (also Core Europe, or Europe core – periphery) refers to a limited group of countries able and willing to develop closer cooperation. Within (as with euro, or enhanced cooperation), or outside (originally, Schengen) of the EU institutional framework.

Variable-geometry Europe is the term used to describe a method of differentiated integration which, unlike the **multispeed Europe**, allows for a permanent separation between a “core” group of Member States and a number of less developed countries.

3. V4 AND CURRENT DEEPER INTEGRATION PROJECTS

Structure of deeper integration/coordination projects, which do not involve all EU members, have developed over time and now offers a variety of legal instruments. Participation of Visegrad countries in these projects is chequered.

3.1. Legal basis

Instruments for differentiated integration could be divided into two large groups: those enshrined in the EU primary law (opt-outs & post-accession suspensions, enhanced cooperation, permanent structured cooperation, OMC), and Intergovernmental treaties, which could be directly related to the EU institutional and legal structures but are not (not yet) part of the Treaties.

Use of EU symbols would be a special case: an informal consent of some member states to use EU symbols (flag, anthem, motto).

The list of existing or planned project includes:

- Opt-outs & post-accession suspensions: economic and monetary union, Schengen area, CSDP, Charter of Fundamental Rights
- Enhanced cooperation: Applicable Divorce Law⁹, Unitary Patent¹⁰, Property Regimes of international couples¹¹, European Public Prosecutor¹², Financial Transaction Tax (application postponed)¹³,
- Permanent structured cooperation: Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defence¹⁴
- Open Method of Coordination: Euro Plus Pact¹⁵
- Intergovernmental treaties: Prüm Convention¹⁶, European Stability Mechanism¹⁷, Fiscal Compact¹⁸, Single Resolution

Fund¹⁹, Unified Patent Court²⁰

- Informal: EU Symbols

Enhanced cooperation in other areas – such as tax policy, social standards – has been discussed among member states, but no formal proposals have been submitted yet.

3.2. V4 participation

Previous chapter shows that the multi-speed Europe forms so far in three main areas – economic and fiscal policies (mostly related to the EMU), justice and home affairs, external security and defence – with some projects in other areas (patent, tax, symbols).

Visegrad countries participate on most of these deeper integration projects, with Slovakia (unlike other three) fully engaged in the area of economic and fiscal policies (related to EMU membership), and generally less enthusiastic approach to deeper cooperation on JHA (Slovakia, Poland: Divorce rules, Property of international couples; Hungary, Poland: EPPO; etc.).

9 More information: https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_law_applicable_to_divorce_and_legal_separation-356-en.do

10 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/intellectual-property/patents/unitary-patent_en

11 More information: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/06/09/property-regimes-for-international-couples/>

12 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/cross-border-cases/judicial-cooperation/networks-and-bodies-supporting-judicial-cooperation/european-public-prosecutors-office_en

13 More information: http://ec.europa.eu/budget/news/article_en.cfm?id=201302151033

14 More information: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/our-current-priorities/permanent-structured-cooperation>

15 More info: https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/strategic-notes/euro-plus-pact_en

16 More info: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aj0005>

17 More info: <https://www.esm.europa.eu/>

18 Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_DOC-12-2_en.htm

19 While the Single Resolution Mechanism was established on basis of the Article 114 TFEU, to avoid a risk of legal challenges at the request of the Council, certain elements related to the functioning of the Single Resolution Fund (transfer of the contributions collected by the national resolution authorities to the Fund and the mutualisation of the financial resources available in the national compartments) are regulated in an Intergovernmental Agreement between the participating Member States. More info: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-295_en.htm?locale=en

20 More info: <https://www.unified-patent-court.org/>

This situation is summarised in the following table:

	Economic and fiscal policies						Justice and home affairs						Security and defence			Other			
	Euro	ESM	EFC	SRM	Euro+	SRF	Schengen	Charter	Divorce	Property of Int. couples	European Prosecutor	AFSJ	CSDP	Prum Convention	PESCO	Unified Patent	Symbols	FTT	Unified Patent Court
CZ	C	-	-	C	-	-	M	M	-	M	M	M	M	-	M	M	-	-	M
HU	C	-	M	M	-	M*	M	M	M	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	M
PL	C	-	M	C	M	-	M	-	-	-	-	M	M	-	M	M	-	-	-
SK	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

M: member
C: candidate
- : not participating

When it comes to areas of possible enhanced cooperation currently under dis-

cussion, positions of Visegrad countries have been for a long time unanimous – they were rejecting calls for harmonisation or coordination of tax policies, or

social standards. With changed positions of Slovak government on the cooperation in tax policy area, the picture is less uniform.

	Digital tax	Corporate tax base	Social standards
CZ	Openly against	In 2017, the Check Chamber of Deputies called on the government to change framework position on CCCTB; it called the proposal “as an appropriate tool against erosion of the tax base and shifting of profits”.	Policy Statement of the Government (2018) promises to “push for greater use of Union instruments and policies to pursue the convergence of wages, standards of living and social standards across Member States”.
HU	Prefers a global solution, but in favour of EU tax	Against, supports Ireland’s position (tax as a key element of competition)	Against any harmonisation
PL	Supports EU tax	Unlike in 2011, Poland did not openly reject the proposal.	Support for cooperation on better convergence of social standards, but sceptical about hard legislation in the area, which may affect common market (posted workers directive).
SK	Supports EU digital tax	Open to participation, subject to conditions (wide tax base)	Wait-and-see approach, an openness to common standards or tools indicated

In the next four chapters we will compare the structure and intensity of the debate on the “multispeed Europe” in four Visegrad countries, focusing on

five elements: meanings, prominence, pathways, positions and stakeholders.

4. MEANINGS

4.1. Czech Republic

Publication of the EC White Paper on the Future of Europe, especially its third scenario – “Those who want more do more” – coupled with President Juncker’s initial tendency to favour this scenario set off a period of heated discussions in the Czech Republic. The local political scene’s source of unease was the clear starting point of the multispeed scenario – only Member States which have adopted the euro could become the “core”, the others will fall behind and become “periphery”.

Nevertheless, although the common currency has become a central topic of discussions – mainly because of its ambiguous prospect – it certainly has not been the only talking point. The Czech Republic has been participating (unlike some Member States), in, for instance, the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO), the Schengen Area, or the establishment of a new European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO).

The Czech Republic has been rather negative about the euro. According to the Flash Eurobarometer 453²¹ (introduction of the euro in the Member States that have not yet adopted the common currency) from May 2017²², only 29% of

Czech respondents are in favour of introducing the euro in the country, amounting to the survey’s low. At the same time, 62% of respondents believe the euro will have negative consequences for the Czech Republic. There is no other MS which is more sceptical about the euro adoption than the Czech Republic.

The perception of the euro by the general public as well as the stance of local political parties made the possibility of moving towards the adoption unlikely in 2017²³. At the same time the membership in Eurozone became almost a synonym for the being in the core while discussing multispeed Europe.

4.2. Hungary

Right after Fidesz gained 2/3 majority for the third time in a row, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán confirmed²⁴ that he supports the “Europe of nations” concept over a federalist system. The institutional future of the EU is highly politicised in Hungary, which has been mirrored accurately by the fact that the Hungarian government has amended the Constitution for the 7th time by using the global migration processes and the allegedly growing federalisation aspirations within the European Union.²⁵

Since Fidesz came to power in 2010 most of its energy were taken up by “stopping Brussels”. Since 2015 the government has spent 100 million Euros for a public advertisement campaign claiming that the Hungarian originated American bil-

lionaire George Soros together with the Commission are willing to undermine statehood and national sovereignty by flooding Europe with illegal migrants. The Orbán government is aiming to polarize both the national and European field by claiming that anyone who is criticizing the Hungarian government due to its increasingly authoritarian system is about to undermine national sovereignty, willing to destroy nation states and most certainly showcases pro-immigrant sentiments. According to Viktor Orbán in a nutshell, the Hungarian government do not want a United States of Europe, because that would mean an „immigrant-continent“ with an „immigrant Europe“ and it would make Hungary sn „immigrant country“.²⁶

The approach of the Hungarian government towards the future of the European integration is dominated by three broad lines:

- The Hungarian Government is not willing to transfer further competencies to the Commission, it would rather curb the power of Brussels institutions and preserve national sovereignty in more areas.
- It opposes the creation of any kind of core Europe by institutionalizing exclusive structures.
- It finds certain flexibility acceptable but only if there is a chance for the member states remaining out to be able to join later.

21 European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 453 Report Introduction of the Euro in the Member States That Have Not yet Adopted the Common Currency, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/2187>.

22 The survey was published in May 2017; fieldwork was done in April 2017. It is important to highlight that the Czech Republic had faced a positive growth in terms of trust in the EU – it grew by two in the Spring 2018 – Autumn 2017 period (in comparison, Slovakia dropped by six). In the current Flash EB 456 from May 2018, the proportion of those in favour was higher by four percentage points. More about the Flash EB 465 at <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/FLASH/surveyKy/218787>; and about the Standard EB 89 at <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2180>.

