

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION IN LIGHT OF ANTI-LGBTQ LEGISLATION

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ABSTRACT: *This paper investigates how the relationship between Hungary and the European Union, particularly regarding the diffusion of social norms and values, has been discursively constructed in the Hungarian media in relation to the adoption of Act LXXIX of 2021, frequently referred to as the “child protection Act” or “homophobic Act” in the Hungarian political and media discourse. The Act introduced stricter regulations aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse while also restricting the dissemination of media content portraying sexual minorities, asserting that it is harmful to children. The adoption of the law intensified tensions between Hungary and the European Union, sparking discussion in the Hungarian media about the EU’s role in promoting LGBTQ rights among its Member States, as well as the specific relationship between the EU and Hungary. Therefore, this study focused on media content discussing the European Union and the new Hungarian anti-LGBTQ law. The analysis identified nine dominant discourses and found that anti-EU discourses connected to the Hungarian government called for weaker enforcement of the social norms and values enshrined in various EU documents, labeling the diffusion of such norms as external oppression and as the violation of national sovereignty. In contrast, only a few discourses advocated for the European Union to monitor, disseminate, and enforce the norms enshrined in its own founding documents more rigorously.*

KEYWORDS: *Hungary; European Union; Europeanization; LGBTQ; discourse analysis; media discourse*

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INTRODUCTION

This study explores how the relationship between Hungary and the European Union, especially the Europeanization process, was discursively constructed in the Hungarian media regarding the adoption of the so-called “child protection law” in 2021 and the related public referendum in 2022.

In the summer of 2021, the Hungarian Government introduced a bill initially aimed at imposing stricter penalties for pedophilia, to which amendments soon emerged on behalf of government politicians restricting the dissemination of media content portraying lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (henceforth LGBTQ) people. The adoption of Act LXXIX of 2021 was not the first measure taken recently by the Hungarian government that targeted LGBTQ individuals. However, it significantly intensified tensions between Hungary and the European Union since the EU contended that Hungary had violated several of its legal and social norms with this legislation, ultimately prompting the European Commission (henceforth EC) to initiate an infringement procedure against Hungary (EC, 2021).

At the same time, discussions about the European Union’s role in the diffusion of values and social norms, as well as its relationship with Hungary, have intensified in Hungarian media. The study relies on Europeanization theory and anti-gender discourse studies to understand how the Hungarian media and, through that, Hungarian political elites have conceptualized the role of the EU in the protection and promotion of LGBTQ rights in its Member States and the relationship between Hungary and the EU. To answer these questions, discourse analysis was conducted on 48 pieces of media content (news articles and television programs alike) from eight Hungarian media outlets published between July 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022; this period encompassed both the period after the adoption of the new Act and the campaign leading up to the Hungarian referendum held in relation to it. The media outlets thus selected represent both pro-government (*MI*, *Hír TV*, *Origo*, and *Magyar Nemzet*) and government-independent media (*RTL Klub*, *ATV*, *HVG*, and *Népszava*) and are also diverse in their formats.

In the following sections, the Hungarian context will be presented first, followed by the study’s conceptual framework. Then, after the description of the methodological approach, the discourses identified from the analyzed media content will be presented in detail. Finally, in the concluding remarks, the findings will be examined in the light of the conceptual framework thus presented and the Hungarian context.

THE HUNGARIAN CONTEXT

Since 2010, the Fidesz party (Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance), along with the Christian Democratic People's Party (henceforth KDNP), has dominated the Hungarian Parliament, consistently securing supermajorities that allow for significant legislative influence. Scholars believe that Fidesz-KDNP's right-wing paternalist populism is fundamentally opposed to the meaningful representation of minority interests, including those of sexual minorities (Enyedi, 2016), and the right-wing populist party alliance has continuously argued that the equality of LGBTQ people is incompatible with Hungarian cultural and religious traditions. Among other activities, KDNP released a statement in 2008 claiming that the legislation introducing registered partnerships for same-sex couples was "an attack on families."² Viktor Orbán, leader of Fidesz and Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010, emphasized in one of his European Parliament speeches that he perceives the legal equality of LGBTQ people as incompatible with Hungary's religious roots (Orbán, 2013); in 2015, Orbán, in response to a journalist's question about his opinion on homophobia, thanked Hungarian homosexuals for "not acting provocatively, unlike LGBTQ people in Western countries," adding that although he considers Hungary a tolerant country, this only means that the majority population has patience towards LGBTQ people and not that the sexual minority should have equal rights (Fábián & Szilli, 2015). A few years later, in 2019, László Kövér, a member of Fidesz and Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, caused public outrage with a speech made at a European election campaign event where he compared child-rearing by same-sex parents to pedophilia and claimed that "A normal homosexual [...] does not necessarily consider themselves equal [to others]" (Dull, 2019). On top of these, the government-friendly public media has consistently provided space for anti-LGBTQ opinions and organizations (Tamássy, 2019).

The ruling parties' anti-LGBTQ stance showed up in legislation as well, as in 2011, the Hungarian parliament adopted a new constitution, the Fundamental Law of Hungary, with the almost exclusive support of Fidesz-KDNP, that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. With the Fundamental Law, the ruling parties de facto prohibited same-sex marriage, which was not legal before 2010 either but was not prohibited at a constitutional level. The curtailment of LGBTQ rights resumed in the spring of 2020 when Parliament prohibited the legal recognition of gender changes with the overwhelming support of Fidesz-KDNP politicians, ending legal acknowledgment for transgender and intersex

² See <https://kdnf.hu/news/a-bejegyzett-elettarsi-kapcsolat-tamadas-a-csalad-ellen>. Retrieved: 2024.10.29.

individuals. In December 2020, Parliament amended the definition of family in the Fundamental Law to explicitly exclude same-sex couples from the concept. This amendment also asserted that “Hungary defends the right of children to identify with their birth gender and ensures their upbringing based on our nation’s constitutional identity and values rooted in our Christian culture” (Hungarian Fundamental Law, art. XVI, cl. 1). Additionally, Act CLXV of 2020 was enacted, reserving child adoption exclusively for married couples. This effectively banned child adoption for same-sex couples, who were not previously allowed to adopt as a couple, though individual members of such couples could adopt separately.

