Anna Molnár: Economic Crisis and Euro-Scepticism: A Comparative Study of the Hungarian and Italian Case¹
Draft paper

Introduction
This comparative paper examines the reasons and the features of the rising euroscepticism in Italy and in Hungary in the light of the economic, financial, and political crisis. The on-going crisis became the main element of the political debates and discourses among the Italian and the Hungarian political parties. In Italy and Hungary euroscepticism is still on the rise. I have chosen Italy and Hungary because both have become more eurosceptic or Euro-sceptic only recently during the last few years.

In the first chapter I will shortly summarise the conceptual framework of euroscepticism which is a negative or sceptical attitude towards the European integration process. On the bases of the literature we can speak about party level or individual euroscepticism (sceptic public opinion towards the EU or the membership of the country in the EU or only one common policy).

In the second chapter I provide an overview of ideas of Europe in Italian and Hungarian political discourse in the post-bipolar or, we can say, in the post-Maastricht period (from the early 90’s). The fall of the Berlin wall had a decisive impact on the domestic politics, and the international changes has created the basis for political transitions (on a different level) in both countries. In the case of this two countries there are different type of transitions: Hungary leaving behind the one-party system and created a functioning democracy, Italy mainly changing the political party system marked the end of the “First Republic” and the birth of the highly promising “Second Republic”.

This time-period can be labelled as the post-Maastricht period also, as since the Maastricht Treaty the European integration has had a increasing impact on domestic politics and on the national party system (Mair, 2000). As the EU is more and more integrated the society is more and more critical about it, having more questions and discussions about the whole EU integration and democracy on EU level (democratic deficit, information deficit, communication deficit etc.). Firstly in the case of Italy the transformation of the Italian party system between 1992 and 1994 and secondly in the case of Hungary the regime-change make this period very interesting for our research.

This part of the investigation focuses on the individual and party attitudes towards the EU (internal debate on accession and on membership), analyses the public opinion about the membership of Italy and Hungary, and the opinion of political parties about the institutional reform of the European Union based on primary and secondary sources. In order to analyse euroscepticism I prefer to use data provided by Eurobarometer surveys. For both countries the EU or in the case of Italy, also the Euro has became a modernisation symbol, and a certain “EU-entusiasm” or Euro-entusiasm can be observed in order to Join the Euro (Italy) or EU (Hungary). Following the realisation of these projects there has been an ever growing euroscepticism (Hungary, Italy) or Euro-scepticism (Italy), and less and less confidence in the transition processes due to the lessening economic advantages. “Euro” in euroscepticism refers to the European integration, and “Euro” in Euro-scepticism refers to the common currency.

EU as Modernisation Symbol

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<td>Funding MS of the EC/EU</td>
<td>Following the collapse of the bipolar world – the potential EC/EU membership has become the modernisation symbol of Hungary</td>
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<td>Third Economy in the Euro-zone - structural economic problems</td>
<td>Hungary, during the eighties, had a special experience of liberalisation in economic and political fields (naturally only to a limited extent) – it was considered one of the best prepared country in the region among the first group to join the EC/EU. - structural economic problems</td>
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<td>Since the 70s bipartisan pro-european attitude</td>
<td>In the period of the collapse of the socialist state, – the primary goal of the main Hungarian political parties was immediate accession to the European Union.</td>
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<td>one of the most Euro-enthusiastic member state, – supported the deepening of European integration all through the 20th century</td>
<td>It was not an real Euro-enthusiastic member state, – but supported the deepening of European integration</td>
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<td>High support of the Italian population – strong pro-European public opinion – weak national identity – modernisation of Italy was considered as dependent on the country’s role in the EU – Italians traditionally have had a greater confidence in the EU institutions than in their national ones</td>
<td>High support of the population - strong national identity – modernisation of Hungary was considered as dependent on the country’s role in the EU – Hungarians traditionally have had a greater confidence in the EU institutions than in their national ones</td>
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In the third chapter I will focus on the causes of growing euroscepticism (party level or individual euroscepticism) in Italy and in Hungary as a consequence of the crisis. In my research I analyse the post-crisis period which more or less coincide with a second transition period.

Transitions

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<td>2011-13. beginning of the „Third republic”?</td>
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I. chapter Euroscepticism

Euroscepticism which is a negative or sceptical attitude towards the European integration process (Taggart - Szczerbiak, 2001.). On the bases of the literature we can speak about party level or individual Euroscepticism (sceptic public opinion towards the EU or the membership of the country in the EU or only one common policy). Gabel and Whitten stated that the
worsening economic situation (subjective perception) has a negative impact on the level of individual euroscepticism (Gabel – Whitten; 1997, 81).

A division can be mentioned between soft and hard euroscepticism. Soft euroscepticism includes for example viewpoints against one of the policies of the EU. Those who express revulsion against the political or economic ‘deepening’ of the EU (e.g. objection against the introduction of the Euro) are also counted among ‘soft sceptics’. In short, those who belong to the soft wing of eurosceptics are not against the European integration, but have different opinions about particular measures. They attach primary importance to the vindication of national interests. In contrast, the representatives of the hard euroscepticism are totally against the political and economic integration, and they stand up against the EU membership of their own country. (Taggart - Szczerbiak, 2001, 8. p.) They generally express criticism against capitalism, liberalism and socialism considering these as power tools of the EU.

There is a big variety of levels and opinions concerning the European integration process. We can mention the categories of Kopecky and Mudde (2002): Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Europragmatists, Eurorejects. Analysing Italian political parties Conti and Verzichelli defined five different types of attitude towards the European integration. According to their classification the centre-left parties (PPI, DS, and later the PD) represent identity Europeanism, the extreme left (RC) hard euroscepticism, centre-right parties (FI, AN) functional Europeanism and soft euroscepticism, and the Extreme right (LN) functional Europeanism and floating between soft and hard euroscepticism, (Conti, 2003) as seen in detail in the table below:

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<th>Party attitudes to European integration</th>
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<td>Hard euroscepticism</td>
<td>There is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration. It can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU oppose the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived. There is no commitment to reform but to change radically the current trajectory of European integration.</td>
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<td>Soft euroscepticism</td>
<td>There is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but concern on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU. Or there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU trajectory. The party has a will to reform Europe.</td>
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<td>No commitment/No mention</td>
<td>No clear attitude to European integration. Policy-specific preferences may be expressed but it is overall impossible to define the broad party attitude.</td>
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<td>Functional Europeanism</td>
<td>Support to European integration can be re-conducted to a strategy, serving domestic interests or a different party goal. There is no commitment to further integration, unless it is proved it would serve such interests. Otherwise, commitment to European integration is mainly in terms of defence of the status quo.</td>
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<td>Identity Europeanism</td>
<td>There is a principled support to the EU and European integration. There is claim in favour of further competence shift from the national to the supranational arena, of Federal Europe and of a European</td>
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citizenship. Further integration is a fundamental party goal.

The Hungarian Europe Society has started a regular monitoring research project to examine the attitude of the Hungarian political parties towards the EU and created its own PERC-index categories. 1 represents the “total rejection of any kind of European integration” and 10 “the complete acceptance of a full-blown European federalism” to measure their attitude between June 2009 (European elections) and mid-2012. In the PERC-index 1. is Euro-destructive, 2. is Europhobe, 3. is Hard eurosceptic, 4. is Soft eurosceptic, 5. is Europessimist, 6. is Europragmatist, 7. is Soft europragmatist, 8. is Euro-constructive, 9. is Eurooptimist and 10. is Federalist.

The executive summary of the project stated that no Hungarian parliamentary party received 1 (real Euro-destructive which would refuse also to participate in EP elections) or 10 (real federalist which offers a coherent federalist vision), the two opposite categories. (Európa Társaság, 2013, p 5)

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<th>PERC indicators for Hungarian parliamentary parties</th>
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<td>Party Platforms for EP Elections 2009</td>
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<td>Speeches at European Parliament</td>
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II. chapter – first transition following the collapse of the bipolar world – post-Maastricht-period

Party attitude towards the EU

Italy

In Italy up to 1990, European-level policy-making had not turned into the field of combat between bigger conflicting coalitions, mainly due to the lack of the alternation of different political courses and due to bipartisan EU-policy since the 1970s. It was only after the collapse of the Eastern Block, the actions of “mani puliti” and the electoral reform (1993) that the two large opposing coalitions took shape. The introduction of the majority principle in the election system contributed to the formation of party coalitions more efficient in securing a more stable governmental operation, thus creating the basis for the alternation of political courses. The events taking place in Italy during the early 1990s were considered by many as a kind of “transformation” which marked the end of the “First Republic” and the birth of the highly promising “Second Republic”.