23 Comprehensive information about the eurozone and its future in the country at <http://www.narodnikonvent.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Česká-republika-a-eurozóna-Analýza-ÚV.pdf>

24 <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20180410-orban-viktor-nemzetkozi-sajtotajekoztato.html>

25 <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-justice/news/the-constitution-needs-to-be-amended-because-of-migration-and-eu-federalisation-aspirations>

26 <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/orban-viktor-beszede-az-ig-azsagugyi-zsebtorvenyter-bemutatasan/>

The Orbán government rejected any integration-related concepts that were not about keeping the 28 – and now the 27 – member states together for a long time. However, in autumn 2017 government representatives openly admitted that a multi-speed EU would be good for Hungary. Deputy State Secretary for EU Affairs at the Ministry for Prime Minister's Office Balázs Molnár claimed that “the two-speed Europe (Eurozone and members outside of it) is not acceptable for the Hungarian government, the multi-speed operation is already a reality and the government will continue to support this model in the future. This means that as long as they adhere to the EU treaties all member states must be allowed to progress and join the deepening integration (for example in the form of enhanced cooperation) as fast as the given member state wants to.”²⁷ According to Szabolcs Takács, State Secretary of EU Affairs “a two-speed Europe might mean such a deep division that eventually it would be the end of the EU in its present form”.²⁸ With this approach Fidesz might want to “kill two birds with one stone”: to strengthen national sovereignty further and to avoid any institutionalized structure that would result in permanent separation between a “core” Europe and the periphery.

The Orbán government stressed that “the EU could set up a kind of matrix of different strengthened cooperation with the overarching goal and principle being competitiveness.” The real challenge for the Hungarian government would be if it had to position itself in a two-speed integration with a core group of member states that are aiming to deepen integration on the basis of the Eurozone. Fidesz's long-term interest is the maintenance of the “open gate” nature of EU policies while avoiding the formation of any institutional inner core with veto potential.

Contrary to that, a major part of the Hungarian opposition would rather move forward with the core states and perceive any opt-outs as a threat of marginalization. Due to the longstanding destructive anti-EU campaigns of Fidesz, opposition parties' strategies were built on pro-EU stance, even though they were far from homogenous.

Parties such as the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), the Democratic Coalition (DK) and the Momentum are willing to join the core Europe to strengthen the EU and the Hungarian membership in order to gain protection from the union against Fidesz. They are advocating for the adoption of the euro and they interpret multispeed EU in binary terms, meaning that growing number of enhanced cooperation might automatically lead to a two-speed structure, therefore it is not worthy to be opted out in the long run.

Smaller parties such as Együtt and Párbeszéd also show pro-EU stance and willing to avoid Hungary being left behind on the periphery in a two-speed structure. Green oppositional Politics Can be Different (LMP) has undergone a pro-EU shift before the parliamentary elections in 2018: the formerly soft-euro-sceptic party has proposed a series of community solutions such as tax harmonization, minimum wage and the introduction of a European social minimum and the adoption of the Euro.

Democratic Coalition led by former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány represents a clearly federalist approach by advocating for the United States of Europe. Instead of a multispeed concept the party openly advocates for a European Constitution with federal government, common foreign, defence, social and economy policy.²⁹

The Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Better Movement for Hungary, Jobbik), which used to be strongly Eurosceptic, but changed its approach while aiming to become a centrist people party since 2015, prefers the concept of “Europe of nation states” and advocates stronger national sovereignty. While the party used to burn EU-flags in 2012 and objected EU integration from, Gábor Vona, former president of the party was representing a differentiated approach and he was even advocating the introduction of the Euro in 2017.³⁰ Even though one of the most important tools of Jobbik's repositioning effort was launching the wage union initiative through which the party was aiming to extend its diplomatic relations in the EU³¹, Jobbik remained a Eurosceptic party with a more pragmatic approach.

4.3. Poland

Polish politicians and experts are unequivocally critical of the ideas, like a multi- or two-speed Europe. Therefore today, the main point of contention is about the blame for pushing Poland away from the core of the European integration into the back row. This perception of the multispeed integration as a threat was apparent in the positions of the Polish government before the Rome summit in March 2017³², and many other occasions. In December 2017, Poland's PM Mateusz Morawiecki, refused the idea in the national parliament: „We don't want a union of two speeds,” he told Poland's parliament in December 2017. “We do not agree to Europe being divided into better ones and worse ones, where stronger nations are favoured. That's not right.”³³

Similar sentiment was shared by the Polish President Andrzej Duda. “A division of the Union into a multi-speed union will not be beneficial ... politically, will not be beneficial economically”, he said at the Krynica forum in 2017. Duda warned that it will ultimately lead to the breakup of the EU.³⁴

For the government and right-leaning experts, the side-lining of Warsaw is Brussels' fault, while the opposition and the left, blame the Polish government.

On the one hand, the partisan divide in Poland is binary – there are two fortress-es entrenched against each other. One consists of the government's Law and Justice (PiS) party politicians and its supporters, the other of their political opponents. Opposition politicians and voters are usually overwhelmingly Euro-enthusiastic, while the views of government's supporters are harder to define, as they are both Euro-enthusiastic and Euro-critical, and also full of scorn for the Brussels' outlandish elites.

The government and its supporters seek roots of the ideas such as multi- or two-speed Europe in the ‘diktat’ of Brussels,

27 <http://www.portfolio.hu/unios-forrasok/gazdasagfejlesztes/tobbsebessleges-eu-t-akar-a-magyar-kormany-de-mi-legyen-a-forinttal.264527.html>

28 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-hungary/two-speed-europe-could-be-end-of-eu-in-its-present-form-hungarian-state-sec-idUSKBN1941EB>

29 http://web.dkp.hu/dk/DK_valasztasi_programja.pdf

30 Serdült Viktória, „Van olyan dolog, amiben még az MSZP és a Jobbik is egyetért”. 2017. október 27. <https://zoom.hu/2017/10/27/van-olyan-dolog-amiben-meg-az-mszp-es-a-jobbik-is-egyeter>

31 http://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=2241

32 Poland promises to fight idea of multi-speed Europe at EU summit. Reuters, March 20th, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-eu-kaczynski-idUSKBN16R1NJ> Visited on November 10th, 2018

33 Hungary and Poland's multispeed Europe. Politico.eu, October 24th, 2018. <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-mateusz-morawiecki-hungary-poland-euro-rule-of-law-migration-multispeed-europe/> Visited on November 10th, 2018

34 Polish president says “multispeed” EU will lead to breakup of block. Reuters, September 5th, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-eu-duda/polish-president-says-multi-speed-eu-will-lead-to-break-up-of-bloc-idUSKCN1BG2AJ> Visited on November 10th, 2018

or Berlin (and now Berlin-Paris axis), which is perceived as almost synonymous with the EU rule. Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz in his foreign policy exposé (March 2018) verbalized this view, criticising the European Commission for acting like a “super-government”.³⁵

The line of argumentation goes as follows: European ‘elites’ wanted to impose on sovereign states – e.g. Poland and other (mostly V4) countries – mandatory refugee quotas. However, as we – sovereign states – opposed this idea through the democratic will of our citizens, these European ‘elites’ want to take revenge and push us away to the second-speed circle of the European integration. Additionally, as minister Czaputowicz put it, the EU uses “double standards” in dealing with its members. This, according to him, is especially visible with respect to the rule of law, where the EU is “departing from its role of an objective guardian of treaties to become an instrument in the hands of the largest states”³⁶ (meaning, as above, Germany and France).

For the government and the right-leaning experts of Poland – but also for the V4 leaders – the preferred model of integration is based on an inter-governmental approach. As professor Tomasz G. Grosse believes, the best model for European integration would mean “maintaining the ‘Europe of Sovereign Nations’ [Europe of the Fatherlands, originally: “Europa Ojczyzn”], which means giving the power back to the member states, respecting the rule of equality of the member states with respect to the EU treaties (article 4 TUE), respecting their national identity (article 4 TUE) and the principle of conferral (article 5 TUE) “. The Poland’s government shares his view.

This intergovernmental model of further integration would allow every country to shape its policies according to its own political will, unbothered by supranational rules and expectations. The government and like-minded experts believe that this model of integration is much more democratic than the one the EU espouses now or aspires to embrace in the future. Today’s Europe shapes European integration “according to the pref-

erences of a narrow group making up for the integration vanguard” – professor Grosse explains. While “the EU should extend the range of integrational diversity, as this is the only form of respecting the treaties-borne principle of democracy (article 2 TUE). This means that if voters in some countries are not ready for the advancement of integration – they should not be forced to accept it, because it would mean that there is deficit of democracy in their country”.

4.4. Slovakia

Once an integration laggard, Slovakia is now “the most deeply integrated” country in the V4 – the main objective being the membership of the Eurozone. After a “Eurosceptic interlude” of 2015/2016, its political elites have rediscovered attractiveness of the European integration. Unlike Orban or Kaczynski, who are calling for looser EU and stronger nation states, the Slovak former Prime Minister Fico was openly proclaiming that Slovakia’s place is in the “core of Europe” and his government is ready to “pay the price”.³⁷

This strong pro-European turn from summer 2017 (at least at the rhetorical level), markedly different from Fico’s statements in 2015/16, was motivated by external and internal factors. Internally, it’s part of his strategy to shift the political discourse in Slovakia from domestic problems (like corruption, problems in education system, etc.) to a field that he could more easily dominate, to isolate part of the political opposition (especially the Eurosceptic SAS party), and limit the appeal of his current ally, the Slovak National Party, which is traditionally more EU-critical.

Externally, it was probably provoked by intensified European discussion about the reform of the EU, multi-speed integration, and the creation of the core that would leave out (some) of the new member states.³⁸

However, after the government crisis in April-May 2018 led to the resignation of Robert Fico, and formation of a new government of Peter Pellegrini, situation became less transparent. Officially, Slovak government still supports our participation in the “Europe core” but this strongly pro-EU (and pro-Western) sentiment seems to be shared only by one of the members of the government coalition: Most-Híd.