This wave of anti-LGBTQ legislation culminated in the latest anti-LGBTQ law to date, Act LXXIX of 2021, “on taking more severe action against pedophile offenders and amending certain Acts for the protection of children,” which was supposed to introduce child protection regulations concerning sexual exploitation and abuse³. Then, members of Fidesz proposed an amendment to the bill to ban or restrict minors’ access to content that “propagates or portrays” so-called “divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change, or homosexuality.” The new Act, including this anti-LGBTQ amendment, was adopted on 15 June 2021. According to the Act, any media content depicting sexual minorities is classified as unsuitable for those under 18 and is to be distributed accordingly. The Act attracted nationwide and international criticism for suggesting a connection between sexual minorities and pedophilia and suggesting that the mere media representation of LGBTQ people poses a threat to children’s mental and sexual well-being. LGBTQ advocacy groups also criticized the Act for making LGBTQ-inclusive sex education in public education institutions quasi-impossible (Háttér Society, 2021), thereby limiting the access of LGBTQ students to comprehensive sexual health information and increasing their vulnerability to health risks.

The Fidesz-KDNP’s anti-LGBTQ actions have significantly impacted Hungary’s relations with the European Union, leading to explicit criticism from EU bodies toward Hungary, as the EU and its institutions have consistently developed directives and resolutions aimed at strengthening and broadening LGBTQ rights and condemning various forms of discrimination since the 1980s (Tóth, 2013). Following the enactment of Act LXXIX of 2021, many prominent European politicians and EU institutions condemned it, arguing that it discriminates against and stigmatizes LGBTQ people. Moreover, the EC launched an infringement procedure on 15 July 2021 against Hungary for

³ The manuscript of this article was submitted in November 2024, that is, before the 2025 amendment to the Fundamental Law of Hungary, which allows the ban of Budapest Pride.

violating, among other things, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights concerning the fundamental rights of LGBTQ people – regarding human dignity, freedom of expression and information, the right to the respect of private life, and the right to non-discrimination, – and the free movement of services (EC, 2021). Additionally, at the end of September 2021, the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) arrived in Hungary for three days to evaluate the rule of law in the country, including human rights and, thus, LGBTQ rights. The Committee then prepared a report in which it, in the name of the majority of the delegation, expressed “serious concerns about democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in Hungary” (LIBE, 2021, p. 29).

After the EC launched the infringement procedure, Viktor Orbán announced that the Hungarian government would initiate a so-called “child protection referendum” at the time of the upcoming Hungarian general election on 3 April 2022. Questions for the referendum concerned LGBTQ-inclusive sex education in public education institutions and the distribution of (media) content depicting LGBTQ people and gender-affirming care (for the referendum questions, see Appendix A). Subsequently, several Hungarian LGBTQ organizations and other human rights NGOs published a joint statement in which they emphasized that the referendum questions were formulated in an explicitly hostile tone and misleading manner and encouraged citizens to cast invalid votes.⁴

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between developing and broadening LGBTQ rights and EU membership and candidacy in (Central) Eastern European post-communist countries has been researched extensively. Although it is known that the EU aims to promote various minority rights, including LGBTQ rights, in its candidate and member countries, the efficacy and impact of the instruments used to promote the broadening of such rights, as well as their possible shortcomings and negative effects, continue to be the subject of scientific inquiry and contest.

Scholars in the field often use Europeanization theory, which conceptualizes the construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of EU norms (Radaelli, 2003, p. 30) to model the effect of the EU and its institutions on broadening domestic

⁴ See <https://www.amnesty.hu/szavazzunk-ervenytelenul-a-kormany-kikozosito-nepszavazasan/>. Retrieved: 2024. 10.29.

LGBTQ rights in candidate and Member States.⁵ Specifically, they rely on two models of the Europeanization concept to grasp the process of transposing EU norms and regulations into domestic contexts: *external incentives* and *social learning* models (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). The former basically refers to conditionality mechanisms, i.e., the European Union's practice of linking a state's accession to the Union to the formal transposition of EU legal norms into its domestic context. The conditionality mechanism has been assessed as effective to some extent in relation to adopting better legal frameworks for LGBTQ people in post-communist countries (Krizsan, 2009; O'Dwyer, 2013). However, as conditionality's leverage weakens after accession, the model has been characterized as unable to account for post-accession political and policy changes in the Member States (O'Dwyer, 2012, 2013; Pelz, 2014). Others note that adopting LGBTQ-friendly policies in post-communist member and candidate states might not positively affect social norms concerning LGBTQ persons either in society or among political elites (Krizsan, 2009; Pelz, 2014; Shevtsova, 2020). As such, external pressures might only tackle LGBTQ rights but not societal and political homophobia (O'Dwyer, 2013). Moreover, even in countries where political elites aim to meaningfully adhere to the EU's LGBTQ-related policy requirements, they may lack the resources necessary for enforcement (Krizsan, 2009).

The other frequently discussed model of Europeanization theory, social learning, refers to domestic political elites' internalization of so-called European norms and values through the candidate and Member States' continuing cooperation with each other and EU institutions and domestic non-governmental organizations' (in this case, LGBTQ and other human rights advocacy groups') transnational cooperation supported by EU institutions and mechanisms. In contrast to external incentives, the social learning process has a slow but long-term effect, which supposedly becomes stronger as time passes after a state accedes to the EU (O'Dwyer, 2012; Pelz, 2014; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). However, social learning is more likely to positively affect LGBTQ-related social and political attitudes in settings where the EU norms in question do not conflict with domestic norms (O'Dwyer, 2012; Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). In Hungary's case, the external pressure stemming from the country's accession negotiations was preceded by "some equality thinking in Hungary since the mid-1990s" (Krizsan, 2009, p. 6) and endogenous LGBTQ-friendly societal developments (Forest, 2018, p. 133). However, the

⁵ See, among others, Krizsan's (2009) study in the Hungarian context, Forest's comparison regarding Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Slovakia (2018); O'Dwyer's (2013) analysis of Poland; Shevtsova's study on Ukraine (2020), and Pelz's (2014) comparison of Estonia, Latvia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

legal framework adopted to adhere to the EU's LGBTQ-related norms did not lead to greater social acceptance of LGBTQ persons (Krizsan, 2009).