Although the collapse (1989-1991) of the Eastern Block served as the fundament of changes, but the real political avalanche was launched by the corruption scandal that broke out around the Italian Socialist Party, which soon reached several elements of the political scene. In the case of Italy, however, is not possible to speak about the birth of the new Republic in the traditional political or constitutional sense, as this process was not due to the elaboration and approval of a novel constitution, but rather to a political landslide mainly concerning parties, the political elite and the party system. Simultaneously with the political landslide, the smaller parties almost totally disappeared while the bigger ones transformed to a large extent, with their support dropping. This remarkable transformation of the political and party system was connected to the renewal of the political elite and helped the creation of the bipolar party-system.

All of the main political parties have expressed a pro-European approach since the 1970s, but during the post Maastricht Treaty period different level of euroscepticism emerged.

On the left the major successors of the PCI (Italian Communist Party), the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left, 1991-1998), later transformed into DS (Democrats of the Left) (1998-2009) emphasised, concentrating on welfare and social issues, the social democratic aspects and supranational federalist vision of the integration. The PDS/DS, a founder of the Party of European Socialists (PES), expressed this opinion during the electoral campaign of the 1999 EP elections with its political slogan: ‘yes to a market economy, no to a market society’. The Party for Communist Refoundation (PRC), smaller of the two successor parties to the PCI, represented a different model of the integration, and it expressed its critical opinion about the deepening of the integration and the institutional reform, voting against the Maastricht Treaty and later the European Constitutional Treaty, and expressed their criticism about the wider competencies of the EU. The PRC missed the articulation of some basic principles, like the ban of all wars and the creation of a full-employment economy. (Bardi, 2007, pp. 6-7; Conti, 2003, p. 25)

The other main pro-European centre-left party, the PSI became one of the main loser of the party system crisis due to the actions of the so called ‘Mani Puliti’. The most important successor of the PSI was the SDI (Italian Democratic Socialists), which maintained the pro-European, federalist attitude of its predecessor.
The left and liberal Radical Party was also pro-European, and in its 2004 statute stated the necessity to strengthen ‘the liberal, liberist, and libertarian struggle for liberal revolution and for the United States of Europe’. The party supported the federal development of the integration based on the principle of subsidiarity in order to make decisions closer to the people. The 2000 statute of the Greens expressed a similar, pro-European opinion: ‘The Greens are those who work for the political unity of a Europe based on the principles of democratic federalism and subsidiarity.’ They represents that the environment is a key issue for the creation of the political unification of the Union. (Bardi, 2007, p. 7)

The centre-left parties (e.g. DS, PPI) have been the most devoted supporters of the deepening of the European integration with the aim of creating a supranational, federal union, highlighting the importance of a common European identity since the 90s.

Following the collapse of the Italian party system the Italian Christian Democracy (DC) was divided into two different political directions. The right wing of the DC created the CCD (Christian Democratic Centre) and the CDU (United Christian Democrats, later became the UDC, Union of Christian and Centre Democrats). The successors of the DC were all pro-European and favourable to the deepening of the European integration. The left wing of the DC founded the Italian Peoples Party (PPI). The PPI later played an important role in the creation of the centre-left Margherita.

In 1993, leaving a political vacuum behind, the Italian Christian democracy finally dissolved, and the voter support of the successor parties also significantly decreased. Consequently, the vacuum in the internal politics was filled suddenly by a new type of political parties. On the right side of the political palette during the 90s there were three new parties that attracted most the voters with a right-wing orientation: Forza Italia (FI), National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale - AN) and the Northern League. This process naturally did not occur without any precedents as the routes of the Northern League can be traced back already to the 80s. At the same time, the National Alliance grew out of the Italian Social Movement (MSI, Movimento Sociale Italiano). In 1993 a new party emerged to oppose the centre-left coalition: Forza Italia. This party was indeed constituted a totally new, unprecedented political construct. The huge vacuum in the right-wing was finally filled by the media magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

Introducing the Euro in Italy

At the beginning of the 1990s, Italy had to face serious economic problems. In 1992, the Lira was deflated by 7% (and than 30%), so, although not permanently, only temporarily, Italy had to leave the European Monetary System. Simultaneously other macroeconomic indicators of the Italian economy (like e.g. the foreign trade balance) showed decreasing trends, while Italy’s joining the European common currency also became insecure.

During the first Berlusconi government in 1994 the Foreign Minister, Antonio Martino criticised the EMU project. He emphasised that ‘the convergence was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for monetary unification’. He also considered necessary to re-negotiate the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty. The Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi also proposed the renegotiation of the TEU in order to Italy could join the EMU without fulfilling the convergence criteria. (Quaglia, 2003, p. 11)

However, by the middle of 1990s, following the 1996 elections, the new centre-left ‘Olive tree Coalition’ managed to re-stabilise the Italian economic balance. In November 1996, the Lira re-joined the European Monetary System. The ‘‘Olive-tree Coalition’ considered one of their priority to fulfil the euro convergence criteria (Maastricht Criteria), the pre-requirements of joining the third stage of European Economic and Monetary Union and adopt the euro. (D’Alema, 1998; Ciampi, 2000/a, pp. 203-205) In this period, the problems of the Italian economy made it doubtful whether Italy could remain at all an important member of the European Union. The Prodi government considered their primary mission to conclude the
necessary reforms. They set as their goal to eliminate economic problems and to re-establish the prestige of the political elite, to answer the euro convergence criteria, to lead Italy back into the European Monetary System, to get admitted into the Euro Zone, as well as the reform of the public sphere and political institutions. (D’Alema, 1997, p. 157) During centre left government in opposition, the Forza Italia renewed the idea of re-negotiating the TEU. (Quaglia, 2003, p. 12)

In the year 1997 in order to comply with the euro convergence criteria, without any resistance by the Italian public, they introduced a so called ‘one-time Euro tax’ to be valid only until the fulfilment of the criteria had been achieved. Owing to the successful economic policy, Italy became a member of the Monetary Integration, which the centre left government could account for as a great achievement, when it was finally decided after long debates in Brussels on May 1, 1998. To reach this stage, however, the strict Maastricht criteria had to be fulfilled, which naturally was not an easy task for Italy, as the ratio of the annual government deficit to gross domestic product (GDP) was 7.7% in 1995, and 6.6% in 1996. Nevertheless this ratio was decreased to 2.7%, as a consequence of the Euro tax and the economic restrictions. This ratio was kept in the following two years as well; in 1998 and 1999 government deficit was 2.6% to the GDP. Already by 1997, the inflation rate had also been decreased significantly, from the 1995 rate of 5.4% to the 1997 1.9%. However, the ratio of Italy’s gross government debt could not be dropped under the Maastricht required level; as it was as high as 124.2% in 1995, 124.0% in 1996, 121.6 in 1997 and 118.5% in 1998. (Horváth, 2000, pp. 550-553)

After the introduction of the Euro, analysts found that contrary to the early difficulties, participation in the European Monetary signified a serious advantage for Italy; the interest rates for example decreased at a higher speed than in other states, and as analysts claimed, the 2000 oil crisis also shook the Italian economy less strongly than it would have, were Italy to face the crisis on her own. (Vaciago, 2001, p. 208)

While after the introduction of the Euro several political fields (e.g. inflationary and monetary policies) became part of the common policies, several others remained under the authority of national governments (e.g. employment policy, technological development, tax policy and social policy), so national governments kept on being responsible for the reform of the latter political fields. In Italy, the execution of reforms was to a large extent made difficult by the economic problems that had cumulated during the preceding decades (e.g. the problems occurring in the Mezzogiorno, the high government debt and the relatively low R+D subsidies). Italian politicians worried about the country’s exclusion from the important issues concerning the integration in case of staying out of the Euro Zone. As Massimo D’Alema, Italian PM in 1998 stated, close attachment to the Union brought Italy out of the ever deepening political and economic crisis of the 1990s. In his view, the maintenance of the competitiveness of the EU required the left-wing governments to conclude the reform of the social state. (D’Alema, 1998) Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, at the time President of the Italian Republic considered the introduction of the Euro as a great success, and stated that the centre left coalition had managed to balance the country’s economic state. According to the President, Italy’s joining the Monetary Union also had advantages for the domestic affairs, as one of its consequences was the decrease of the threat of the country’s dissolution, i.e. the secessionism supported by the Northern League. In his view, the country’s population also endorsed the government so that with the introduction of the Euro the national sovereignty could be elevated to the Community level. (Ciampi, 2000/a)

Already during the time of the first Berlusconi government (1994), as well as the next, 2001 Berlusconi-led central right coalition, a drifting away from the traditional EU policy became apparent. The new government, through a more determined emphasis on national interests, stopped representing the traditional ‘follower’ EU policy of its predecessors. After the
inauguration of the second Berlusconi government, communications concerning the Euro seemed to underpin the worries of those who had concerns about the future of the integration, when in early January 2002 the debate between some members of the government and the minister of foreign affairs concluded in the resignation of the foreign minister, Renato Ruggiero.