The chairman of the Slovak National Party Andrej Danko, who is also the President of the national parliament, is cultivating relations with Russia, and openly supports the style of politics of Victor Orbán. Robert Fico, who is still the chairman of SMER-SD, now talks more about foreign conspiracies that pushed him from power, than about the need to remain part of the “core Europe”.

Major part of the democratic opposition shares a generally positive approach to the EU membership.³⁹ The most visible exception would be Sloboda a Solidarita (CER), led by Richard Sulík. It’s program document Manifest eurorealizmu (Manifest of the Eurorealism) is sceptical towards the participation in the “core Europe”, if it should entail risk sharing in the monetary union, or deeper integration in tax or social policies.⁴⁰

The far-right party Kotleba-ĽSNS, represented in the national parliament, refuses participation on deeper integration. After the Brexit referendum, the party started to register signatures for a referendum on an EU membership.

35 We are committed to EU, but Commission is not a „super-government“. EURACTIV.com, March 21st, 2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-europe/news/polish-fm-we-are-committed-to-eu-but-commission-is-no-super-government/>

36 Ibid.

37 On September 10th, 2017, R. Fico effectively supported common European income tax rate, European minimum wage, and common social standards. TA3 TV: V politike. 10.9. 2017. Available at <http://www.ta3.com/clanok/1112465/napate-vztahy-v-koalicii-aktualne-politicke-dianie-zdravotnictvo-po-novom.html>

38 When the new French President Emmanuel Macron met Visegrad leaders in Brussels at the margins of the June EU summit, Fico distanced himself from negative Polish and Hungarian reactions, bluntly saying: „I am antirely convinced that Germany and France will gear up and will demand a deeper cooperation and integration, especially of the Eurozone members. I support that we should be part of it. “See for example EurActiv.sk: Fico sa prihlásil k Macronovi, ostatní lídri V4 ho ďalej kritizujú. 23.6. 2017. Available at <https://euractiv.sk/clanky/vysehradska-skupina/fico-sa-prihlasil-k-macronovi-ostatni-lidri-v4-ho-dalej-kritizuju/> (5.9. 2017). In August 2017, Slovak and German ministries of foreign

affairs signed a memorandum on structured cooperation on EU policies, creating a platform for dialogue and coordination on political and expert levels.

39 See for example: Zuzana Gabrižová, Radovan Geist: Rozšírenie bojového poľa? Analýza postojuv a programov slovenských politických strán pred voľbami do Národnej rady SR 2016. EURACTIV.sk, available at: https://www.academia.edu/33701642/E%C3%9A_vo_vo%C4%BEB%C3%A1ch_2016_Roz%C5%A1irenie_bojov%C3%A9ho_po%C4%Ba_visited_on_November_15%2018

40 Manifest eurorealizmu. Sloboda a solidarita. Available at: <https://www.sas.sk/detail/4060/manifest-eurorealizmu/obsah> Visited on November 16th, 2018

5. PROMINENCE

5.1. Czech Republic

In 2018, discussion on the multispeed Europe is lukewarm. The general perception of the issue, as shown in the report, remains negative, but not actively debated. The only current statement on this topic was given by Prime Minister Andrej Babiš during the GLOBSEC 2018 Bratislava Forum. He said that: “I do not like the concept of a two-speed Europe that a priori divides Europe into two categories. If we are to adopt the concept of multispeed Europe, then (only) if it divides Europe into small clubs and simultaneously all Member States can join in, and if it does not disturb the common market, [...] No Member State should ever be excluded from the process of creating and approving decisions in the single market.”

Actually, the fear from the division of the Europe is still on the table. But it is not connected to the multispeed Europe but to East and West division of Europe. The current priority of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the Europe is to keep the EU united and functional and to not let Europe divide into East and West. The topic is neither discussed at academic level. There was no relevant study on this topic published this year, prominent research papers appeared in 2016 and 2017

5.2. Hungary

When it comes to the future architectural design of the EU, the Hungarian government prefers to frame the debate in terms of “federalists vs. souverenists”, without elaborating on the risks or opportunities that the multi-speed integration might bring to Hungary and the EU. The Orbán government has announced in October 2018 that it launched its own national campaign⁴¹ about the future of the European Union by organizing public discussions in the Hungarian countryside on the importance of national sovereignty. So far the agenda was mainly focusing on the basic narrative of the Orbán government, claiming that the EU is being divided by those who are against migration and aiming to preserve national sovereignty versus those who are on the side of the “open society” and willing to

build up the United States of Europe.⁴² Their main concern is that a Europe of different speeds may lead to dominance by larger countries. Another recurring argument of the party is that influential bigger member states want to silence smaller/dissident countries on important issues with qualified majority voting format.

5.3. Poland

The concept of a multi-speed Europe is very much present in the public discourse, mostly in its more concrete variety of a two-speed Europe – where Poland would move with a slower speed. The intensity of the discussion is influenced by the intensity of the internal political campaign – participation on closer European cooperation being one of the conflict lines between government, and the main opposition parties.

Rome summit held in March 2017, EC White paper, as well as ongoing conflict with the EU institutions provide external impetus⁴³ that moves this topic towards the centre of the political debate, generally reducing its complexity to in-out question.

5.4. Slovakia

In Slovakia, the debate on the “core Europe” or “multispeed integration” follows also the logic of political quarrels between the government and the coalition, or among government coalition parties. SMER-SD seized upon this topic in 2012-16⁴⁴, while ruling in the single-party government, and then again in summer 2017 after the election victory of Emmanuel Macron gave a new impetus to the idea of “multispeed integration”.

This rhetoric support of the membership in the EU core was interrupted by a conflict around the migration policy, which had put Slovak government at odds with the most EU partners (including Germany, France),

and EU institutions. At that time, PM Robert Fico preferred to talk about the Visegrad cooperation, as a counterweight to influence of “big EU members”, such as Germany. For example, on November 2016 at the Comenius University in Bratislava, he talked about Visegrad countries as our “closest allies” in the EU politics, which together muster more votes in the EU Council, than Germany.⁴⁵

Less than a year later, in June 2017, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and a seasoned diplomat Ivan Korčok said: “If we really want to discuss, if (we should choose) the European Union or V4, then I say now without any hesitation – the Union. V4 is only a pragmatic instrument. When and where it suits us all, we are trying to increase our weight and influence.”⁴⁶ Then PM Robert Fico, and other leading political figures, echoed the sentiment and diligently avowed to the Macron’s “core Europe”.⁴⁷

A political crisis that started in March 2019 and led to resignation of the PM Robert Fico and his replacement by Peter Pellegrini put the topic on a backburner. While the official representatives of the governing coalition still proclaim that Slovakia should belong to the core Europe (most recently Robert Fico on the SMER-SD party congress), or at least do not openly question it (Slovak National Party), political discussions focus more in internal political issues, or general orientation of the Slovak foreign policy.

This may be changed in the approaching presidential and EP elections. However, presidential campaign will be most probably dominated by internal political issues (corruption, rule of law, etc.), and EP elections will most probably remain a low-profile affair.

⁴⁵ See for example: V4 and the Future of the EU: A good perspective or a dead end? FES Slovakia, available at <http://www.fes.sk/news-events-publications-detail-ge/v4-and-the-future-of-the-eu-a-good-perspective-or-a-dead-end/?L=1&cHash=07839b548e265432fd86494433ab7b7>, visited on November 10th, 2018

⁴⁶ EurActiv.sk: Ivan Korčok: Ak si máme vybrať medzi Úniou a V4, vyberieme si Úniu. (19.6. 2017). Available at <https://euractiv.sk/clanky/buducnost-eu/ivan-korcok-ak-si-mame-vybrat-medzi-uniou-a-v4-vyberieme-si-uniu/> (9.9. 2017)

⁴⁷ For an overview of this debate see for example: Radvan Geist: Slovakia: Squaring the Visegrad Circle. In: Ania Skrzypek, Maria Skora (eds.): The Future of the Visegrad Group. Das Progressive Zentrum, 2017. Available at https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Future-of-the-Visegrad-Group_2018_english.pdf, visited on November 10th, 2018

⁴² <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/miniszterelnokseg/eu-ropai-unios-kapcsolatokert-felelos-allamtitkar/hirek/mi-sze-retnekn-megorizni-europat-ugy-ahogy-megismertuk>

⁴³ For an overview of Polish position on multispeed integration before 2017, see for example Agnieszka K. Cianciara: Differentiated Integration and the Future of Europe. Debate in Poland. In: Yearbook of Polish European Studies, 17/2014, pp.124-147. Available at https://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/pliki/pw/17-2014_cianciara.pdf Visited on November 20th, 2018.

⁴⁴ Already in 2012, Robert Fico said that Slovakia should be in the core of Europe “at any price”. Noviny.sk: V jadre EÚ treba byť za každú cenu, July 20th, 2012. Available at: <https://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/105662-priprava-na-predseditvo-eu-bude-nas-to-stat-miliony>, Retrieved on November 29th, 2018

⁴¹ https://hvg.hu/itthon/20181019_Orszagjarasba_kezd_az_Or-bankormany

6. PATHWAYS

6.1. Czech Republic

Czech disinterest in the euro cannot be generalised to inspect the whole issue. Czechs are very concerned about security. Moreover, they are aware of their propensity and have established their attempts of being part of the mainstream on this issue.

