



**THE EUROPEAN POLICIES OF THE EU MEMBER STATES:  
THE CASE OF HUNGARY**

**We are going to discuss...**

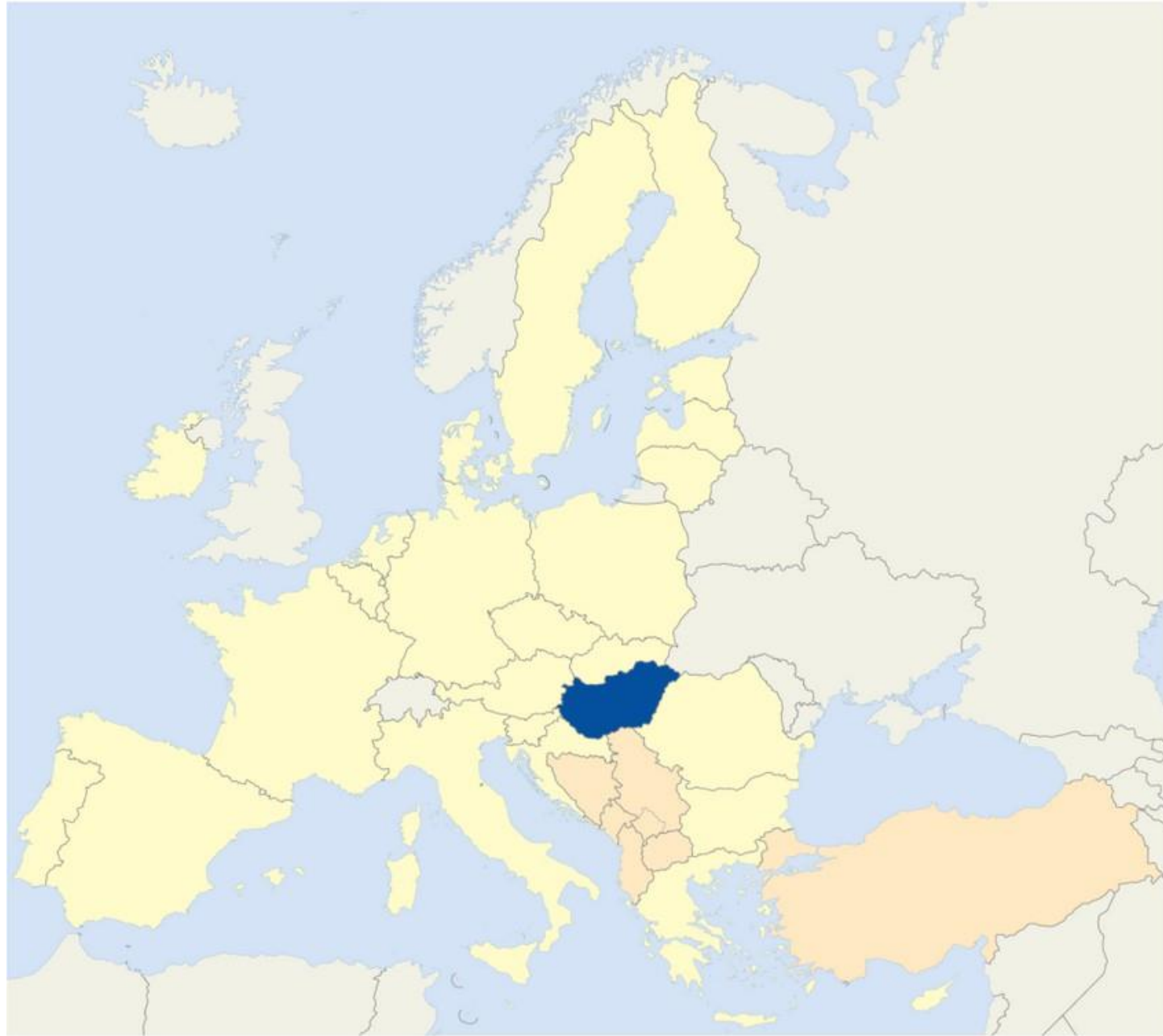
**A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary**