The debate was induced by the hostile anti-Euro declarations of defence minister Antonio Martino, Giulio Tremonti minister of economy and Umberto Bossi minister of reforms without portfolio, while Ruggiero, not assuming community with the other members of government, stood up against the declarations. The major West-European newspapers (El Pais, Le Monde, Financial Times, The Times, Le Figaro) interpreted the resignation of Ruggiero as signalling the weakening of the Mediterranean pillar of the EU, Italy’s turning away from the Union, since Ruggiero became foreign minister exactly because of his prestige as a politician all over Europe, which was due to him having been a former president of WTO, and because of his well-known pro-integration approach.

After the resignation of the foreign minister, in order to ease the European partners’ worries, Silvio Berlusconi announced in his speech in Parliament that Italy would remain a stable and solid member of the integration. In his interview given to The Times on January 14, 2002 stated that as a representative of Italy’s interests he would support the reforms aimed at the more efficient functioning of the EU. In several of his official statements Berlusconi reinforced his intention to endorse setting up of the Convent and the enlargement of the EU. Following this statement, certain ministers also involved in the affair, among them also Umberto Bossi was forced to stand up for his own pro-integration approach. (CNNITALIA, 2002/ab) Umberto Bossi, however, was already at the time forming the second Berlusconi government opposed to Ruggiero’s appointment, arguing that Ruggiero was a symbol of the past (CNNITALIA, 2001/a). On January 4, Umberto Bossi stated to Corriere della Sera that between him and Ruggiero there always had been conflicts because for him the foreign minister had represented the bureaucrats’ despotic and tyrannical Europe. (CNNITALIA, 2001/b) An article published in the January 6 issue of La Padania, the official daily of the Northern League, explained Umberto Bossi’s arguments with the fact that the introduction of the Euro brought very sensitive policies under the Community’s authority. According to the author of the article Unberto Bossi did not intend to refute the introduction of the Euro, his aim was only to find out what consequences the introduction of the common currency could lead to, since in Bossi’s opinion it would cause serious tensions if decisions would be made in Brussels and not in Rome in questions concerning the welfare state (e.g. the pension reform). (La Padania, 2002/a) As Franco Speroni, EU MP of the Northern League did not agree with the fears of those worried about the criticism of the common currency’s to mean a threat to its facilitative role in the integration. In his opinion earlier examples like e.g. the Rouble also underpinned the argument that the use of a common currency in itself does not lead to the integration of the nations implementing the currency. (La Padania, 2002/b) Making comparisons of the Soviet Union to the EU has been rather characteristic of politicians of the Northern League. Speroni, however, did not count with the fact that Rouble had been introduced in a totally different international situation as the dictatorship of the Soviet Union could in no way be equalised with the voluntary structure of the EU. At the same time it cannot be considered an accident why Speroni chose the USSR as an example for the above mentioned trend of the Northern League.

In contrast to the previous ideas, political scientist Piero Ignazi thought that in actual fact Silvio Berlusconi forced his foreign minister to resign because Ruggiero, with his devotion to pro-integration policy, did not fit among the populist majority of the government. (Ignazi, 2002) According to the left-wing opposition Silvio Bersconi’s decision signalled the sudden breakthrough of ‘Bossism’ in the government. For them this was a clear sign of the
government’s anti-integration policy, and politicians of the opposition parties attacked Berlusconi’s decision in numerous daily papers. (CNNITALIA, 2002/c) During the years following her accession to the Euro Zone, Italy was still able to maintain the macro-economic indicators required by the convergence criteria.

Hungary
Between 1987 and 1990, following the formation of new political parties (e.g. Fidesz – the Alliance of Young Democrats) and the reformation of old political parties (e.g. Hungarian Social Democratic Party (HSDP)), Hungary’s transition to liberal democracy, the so called regime change was completed. With the emendation of the constitution negotiated during the trilateral National Roundtable Talks of 1989 between the three sides (the Opposition Roundtable, the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party the communist party), and the "Third Side" (satellite organizations of the MSZMP)), political reforms were introduced in, for example, political pluralism, freedom of association, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, freedom of trade unions, and a democratic electoral system. Alongside the introduction of liberal democratic institutions, Hungary strove to become an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic co-operation system. In 1990 the country became a member of the Council of Europe, in 1995 it entered the OECD, in 1996 the WTO, in 1999 it entered NATO, and in 2004 it became a member of the EU.

Following the collapse of the bipolar world, the potential EC/EU membership has become the modernisation symbol of a prosperous, democratic and European Hungary (“Back to Europe”). In the period of the collapse of the socialist state, the primary goal of the main Hungarian political parties was immediate accession to the European Union. As Hungary, during the eighties, had a special experience of liberalisation in economic and political fields (naturally only to a limited extent), it was considered the best prepared country in the region among the first group to join the EC/EU.

During the first free election campaign in 1990 there was a common agreement among the political parties that the most important foreign policy goal was early membership of the EU for Hungary. There was only one anti-European political party: the communist Workers’ Party, the smaller of the two successor parties to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, which was an extra-parliamentary movement following the first free elections. Apart from this movement, all the mainstream parties formed during the period of peaceful transition in the period 1987–1989 were pro-European, but some differences can be identified in their political goals regarding EU membership and integration.

The Hungarian Social Democratic Party (HSDP) and the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP, the main successor party to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party) emphasised concentration on welfare issues, social democratic aspects, and a supranational federalist vision of integration. As a consequence of the 1990 electoral failure of the HSDP, the traditional social democratic party was not able to form a parliamentary party. Following the transitory period, from 1991 the socialist party (the larger of the two successor parties to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party) became the most important mainstream party, and by 1993 had transformed into a centre-left party of a ‘social democrat’ or ‘social liberal’ kind. As a testimony of its pro-European attitude, the HSP frequently called the attention of the Western European public and politicians to the very important role of Gyula Horn, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the German unification (Navracsics, 1997, pp. 10-11.). The pro-EU left-wing actors (e.g. HSP and the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD)), have considered the accession as an anti-nationalistic and modernisation project. These parties have emphasised the economic advantages of membership, and the finalisation of the change of the regime.

The AFD and Fidesz (Alliance of Young Democrats), concentrated on the neoliberal, capitalist approach of the European economy based on free-trade principles. For the liberals,
EU membership was the only way to modernise the country. After a short transitory period the two liberal parties sharing similar visions concerning the EU went in two different political directions: the AFD, in becoming an authentic social-liberal party, started to concentrate on the social democratic aspect of the EU, while Fidesz moved towards a more conservative interpretation of Europe, defining itself as a liberal conservative party (Navracsics, 1997, p. 12.).

Conservatives focused on the political aspects of European integration based on the conception of a Europe of nations. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), the Independent Smallholders’ Party (ISP), and the Christian Democratic People’s Party, defined Europe by its cultural aspects, emphasising that Hungary was an organic part of the West, but ‘it was violently isolated from its natural environment for forty years’ (Navracsics, 1997, p. 13.). Thus, their political slogan was not ‘the road to Europe’, but return to Europe.

Individual attitudes towards the EU or the introduction of the Euro

Italy

The deepening of the integration was not only supported by the changing governments, but also by the Italian public. Among the countries of the EU, it was Italy whose population supported this process most. The future of Italy was considered as dependent on the country’s role in the EU. Besides politicians, the Italian public has also been a more ardent devotee of integration than the EU average.

In 2004 the Flash Eurobarometer showed the confidence of Italians in the Constitutional reform of the European integration. The majority of Italians (82%) seemed to agree that without a Constitution, the Institutions of the European Union could reach a deadlock, so they recognised the usefulness of a Constitution (European average 69%). (Eurobarometer, 2004) Italians traditionally have a greater confidence in the EU institutions than in their national ones. In Spring 2005, Eurobarometer survey showed that 56% of Italians trusted the European Union, against 33% who were expressing the opposite opinion. (Eurobarometer, 2005, p. 2)

In 2005 the level of support was lower than in June-July 2004, when more then 90% of Italians supported the Constitution, so had a positive opinion about the constitutional reform. But most of the Italians did not know the text of the Constitution (only 15% knew it). (EU-25 WATCH No. 2., 2006, p. 69) As showed by the Eurobarometer 2006 (Spring) 78 percent of the Italians were not familiar with the whole contents of the European Constitution, or had never heard of the Constitution itself. It is important to underline that the average level of knowledge of the texts of the Constitution was quite low. However, 78% of Italians agreed with the statement that the adoption of the Constitution would make the EU more democratic, 76% more efficient and 76% more transparent.