6.1.1. Security first

Czech citizens are among the most security-conscious nations in the Union. According to the Standard Eurobarometer 87 from May 2017, “terrorism” is the most mentioned issue by Czechs (amounting to 59%, only Lithuanians saw it as a bigger issue). The second most-mentioned issue is “immigration”.⁴⁸

The government’s concertation on security was evident. Tomáš Prouza, former State Secretary for European Affairs until March 2017, said that: “Citizens feel safe only if they are certain that they live in an area with fully controlled external borders and are assured that the authorities have enough tools to keep them safe.”⁴⁹ The current State Secretary for European Affairs claimed in August 2017 that: “The Czech Republic is actively involved in the debate on the future of the EU and is one of the drivers in deepening defence cooperation among Member States. It is our active approach to defence and security that proves that the Czech Republic is at the core of European integration.”⁵⁰

This effort was emphasised by The De-

fence and Security Conference Prague, organised in June 2017 and opened by President Jean-Claude Juncker, HR/VP Federica Mogherini and Rose Gottemoeller, NATO Deputy Secretary General. The conference concentrated on the necessary strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy as well as the EU-NATO partnership.⁵¹

Country has been involved in activities aimed at strengthening security and defence within the European Union since 2003⁵². For this reason, the Czech Republic has been supporting the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) from the very beginning, was one of the initiators of this cooperation, and is committed to fulfilling the criteria of the above-mentioned cooperation established in November 2017. The country’s trump is that not all Member States have joined PESCO⁵³ and thus is in the core of security and defence cooperation. Furthermore, the country has already joined three PESCO projects⁵⁴ and become an observer of several projects⁵⁵. Currently, the Czech Republic is waiting for the European Defence Agency’s decision on its three own projects concerning weapons of mass destruction, pilot training for the new generation of L-39 aircraft from the Czech aircraft company Aero Vodochody, and the third project is focused on electronic countermeasures.

The Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic from 27 June 2018 articulates aims of the Czech Republic within the PESCO framework as follows:

“In particular, we will focus on the urgent need for more effective border protection in the Schengen area, the need for EU-led battlegroups reform towards greater deployability and support the involvement of the Czech defence industry in projects co-financed by the European Defence Fund”⁵⁶.

6.1.2. Schengen area

The Schengen Area and its free movement of people enabling citizens to cross internal borders without being subjected to border checks⁵⁷ is an important area of closer cooperation, which does not involve all member states. It puts the Czech Republic in the core of the EU, unlike six MS who have not – willingly or unwillingly – joined the Area. The common denominator of the Eurozone and the Schengen Area is the idea that all Member States should join the grouping at some point although it is unlikely given countries’ preferences or current development⁵⁸.

This opinion is shared by Czech politicians. For instance, leader of pro-European TOP 09 party Jiří Pospíšil thinks that multispeed Europe already exists, regarding the existence of the Schengen area, Eurozone and the EPPO. On the other hand, he believes that multispeed principle cannot be used when it comes to the EU fundamental principles (e.g. single market). Pospíšil suggests that, at first, members should try to negotiate a common action. And, only if they would not be able to reach agreement, they should approach to multispeed Europe⁵⁹.

48 European Commission, “Standard Eurobarometer 87,” 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/comfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2142>.

49 Euractiv.cz, “Budoucnost EU: Má Visegrád plán?,” 2017, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/budoucnost-eu-ma-visegrad-plan/>.

50 Euractiv.cz, “Euro nesmí být podmínkou pro spolupráci. ČR bude v jádru EU díky společné obraně,” 2017, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/do-jadra-eu-chceme-misto-spolecne-meny-ale-nabizime-spolecnou-obranu-rika-vlada/>.

51 More about the conference at <https://www.vlada.cz/en/evropske-zalezitosti/aktualne/defence---security-conference-prague-156333/>

52 Michal Kořan et al., “Česká Republika ve Společné Bezpečnosti a Obranné Politice EU: Audit a Perspektivy,” 2015, [http://www.cevroinstitut.cz/upload/ck/files/PCTR/Publikace/2015/policy paper ČR ve SBOP EU \(web\).pdf](http://www.cevroinstitut.cz/upload/ck/files/PCTR/Publikace/2015/policy%20paper%20ČR%20ve%20SBOP%20EU%20(web).pdf).

53 Denmark, Malta and the United Kingdom decided not to join PESCO

54 Out of 17 so far

55 Euractiv.cz, “Ministři obrany schválili 17 projektů v rámci posílené spolupráce PESCO. Česko chce stát v čele tří z nich,” 2018, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/ministri-obrany-schvalili-17-projektu-v-ramci-posilene-spoluprace-pesco-cesko-chce-stat-v-cele-tri-z-nich/>.

56 Vláda České republiky, “Programové Prohlášení Vlády České Republiky,” 2018, <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/sites/default/files/2142883-2018-cerven-programove-prohlaseni-vlady-cerven-2018.pdf>.

57 European Commission, “Schengen Area,” n.d., https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen_en.

58 Dominik Bergmann and Lukáš Hendrych, “Odborný podklad think-tanku Evropské hodnoty Vicerchlostní Evropa,” 2016, <https://www.evropskehodnoty.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Vicerchlostni-Evropa.pdf>.

59 Česká televize, “Události, Komentáře (23. Března 2017),” 2017, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/po>

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is considered as another example of multispeed Europe favouring the Czech Republic, which is 20 Member States that are part of the enhanced cooperation.

6.2. Hungary

6.2.1. Monetary union

So far, Orbán government has given no indication that it wants Hungary to move towards the fast lane aiming to achieve deeper economic integration. There still is no substantial discussion on adopting the euro from within governmental circles which indicates that Fidesz is still not interested in the European Monetary Union (EMU) and has no target date of joining the Eurozone. The government's position is in line with the Governor of the Hungarian National Bank (HNB) György Matolcsy,⁶⁰ meaning that adopting the euro would be economically rational if Hungary GDP per capita measured by purchasing power standard (PPS) was 80-85% of the EU average.

Another recurring argument is that less developed countries such as Hungary should pursue their control over monetary policy. Currently Hungary meets all economic criteria in order to adopt the joint currency, but it still does not participate in the ERM II exchange rate mechanism, therefore it does not meet the fifth formal condition (i.e. the stabilisation of the national currency rate against the euro). Given that according to Mihály Varga, Minister of Finance, Hungary is already prepared to formally adopt the fixed exchange rate system, it signals that there is a certain lack of political will to participate in the ERM II. In 2017 the Hungarian government even declared that it does not want to try to get an observer seat in the Eurogroup despite the fact that there are a large number of economic regulations that could be important for non-Eurozone member states, and most of these are decided on in the Eurogroup meetings preceding ECOFIN sittings.⁶¹

On the rhetoric level, Fidesz would support Macron's idea on strengthening fiscal capacities of the Eurozone but with conditions. The Hungarian government

would consider deeper economic cooperation to help the Eurozone succeed a possibility, but only if the unity of the single market and equality in terms of competition are ensured, and if those deciding to remain outside of the Eurozone can freely decide to join later.

But Fidesz will most certainly not support Macron's separate budget concept. According to Szabolcs Takács, "Hungary's interest is a strong and stable Eurozone, but a separate Eurozone fiscal capacity can only be created if its burden is carried solely by the Eurozone members and if its establishment does not affect EU policies negatively, most importantly those concerning the Single Market."⁶²

Contrary to that, the leftist opposition parties (MSZP, DK) are unambiguously support euro adoption by stressing the systemic risk of staying out of the currency union. Their general assumption is that the "core Europe" will evolve around the EMU and Hungary might be marginalized on the periphery if it does not adopt the euro as soon as possible. Therefore, they support the establishment of a European Economic Government with separated EU budget and the position of the European Finance Minister. Even the previously hard-Eurosceptic Jobbik (better Movement for Hungary) decided in 2017 that they would adopt the common currency in power already in 2019.⁶³

Opposition stakeholders are mainly advocating that Hungary should joining the Eurozone in order to avoid marginalization within the EU. Hungarian Socialist Party has been advocating that Hungary should joining the Eurozone as soon as possible. MSZP launched a petition⁶⁴ in favour of the introduction of the single currency. Within the campaign, István Újhelyi (MEP in S&D) were claiming that "Viktor Orbán's politics aims to get the EU to step aside. It is obvious that he does not dare to ask the voters about our EU membership, so that he leaves it in a two-speed Europe, where the majority of the member states overtake us."⁶⁵

Újhelyi has also established a pro-European movement called Radical European Democrats (RED) through which he is propagating "Macronist" ideas about deepening integration on the basis of

the Eurozone, stressing that Hungary could not be allowed to miss out on tighter European integration. Újhelyi has also offered to the French Embassy that RED would be willing to fill the vacuum left by Fidesz and facilitate Macron's citizens' consultation on the EU in Hungary.⁶⁶

Green members of the European parliament such as Benedek Jávor were emphasizing the importance of social convergence and warned against the institutionalization of a two-speed EU where less developed countries might be left behind. Jávor is also outspoken about establishing an integrated energy union which is being opposed by Fidesz.⁶⁷

6.2.2. EPPO

One of the most debated institutional aspect of the flexible integration is whether Hungary should join the European Prosecutor's office. According to Transparency International, Hungary is ranking second to last in the corruption perception index only with Bulgaria ahead within the EU. Hungary occupies second place in the ranking of per capita EU support, and the share of EU subsidies affected by fraudulent practices is the highest in the country among EU member states. These high-profile corruption cases are not being prosecuted by the Hungarian Prosecutor's General Office which is led by Orbán's ally.

While Fidesz has no intention of taking part in the enhanced cooperation for the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO)⁶⁸ which would tackle cross-border crime against the EU budget, an independent Hungarian MP Ákos Hadházy⁶⁹ has launched a petition that aims at Hungary joining the newly set up anti-corruption watchdog. It is backed by the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Párbeszéd, Momentum and his former party, Politics can be different (Lehet Más a Politika, LMP), however the later has joined a similar gathering of signatures within the European Citizen's Initiative.