According to the models presented here, the EU accession of a country should lead to both a sound legal framework protecting LGBTQ rights (through conditionality) and greater acceptance of LGBTQ persons (through the social learning process). If any political backlash should arise, the social learning process ought to consolidate the legal frameworks protecting minority groups, including LGBTQ persons, and the commitment of political elites to support and promote minority rights in the long run after the accession of a country. O'Dwyer (2012) criticizes Europeanization theory for not only being unable to conceptualize the LGBTQ-related political changes in post-communist countries after their EU accession but also failing to account for political backlash and its implications for minority rights in these countries. The scholar understands the strengthening of Polish LGBTQ organizations and advocacy groups not as the outcome of the social learning process outlined in the Europeanization theory but as the outcome of the domestic political backlash following the adoption of some pieces of LGBTQ-related legislation in Poland to adhere to EU norms. As such, in O'Dwyer's (2012) reading, the EU's external incentives and, through these, the Polish domestic political backlash catalyzed LGBTQ and human rights advocacy groups. Others also conceptualize the rise of political homophobia and transphobia and, where it applies, state-funded homophobia and transphobia as domestic backlashes to the EU's and its institutions' promotion and protection of LGBTQ rights in EU member and candidate states (Forest, 2018; Pelz, 2014; Shevtsova, 2020).

Scholars who have analyzed the anti-gender discourse that emerged in the late 2000s and early 2010s conceptualize homophobic and transphobic discourses as key components of the transnational anti-gender political movement and its related discourse (Félix, 2015; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts, 2022; Kováts & Pető, 2017). This movement and the associated discourse have local manifestations throughout the world (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts & Pető, 2017), including in Hungary (Balogh, 2014; Félix, 2015; Kováts, 2022). In the context of anti-gender discourse, the terms "gender" and "gender ideology" encompass a wide range of phenomena. These include the promotion of gender mainstreaming, the promotion and expansion of reproductive rights, the (academic) use of the analytic concept of gender, the recognition and prevention of gender-based violence, and the protection and advancement of LGBTQ rights. Those opposing "gender ideology" or "genderism" typically reject or question these aspirations (Balogh, 2014; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018; Kováts, 2022). According to anti-gender rhetoric, "gender ideology" is being imposed on an "oppressed majority" by various international actors, including feminist movements, organizations like the United Nations and the European

Union, and concepts such as “the West,” “the gay lobby,” or “the LGBTQ lobby” (Félix, 2015; Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). This narrative portrays the anti-gender movement as a form of resistance to external forces that threaten national sovereignty (Kováts, 2022), grasped by some as the distorted adoption of colonialism theories into the anti-gender discourse (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018). Perceiving “gender ideology” as external oppression and an attempt to interfere in domestic affairs is a critical tenet of the anti-gender movement, distinguishing it from previous political backlashes against feminist and LGBTQ movements in post-communist countries (Korolczuk & Graff, 2018).

In the Hungarian context, scholars trace the emergence of anti-gender discourse back to 2008-2009, although noting that, at the time, the anti-gender discourse lacked an identifiable movement (Kováts & Pető, 2017). By the mid and late-2010s, the anti-gender discourse had accelerated with the support of Fidesz-KDNP politicians, (radical) right-wing media outlets, and members of the Hungarian clergy (Fodor, 2022; Kováts & Pető, 2017). Researchers perceive the emergence of the anti-gender discourse in Hungary, in line with the above-presented concept, as a domestic manifestation of a broader transnational trend (Félix, 2015; Kováts & Pető, 2017) rather than merely a political backlash against the diffusion of EU norms in the region. Hungarian findings regarding the use of the terms “gender” and “gender ideology” further strengthen international notions in that they conclude that the expressions are most often used to refer to issues relating to transgender people and somewhat to LGBTQ issues as well (Fodor, 2022; Kováts, 2022). Consequently, the recent wave of LGBTQ rights curtailment in Hungary, which began in 2020, can also be interpreted as part of this ongoing trend as the Fidesz-KDNP government initiated and supported the adoption of several pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation, claiming that “gender ideology” poses a threat to Hungarian culture, national identity, and sovereignty (Kováts, 2022). The anti-EU stance is particularly pronounced in the Hungarian anti-gender discourse, which portrays any aspiration to protect or broaden LGBTQ rights as part of a foreign threat from which only the Hungarian government can provide protection (Fodor, 2022; Kováts, 2022).

The study resorts to discourse analysis to connect the two concepts formerly introduced. Discourse analysis, conceptualized as both a theoretical framework and methodological approach, fundamentally challenges the perception of language as merely a transparent medium or a neutral tool for accumulating knowledge about the so-called “real world” (Wetherell, 2001). Rather, it posits that discourse—comprising of language use and its related practices—is a social practice that plays a crucial role in constructing social reality (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Gee, 2010). This perspective implies that texts (in their broadest sense) do not simply describe

a phenomenon; they actively define and reshape it (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Moreover, texts do not exist in isolation; their meanings are inherently contingent upon the contexts of their production and dissemination (Fairclough, 1992; Phillips & Hardy, 2002), as well as the broader socio-political and cultural environments from which they are interpreted (Reisigl, 2017). As such, discourse both constructs and influences social reality and is simultaneously shaped by it (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Consequently, a discourse analytic approach to media texts may shed light on how Hungary's relationship with the EU is constructed through the issue of LGBTQ rights.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the systematic changes in the Hungarian media landscape since 2010 (see Bajomi-Lázár, 2019; Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely, 2019; Szeidl & Szűcs, 2021), the study analyzes a diverse range of media outlets. The analysis includes four television channels: the public television channel *M1*, characterized by scholars as broadcasting pro-government views; the independent commercial channel *RTL Klub*,⁶ and *Hír TV* and *ATV*, two commercial news channels, the former often characterized as pro-government, the latter as independent; however, due to its changed ownership and tone, this is increasingly questioned by some (Bajomi-Lázár, 2019; Bátorfy & Urbán, 2020; Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely, 2021). Besides television channels, the corpus also includes articles from two dailies online and print versions, *Magyar Nemzet* (pro-government) and *Népszava* (independent), and two news sites, *hvg.hu* (independent) and *Origo* (pro-government) (Bátorfy & Urbán, 2020; Mérték Médiaelemző Műhely, 2021). As such, the analysis covers a broad spectrum of pro-government and independent media outlets and is diverse in terms of formats.