According to the Eurobarometer survey after the French and Dutch ‘no’ referendum about the European Constitution, the relative majority of the Italian interviewed (37%) stated that EU Member States should continue the ratification process. And 33% answered that the European Constitution should be renegotiated. Only 6% of Italians said that the European Constitution should be abandoned (abstaining from answering 23%). In spring 2006 ‘56 per cent of the Italian sample considers that for Italy to be part of the EU is a good thing’. (Eurobarometer 65, 2006, pp. 3-5)

For the majority of Italians the EU membership is still an advantage, however nowadays a wider scale of opinions regarding EU issues can be noticed, and there is a more critical approach in the public debate.

According to the 2007 Spring Eurobarometer survey, In Italy 74% of the sample agreed with the opinion that ‘every European decision is the subject of negotiations in which the opinions of the national governments of all Member States are taken into account’. Furthermore, 53%
of Italians thought the ‘voice of Italy counts in Europe’, and 55% anticipated ‘that Italian influence in the EU will be even stronger in the future’. Italians decisively support the European management instead of national one in certain policies such as foreign and defence affairs (67%), energy (68%), immigration (67%), the fight against crime (63%), and environment (60%). Italians agreed with the concept of the so-called ‘Multi-speed Europe’ where those member states which are prepared to strengthen the level of integration of a common European policy in certain areas could do so without waiting for the others. (Eurobarometer 67, 2007, pp. 3-5)

A few months before abandoning the European Constitution, 72% of Italians still had a positive approach to the Constitutional Treaty, and 68% of interviewees were optimistic about the future of the EU. The majority thought that the ‘European Union in the next 50 years will have a common army and will be a leading diplomatic power in the world’. 72% agreed with the notion that the European Union should have its own Foreign Minister. (Eurobarometer 67, 2007, pp. 3-5)

Hungary
Following the collapse of the communist regime the image of Europe was determined by the economic and political expectations of the Hungarian citizens. In the referendum held on the issue of EU membership (2003), the turn-out was 45.6%, and 83.76% of the voters said ‘yes’. So, despite a relatively low participation, the Hungarian population voted in a high percentage for accession to the EU. Miklós Sükösd examined the reasons for the low turn-out at the EU accession referendum. According to Sükösd, the reason might have been the lack of genuine debate in the political sphere, that is, there had been no serious arguments for or against the accession of Hungary, and all this had led to a staggeringly low interest in the European issues. The communication campaign started abruptly, and rather late, which also contributed to the communication deficit. (Sükösd, 2005)

It is necessary to mention that the communication deficit was not only a Hungarian characteristic, but, as a problem originating from the process of reconciliation of interests, it appeared in practically all the member states. Nevertheless, it seems important to examine the specific reasons for the growing disappointment among the Hungarian population in recent years. István Hegedűs also emphasized that the Hungarian press was not able to introduce the real weight of the Hungarian accession and the European integration (Hegedűs, 2005). The adoption of the acquis by the Hungarian administration did not create a heated debate in the press, except for the final phase of the negotiation process, when it was mainly symbolic issues (like the impact of accession on cakes with poppy seeds) that appeared in the Hungarian media (Uitz, 2008, 44. p.).

In 2005, a Hungarian poll was carried out in order to examine what Hungarians were thinking about the EU membership, and its local consequences (Medián, 2005). Similarly to some other opinion polls of the period, 75% of the subjects were for the Hungarian membership, and 25% were against it. The number of supporters increased linearly with the educational level of the subjects asked, i.e. among those who had no secondary degree, the number of supporters was 70-75%, and in the case of professionals this number was 80%. (Kormány, 2006, 89. p.)

Attila Marján who examined, the feelings towards the accession process in old and new member states, comes to the conclusion in his study that new members were received by the old countries with moderate enthusiasm, due to the still exiting fears. Thus most old members decided to introduce limitations on the employment of applicants from new member states,

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2 Czech Republic: turnout - 55.21%, yes - 77.33%; Poland: turnout - 58.85%, yes - 77.45%; Slovakia: turnout - 52.15%, yes - 92.46%;

3 Hungarian co-worker of the European Commission.
depriving them of one of the fundamental freedoms of the inside market. According to the
author, one of the reasons for the recent feeling of disappointment is that prior to the
accession, there were several myths among the Hungarian population about the fast rise of
salaries, new employment possibilities and material subsidies similar to the Marshall aid. The
potential EU membership of Hungary assured financial resources from the EC/EU. In spite of
the hope, Hungarians were also afraid of the loss of sovereignty, and the prohibition of certain
national characteristics. (e.g. the use of poppy-seed as food ingredient), as well as of the onset
of fatal competition due to the opening of the markets (Marján, 2006, p. 5).
These fears, according to Marján, can be traced back to three main sources: a) even in spite of
the intensive change-over to market economy, free market conditions could not yet come to
life (e.g. the case of agriculture); b) market players were smaller and less developed, and so
they felt weightless in comparison to the competitors. They were preparing for the “EU
tsunami”) and finally, there was quite a lot of fear that expensive regulations protecting the
environment, consumers and the labour force would be introduced. Not all the fears were well
founded, as in the spheres of industry and services, no real traumatic events took place on and
following May 1, as most of the development had already taken place during the accession
process, through the liberalization of commercial and market contacts, and the legal
harmonisation. And, most importantly, Hungary gained real voting rights in the decision
making process if the EU (Marján, 2006, 15. p.).
Among the fears, Marján mentioned the one regarding loss of sovereignty. This arose from
the fact that Community Law has priority over national legislation. Actually, like every other
member, Hungary also gained in the possibility of enforcing the country’s interests as a
member with voting rights. In the globalizing world more and more problems can only be
solved as a member of a larger international community, moreover, for a small country like
Hungary this is the only road to success. He also mentioned the curious paradox that this fear
occurred after Hungary’s full adoption, in the period of accession, of the eighty-thousand-
page documentation of the acquis that had been formulated without the country’s
representative participation in the EU legislation process.
In fact, the real challenge for all the new members is hidden in the process of convergence to
EU average income. Based on the experience of the Southern Countries, it might take several
decades to get rid of the differences between the incomes. The process of convergence is even
more difficult for the Central and East-European countries, partly because of a more
handicapped start (till 1989 lack of experiences in the functioning of market economy and
democracy), partly because of the decreasing resources available in the EU (Marján, 2006).
The Eurobarometer of October 2006 already clearly showed the disappointment in the EU
accession in Hungarian society. Since the spring of that year, the support for EU membership
has dropped by a further 10%, reaching 39%, probably due to the country’s domestic political
issues (elections, growing economic problems, general feeling of uncertainty).
In 2006, as seen from the Eurobarometer figures, the trust in the institutions of the European
Union was the highest among the new countries. 82.5% of those who were supporters of
Hungary’s membership thought that it meant a guarantee against the return of dictatorship.
Among those, however, who were against it, this ratio was only 63.5%. As to the statement
that ‘the sovereignty of Hungary suffered with the accession of the country’, 76% of those
against the membership claimed they agreed, while amongst those who supported the
accession, this ratio was only 43%. There was a slight majority among the subjects of those
who though that the country suffered a disadvantage as a consequence of the accession (53%),
leaving merely 47% claiming that, on the whole, the accession brought about an advantageous
result. (Kormány, 2006, 90. p.)
The long-term benefits of accession were not debated. However, in the short run, the negative
possibilities of the process were only felt by those who were anyway threatened by existential
uncertainty, something which was least applicable to the strata with the highest level of education. 54% of the subjects agreed with the statement that ‘Hungary does not have a word in the EU legislation’, showing also that a significant portion of the population was not aware even of the most basic facts about the European Union. (Kormány, 2006, 91. p.)

The issue of sustaining and preserving national traditions, as well as the alleged threat against them, became part of everyday discourse during the process of accession. This was reflected in the number of replicants who agreed with the statement ‘The EU will threaten national traditions’ (40%). 36% of those subjects who claimed to follow the daily news reports regularly thought that the EU meant a threat to traditions, while this portion was 44.6% among those who were not informed by the media. This shows a relatively low impact of the media interpretations of the accession on the public opinion. Nevertheless, the majority of replicants claimed that the accession would improve the situation existing in the pre-accession period, in the fields of the country’s security (62%), human rights (57%), legal security (52%), and development of the economy (51%). Opinions on the following fields already reflected slight doubts as to the possible positive consequences: stability of democracy (49%), financial stability (47%) (Kormány, 2006, 94-5. pp.). There were also negative expectations, mostly in the field of the financial and labour situation, health care and, above all, in agriculture.