Jobbik has not endorsed the petition formally but proposed a similar bill in the National Assembly during the summer. Although one million collected signatures will not compel the government

66 <https://fuhu.hu/red-lepett-magyar-kormany-helyett/>

67 https://www.europatarasag.hu/sites/default/files/csatolmanyok/perc_3_netre_1.pdf

68 <https://budapestbeacon.com/european-public-prosecutors-office-established-without-hungarys-participation/>

69 <https://444.hu/2018/09/24/mire-jo-az-europai-ugyesszeg-es-miert-gyujtenek-egymillio-alairast-hogy-magyarorszag-csatlakozzon-hozza>

60 https://index.hu/chart/2016/09/14/ha_matolcsy_igaz-at_mond_soha_nem_lesz_euronk/

61 https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20180609_Varga_Mihaly_Nem_kell_sietni_az_euro_bevezetesevel

62 <http://visegradinfo.eu/index.php/80-articles/570-post-2020-eu-budget-visegrad-is-closing-ranks-but-exceptions-apply>

63 https://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20171122_A_Jobbik_eurot_akar

64 https://mszp.hu/hir/kell_az_euro

65 <https://www.europeaninterest.eu/article/mixed-views-hungarys-future/>

to join the EPPO, Hadházy's argument is that Fidesz won't be able to ignore the will of the people. Some experts even argued that EU funds payments should be tied to special requirements such as the participation in the EPPO.

6.2.3. FRONTEX

When it comes to general positions towards further integration of the control of the Schengen area's external borders, there is a certain lack of consistency in the Hungarian government's rhetoric. In 2015, Viktor Orbán was the most outspoken by claiming that Frontex is a toothless institution,⁷⁰ therefore, it needs to be strengthened. PM Viktor Orbán said that using the contributions of several countries, "we must turn Frontex into a strong force which would be able to lawfully take over the protection of the Greek borders from the Greeks."

Currently Orbán is rejecting Merkel's proposal to ensure the Frontex border agency had sufficient powers to be help stop illegal migration, in line with European Commission plans. He was claiming that Brussels want to take away the right of boarder protection from its frontiers and described it within a broader plan to let in migrants. Pro-government daily Magyar Hírlap⁷¹ has published op-eds that were in line with Orbán's argumentation by stressing that the proposal is not about the protection of the borders but the legalization of illegal migration.⁷² Contrary to that, Hungarian leftist opposition would strongly support strengthen and give more competencies to Frontex in order to strengthen the external borders of the EU and to participate in sea rescue commissions. Democratic Coalition would strongly support to. They would support an integrated institution with national and EU officers that is being funded by common budget.

6.2.4. Taxation

Harmonization of the tax systems is one of the mostly rejected proposal by the Hungarian government. Fidesz's anti-Brussels campaign in 2017 even included a national consultation that warned about the danger Brussels poses to the Hungarian tax system.⁷³ According to this, Brussels is attempting to take over new competences in

economic organisation and control-related fields and this would affect Hungarian tax regulation as well.

PM Viktor Orbán often explained that the EU is hiding behind the so-called "social pillar" to assume new competences in the fields of social policy and taxation.⁷⁴ Pro-government mouthpieces such as Magyar Idők – in accordance with Fidesz – has are generally advocating against tax harmonization, highlighting that it would endanger the competitiveness of the Hungarian economy which has the lowest corporate income tax in the EU.⁷⁵

Leftist oppositional parties were generally outspoken with regards to tax harmonization: socialists argued that implementation of a common VAT rate is needed because the Hungarian VAT rate is the highest in the EU.⁷⁶ In Hungary, 39.3% of the GDP is coming from tax revenues; taxes on consumption and work make up around one-third of all tax revenues. LMP also advocated tax harmonization within its parliamentary election programme.⁷⁷

6.2.5. Social union

The question of the Social Pillar is another controversial issue within Hungary: while the Hungarian government would most certainly not willing to join initiatives in this field, as it believes harmonising social standards deteriorates the country's competitiveness,⁷⁸ the leftist opposition is very vocal about it.

Leftist and green parties would support more convergence towards national social security schemes considering that situation of those falling behind could be improved through parallel efforts to create jobs, harmonise market demands, and monitor social transfers, taxes collected to finance these and the efficiency of spent resources.⁷⁹

6.3. Poland

Positions on the different models of the European integration have been

described in the previous chapter. Here we focus on a more fundamental issue – membership in the European Union.

6.3.1. In or Out? In. Definitely, Maybe

Generally, the present formal (President, PM) and informal (Jarosław Kaczyński, the PiS leader) Polish leaders communicate frequently negative aspects of the EU and tend to diminish its positives. Some of the usual critical arguments have been listed in the previous chapters: double standards, multi-level democratic deficit and the de facto injustice of the EU's machineries do not close the full list of heavy charges against the present shape of the European integration.

Only recently, President Andrzej Duda described the EU as "some imaginary community from which we don't gain much"⁸⁰, while PM Mateusz Morawiecki said that if it was not for the EU funds, Poland would do just as well. Polish deputy MFA Bartosz Cichocki told the author of this text that the EC wants to dangerously increase its power whenever something is not clearly defined in the treaties: "the Commission wants to create *faits accomplis* that will work in its favour. In a short run this approach may secure effective decision-making, but in a longer run it may threaten the European project as a whole"⁸¹.

6.3.2. Polls (Poles) against Polexit

However, at least according to the Poland's government, Polexit is not an option. PiS is well aware of Poles being top of the tops in the level of Euro-enthusiasm. As stated in the last Eurobarometer, 87% of Polish respondents view Poland's EU membership as a positive. But it is not all. Poles mostly believe their voice counts in the European Union (53%). Further, they believe most staunchly among the European respondents that the EU counts as a global player (81%). Poles, along with Germans, believe that the European integration has been beneficial to them, and appreciate its very concrete advantages, like: fewer border controls, free roaming, better protection of consumer rights abroad, possibility of

70 https://hvg.hu/itthon/20151217_Orban_tamogatja_a_Frontex_felverteszest_a

71 http://magyarhirlap.hu/cikk/129566/Frontex_es_egyeb_nyalansagok

72 <https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/alairtak-jon-a-kozos-eus-hadsereg.289994.html>

73 <https://24.hu/kozelet/2017/05/10/a-kormany-megvedte-a-nemzeti-konzultaciott-az-eu-valszemben/>

74 http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20170222_orban_viktor_ot_veszelj-forrasa

75 <https://magyaridok.hu/gazdasag/ezermilliardot-bukott-az-orszag-az-unios-adoharmonizacioval-1437301/>

76 <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20160129-a-fidesz-az-mszp-es-az-lmp-szavazoinak-is-iger-gyurcsany-dk-valasztasi-program.html>

77 <https://lehetmas.hu/valasztasi-programunk/>

78 <https://magyaridok.hu/gazdasag/ezermilliardot-bukott-az-orszag-az-unios-adoharmonizacioval-1437301/>

79 https://www.europatarsasag.hu/sites/default/files/csatolmanyok/perc_3_netre_1.pdf

80 Polish president attacks EU as an 'imaginary community'. Financial Times, September 12th, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/3675c1d8-b673-11e8-b3ef-799c8613f4a1>

81 We are committed to EU, but Commission is not a „super-government“. EURACTIV.com, March 21st, 2018. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-europe/news/polish-fm-we-are-committed-to-eu-but-commission-is-no-super-government/>

working and living, studying and working away.⁸²

Taking this EU-fondness and probably also agreeing in the end that the EU membership has its sunny side, major Polish government's politicians stress Poland's commitment to the idea of European integration. "Thanks to its presence in the Union, Polish citizens can learn and study abroad. They have also access to the common market. It is not surprising then that 87% of Poles support the EU membership. This is the highest rate in Europe," Czaputowicz said in his expose.

But at the same time, Poles are considerably distrustful towards each other – as was determined by the Social Diagnosis study of professor Janusz Czapiniski, (the last one, interestingly, was published in 2015, when the present government came to power) – but also towards the government, judiciary and media (Eurobarometer). This may show why – despite appreciating their lives and the benefits obtained from the EU – Poles are prone to the rhetoric of fear and hostility against allegedly adversary groups and institutions (groups of "others" chosen for scapegoats at a given time: now mostly refugees, immigrants in general & Muslims), but also susceptible to conspiracy theories.

Scapegoating refugees and Brussels are very effective politically, and that is why so many European politicians engage in one or both. Only it may lead to an accidental EU "exit", as it was in the case of the UK.

6.4. Slovakia

Slovakia, unlike other three Visegrad countries, is member of the Eurozone, which means that it participates as well on those integration projects that are related to the functioning of the EMU and are mostly based on separate intergovernmental treaties: ESM, Fiscal Compact, Single Resolution Fund, etc.

6.4.1. Economic arguments prevail

Economic arguments – membership in the EMU, prudent fiscal policy, growing economy etc. – were often used as

arguments for the Slovak participation on the "core Europe". While then-PM Robert Fico, or other government representatives, never specified the meaning of the "core Europe" concept, frequent use of economic arguments suggest that for them the core would, or should, form around the Eurozone.