To analyze the EU-related media discourse touching on LGBTQ rights, we selected a time period for analysis around the Act LXXIX of 2021, which came into force on 8 July 2021, and the campaign leading up to the resulting public referendum held on April 3, 2022, thus collecting data between July 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022. Articles that discuss the EU's and Hungary's relationship in connection with LGBTQ rights were found with the help of keywords.

6 To increase comparability, the fact that RTL Klub primarily broadcasts entertainment programs not necessarily containing political opinions or content was taken into account; hence, only these two channels' main evening news programs were included in the corpus.

Namely, first, EU-related content was selected from the previously listed media outlets based on whether they contained at least one of the following Hungarian keywords: *Európai Unió* (“European Union”), *EU*, *Brüsszel* (“Brussels”), *Európai Parlament* (“European Parliament”), *Európai Bizottság* (“European Commission”) and *Európai Tanács* (“European Council”). Second, to find articles that discussed LGBTQ rights, keywords were selected for their central role in the public debate around the anti-LGBTQ law and the referendum; these were *család* (“family”), *családvédelem* (“protection of families”), gender, *genderlobbi* (“gender lobby”), *gyermekvédelem* (“child protection”), *homoszexuális* (“homosexual”), *LMBT** (“LGBT*”), *meleglobbi* (“gay lobby”), *pedofil* (“pedophile”), and *pedofiltörvény* (“pedophile Act”). The two selection steps identified 1328 articles. A randomized selection process was used to achieve a more manageable sub-corpus suitable for manual analysis (Krippendorff, 2019), considering the articles’ relevancy to the focus of the study and their distribution across media and publication date. This resulted in 48 articles, six from each selected media outlet.

The study applies discourse analysis that focuses on four main angles of EU and LGBT-related media discourse: 1. what views on Europeanization are represented in the media articles under analysis; 2. what views on the future of the EU and Europeanization appear in this media content; 3. what symbolic factors appear in articles to legitimize or delegitimize Europeanization, and in relation to this, the equality of LGBTQ people, and how are these discursively constructed in the articles; and finally 4. what pragmatic factors are represented in the material that legitimize or delegitimize Europeanization and, in relation to that, the equality of LGBTQ people, and how are these discursively constructed in the media content under analysis.

To analyze these four main angles, the study relies on Foucault’s (1991) framework of discourse analysis, which examines the characteristics of producing and disseminating discourses through five aspects, i.e., the limits and forms of *sayable*, *conservation*, *memory*, *reactivation*, and *appropriation*. These focus on sayable and unsayable things in discourse, prevalent and circled and repressed and disappeared discourses, discourses accepted as valid or invalid, reactivated previous discourses and their transformations, and the individuals or groups competing to dominate and control the discourse(s) in question, respectively (Foucault, 1991, pp. 59–60). The data was approached with an inductive coding strategy, and articles were coded using NVivo, focusing on the Foucauldian aspects of the four previously defined main angles of analysis.

DOMINANT DISCOURSES CONCERNING LGBTQ RIGHTS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Pro-EU and neutral discourses

In all identified pro-EU or neutral discourses, there is a clear understanding of the hierarchy between the EU and Hungary: Hungary should not give up its sovereignty but should respect and obey the EU's norms and rulings. Namely, none of these discourses suggests a change in the status quo between Hungary and the EU; indeed, this is portrayed almost as a given, and, apart from very few exceptions, nor do they argue for a federal Europe. Articles engaged in these discourses emphasize that the EU institutions' calls to repeal Act LXXIX of 2021 should be respected and blame Viktor Orbán and his political party for the possibility of retorts.

Human rights discourse

In this discourse, Act LXXIX of 2021, its possible effects on Hungarian LGBTQ people, and the pragmatic issues concerning its enforcement are in the limelight. Articles engaging in this discourse generally explicitly condemn the Act and the ruling parties responsible for it while implicitly or explicitly cherishing the EU's reaction. Nevertheless, the reports mostly focus on domestic affairs instead of the European political context.

The EU and its institutions are portrayed positively, framing the EC's launching of an infringement procedure as a legitimate and even necessary step to protect Hungarian and, thus, European and LGBTQ people and their human rights. According to the discourse, the Commission is "doing its job" when evaluating laws in EU member countries. The discourse incorporates the argument that LGBTQ media content does not "turn" children LGBTQ, nor is it harmful to anyone.

This argumentation and the general pro-EU stance of this discourse are reflected in the wording journalists use. For example, they often refer to the legislation as "the homophobic Act" or as "the so-called child protection Act." Additionally, there is a noticeable journalistic and editorial choice of predominantly quoting EU and Hungarian officials and NGO spokespeople who criticize or condemn the Act. The quoted or interviewed Hungarian and EU representatives, along with Western European political leaders, NGO spokespeople, Hungarian political analysts, and other experts, frequently explicitly criticized the new Act

for discriminating against LGBTQ individuals and violating EU legal norms. Moreover, some even expressed support for the EC's outrage regarding the Act, hoping that the EU's response would lead to its repeal.

The following quote, broadcasted under the lead "Right and left MEPs alike called the so-called anti-pedophile law a disgrace in the European Parliament today" in RTL Klub's main evening news program, exemplifies some of these journalistic approaches.

*"The protection of children from pedophilia is a common goal, but the legitimate public interest cannot be a pretext for introducing provisions that discriminate against groups that are minorities in terms of sexual identity and gender orientation," – said the Commission's vice-president, who said the so-called pedophile law could also have an impact on EU funding. "What kind of society is it where the government wants to determine who you love?" – asked a member of the biggest, the People's Party group, to which Fidesz also belonged months ago.*⁷ (RTL Klub, 2021a)⁸

Furthermore, the rule of law mechanism and the EC's infringement procedure frequently appear together in the discourse. They are portrayed as rightful and necessary steps by the EU against Hungary for violating LGBTQ rights, regardless that many EU officials, such as Vera Jourová, vice president of the EC, stated that the rule of law mechanism assesses the state of democracy in general and not the new Act (Hungary Today, 2021).

The pragmatic factor present in the discourse regarding Europeanization concerns the EU's role and duty in protecting its citizens' rights, in this case, the human rights of LGBTQ persons. Namely, the European Union's duty to enforce the norms and values enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in its Member States.

Symbolic arguments in support of the EU and its response revolve around the importance of protecting and promoting human rights and equality. Another, although less frequently appearing, symbolic factor was the linking of

⁷ All translations from Hungarian are the Author's own.