In 2007, as seen from the next Eurobarometer figures, the acceptance of membership showed further decrease. Although the general support of the EU had never been as high as in 2007, this year showed the lowest support ever in Hungary. 57% of EU citizens thought that their country’s membership was ‘a good thing’, and only 15% viewed the membership as totally wrong. This indicated a 4% rise as compared to the previous Eurobarometer. Contrary to this, 40% of Hungarians did not consider the EU accession beneficial for the country, and only 37% claimed that it was ‘good’. Hungarians are among the most pessimistic citizens, both as to the issue of membership (25th place), and to the advantages of membership (27th place in the rank order).

Hungary was one of the three countries in which people who were of the opinion that accession had not brought about any benefit to their homeland constituted the majority. Nevertheless, the trust in EU institutions (European Parliament and the Commission) was far stronger than the EU average. For Hungarians, the European institutions are more trustworthy than the national ones. The reason for this can be found in the fact that the new member States have a short and sometimes negative experience in the ‘existing Hungarian capitalism and democracy’ and in the consolidation of national democratic political institutions. Citizens’ attitude to European symbols (the EU flag, anthem) was also positive, and the portion of supporters of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE), commonly referred to as the European Constitution (which failed in several national referenda) and of further accession was remarkably high. The low acceptance rate of EU membership was primarily due to the perception among people of an extremely bad state of national economy, much lower than in any other EU country. Only a staggering 9% of the respondents expressed a positive opinion about the Hungarian economic situation. This is proved by the figures expressing the changes in people’s opinion: in 2004 only 10% of the population thought the EU to be ‘a bad thing’, whereas by the Spring of 2009 this percentage had grown as high as 23%.

According to the data gathered by the Standard Eurobarometer of Autumn 2008, Hungarian pessimism can be traced already in the answers to the first set of questions, as only 31% of the respondents evaluated membership positively, in contrast with the EU average of 53%. It is worth noting that in the Autumn of 2004 the percentage of positive responses was still high – 49%. While 60% of the EU average citizens claim that the EU imposes its opinion on the member states, only 57% of Hungarians share this view. At the same time, in contrast with
the EU average of 60%, 47% of Hungarians think that their country’s opinion counts at the European level.

Problems of the transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
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<tr>
<td>uncertainties about Italy’s role in the EU</td>
<td>Losing position in the region</td>
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<td>Financial and economic crisis</td>
<td>Financial and economic crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euro-crisis</td>
<td>Lack of democratic traditions (long period of authoritarian period)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luck of structural reforms</td>
<td>weak capacities of defend national interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>unfinished regional reform</td>
<td>weak civil society</td>
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<td>unfinished bipolarism</td>
<td>Ethnic intolerance</td>
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<tr>
<td>crisis of representative democracy</td>
<td>low participation, turn-out,</td>
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<td>growing abstentions at elections</td>
<td>Weakness of social debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement of populism</td>
<td>Political apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>Lack of pragmatism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Trasformismo or Gattopardismo (The Leopard)
- "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change."
- superficial personnel changes allow everything to remain exactly as before

Reinforcement of populism

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<th>Corruption</th>
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Early Euroscepticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
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<tr>
<td>In spite of the strong pro-European public opinion,</td>
<td>During the first free election campaign in 1990 there was only one anti-european party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– eurosceptic attitude has surfaced among the new centre-right political parties originating from the remarkable transformation of the domestic party system,</td>
<td>–the communist Workers’ Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>–and issues regarding the European integration have become more problematic then before (Quaglia, 2003)</td>
<td>–an extra-parliamentary movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Party for Communist Refoundation (PRC),</td>
<td>During the early 90s an embryonic eurosceptic party was created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–expressed its critical opinion about the deepening of the integration and the institutional reform,</td>
<td>the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (PHJL).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–voting against the Maastricht Treaty and later the European Constitutional Treaty (Bardi, 2007, pp. 6-7; Conti, 2003, p. 25)</td>
<td>–It considered European integration as a danger to Hungarian independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- not able to become a parliamentary party in 1994,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Centre-right parties (1994-98) shifted in different directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- While centre-right parties (HDF, Fidesz-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hungarian Civic Party) remained in favour of joining the EU,
- the Independent Smallholders’ Party moved closer to the approach represented by the PHJL, and later, the Christian democrats moved closer to a soft-eurosceptic attitude.

III. chapter - Growing Euroscepticism
Post-Euro-introduction crisis - Italy

Italy fulfilled the conditions to introduce the Euro, but the Commission’s interest towards the Italian budget situation, however gradually increased after December 2004, because it became known that the Italian government took up yearly more credit than reported to Brussels, which reminded Brussels of the practice of Greece. In recent years the gradually growing government deficit and the structural problems of the Italian economy have caused a steadily increasing problem. According to official data of the EU, Italy’s government deficit in proportion to the GDP was 3.5% in 2003, 3.5% in 2004, 4.2% in 2005, and 4.4% in 2006. At the same time, government debt was 104.3 in 2003, 1013-8 in 2004, 106.2 in 2005, and 106.8% in 2006. (Eurostat, 2008) In 2006, Italian government deficit was the highest in the Euro Zone. Padoa-Schioppa, minister of economy still thought at the end of 2006 that the 2007 budget would give a chance for Italy for remaining below the 3% threshold. (Corriere della Sera, 2006) In April 2006, when an approximate 4% deficit in proportion to the GDP was foreseen, one of the analyses of the Financial Times even mentioned that Italy would have to leave the Euro Zone. The chance for this, however, was very low, but Italy is to execute further severe reforms to avoid this threat. (La Repubblica, 2006) In 2009 as a consequence of the global crisis, all the above listed indicators got worse, which can mean that the government debt may be as high as 110.5%, and the government deficit can reach 3.7% of the GDP. In addition to this the government has also counted with an economic decrease of 2%.

According to the results of a 1999 telephone poll with 2003 subjects, the majority of Italian citizens was aware of the fact that the costs of the introduction of the Euro had to be covered by them, but they still believed that this process had an important role in the development of the country. 85% of the respondents thought that it was good for Italy to be member of the EU, and 92% of them considered the further strengthening the European Integration necessary. (Battistelli-Bellucci, 2002)

In the year 2000 the exchange rate of the Euro fell against the US Dollar, which was followed by a decrease of Italians’ trust in the common currency and the common institutions. According to the poll of September 2000 carried out by Ipsos, a mere 58% of Italian citizens trusted the Euro, which though higher than the EU average (46%), was lower than the figures of two years before by 20%. (Il Sole 24 Ore, 2000) Similarly to the opinion poll data of the Ipsos, La Polis also came out with results referring to the decrease in people’s trust. In 1999 it was shown that 72% of Italians ‘trusted very much’ the EU institutions, while by 2000 this ratio fell to 57%. In 1999 it was only a thin 25% of the respondents who thought that belonging to the EU was disadvantageous for the country, and this proportion grew to 35% within a year’s time. In 1999, the majority (53%) of Italians thought that it was for the advantage of the country and the citizens as well to be member of the EU, while in 2000 only 41% agreed with this statement. (Dente, 2001, p. 1054) Nevertheless, the institutional reforms were still supported by Italians. This was shown by the data of the October 2000 Eurobarometer in which 84% of Italian citizens agreed with the creation of a European Constitution. This ratio by far surpassed the EU average (70%). The outstandingly positive
attitudes towards the EU of the Italian public may have originated from the more apparent disappointment in their own national institutions. Thus it was the integration that they expected to lead to the economic development of the country. Together with the devaluation of the common currency, also the trust in Brussels institutions began to decrease. The temporary crisis of the Euro raised the number of Italian Euro-sceptics measurably. (Dente, 2001, 1052)

In 2008 the relative majority of Italians still had a positive opinion about Italy’s membership in the EU, though a clear decline (from 50% to 39%) can be noticed. 37% of Italians thought about EU membership in a positive way, from which Italy had benefited. Half of the interviewees believed that the Italian position was not taken into account at European level. It is important to underline that only 15% of Italians thought that MEPs payed attention to their views and 14% thought the same about the European Commission. 78% of Italian believed that national institutions were not transparent, and 50% thought the same about European institutions. However, the relative majority of Italians maintained confidence in the European Union (40%), but the number of sceptics was growing. (Eurobarometer 69, 2008, pp. 2-3)

From Table 2, it is evident that in recent last years, support for EU membership has decreased significantly. In 1991, 78%, in 1999 62% of respondents considered membership a good thing, whereas by 2008 only 39%, in 2011 41% stated that this was the case. The proportion of those stating that membership was a bad thing rose from 4% to 17% between 1991 and 2011, with a rise to 17% in 2008 at the peak of the financial crisis.