After meeting with in Salzburg in August 2018, R. Fico said: "Country is simply doing well. It's difficult to question these figures. We are fulfilling two or three conditions for the participation in the European core, and we also have something to offer to other countries that want to participate." One of these conditions should have been fiscal discipline: "A fact is that thanks to our results in fiscal discipline, European politicians pay us respect for several years. We have announced a historically lowest deficit, and we are still working on further consolidation of our public finance."⁸³

6.4.2. Change of hearts on red lines

Taxation policy used to be one of the Slovakia's red lines in the EU. Government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002-2006), and the first government of Robert Fico (2006-2010) did not support ideas for harmonisation of tax policies, or a European tax that would help to finance the EU budget. In 2017 the situation was different. PM Robert Fico spoke about the readiness to discuss coordination, or harmonisation of tax policies, and this translated also to official positions. Slovakia was ready, under certain conditions, to support the CCTB (consolidated corporate tax base) initiative. Furthermore, the official government position to the EC's proposal of the 2021-2027 Financial Framework shows openness to the creation of the common European digital tax, as one of the resources of the EU budget.

In fact, this shift had pre-dated the enchantment with the "core Europe" concept from summer 2017 and was initiated by the Ministry of Finance. In December 2016, Ivan Lesay, State secretary of the Ministry of Finance, responsible for the Slovak presidency of the EU Council, stated: "We are not against the European tax"⁸⁴.

The finance ministry played an important role also in other area, where Slovakia previously resisted any increase of competences to the EU: social policy. In the preparation to the Slovak Presidency, the ministry managed to add to country's priorities "Initiation of discussion on the European unemployment insurance scheme".⁸⁵ While this idea has been proposed and discussed before 2016 (at least in expert circles), it's real political resonance has been very weak.

In 2017, PM Robert Fico formulated an idea of "European minimum wage", which would help to decrease wage differences among the EU member states (or at least, within a hypothetical "core Europe"). However, this idea remained vague, it was never translated into a concrete proposal.

6.4.3. Defence, justice and home affairs

Two other areas of deepening EU cooperation – justice and home affairs, and defence – are not perceived, or communicated, so much as avenues towards "core Europe". Slovakia participates in most of the projects (with exception of two, related to family law).

In defence and security cooperation, Slovakia belonged to a group of "Atlantists" in the EU – a position that could be traced back to the rift between "old Europe" and "new Europe" over the Iraq war in 2003. While it did not actively oppose attempts to strengthen European defence capacities, it has watched them with a level of suspicion as a possible threat to transatlantic partnership, stressing the need of compatibility and synergies with NATO.

When 23 countries initiated PESCO in November 2017, Slovakia participated. A changed international climate, including gradual shifts in the priorities of the U.S. security policy, played a role. Besides, PESCO was initiated at a height of the "core Europe" discussion in Slovakia, and defence cooperation was seen as an important part of the future core.⁸⁶ Slovakia has initiated one defence ca-

section/ekonomika-a-euro/interview/ivan-lesay-nie-sme-zasadne-proti-europskej-dani/, visited on November 20th, 2018

⁸⁵ According to unofficial information, confirmed by sources from both ministries, this initiative has been originally resisted by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs as "too ambitious".

⁸⁶ See for example: 23 krajín chce PESCO. Má to znamenať najväčší skok v obrane EÚ. Trend, November 13th, 2017. Available at <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/23-krajin-chce-pesco-ma-to-znamenat-najvacsi-skok-v-obrane-eu.html> Visited on October 20th, 2018.

⁸² Standard Eurobarometer 89, Spring 2018. European Commission. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2180>

⁸³ PREMIÉR.: Slovensko splňa podmienky byť v jadre Európskej únie. Office of the Government SR, August 22nd, 2017. Available at <https://www.vlada.gov.sk//premier-slovensko-splna-podmienky-byt-v-jadre-europskej-unie/>, accessed on November 10th, 2018

⁸⁴ Ivan Lesay: Nie sme zásadne proti európskej dani. EURACTIV.sk, December 22nd, 2016. Available at <https://euractiv.sk/>

capacities' project – EuroArtillery – which was also selected among 17 projects supported in the first phase of the cooperation.⁸⁷

The final steps in the approval of the European Public Prosecutor Office (albeit only in a form of enhanced cooperation)

87 Slovakia's Indirect Fire Support (EuroArtillery) project battles it out to be selected for final PESCO projects. Ministry of Defence SR. Available at <http://www.mosr.sk/41015-en/slovensky-projekt-nepriamej-palebnej-podpory-euroartillery-sa-prebojoval-medzi-finalne-projekty-pesco/> visited on October 20th, 2018

were taken during the Slovak presidency in the EU Council. Slovakia was one of the countries that, in the end, supported the inclusion of the VAT among the EU financial interests, which was one of the crucial conditions for the EP's consent.

While the participation on the enhanced cooperation on EPPO was not officially communicated as a matter of membership in a "core Europe", some voices used also this line of argument. MEP József Nagy (Most-Híd, EPP) said: "We could

begin that Slovakia is (among countries that joined EPPO), together with Czech Republic, while Hungary and Poland did not support the initiative, which for me is hardly explicable. I see it as a breakpoint in the integration of V4 countries towards the supposed core of the EU."⁸⁸

88 Na boj proti podvodom s eurofondami a DPH sa zriadila Európska prokuratúra. SME.sk, October 5th, 2017. Available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20665275/euroopska-prokuratúra-eurofondy-podvod-s-dph-strasburg.html?ref=av-center> Visited on October 20th, 2018

7. POSITIONS

7.1. Czech Republic

Due to connection of the concept with the unwanted Eurozone membership, multispeed Europe became unwanted, too. Politicians spoke about the multispeed Europe only as a threat that should be avoided. The debate shrank on the fear that the Czech Republic will be thrown out from the table where important decisions are made and that not being Eurozone member means having a lower voice in the EU. Simultaneously the possibility of not being part of the "core" was not viable, too.

Fears from the multispeed Europe are well summarized in this statement by former Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka who was in mandate when the debate on the multispeed was on its top. "It is a measure of influence on what is happening in Europe. The degree of influence is given by sitting at the table when deciding. Multispeed Europe means that there will be more times when the Czech Republic will not sit at this table,"⁸⁹ said Bohuslav Sobotka.

He also claimed that: "Our shared European history shows that when we fail to work together, we see conflict, division and war, [...] The EU's strength lies in collaboration and unity. If we don't face our challenges together, we will not solve them at all."⁹⁰ The fear of exclusion was

prevalent in debates; the leaders were aware that it would be a dead end for the country in the EU.

The concept of multispeed Europe was highly discussed also by the representatives of the Czech Republic in Brussels. Věra Jourová, Czech Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said: "I am slightly afraid of multispeed Europe and I do not think it is fully in line with the needs of the Czech Republic."

Czech members of the European Parliament generally agreed with this opinion. Pavel Telička (ALDE) said: "I will try to be among those who want to go faster, [...] Why did we want to be a member of the European Union? To participate in decisions that can influence us. We did not want to stand outside and watch the other states decide."⁹¹

Tomáš Zdechovský (EPP) added that the concept is a nonsense. According to him the multispeed Europe could boost Euroscepticism in many countries of Central and Eastern Europe as it would be suddenly more visible that some MS have integrated more than other.

MEP Jan Zahradil (ECR) supports reform of the EU towards so-called multi-speed Europe. "We should focus on completing the single market and then on reforming the EU into union based on multi-speed integration principle," he said to Český rozhlas. He supports this idea mostly because in a such union member states,

given their interests and abilities, decide whether, in which policies and to what extent they would cooperate. However, Zahradil points out that the Czech Republic should cooperate more only in certain policy areas. For instance, he rejects Czech Republic to be a part of the eurozone and of the common migration and asylum policy. On the contrary, he attaches big importance to policy areas such as internal market, customs union and common commercial policy.

The previous government tried to secure its position in the core by obtaining so-called observer status at Eurozone meetings. Aleš Chmelař, State Secretary for European Affairs, said that: "The euro area must remain as inclusive as possible and the debate on its further deepening must be kept in the EU27 format, [...] The participation of non-euro area members in discussions and full transparency and openness of the initiatives should be guaranteed," adding that Prague proposes the opening of the Eurogroup to non-eurozone members, for example in the form of granting countries like the Czech Republic observer status.⁹²

However, academics found the observer status idea securing the Czech Republic's position improbable. For instance, Vladimír Bartovic, Director of EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, said that: "The minimum requirement for the Czech Republic to lie at the heart of the EU and, eventually, to obtain an observer status in the euro area is the notification of the target date for euro adop-

eu, accessed September 24, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/bohuslav-sobotka-oped-two-speed-europe-is-a-mistake/>.

89 EURACTIV.CZ, "Vicerychlostní Evropa Je pro Česko Nebezpečná, Varují Odborníci," 2017, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/vicerychlostni-evropa-je-pro-cesko-nebezpecna-varuji-odbornici/>.

90 Bohuslav Sobotka, "Two-Speed Europe Is a Mistake," Politico.

91 Pavel Telička "Česká republika musí patřit mezi státy, které se budou integrovat rychleji," řekl Telička během debaty o vicerychlostní Evropě," 2017, <https://www.telicka.eu/en/articles/detail/738>.

92 Politico.eu, "EU Divisions on the Eastern Front," 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-divisions-eastern-integration-romania-bulgaria-croatia-poland-hungary-czech-republic/>.

tion, possibly accompanied by the entry to the ERM2.⁹³

The current Prime Minister Andrej Babiš decided not to apply for the observer status 13 days (on 19 December 2017) after assuming office since the threat of not taking all MS on board was, allegedly, no longer present.

7.2. Hungary

Viktor Orbán has been accusing Brussels of overstepping its competences⁹⁴ for years and depicted Berlin and Paris as a threat to Hungarian civilization. It fits into a wider discourse on sovereignty on the basis that there is a potential conflict between the Hungarian nation and the dangerous, decadent West heading wrong direction.⁹⁵ His recurring argument is that the European democracy has floundered, “so we want to restore democracy”⁹⁶ on the continent.