**B. Why and What Europe**

**C. Major crises and Euroscepticism**

# A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary

## 1. Place on the map



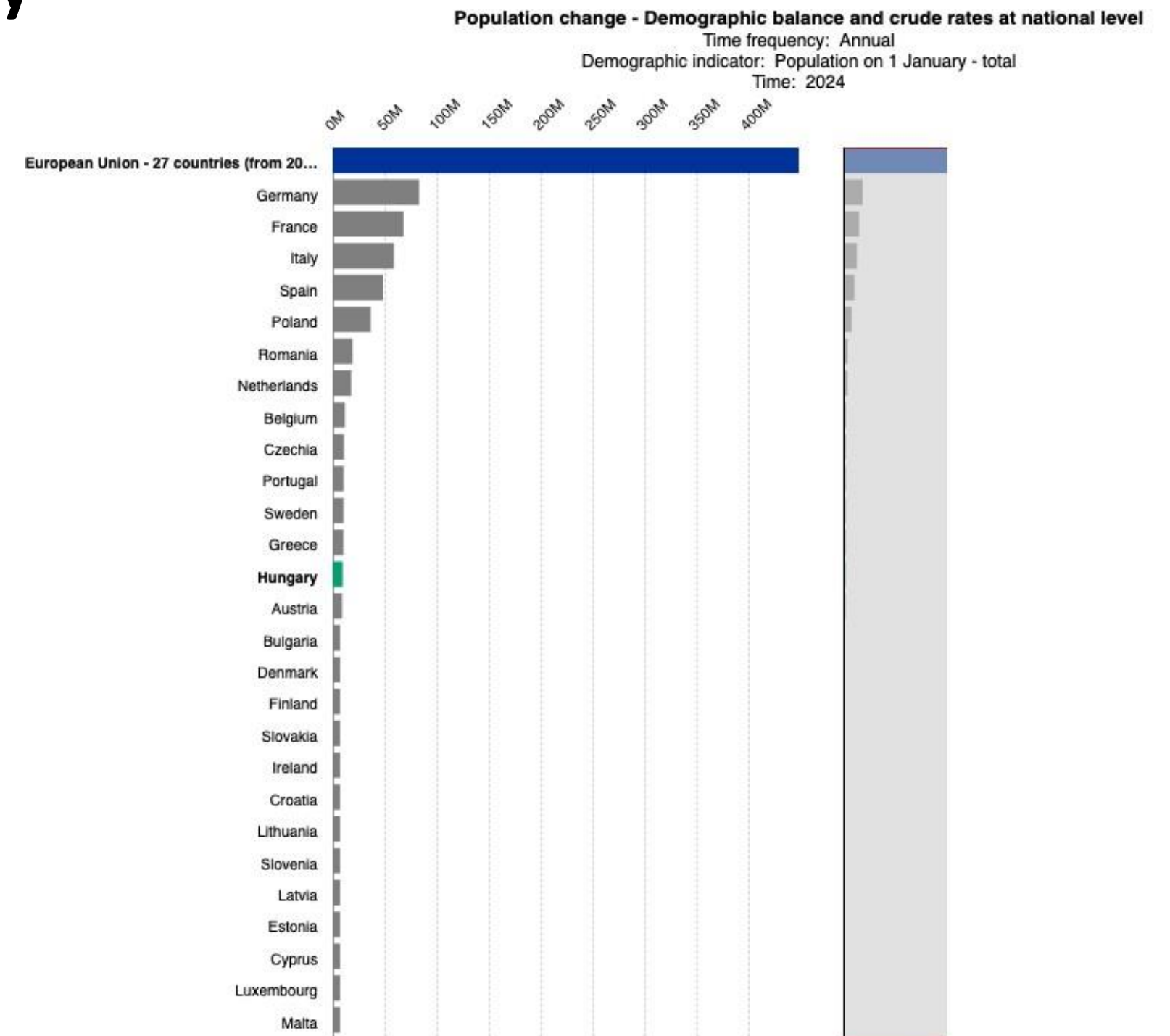
source: European Union

- **Landlocked** country in Central Europe
- Borders **seven** countries : Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine
- Part of its borders forms the **external borders** of the Union
- **Strategic position**: important for the EU Market and vital for trade
- Placed at a **crossroads of major land routes**: connects the West with the Balkan Peninsula and Ukraine with the Mediterranean
- Transit country for land **migration** towards numerous EU member-states
- Significant player in **energy transit discussions** (due to its proximity to Ukraine)

# A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary

## 2. Size and Population

- population of **9.6 million** (9,584,627)
- One of EU's **small** member states (population between 5 and 10 million )
- **2.1%** of the EU's total population
- Covers a **93,012 km2 area** ( around 2.2% of the EU's total land area)
- **13th largest** EU member state in terms of population size
- Is facing a **serious demographic crisis**, characterized by a declining population and low birth rates Hungary's
- population will decrease from 9.6 million today to **8.5 million by 2050**



Population change - Demographic balance and crude rates at national level [demo\_gind]

Source of data: Eurostat - Last updated date: 27/11/2024 00:00

Disclaimer This graph has been created automatically by ESTAT/EC software according to external user specifications for which E  
General disclaimer of the EC website: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/legal-notice\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/legal-notice_en)