⁸ « » A gyerekek védelme a pedofiliától közös cél, a jogos közérdek azonban nem lehet ürügy olyan rendelkezések bevezetéséhez, amelyek hátrányos megkülönböztetést jelentenek a szexuális identitásukban, nemi orientációjukban kisebbségnek számító csoportoknak « - jelentette ki az Európai Bizottság alelnöke, aki szerint az uniós támogatások kifizetésére is hatása lehet az úgynevezett pedofil törvénynek. »Milyen társadalom az, ahol a kormány akarja meghatározni, hogy az ember kit szeressen? « - tette fel a kérdést a legnagyobb, a néppárti frakció tagja, ahová hónapokkal ezelőtt még a Fidesz is tartozott.»

Europeanness and being part of a broader European community to supporting LGBTQ people and their rights. Concerning this aspect, the adoption of an anti-LGBTQ Act drove Hungary away from the European community and European norms.

Therefore, the EU is positioned as both an institution that enforces legal norms and as a broader community that promotes specific social norms and values that Member States, especially their political actors, should internalize and represent.

Economic law discourse

Though less frequently, an economic law discourse also appeared in the articles analyzed. This discourse, allowing space for EU-neutral positions, shifted away from arguments centered on human rights and instead emphasized the consequences of the new Act for the flow of economic goods between EU borders. As such, the discourse both provided a pragmatic context for interpreting the new legislation and contained a direct, pragmatic reason for repealing Act LXXIX of 2021. The discourse emphasized that, according to EU regulations, the free flow of products, including media content, must be guaranteed across EU borders; it also pointed out that as the new Act contradicts this principle, it violates the EU's economic laws.

Quotes from EU institutions and politicians were frequently used to convey this discourse.

The President of the European Commission called the so-called pedophile Act a disgrace this summer. In July, the body launched an infringement procedure because it believes the law violates both content providers and trade directives by restricting the distribution of certain publications while also assessing the law as discriminatory.
(RTL Klub, 2021b)⁹

In the discourse, the EU is portrayed merely as an international organization protecting its and each of its Member States' economic interests, and to do so, it has to enforce its economic regulations in each of its Member States. As such,

⁹ "Szégyennek nevezte az úgynevezett pedofil törvényt nyáron az Európai Bizottság elnöke. A testület júliusban kötelezettségességi eljárást indított, mert álláspontjuk szerint a tartalomszolgáltatókat és a kereskedelmi irányelveket is sérti a törvény azzal, hogy bizonyos kiadványok terjesztését korlátozza, és diszkriminatívnak is tartják a törvényt."

the discourse ignores symbolic and moral arguments and focuses only on the legal matters over which the EU has authority.

Distraction

The third pro-EU/neutral discourse interprets the adoption of Act LXXIX of 2021 and the pro-government media's increased attention to the EU, its institutions, and politicians' reactions to the new legislation as only a government strategy intended to distract the public from other political scandals occurring in the same year, such as the so-called Pegasus scandal and the Fudan University scandal. As such, it is more focused on Hungarian domestic affairs. The following quote from the independent daily *Népszava*, which refers to the independent think tank Political Capital in interpreting the government's anti-LGBTQ legislation and the subsequent referendum, exemplifies this discourse.

Political Capital believes that the government is trying to take back the initiative with the LGBTQ issue after several topics that cast a negative light on the government were put on the agenda. First, the Fudan issue made bigger waves than expected; now, the Pegasus scandal has embarrassed the government, while the period ahead was supposed to be about the opposition's primaries. The government is trying to put all of these things behind with the referendum. (Czene, 2021)¹⁰

Regarding how LGBTQ issues affect the relationship between Hungary and the EU, the discourse posits that the EU and its institutions are not particularly invested in promoting LGBTQ rights in Hungary but aim to enforce the rule of law in Hungary. That is, media outlets engaging in this discourse argued that even though the EU condemns the government's anti-LGBTQ legislation and the related homophobic political discourse, the rule of law mechanism is due to the deterioration of democracy, lack of rule of law and adequate anti-corruption measures, not value or moral-based reasons, i.e., the "ideological reasons" of enforcing human rights for LGBTQ people.

Two main pragmatic aspects emerged in the discourse regarding the EU. First, the EU is portrayed as a legitimate and objective institution that can rightly and

¹⁰ "A Political Capital is úgy látja, hogy a kormány az LMBTQ-témával próbálja visszavenni a kezdeményezést, miután több, számára kellemetlen téma került napirendre. Először a Fudan-ügy vert a vártnál nagyobb hullámokat, most a Pegasus-botrány hozta kinos helyzetbe a kormányt, az előttünk álló időszak pedig az ellenzéki előválasztásról szólt volna. A népszavazási kezdeményezéssel igyekszik a kormány ezek mindegyikét zárójelbe tenni."

correctly judge the state of democracy and the misuse of EU funds in Hungary. Second, the EU has the right to withhold funds if its Member States, in this case, Hungary, do not fulfill their legal requirements.

Concerning symbolic factors, the human rights angle appears in the discourse only as collateral damage in the government's attempt to cover up its non-rule-of-law-compatible operation. As such, the EU's role in enforcing particular social norms and values in its Member States is secondary to its duty to monitor the rule of law and state of democracy in the Member States.

Janus-faced power demonstration

This discourse focuses on the Hungarian government's, and specifically Viktor Orbán's, relationship with the EU rather than the EU's role in domestic or European politics.

In this discourse, the government's adoption of Act LXXIX of 2021, the subsequent referendum, and the anti-LGBTQ political discourse around these are only political tools in domestic politics. That is, the new Act and the associated state-funded homophobic discourse are conceptualized as Fidesz-KDNP's campaign tools, deployed to gain voter support in the upcoming general elections by whipping up social homophobia in the name of child protection. This discourse reflects the anti-gender discourse formerly presented, so much so that the following quote from Péter Balázs, the late Minister for Foreign Affairs, on a television program on ATV, compares the government's focus on LGBTQ issues to the political discourse in Russia and Poland, thus interpreting the domestic campaign as the local manifestation of a transnational trend.