The Hungarian Prime Minister has declared that the next EP-election will be a major clash between the anti-migrant and the pro-migrant forces, and the latter is being represented by Emmanuel Macron, who claims to build the United States of Europe. It is also very telling that the Hungarian government was the only one which did not participate in the consultation on the future of the EU launched by Emmanuel Macron. It was rather a message to the Hungarian electorate that Fidesz is unwilling to cooperate with “federalists”.

One of the recurring arguments of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó was that President Macron might want to achieve tax harmonisation within the EU which would result in “brutal tax increases” in Hungary.

According to Tárki, trust in institutions is low and the level of political polarisation in opinions is rather high in Hungary even in comparison with other European states.⁹⁷ Government campaigns have been ongoing continuously in past years in the country informing on the govern-

ment’s anti-EU freedom fight.⁹⁸ After 2010, the share of Hungarians who did not consider themselves European almost reached 50%.⁹⁹

At the same time, trust in EU institutions is exceptionally high in Hungary, and that Hungarians are overwhelmingly pro-European,¹⁰⁰ the Orbán-government successfully channelled the frustration of anti-establishment voters towards Brussels. According to the poll conducted by Median in October 2017, “Brussels”, and George Soros are considered to be more threatening than Russia.

This is also visible in how different the evaluations of the EU and Brussels are. Since the majority of Hungarians continue to be pro-European, Fidesz has been using the word “Brussels” in billboard campaigns and not “European Union”. This is mirrored accurately by the same poll which shows that “Brussels” is considered to be threatening by 1.5 times more people than the “European Union”.¹⁰¹ Also, Fidesz could easily reject EU proposals regarding asylum system and migration given the fact that the level of xenophobia has reached record high: according to a research, almost half of Hungarians (48%) said there were no arguments that would convince them to welcome immigrants to the country.¹⁰²

When it comes to public attitudes, federalist approach is less supported by Hungarian respondents. According to the public opinion poll conducted by Chatham house and Kantar Public, 53% of the Hungarian respondents totally disagreed that the EU should become a United States of Europe with a central government. While 45% of the Hungarian respondents said that the EU should return some of its powers to individual Member States, only 20 percent claimed that the EUs should get more powers than it currently has.

¹⁰³ As Boglárka Kollár (National University of Public Service, dean) highlighted, according to the Eurobarometer polls, Central-Eastern societies such as Hungarian prefer multi-speed integration despite

the fact that Hungary is not part of various layers of deeper integration such as the Eurozone.¹⁰⁴

When it comes to the Hungarian public attitudes towards the euro, polls are showing mixed tendencies. According to the survey poll conducted by Eurobarometer in 2018, support for introducing the euro has risen over the last years in Hungary: majority of Hungarians (59%) support the adoption of the single currency.¹⁰⁵ It partly stems from the fact that the pro-EU sentiments are rather high and the trust within the EU institutions are higher than the average among member states. However, according to another poll, conducted by IDEA Institute, majority of the respondents claimed that Hungary is not ready to adopt the single currency.¹⁰⁶

While pro-government experts are in line with Fidesz’s wait and see position, a newly established party called Central Civic Party has also launched a petition about the referendum on the introduction of the Euro which was endorsed by prominent conservative economists and experts as well. Even though the petition was rejected by the National Election Committee, the debate on the single currency has accelerated in the Hungarian press which also directed attention to the issue of multi-speed EU. The initiative was supported by well-known Hungarian experts, including former Minister, of Foreign Affairs (Géza Jeszenszky), EU Commissioner (Péter Balázs), Hungarian National Bank governor (Ákos Péter Bod) and former adviser of Orbán (Kálmán Mizsei).¹⁰⁷

Other economists, including Péter Róna, former member of LMP, has argued that the adopting the single currency could not be interpreted as a pro-EU stance against Orbán’s sovereign, destructive approach. Rónai claimed that instead of scaring with the consequences of a two speed EU and rush into euro adoption, Hungary should create conditions through which it can get prepared to a successful integration within the currency union in the long run.¹⁰⁸

93 Euractiv.cz, “Evropa zve členské státy do jádra, ČR ale stále váhá a směřuje tak k periférii,” 2017, <https://euractiv.cz/section/aktualne-v-eu/news/evropa-zve-clenske-staty-do-jadra-cr-ale-stale-vaha-a-smeruje-tak-k-periferii/>.

94 <https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/orban-eloszor-fogad-tak-el-a-magyar-megkozeltest-brusszelben.227547.html>

95 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban/hungarian-pm-sees-shift-to-illiberal-christian-democracy-in-2019-european-vote-idUSKBN1K10BK>

96 <https://dailynewshungary.com/we-want-to-restore-democracy-in-europe-says-orban-in-brussels/>

97 Tárki, 2013: Értékek. www.tarki.hu/hu/research/gazd-kult/2013/2013_zarotanulmany_gazd_kultura.pdf

98 Pollster organisation measured the effects of the government’s propaganda in one study, which found that voters are 1.5 times more scared of “Brussels” than of the “EU”. <https://444.hu/2017/10/04/a-magyarok-tobbsege-pont-attol-fel-a-legjobban-amitol-a-kormany-szeretne>

99 PC, 2013

100 [file:///C:/Users/Work%20Hard%20Play%20Hard/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_Bwekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/eb86_nat_hu_hu%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Work%20Hard%20Play%20Hard/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_Bwekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/eb86_nat_hu_hu%20(1).pdf)

101 <https://444.hu/2017/10/04/a-magyarok-tobbsege-pont-attol-fel-a-legjobban-amitol-a-kormany-szeretne>

102 <https://qubit.hu/2018/03/02/a-magyarok-gyulolnek-a-legjobban-mindenki-mast-europaban>

103 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-06-20-future-europe-attitudes-general-public-tables.pdf>

104 http://old.polgariszemle.hu/?view=v_article&ID=625

105 https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/economy-finance/flash-eurobarometer-public-support-for-introducing-the-euro-continues-to-rise_en

106 <http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20171119-idea-euro-kozvelemeny-kutatas>

107 <https://mno.hu/gazdasag/mar-most-is-a-kozos-valutahatarozza-meg-az-eletunket-2415684>

108 http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20171017_rona_peter_hu_kimaradunk_lemaradunk_az_euro_mint_latszatgyogyir

Speaking of institutional formats, scholars such as Ervin Csizmadia (Hungarian think tank Centre for Fair Political Analysis) and political advisor for the EP, Katalin Csiba¹⁰⁹ perceive multi-speed EU as a necessity which stems from the evolution of the integration. He argues that due to the different level of developments, the EU integration among 27 Member States can and should not be unified.¹¹⁰

Another argument, represented by Róbert Csehi (Hungarian Researcher at Hochschule für Politik München an der Technischen Universität München)¹¹¹, claims that integration since Maastricht has been pursued via an intensification of policy co-ordination between Member States, which is a distinct phase of European integration, called 'the new intergovernmentalism. He argues that it is not necessary to establish supranational separate institutions to deepen integration, which is possible through intergovernmental treaties such as the Fiscal Compact and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) Treaty.

7.3. Poland

As mentioned in the beginning, PiS and right-leaning experts prefer the intergovernmental model of the EU integration and oppose the ideas of the multi-speed Europe. Likewise, the opposition, as well as centrist and left-leaning experts, don't want Poland to lag behind the EU core. They believe, however, that it is PiS that pushes us to the backbench – by criticizing most of the EU solutions, apart from the ones that bring us direct profit and by investing disproportionate amount of time and effort into potentially impulsive initiatives like V4, 3 Seas Initiative, 16+1, or bilateral relations with the US.

The opposition parties focus on what the EU gives to us – for them, the European glass is half full, not half empty, which does not mean that the EU is perfect. They underline that today's hardest challenges – be it in economy, climate, migration and demography, global competition, or even hybrid military threats – cannot be tackled effectively by any individual country. And the stronger the EU gets, the better it is for the mem-

ber states. Therefore, "ideally (now, unfortunately, it means wishful thinking) Poland should take a path of as strong integration within the EU as possible" – professor Renata Mieñkowska-Norkiene told EURACTIV.pl.

Taking into account the broader global context – namely, the unpredictability of the US, its unstable future within NATO and an unclear role of Turkey in this organization – it is even more fundamental for Poland to participate in all of the EU's security and defence initiatives. To be sure, its participation in regional undertakings is not wrong per se, but only when it squares with the broader EU policy framework.

Regarding the economic development, "there is no alternative for the strong support of the free movements within the EU, particularly taking into account the ongoing trade wars (e. g. between the US and China, or between Iran and the US). Stronger economic integration within the EU will lead to adopting euro as a currency by Poland. This is extremely important in as near future as possible due to the expected new global crisis. Stronger integration in the Weimar Triangle will, paradoxically, strengthen Polish position in the V4 and other regional configurations, because Poland is really valuable for other countries of the region only if it maintains good relations with the strongest EU member states. Relying only on the US (and to rely on the US nowadays does not seem to be particularly wise), Poland can never be attractive for Baltic States, Czech Republic, Slovakia, or Slovenia (almost all these countries have adopted euro, so they will not be interested in any risky behaviour within the UE) – professor Mieñkowska-Norkiene continues.

Today, Poland is in the pre-electoral mode. In 2019, not only EP elections, but also the parliamentary ones, loom ahead. Then, the following year, it will be time for the presidential contest. With this perspective in mind, the government's Euro-critical rhetoric has become much more moderate recently. And the words were turned into deeds, as after the EUCJ ruling, the ruling party decided to reinstate the Supreme Court justices who had earlier been forced to retire. Donald Tusk is breathing down PiS neck as a potential presidential candidate, when his present EUCO President tenure is ended, making its politicians ill at ease about his charismatic figure. And he is also for a stronger Europe. Howev-

er, with the EUCO President as a major rival, and with the European elections in mind, PiS will also change its approach for more EU-friendly.