Responses (%) to questions starting ‘Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is ... ?’ that were recorded during Eurobarometer surveys conducted between 1991 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italy date</th>
<th>A good thing</th>
<th>A bad thing</th>
<th>Neither good nor bad</th>
<th>DK - Don’t know</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okt.91</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr.92</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okt.92</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr.93</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.93</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maj.94</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec.94</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maj.95</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan.96</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maj.96</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.96</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr.97</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.97</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maj.98</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.98</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr.99</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.99</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun.00</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan.01</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maj.01</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</table>
Italy - eurosceptic approaches

In Italy soft and hard eurosceptic approaches appeared among the new centre-right political parties. In spite of the strong pro-European public opinion, both soft and semi-hard eurosceptic approaches appeared among the new centre-right political parties. Already during the first (1994), but manifestly during the second (and third, 2001) and fourth (2008) Berlusconi governments, eurosceptic approaches surfaced on governmental level. (Quaglia, 2003) It must be emphasized that the different parties of the centre right coalition (House of Freedom) represented different levels of euroscepticism.

Forza Italia’s attitude regarding the EU was very fluid because of its wide range of social background and its rather vague ideological platform, mainly based on the Thatcherian principle of liberal market economy. This attitude emphasised the defence of Italian national interests. As Lucia Quaglia in 2001 underlined ‘the position of its leaders on EU issues is still unclear.’ (Quaglia, 2003) As an appearance of the soft euroscepticism of Forza Italia we can mention the suggestion by Silvio Berlusconi to re-negotiate the Treaty on European Union (in 1997) in order to join the EMU without fulfilling the convergence criteria, the decision of the Berlusconi government not to participate in the project of the Airbus A400M military transport aircraft (2001) and soft eurosceptic statements of the government’s politicians like Tremonti or Martino. These eurosceptic elements can also be considered the manifestation of latent euroscepticism in Italy. (Quaglia, 2003, pp. 17-20) Bardi Luciano expressed a similar opinion on Forza Italia: ‘Forza Italia is one of the most ambivalent Italian parties with regard to attitudes towards the EU. Documents and manifestoes concerning EP elections are imbued with all the classic elements of pro-European rhetoric. In other documents and positions, however, the party’s attitude is more detached and less enthusiastic, especially if compared with that of Italian Catholic and moderate left parties. FI’s hesitations are particularly visible on issues having implications for domestic fiscal and budgetary policies, and also on foreign policy and security questions, probably in view of the party’s preference for a stronger and closer relationship with the United States.’ (Bardi, 2007, p. 10)
integration is not at the centre of the ideology of FI, where the market is, instead, the focus’. (Conti 2003, 26.p.) Forza Italia joined the European Peoples’ Party in 1999. This fact largely contributed to the party gaining political power.

In 1995 the National Alliance (AN) replaced the nationalist and post-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI). The extreme wing of the MSI created the new party, the MSI-Tricolour Flame, which represented a soft eurosceptic attitude, and the idea of a ‘Europe of nations’. The AN maintaining an intergovernmental approach, had a more pro-European attitude than its predecessor, the MSI, in order to realise the political rehabilitation of the party. From the beginning Gianfranco Fini’s main aim was to lead the party close to the political centre, creating a new centre-right Gaullist party. The Statute (1995, Fiuggi) emphasised the ‘Europe des patries of de Gaulle’. At the conference of Verona (1998) the final document still proposed the reduction of the weight of the national government by increasing the power of the European Parliament’. (Bardi, 2007, p. 7) Minister for Telecommunications of the second Berlusconi government, Maurizio Gasparri, emphasised that ‘on the one hand there has to be a greater political and democratic legitimisation of the [EU] institutions; on the other hand, there has to be a more balanced vindication of national interests’ (Secolo d’Italia, 20 December 2001, Quaglia, 2003, pp. 13-14).

In the second Berlusconi government the party did not represent either soft or hard euroscepticism. (Quaglia, 2003, pp. 13-18) The new statute approved in 2006, however did not even mention the European integration. (Statute of Alleanza Nazionale, 2007) According to Conti a certain cost-benefit analysis characterized the attitude regarding EU issues of FI and AN, and the even deeper European integration was not a goal for itself, but for the benefits to national interests. (Conti, 2003, p. 26) The right-wing or rather neo-populist Northern League was officially founded in 1991 as a federation of leagues from different northern regions. The party won its first important success in the 1983 elections, when in the region the 4.3% of the votes went to the party. In the second half of the ’80, however, the centre of the different regional leagues moved over to Lombardy, and their leader Umberto Bossi received a seat in Senate in 1987. Bossi who recognised the limitation of the ethno-regionalism created the Northern League. The case of this regionalist party is interesting because the LN changed its position regarding the European integration from a pro-European to a eurosceptic standpoint. The Lombard League, the predecessor of the Northern League, often referred in its political ideology to the European Integration Process. Already in the 1980s they envisioned the token of the independence of Lombardy in a Europe organised on federative basis. The basis of legitimating their anti-constitutional, secessionist intentions was provided by the just deepening European Integration. Nevertheless, they conceptualised Europe as a confederation of regions with the broadest possible competencies. They considered the Integration as an alternative to national identity. They did not support the development of an integration based on nation-states, centrally governed from Brussels. (Diamanti, 1993, p. 161) Umberto Bossi, in his book ‘Wind of the North’, wrote about the birth of regional states, the formation of ‘Europe of the regions’ as the Europe of the peoples. Obviously the constantly growing competence of the Brussels bureaucracy did not fit into this picture. The goal of this party was to create ‘the federal Europe of regions’ based on the inter-regional (not inter-governmental) principle. (Bossi – Vimercati, 1992) Umberto Bossi envisaged the role of Brussels as threatening with the danger of a ‘new Rome’. Nevertheless, in 1993 the League voted in favour of the ratification of the TEU as they considered the establishment of the Committee of the Regions a major step which could lead towards the transformation of the EP on a federative basis and in a two-chamber form, since, according to their plans the upper chamber of the European Parliament would fulfil the task of representation of the sub-national regions. (Diamanti, 1993, p. 166)
During the time of the first Berlusconi government in 1994, the Northern League proclaimed to represent a strong pro-European approach, without any eurosceptic attitude. The LN represented the stance that Italy had to fulfil the convergence criteria in order to enter the Single Currency Zone. Umberto Bossi, the leader of the LN wrote a letter to the European Commission asking about the possibility for Padania to join EMU. (Quaglia, 2003. p. 15; Giordano, 2004).

The Northern League, on their Milan Congress in 1997 officially accepted the party’s strategy whose motto suited the previous views of the NL concerning the integration: ‘free Padania in a free Europe’. Their goal was to achieve a ‘federation based on the cooperation of independent ‘small nations’. In this period the NL built their strategy on the fact that Italy was not expected to become member of the EMU. According to their expectations this would have strengthened the secessionist inclination in the people of the Northern regions and the formation of a unified Northern identity. (Luverà, 1997, p. 88)

The Northern League’s eurosceptic stance appeared following Italy’s official qualification to join the EMU. After joining the EMU at the millennium the popular support for the NL decreased significantly. At the same time, Umberto Bossi began to declare increasingly eurosceptic views.

In 2000, at the Pontida meeting of the NL, Umberto Bossi claimed that the EU did not only threaten only nation states, but also small nations. He expressed his view that emphasising the principle of subsidiarity was only necessary in order to mislead people, as it was only useful for concentrating power at the community level. (Bossi, 2000) According to Umberto Bossi the European left wing was striving to create a super-state similar to the Soviet Union. (Bossi, 2001) All over Europe there was a surge of indignation following that Bossi’s naming the EU ‘the USSR of the West’ and a ‘Stalinist superstate’. (Bossi, 2002)

Although the Italian government had a traditional pro-Turkish approach, the Northern League stood against the opening of accession process with Turkey because of its Muslim traditions and its number of population, and the accession process was supported by the main Italian parties as well. In the Italian society there was no widespread debate on the question of the Turkish accession. (EU-25 WATCH No. 2. pp. 127-128)

Following the general elections of 2006, The LN in opposition represented a soft eurosceptic attitude. In general they emphasised that the Euro was the cause of the crisis of Northern Italy's small industries.

By 2007 it became clear that the Italian political processes in the short term would result in the formation of a bipolar party system. One of the major signs of this process was that beginning from 2007, the process of fusions between parties accelerated at both sides of the Italian political palette. Despite the conflicts between parties close to one-another in the ideological respect, during the following two years two mass parties, People of Freedom and the Democratic Party were brought to life.