Péter Balázs: It [the new Act] is about him [Viktor Orbán] searching for and finding another piece of ammunition for next spring's elections. Since Soros has got old and [the] migrant [issue is] out of sight, Brussels somehow had to be cast in a new enemy role. They [Fidesz] now have invented this role for it [Brussels]. As I said, this is the Russian model that the Poles also use. (ATV, 2021)¹¹

11 "Balázs Péter: Arról van szó, hogy ő egy újabb muníciót talált, keresett és talált a jövő tavaszi választásokhoz. Ugye Soros megöregedett, a migránsok nem láthatók, és Brüsszelt valahogy egy új ellenségszerepbe kellett beállítani. Most ezt a szerepet találták ki neki. Mondom, ez azért orosz minta és a lengyelek is alkalmazzák."

Considering the new Act's impact on the relationship between the EU and the Hungarian government, those employing this discourse argue that the Hungarian government, particularly Viktor Orbán, capitalizes on these arguments with the EU. Namely, such incidents can be framed as a battle in domestic public discourse. The 'Janus-face' of the discourse lies in the notion that while in Hungary Viktor Orbán portrays himself as a freedom fighter who singlehandedly teaches manners to the EU, in the EU and foreign media, he mostly escapes accountability by arguing that the new Act only applies to children and that Hungary still protects the rights of adult LGBTQ people. As such, those engaging in the discourse continuously emphasize this ambiguity of the Hungarian Prime Minister's discourse, portraying himself as a relentless fighter against Brussels' oppression in the Hungarian media and, at the same time, a harmless and misunderstood protector of LGBTQ rights in the EU.

Anti-EU discourses

Although to different degrees, all of the Hungarian pro-government and anti-EU discourses revolve around a David-Goliath theme: a gigantic, strong oppressor, i.e., Brussels or the EU, is trying to control European countries and violate their sovereignty. According to this view, the Hungarian government is protecting so-called "traditional Hungarian values" and even posing as the custodian of "real" European values.

This overarching political narrative questions the concept of the EU as a community with shared values and social norms. It portrays the EU's goals of enforcing minority rights not as a legal or human rights issue but as a purely ideological one. Thus, it delegitimizes the EU's role in the diffusion of European social norms and values, presenting it as purely ideological external oppression. As such, sovereignty is a key concept in these discourses, entangling pragmatic and identity factors. In pragmatic terms, sovereignty is interpreted as questioning and delegitimizing the superiority of EU law over Hungarian law. As a symbolic factor, sovereignty refers to the notion that Brussels, as an abstract political entity, should not have the authority to tell Hungarian people how to live their lives and cannot force them to change their values and norms.

Journalistic methods employed to convey this discourse include quoting government officials and pro-government "experts" without providing any counterpoint to their views and the repetition of the government's narratives and arguments as *facts*.

Denial

The discourse of denial was dominant in pro-government media in the first few weeks when the EC began to criticize the adoption of the new Act.

Two main arguments dominated the discourse. First, Fidesz-KDNP officials, pro-government public figures, and journalists argued that EU politicians and bureaucrats were attacking the Hungarian government, or as frequently put in the discourse, the “Hungarian people,” because they had not actually read the new Act. Some even suggested that EU officials were having difficulty understanding or interpreting the Act. Second, the Act had been misunderstood, and the Hungarian government and the Act were being falsely accused of being homophobic. The latter argument was frequently underpinned by downplaying the discriminatory parts of the Act, for example, claiming that the Act only applies to those under 18 and, therefore, does not affect LGBTQ adults in any way or emphasizing that the Act’s main target is pedophiles and not sexual minorities.

In this discourse, the EU’s proposed retaliatory measures were portrayed as an exaggerated and disproportionate response to what was perceived as a misunderstanding. This narrative implicitly delegitimized the Europeanization process by relying on the pragmatic notion that the EU is not capable of objectively evaluating the laws enacted in its Member States.

Parents’ rights

In this discourse, Fidesz-KDNP politicians and the pro-government media argued that the new Act only strengthens parents’ right to decide what is taught to their children. They also claimed that the EU does not respect parents’ rights when urging the repeal of the legislation. Consequently, the governing parties and the media outlets supporting them portrayed the governing parties, especially Viktor Orbán, as fighting for parent’s rights to decide what is taught to their kids. The following excerpt from the pro-government public television channel M1’s evening news program, quoting Máté Kocsis Fidesz MP, exemplifies this discourse.

Through children’s books, advertisements, and various Internet platforms, minors are bombarded with propaganda that we think they should be kept away from because it is only the parents’ right to decide on their children’s education regarding this matter. It is up to the

parents to decide which direction they want their children to take, but only they can decide. (MI, 2022)¹²

Furthermore, the discourse changed noticeably throughout the period under analysis. What started as the argument that the Act is “ensuring parents’ right to decide,” with the “collateral damage” of LGBTQ rights’ erosion transformed into a pronounced anti-LGBTQ discourse dehumanizing LGBTQ individuals, portraying the EU as wanting to strip parents of their rights, and LGBTQ activists and so-called “LGBTQ propaganda” as posing an explicit threat to children. In this later phase of the discourse, pedophiles are rarely even mentioned; the focus instead shifted to “LGBTQ propaganda” and LGBTQ activists who supposedly pose harm to children’s development.

The phrase “we will not let them into our kindergartens and schools” became the core of the discourse, where “them” referred to both LGBTQ persons and organizations and, figuratively, the EU and Brussels, who are portrayed as aiming to interfere in Hungarian parents’ private decisions.

The discourse does not engage with meaningful pragmatic aspects of the relationship between Hungary and Brussels but portrays the relationship as a battlefield where Brussels sides with “gay propaganda,” which poses a threat to the healthy development of children. Legal aspects, such as the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, are not considered. Instead, symbolic aspects concerning the “ideology-fueled” imposition of “Western values” dominate the discourse.

The people’s will

This discourse appeals to the idea that the Hungarian government represents the opinion of the Hungarian people and is also the protector of the “oppressed majority” around Europe. According to this discourse, people in Hungary and all over Europe are fed up with the values and social norms that “Brussels ideologists” constantly try to force on them, and the Fidesz-KDNP government is the only political force that actually cares about and represents the will of “the people.” As part of the discourse, Fidesz-KDNP politicians often state that by questioning the legitimacy of the adopted Act, the EU is questioning

12 “Mesekönyvek, reklámok, az internet különböző felületein olyan propaganda árad a kiskorúakra, amitől azt gondoljuk, hogy őket távol kell tartani, mert kizárólag a szülőknek a joga, hogy ezirányú neveléséről döntsenek a gyerekeknek. Az, hogy melyik szülő milyen irányba tereli a gyerekeit, az már a szíve joga, de kizárólag ő dönthet.”

the legitimacy of elected Hungarian representatives and intends to override Hungarian voters' decisions regarding their own political representation.