7.4. Slovakia

In Slovakia, participation in the "core Europe" is related to Slovak membership in EMU and, progressively, willingness to participate on future initiatives in tax, or social policies. Other two areas – defence, justice and home affairs – are not debated in this context, even if Slovakia participates on most of the initiatives.

Three cabinets that were mostly affected by the debate on the "multispeed Europe" (Fico 2012-2016, Fico 2016-2018, Pellegrini 2018) officially supported country's participation on a deeper integration, including membership in a "core Europe".

The highlight was probably achieved in October 2017, when three highest state representatives – President Andrej Kiska, President of the Parliament Andrej Danko, and the PM Robert Fico – signed a joint declaration on the "foreign policy orientation of Slovakia". The document included support for the "future of Slovakia in the core of the EU, and continuous deepening of the Eurozone". PM Fico even called Slovakia a "pro-European island in the middle of Europe".¹¹²

This position was supported by economic, as well as geopolitical arguments. In September 2017 MP Martin Fedor (Most-Híd, governing coalition political party) warned against grounding on the EU periphery. "(Either) we are in the core, with possibility to co-decide, or on the margins, as a toy in the hands of powers. Something like a geopolitical vacuum which would allow us to exist in peace, to think that everybody would leave us at peace, does not exist. We have no other choice, if we do not want to remain on the periphery."¹¹³

This official support for the "EU core" had two caveats. PM Fico, and other official representatives, were always stressing that we will never accept "ref-

109 https://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2017/06/19/a_tobbesebeseg-es_europa_nem_uj_otlet_megis_meglephet

110 http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20180213_csizmadia_ervin_van_e_mas_eselyunk_mint_a_tobbesebeseg_europa

111 <https://pcblog.atlatszo.hu/2015/08/28/quo-vadis-europa-gondolatok-az-uj-kormanykozisegrol/>

112 Danko, Fico a prezident Kiska rokovali na Bratislavskom hrade, dospeli k zhode. SME.sk, October 23rd, 2017. Available at <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20678975/slovensko-kiska-fico-danko-eu-integracia.html> Visited on October 20th, 2018

113 Zostať na okraji Európskej únie mimo jadra si nezaslúžime, myslí si Fedor. Topky.sk, September 10th, 2017. <https://www.topky.sk/cl/100535/1655301/Zostat-na-okraji-Europskej-unie-mimo-jadra-si-nezasluzime--mysli-si-Fedor> Visited on October 20th, 2018

ugee quotas". Or, in a more diplomatic language, that it's not a "Bianco cheque" for the future form of the core. In July 2017, Ivan Korčok, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, said: "As anybody in the EU, we are also trying to enforce a maximum of our own ideas. Those are to a large extent common (with France), but that does not mean that they are identical. Slovakia is ready for a deeper integration everywhere, where it brings added value for us, and for the whole EU. But we are not issuing a Bianco cheque for the idea of the EU core."¹¹⁴

Another reservation related to the nature of the "core" – it should remain open. Again, Ivan Korčok (June 2017): "We are saying it clearly that this core needs to stay open. It could not be a group of countries that is exclusive, which will close and would not allow others, even if they'd be interested, to participate on this selective integration."¹¹⁵

This opinion is shared by the SaS – the only mainstream political party represented in the parliament, which openly challenged the idea of participation in a more deeply integrated core. Openness would guarantee that Slovakia would not be left out, even if it decides not to participate on all integration initiatives. "In that case, there's nothing

to be afraid of. If some integration policies increasing the level of integration would not suit us, we should stay out of them", said MP Martin Klus.¹¹⁶

Some experts point out that the concept of the "core Europe" is still vague and in the making. According to political scientist Jozef Bátora (Department of Political Science, Comenius University) it is used as a "rhetorical instrument to create a normative pressure for reforms at home".¹¹⁷

P. Mihók, president of the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was in 2017 one of the few voices which stressed the risks of multispeed Europe, and Slovak participation in the core EU. "(Our) road does not certainly lay in the two- or multispeed Europe. That's just another step towards disintegration, and in the end towards weakening of all member countries."¹¹⁸

At the beginning of the year 2018 it seemed that the proponents of "deeper integration" had the upper edge both in the debate, and political influence. SaS was the only mainstream political party openly voicing reservations. Whatever shallow were the arguments about the "core EU", it was an official political line, officially declared and supported by all three highest representatives of the state – president, president of the parliament, and the prime minister.

However, next few months have changed the situation. Political crisis caused by a murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancé did not lead only to a replacement of the PM Robert Fico, and a partial reconstruction of the government¹¹⁹; it has also weakened the existing (probably formal) compromise on the orientation of the Slovak foreign – and European – policies.

Officially, a changed course has not been announced, and the PM Pellegrini stresses that Slovakia wants to participate on a deeper integration (recently, during the visit of the President Emmanuel Macron in Bratislava). But this ambition might not be shared any more by leaders of two strongest parties in the governing coalition – Robert Fico (SMER-SD), and Andrej Danko (SNS). For now, they both find more value in fanning the flames of xenophobia and challenging the EU stance on Russia, or conflict in Ukraine, attacks on civil society or media.

So far, it's too early to say whether that will represent a formal re-positioning of their political parties towards the EU integration, and what would be the influence on the public perception of the EU, or deeper integration.

114 I. Korčok v Paríži: Na podobu jadra európskej integrácie nevystavujeme "bianko šek". Embassy of SR in Paris. Available at https://www.mzv.sk/web/pariz/detail/-/asset_publisher/bZtjMy3iNwbo/content/i-korcok-v-parizi-na-podobu-jadra-europskej-integracie-nevystavujeme-bianko-sek-/10182?p_auth=GAmqV9up&_101_INSTANCE_bZtjMy3iNwbo_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fpariz%2Fspravy Visited on October 20th, 2018

115 Jadro Európskej únie musí ostať otvorené – Ivan Korčok. Slovenský rozhľad, June 22nd, 2017. Available at <http://www.slovenskyrozhlad.sk/?jadro-eur%f3pskej-%fAnie-mus%ED-osta%9D-otvoren%e9-%96-ivan-kor%e8ok,4318> Visited on October 20th, 2018

116 Ibid.

117 Bátora: Jadro EÚ využívajú ako nástroj rétoriky, ako pojem sa stále formuje. Teraz.sk, August 18th, 2017. Available at <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/batora-jadro-eu-vyuziva-ju-ako-nas/276004-clanok.html?mostViewedArticlesInSectionTab=2> Visited on October 20th, 2018

118 P. MIHÓK: V Európskej únii je stále veľa deliacich čiar. Teraz.sk, April 4th, 2017, https://www.teraz.sk/ekonomika/pmi-hok-v-eu-je-stale-vela-deliacich-clar.252720-clanok.html?combinedGlobalTab_zamestnajsja=1 Visited on October 10th, 2018

119 For a description of events, and debate on possible consequences, see for example: Radovan Geist: Korruption und Vetterwirtschaft. Die Slowakei in der politischen Systemkrise. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2018. Available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/14370.pdf>

8. COMPARING THE INCOMPARABLE?

Debates on the deeper integration, multispeed Europe, or “EU core” in Visegrad countries follow their own logic, shaped by internal political fractures, conflicts and discourses. Any structured analysis of positions is additionally complicated by the fact that political actors often utilise these concepts quite arbitrary in their conflicts with opponents.

However, there are several aspects of the debate, perception, or positions, which are similar in all Visegrad countries:

- Multispeed integration as a binary option: representatives of Visegrad countries, as well as experts, repeatedly stressed the need to maintain an open character of the future “EU core”. However, public and political debates are more affected by an implicit fear that the “multispeed Europe” will lead to a creation of an exclusive club. Those that do not wish to (or could not) participate would be left out with less and less relevant “just EU” membership.
- Important role of euro: even countries that are not part of the EMU realise that more deeply integrated eurozone, possibly with its own fiscal instruments, risk-sharing, etc., might lead to a “hard core” within the EU – officially open to those that stayed out, but practically more and more exclusive. Interestingly, this fear did not lead to a visible shift of official policies to the Euro adoption in CZ, HU, PL.
- Possible sudden shifts of positions: debate on “multispeed Europe” – part of the conflict between the government and the opposition, or within the governing coalitions. Change of political constellation in government could lead to a quick shift in the official position.
- Superficiality of the debate: Major political actors, including highest representatives of the states, voice their support for, or opposition to, multispeed Europe and the participation of their countries in the core, often in vague terms, lacking structured arguments. Similarly, alternative concepts (such as “Europe of Fatherlands”), or ideas for deeper cooperation (European army, European minimum wage, etc.) are thrown out into discussion without any further details, and then dropped, or simply not elaborated any more. This diminishes the influence of Visegrad countries (individually, and as a group) in the debate on the future of the EU.
- It is currently not conceivable that Hungary and Poland would opt for the EMU membership or commit to a specific entry date. In Czech Republic, future EU strategy will be influenced by the result of a current political malaise. If Slovakia maintains its current official course in the EU, Visegrad countries might face a situation when maintaining a semblance of close cooperation in V4, and active participation in the “EU core” would amount to political squaring of a circle.

**VISEGRAD COUNTRIES
AND MULTISPEED EUROPE:
PERCEPTIONS, POSITIONS, STRATEGIES**

Euro Policy

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