The centre-left Democratic Party was established in October 2007, under the leadership of Walter Veltroni, following the dissolution of the Democrats of the Left (DS) and the Margherita, as the successor of the Olive-tree Coalition. Veltroni, reacting to the political tensions in Italy, grouped the political goals of the party around four main topics (environment, agreement between generations, training and security.) The definition of the position of this new political agent among the European political parties, however, proved to be very difficult, and inspired debates among politicians, as it embraced politicians both from the left wing and from the Christian Democrats. In the Party’s Manifest it was stated that ‘The process of the European unification is still restrained by the strong resistance of nationalistic egoism, which the Democratic Party intends to withstand in order to realise a complete political and democratic integration. (Partito Democratico, 2008)
The creation of the new centre-right mass party, the People of Freedom was prepared by Silvio Berlusconi in 2007, and then officially finalised during a party congress on 27–29 March 2009 with the fusion of Forza Italia and the National Alliance. The new party still has a wide social background and a rather vague ideological platform.

As emphasised in the ‘Charter of Values’ (Popolo della Libertà, 2009) of the People of Freedom, the major ideological issues and goals of the party were its ‘Christian’ and ‘liberal’ character, the defence of traditional values as well as of individual responsibility and self-determination, the adherence of the party to the values and the platform of the European People's Party (EPP) and its support for European integration.

Post-EU-accession crisis - Hungary

After the EU accession, the ‘EUphoria’ in Hungarian society was soon replaced by a feeling of disappointment (‘EUphobia’). This happened partly because the accession took place later than expected and partly because it did not fulfil the sometimes-exaggerated hopes (of convergence to the EU average), let alone the communication deficit regarding the accession. According to data gathered in 2004, the proportion of those who thought that EU membership would be advantageous for Hungary peaked in autumn 2002 with 76%, followed by consistent decline (Eurobarometer, 2004b). During the next one and a half years, as ‘the requirements set and support offered by the Union became clear’, the proportion of optimists decreased by 18 percentage points by spring 2004, ‘when only 58% of Hungarian citizens professed to believe that EU membership would be advantageous for the country’. Among the new member states, Hungary still remained one of the three most optimistic countries regarding the advantages expected from EU membership (Eurobarometer, 2004b, 1: 4). Still, it is worth mentioning that Hungary received a chance to become closer to the more developed European nations, because in 2004 the GNP per capita in six regions of Hungary was below 75% of the EU average, (38.25% – 60.47%), and only that of Central Hungary was 89.24% of the EU average.

Post-accession factors have played some role in emphasizing euroscepticism in Hungary following the accession to the EU. During the government of the second conservative coalition (1998-2002) two small parties took a hard Eurosceptic position. The far right Hungarian Justice and Life and the Hungarian Workers’ Party adopted a strong opposition to Hungary's EU membership. According to Taggart and Szczerbiak ‘soft euroscepticism’ was taken up by two parties in the then governing coalition, FIDESZ and the Smallholders Party (the smaller partner). The leader of FIDESZ, PM Victor Orban, was increasingly accepting ‘national interest’ euroscepticism. (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 16).

From Table 1, it is evident that in most of Hungary’s regions there has not been any economic convergence to more developed ones in recent years. Moreover, in the case of some Hungarian regions, a certain amount of divergence can be observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUTS 2</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Hungary</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>101.2</td>
<td>103.3</td>
<td>105.1</td>
<td>102.9</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Transdanubia</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Transdanubia</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In the EU, regional statistics are based on a common classification of territorial units: the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS). NUTS has three regional levels, each with minimum and maximum thresholds for the average population size of the regions.
The Eurobarometer of October 2006 already clearly showed Hungarian society’s
disappointment in the EU accession. Since the spring of that year, the support for EU (people
see EU membership as a good thing) membership has dropped by a further 10%, to 39%,
probably due to the country’s domestic political issues (such as elections, growing economic
problems, and a general feeling of uncertainty) (Eurobarometer, 2006: Autumn, 6).
By 2007, the support for membership had further decreased, as is evident in the following
Eurobarometer statistics. Although general support of the EU had never been as high as in
2007, that year showed the lowest level of support ever in Hungary’s history: 57% of EU
citizens thought that their country’s membership was ‘a good thing’, and only 15% viewed the
membership as wholly wrong. This indicated a 4% rise as compared to the previous
Eurobarometer. Contrary to these findings, 40% of Hungarians did not consider the EU
accession beneficial for their country, and only 37% claimed that it was ‘a good thing’.
Hungarians were among the most pessimistic citizens, both with regard to the issue of
membership (ranked 25th place), and to the advantages of membership (27th place)
(Eurobarometer, 2007: Spring, pp 15-16)
According to the data gathered for the Standard Eurobarometer of autumn 2008, Hungarian
pessimism can be traced already in the answers to the first set of questions, as only 31% of the
respondents evaluated membership positively, in contrast with the EU average of 53%. It is
worth noting that in autumn 2004 the percentage of positive responses was still high, at 49%.
While 60% of the EU average citizens claimed that the EU imposed its opinion on the
member states, only 57% of Hungarians shared this view. At the same time, and in contrast to
the EU average of 60%, only 47% of Hungarians thought that their country’s opinion counted
at the European level. (Eurobarometer, 2008: Autumn, pp 31-32)
From Table 2, it is evident that in recent last years, support for EU membership has decreased
significantly. In 2004, 49% of respondents considered membership a good thing, whereas by
2011 only 32% stated that this was the case. The proportion of those stating that membership
was a bad thing rose from 10% to 22% between 2004 and 2011, with a further rise to 23% in
2009 at the peak of the financial crisis, followed by a fall to 15% in the year of the general
elections (2010). In 2010, the proportion of respondents stating that EU membership was a
‘good thing’ was 38% as compared to 34% in 2009. The change in percentage might have
reflected new hope for stronger representation of national interests on EU level. The
proportion of respondents who thought that membership was ‘neither good nor bad’ also
increased, from 36% to 44% over the same period.

Responses (%) to questions starting ‘Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s)
membership of the European Community (Common Market) is ... ?’ that were recorded
during Eurobarometer surveys conducted between 2004 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘A good thing’</th>
<th>‘A bad thing’</th>
<th>‘Neither good nor bad’</th>
<th>‘Don’t know’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/2004</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/2005</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the results of opinion polls conducted by Medián in 2004, 80% of the respondents supported the EU membership of Hungary. Although in 2011 the percentage had fallen to 68%, two-thirds of the population still supported Hungary’s membership of the EU (Medián, 2012). In 2012, the results of an opinion poll conducted by Századvég showed that less than half (49%) of the respondents said that membership of the EU was beneficial for Hungary and 53% did not support further deepening of the European integration process (Origo, 2012).

2010: changing political landscape and debate on the political changes
Since the general elections of 2010, the Hungarian political landscape has changed due to the high level of protest votes: Fidesz received a more than two-thirds majority in Parliament, the socialists lost their political support, Jobbik became the third main party in the country, the two more important parties of the transition period, namely the liberals (AFD) and the MDF disappeared, and last but not least the LMP (Lehet Más a Politika, ‘Politics Can Be Different’), a new green and an anti-corruption party, entered Parliament. The Fidesz-KDNP coalition received 53% of the votes and 68% of the seats in Parliament, which enabled it to pass the new Hungarian constitution even without the vote of opposition and the significant involvement of the opposition in the political process. The new Hungarian constitution, approved by the central right government with a two-thirds majority on 18 April 2011, was signed into law on 25 April 2011. This date had a symbolic message for its religious content (Easter Monday). The Socialists (MSZP) and the new liberal and green party, LMP, boycotted the parliamentary debates and the vote. The extreme right party Jobbik voted against the new basic law, for different reasons. The new constitution came into force on 1 January 2012. It has several symbolic messages that has been widely criticised by Hungarian and international media. The political changes and the new constitution have also received critique from the Venice Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe, the EU institutions (European Parliament, European Commission), and the United States of America.