The idea of Fidesz-KDNP having political allies in their crusade strengthened in the discourse after the LIBE Committee's visit when two visiting EU officials called the LIBE visit a witch-hunt, its only goal being to punish Hungary for its conservative views. They also stated that democracy is strong in Hungary and that the Hungarian government should not be punished for the new Act or any other reason. Relying on these two politicians' opinions, pro-government media concluded that even Western politicians and people are fed up with the EU's enforcement of liberal values. Therefore, the Hungarian government is not only fighting for the Hungarian people but is also one of the last bastions of traditional European values.

The following quote from the pro-government daily and online news portal *Magyar Nemzet* represents this discourse, in which "true Germans," i.e., "national sovereigntist conservatives," reject the values implicitly promoted by EU officials who otherwise look down on and threaten everyone who "thinks differently."

Von der Leyen and her Brussels colleagues, hovering in a rainbow bubble and scorning, lecturing, and threatening those who think differently about European values, human rights, migration, racism (such as the far-left BLM's anti-white and anti-Christian racism), the aggressive and destructive LGBTQ network and the ultra-liberal stormtroopers, should think about which side they are on. On the side of the internationalist socialists – including the new German "cultural philosopher" Aydan Özoguz – or on the side of the national sovereigntist conservatives, Christian democrats, and true Germans? Either – or: there is no third way. (Faggyas, 2021)¹³

13 "A szivárványos buborékban lebegő, az európai értékekről, emberi jogokról, migrációról, rasszizmusról (például a szélsőbaloldali BLM fehér- és keresztényellenes rasszizmusáról), az agresszív és destruktív LMBTQ-hálózatról és az ultraliberális rohamosztagokról másként gondolkodókat lenéző, kioktató és fenyegető Von der Leyennek és brüsszeli társainak el kellene gondolkozniuk, melyik oldalon állnak. Az internacionalista szocialisták – köztük az újnómet „kultúrfilozófus” Aydan Özoguz –, vagy pedig a nemzeti szuverenista konzervatívok, kereszténydemokraták és az igazi németek oldalán? Vagy-vagy, nincs harmadik út."

Moral superiority

This anti-EU discourse is best grasped as incorporating the view that the government is on high moral ground compared to the EU and representing the issue of child protection and LGBTQ rights as a zero-sum game.

The discourse incorporates the argument that the EU favors gay rights instead of children's rights and puts LGBTQ lobbyists before innocent children by trying to make the government repeal the Act, just as with the parents' rights discourse. However, in this discourse, another aspect is emphasized: the EU is "morally corrupt" for supporting so-called LGBTQ propaganda instead of protecting young, innocent children. Since the Hungarian government puts kids first, protecting them and their families, it is morally superior to the EU. It is noteworthy that the argument involves a zero-sum game logic, depicting the promotion and protection of children's rights and LGBTQ rights as inherently conflicting, as shown in the following excerpt from M1.

Judit Varga [then Minister of Justice for Hungary] highlighted that an unprecedented campaign has been launched against Hungary because our country considers the protection of children more important than the LGBTQ lobby. (M1, 2021)¹⁴

Furthermore, with a somewhat twisted logic, the discourse posits that the government had successfully solved the issue posed by the zero-sum logic, as it had put children first but did not sanction adults and their private lives. Consequently, Hungary is performing better at protecting minority groups' rights than the EU as it has managed to resolve the contradiction between children's rights and LGBTQ rights (a "contradiction" that the Hungarian government introduced in this discourse), which makes "us" Hungarians "even more European" than the EU.

This discourse further strengthens the Hungarian government's moral superiority by portraying the legal case of an MEP as characteristic of the EU as a whole. Cyrus Engerer, who proposed the draft resolution in which the European Parliament condemned the new Act, was found guilty by the Maltese Court for distributing pornographic pictures of his former partner as revenge. Media outlets engaging in this discourse frequently mentioned that the MEP in question is gay, implying that his sexual orientation bears a relation to his felony, further strengthening the link between homosexuality, pornography, and

¹⁴ "Varga Judit arra hívta fel a figyelmet, hogy eddig soha nem látott hadjárat indult Magyarországon ellen, mert hazánk a gyermekek védelmét fontosabbnak tartja az LMBTQ lobbainál."

crimes, which were already present in the discourse. The pro-government media used this case to emphasize that the Hungarian government is morally superior to the EU.

As a pragmatic factor, the discourse involves the government's criticism of Europeanization, arguing that the EU does not satisfyingly protect children's rights and that the Hungarian Act serves children better than other EU laws. However, the symbolic element is much more dominant in explicitly stating that the Hungarian government and, thus, Hungarian people who voted for them, are morally superior to EU bureaucrats and that generally no one, but specifically morally questionable people (who would choose LGBTQ rights "instead" of children's rights, for example) can impede the Hungarian legal system.

Ideology-based punishment

The most prevalent anti-EU discourse initially centered around the claim that Hungarian politicians tried to negotiate with EU bureaucrats and help them understand the Act and the will of the Hungarian people, but the "left-liberal bureaucrats" instead chose to attack Hungary, disguising their ideology-based attack as human rights reservations and an impartial assessment of the rule of law in Hungary. According to this discourse, the circle of those attacking Hungary for ideological reasons, i.e., merely due to the country's right-wing government promoting traditional Christian values, ranges from George Soros, international human rights and LGBTQ organizations, and the "LGBTQ lobby" through the EU to the Hungarian opposition.

The infringement procedure and the rule of law mechanism are continuously mixed up in the discourse, and the argument that the EU is punishing Hungary for the new Act is used for both. Therefore, it is not addressed anywhere in the discourse that the rule of law mechanism was separate from the infringement procedure. The rule of law mechanism is addressed through two strategies in the discourse. First, in claiming that the only reason EU institutions support the rule of law mechanism against Hungary is the adoption of the new Act, which they condemn on ideological bases either because, for Brussels, LGBTQ rights are more important than the protection of kids or because Hungary has a conservative ruling party. Second, through admitting that the rule of law mechanism targets corruption but claiming that opposition politicians are the ones who violate the EU's rules and engage in corruption.

There are no pragmatic reasons present in the discourse concerning why the EU/Brussels would pick on Hungary particularly. Instead, it is emphasized that Brussels tries to push its (LGBTQ) values and norms on the Member States and

attacks Hungary because it does not bow to this so-called “left-liberal ideology” but stays a conservative country, which Brussels, as the external oppressor, cannot stand. The portrayal of the EU is sometimes refined by pushing the responsibility onto LGBTQ advocacy groups and the so-called “gay lobby” and claiming that these organizations are behind the EU’s “attack on Hungary,” suggesting that the EU’s wrongdoing is that it gave in to pressure from these international organizations.

In the following excerpt, which contains a condensed example of this discourse, the Hungarian pro-government public television channel M1 is quoting Balázs Szolomayer, lead analyst of the *Center for Fundamental Rights*, a pro-government think tank.

[Balázs Szolomayer:] They [LGBTQ and other human rights organizations] are deliberately trying to make the Hungarian government look bad, and the reason behind this is that Hungary is now run by a right-wing government, a conservative government, which is contrary to their ideological views. (M1, 2021)¹⁵

Moreover, the discourse also connects the EU’s response to the new Act to the Hungarian domestic political landscape, implying that there is an alliance between Brussels and the Hungarian opposition parties, which aims to prevent the government from protecting children from pedophiles and LGBTQ content. It portrays the Hungarian opposition as aiming to “sell” the country to “the West” and give up any traditional, Christian, Hungarian values. The discourse appeals to the idea that Brussels and the EU aim to use Hungarian opposition parties and politicians to overthrow the legitimate Hungarian government due to its conservative Christian views instead of left-liberal ones.

As part of the discourse, attention is also drawn to the ambiguity of the EU’s interpretation of human rights, claiming that Brussels only cares about human rights and the rule of law when it concerns certain groups, like sexual minorities, but does not care about discrimination when its victims are conservative and catholic groups or are victims of political groups that the EU favors.

In this discourse, the Member States criticizing the Hungarian Act are portrayed as the “declining West,” where the abnormal is the new normal, and traditional values are supposedly penalized. In contrast, Hungary is portrayed as a country protecting its traditional, Christian-conservative values; as an “island

15 “Tudatosan próbálják rossz színben feltüntetni a magyar kormányt, és ennek az áll a háttérében, hogy egy jobboldali kormány vezeti ma Magyarországot, egy konzervatív kormány, amely ellentétes az ő ideológiai nézeteikkel.”

of sanity” in the decaying left-liberal European Union, for which it is punished by Brussels. As such, the interpretation of the Hungarian Act transformed it into a means of self-protection intended to defend the country’s Christian-conservative values from fast-spreading and aggressively propagated “deviances” such as “LGBTQ propaganda.” This is a shift in the sense that initially, the Hungarian government deemed the Act per se necessary, but later, the Act transformed into a reaction to already existing so-called “gay propaganda” or “LGBTQ ideology” that Brussels forces on the Member States.

CONCLUSION

The nine identified discourses are mainly fragmented among the media outlets. Government-related anti-EU discourses appeared in both pro-government and independent media outlets, while neutral and pro-EU discourses appeared only in independent media outlets, demonstrating that they represent more diverse voices in the public discourse. However, EU-critical discourses independent of the government’s political discourse did not emerge in the period under analysis. A possible explanation is that the strong connection of EU criticism to the governing parties, Fidesz and KDNP, and their radical right-wing satellite, the Mi Hazánk party, in the polarized Hungarian public and media discourse led to the exclusion and abandonment of EU-critical political voices independent of the government.

The analysis showed that the pro-government media, in its prevalent and anti-EU discourses, opted for a strong anti-LGBTQ discourse as well, portraying the EU as enforcing its social norms and values on its Member States against the will of European people and traditional and conservative values. Although public media services, such as M1, have distanced themselves from the topics of sexual and gender minorities and their equality (see, for example, Tamássy, 2019) in the last few years, the turn in the government’s and, thus, pro-government media’s communication is striking as the identified discourses construct LGBTQ identities and national identity as mutually exclusive.

Regarding the discourses’ stance on Europeanization, anti-EU discourses connected to the Hungarian government explicitly called for the weaker enforcement of social norms and values enshrined in various EU documents, labeling such attempts to diffuse these norms as “external oppression” and as a “violation of national sovereignty.” In contrast, only a few discourses called for the need for the European Union to monitor, disseminate, and enforce more rigorously the norms enshrined in its own founding documents. In the polarized

Hungarian media discourse around the adoption of Act LXXIX of 2021 and the EU's response to it, pragmatic factors often intertwined with symbolic ones regarding the evaluation of the Europeanization process or even disappeared because mere symbolic aspects heavily dominated the discourses.

The identified discourses support the conceptualization of the governments' recent anti-LGBTQ discourse as part of the transnational anti-gender movement because the anti-EU discourses, even if intertwined, are imbued with the characteristics of the anti-gender discourse as identified by Korolczuk and Graff (2018), and especially the characteristics of the Hungarian local manifestation of the anti-gender discourse identified by, among others, Kováts (2022), Kováts and Pető (2017), Félix (2015) and Balogh (2014). So much so that even some who engaged in pro-EU discourse emphasized that the Hungarian government's homophobic discourse and anti-LGBTQ legislation is part of a greater transnational trend also present in Russia and Poland. These findings further strengthen the crucial role of international bodies, such as the EU, in the anti-gender discourse. They underpin that the way discourses interpreted Hungary's relationship with the European Union and the representation of European values was decisive in its assessment of and attitude toward LGBTQ rights. Whether the 2020-2021 wave of anti-LGBTQ policies has strengthened domestic LGBTQ movements in the long term is for the future to tell.

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APPENDIX

Questions in the so-called ‘child protection’ referendum held on 3 April 2022.

- *Do you support children in public schools participating in classes that demonstrate sexual orientations without parental consent?*
- *Do you support information about gender change treatments being given to children?*
- *Do you support media content of a sexual nature and affecting the development of children being presented to them without any restrictions?*
- *Do you support media content presenting gender change being presented to children?*

Source: <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/parliament-votes-to-hold-referendum-on-hungarys-child-protection-law>