Hungary has been (and still it is) among the countries in Europe hardest hit by the international financial crisis since 2008, and is finding itself in a seemingly never-ending economic recession. The country has had economic problems since the beginnings of the 21st century. Due to Hungary’s high budget deficit, the European Union’s excessive deficit procedure has been in place against Hungary since its year of entry to the EU. In recent years, in order to reduce the budget deficit, the Orbán government has elaborated the ‘unorthodox economic and financial programme’ by introducing the highest bank tax, special
taxes on certain businesses, buying back energy and water companies, and using an anti-IMF campaign, which has been quite popular within Hungarian society and not increasing personal income-taxes. That’s why it was also important for the Hungarian Government to avoid new loans from the IMF, not to accept the austerity programme proposed by the IMF, and to maintain its economic sovereignty, at least on the surface. Although in 2011 the Hungarian deficit was only slightly above the 3% threshold due to the new taxes introduced by the Orbán government, in 2012 the European Commission – using the tools of the ‘six-pack’ of EU fiscal rules – proposed the suspension of Hungary’s Cohesion Fund support from 2013. In explaining its decision, the Commission stated that deficit reduction was caused by ‘one-off revenues’ due to the temporal taxes on banks, junk food (the ‘chips tax’), and telecom firms, and in the view of the EC this was not sustainable. Olli Rehn said: ‘Today’s proposal should be seen as a strong incentive for Hungary to conduct sound fiscal policies and put in place the right macro-economic and fiscal conditions to ensure an efficient use of Cohesion Fund resources’. The Hungarian Government declared the EC’s decision ‘unfounded and unfair’ and as ‘using double standards’ (Euractiv, 2012). Finally, in June 2013, Ecofin approved the European Commission’s proposal to remove Hungary from the excessive deficit procedure.

During the second conservative government, semi-hard or sometimes hard Euro-sceptic standpoints were still represented by Jobbik, while pro-European/euro-optimist positions were more common among members of the Democratic Coalition led by a highly criticised ex-socialist party leader and the LMP. According to a research carried out by the Hungarian Europe Society the Fidesz ‘covers internal divisions’, as the research identified two wings in Fidesz: ‘a less visible, Euro-constructive one and a noisier, Euro-pessimist one led by Viktor Orbán’ (Európa Társaság, 2013: 4). At the national level, the MSZP carefully avoids taking a position in debates concerning the future of the EU. Only the LMP has a coherent federalist vision of the EU (in its 2010 electoral manifesto) (Európa Társaság, 2013: 4).

Although the Hungarian presidency of the EU council between January and June 2011 provided a better opportunity to bring the EU and its institutions closer to Hungarians, Euroscepticism still increased in Hungary. The debates regarding the Hungarian legal changes shadowed the results of the successful EU presidency, focusing on, for example, the Roma integration, economic recovery, and the enlargement process of the EU. Whereas Fidesz represents a soft Euro-scepticism or ‘Eurorealism’, the party has not opposed the enlargement process or (after heated negotiations) the deepening of the economic governance of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (‘six-pack’ governance package) during the Hungarian EU presidency, the Hungarian Presidency worked for a ‘stronger Europe’. In his assessment of the results of the Hungarian presidency, Viktor Orbán said that ‘Hungary’s EU presidency has successfully achieved its targets and contributed to strengthening the EU’ (Fidesz, 2011).

However, during the anniversary of Hungary’s 1848 revolution against Austrian Habsburg rule, the Hungarian prime minister accused the European Union of treating Hungary as a colony. He said that Hungarians would not live in accordance with the commands of foreign powers. Following the possibility of the suspension of EU funds (as a consequence of the ongoing excessive deficit procedure) for Hungary, he spoke about ‘double standards’, and said: ‘We will not be a colony ... Our rightful demand is to have the same standards apply to us, which apply to other (EU) countries’ (BBC, 2012).

As a result of the 2010 parliamentary elections, Jobbik became the third main party in Hungary, with 17% of the votes. Its popularity is highly connected to the economic problems in Hungary (in 2010 the GDP was −6.3%, and the unemployment rate was above 11%), and to the disappointment in the process of democratisation and Europeanisation due to the high level of corruption. The characteristic features of Jobbik’s extreme rightist ideology are anti-
democratic feelings, nationalism, chauvinism, and racism. They usually do not reject the application of radical methods in resolving social problems. Although Jobbik is strongly Euro-sceptic, it considers itself rather eurorealistic (a concept that many analysts equate with ‘soft Euro-scepticism’). Jobbik, whose political standpoint floats between soft and hard Euro-scepticism, do not yet wish Hungary to leave the EU, but according to Gábor Vona they did not exclude this possibility either. In one of his interviews in September 2009, Vona claimed:

Several of our supporters have expressed the possibility of leaving the EU. Under certain circumstances I do not exclude this either, but first let us see what we can do within the Union. The Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Irish, and Finns, among others, have benefited from the membership much more than us. Success can be brought about only by a more combatant attitude. (Teol, 2009)

Instead of the joint Euro-Atlantic political direction followed by the parliamentary parties since the change of political regime, Jobbik focuses its political objectives on turning to the East, which does not coincide with the traditional approach of ‘third way’ foreign policy. They explain this is not simply because of seemingly obvious economic reasons, but due the ‘Eastern identity’ of the Hungarians emphasised by the party. In the party’s interviews and articles, Jobbik stresses opening up towards Moscow, the Arab world, and the Far East, and shows a somewhat anti-Israeli attitude and Euro-scepticism (Vona 2009).

The Jobbik, like extreme right nationalistic parties in general, represents a semi-hard Euro-sceptic standpoint in not supporting the further deepening of the integration. The party appears to see the integration as standing for a supranational political structure that aims at renewed suppression against small countries. In Hungary, the reason for growing Euro-scepticism is probably the lack of economic growth following the accession (2004) and the disillusionment with the process of democratisation and liberalisation. Accession to the EU brought about a serious trauma for Hungary, known as the “post-accession crisis”. His point of departure was that, under the influence of the change of the regime, there was, on the one hand, a social-structural crisis, because the economic deficit was transformed into social deficit during the process of crisis management. On the other hand, the new democratic state had no time to develop fully, and thus remained weak. Speeded-up democratization led to a serious social deficit, namely to economic and social insecurity. When Hungary’s accession to the EU was achieved, the state was still weak. It was this fact that caused the trauma; the country was not ready for accession either from the point of view of societal capacity or of the state of development of the institutional structure. In addition, the onset of the so-called “accession and reform exhaustion” has resulted in the rise of populism. (Ágh, 2008, pp. 94-95).

in 2010 the new governing coalition answered to this challenges with the strengthening and centralising state capacities, and with a quiet populist approach based on national sovereignty.

Italy – Third Republic?
There is still the question whether following the resignation of Berlusconi (2011) as PM the transition to the Third Republic has started or still not. But we must emphasise that there is a changing political landscape, the end of bipolarism, and the fragmentation of the party system (Terza Forza, M5S) has started again. Due to the wave of corruption scandals, to the eroding Italians’ confidence in their politicians there is going to be a new party-system. The birth of a new populist, anti-political movement, the Five Stars Movement (M5S) is the clear symptom of the deep crisis of Italian representative democracy. This political movement taking advantage of the possibilities of direct democracy offered by the web in 2013 has become the third political actor gathering 26% of the votes at general elections and filling the political gap left behind PdL, LN. This new political actor which was created following the
The beginning of financial crisis is against existing political parties and the traditional elites, its aim is destroying the established party system. Represents the irritation and the anger of the Italian electorate.

M5S has an unclear picture of EU and a soft eurosceptic or Euro-sceptic standpoints. In 2013 has started to prepare a referendum on EU membership and on Euro. B. Grillo said that "Europe should be rethought," It is more against the Euro and the EU-imposed austerity policies.

Following the resignation of Berlusconi in 2011 the government of Monti and later the one of Letta have clearly returned to the traditional EU-policy of Christian Democrats supporting more Europe (banking union, a fiscal union, eurobonds etc.) We can easily observe a growing gap between the Italian political elite and the Italian public opinion.

Reasons of Euroscepticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Euro-phobia</strong></td>
<td><strong>EU-phobia</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Loosing economic position and divergence</td>
<td>Loosing economic position and divergence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from EU-average</td>
<td>from EU-average</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial, economic and Euro-crisis</td>
<td>Financial, economic and Euro-crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Longest recession since WW2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>–Austerity reforms (Monti)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enlargement process towards Central and</td>
<td>Conflicts between the centre and periphery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe (Serricchio; 2012, p 115)</td>
<td>- East and West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflicts between the centre and periphery</td>
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<tr>
<td>–Northern and Southern Europe</td>
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<td>–widening gap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unable European institutions to resolve</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the problems caused by the crisis</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Both Italy and in Hungary has had difficulties of the transition and both are hit hard by the financial and economic crisis (long recession) The two countries peripheral position have been strengthened by the economic and financial crisis, and the. The party Jobbik and M5S are the clear symptoms of the deep crisis of Hungarian and Italian representative democracies. There is a growing populism and euroscepticism due to the disadvantages of joining the EU and the Euro-zone and to the still existing democratic deficit on EU level. In the Euro-zone as a consequence of the crisis, the EU (with fiscal compact) has extended its competences on hot issues (pensions, labour market…) emptying national democracies. In the case of Hungary we can observe the process from EU-foria to EU-fobia (Eurosceptics), in the case of Italy the process from Euro-enthusiasm to Euro-delusion (more Euro-scepticism, less Euroscepticism).

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