# A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary

## 3. History

- Was part of the **Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy** (1867–1918) and had an ethnically diverse population
- After World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, and the **Treaty of Trianon (1920)** significantly reduced Hungary's territory and population.
- For that reason significant **Hungarian minorities** exist in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine and Austria
- After World War II, Hungary fell under **Soviet control**
- Public dissatisfaction led to the **1956 Hungarian Uprising** ( it was crushed)
- After the **collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991**, Hungary transitioned to democracy

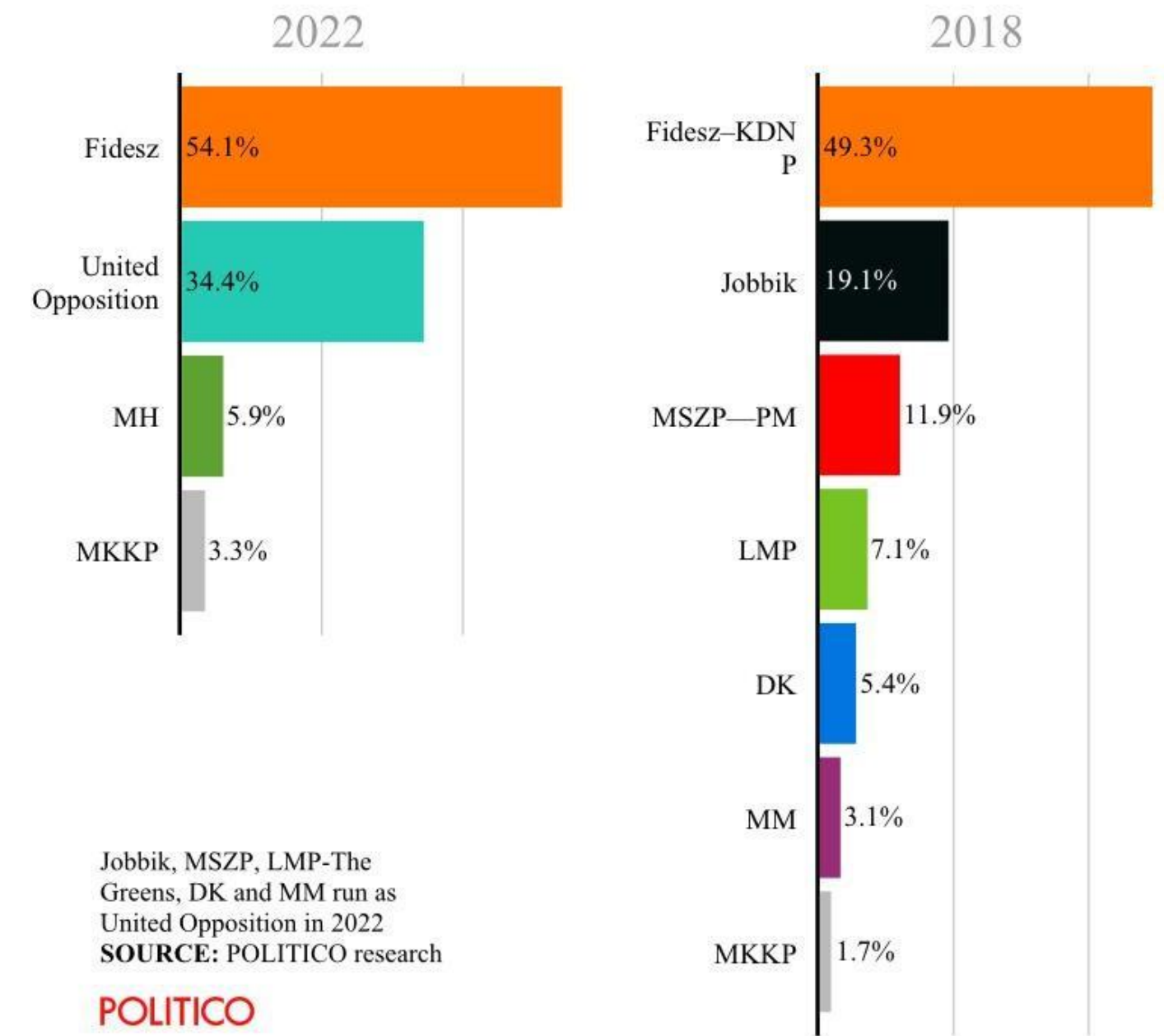


# A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary

## 4. Domestic Politics

- **Independent state**
- **parliamentary republic** since 1989 (parliamentary representative democratic republic)
- Prime minister: head of Government (Victor Orban)
- President: head of State with a ceremonial role (Tamás Sulyok)
- pluriform **multiparty system** since it gained its independence
- Legislative power is exercised by the **unicameral National Assembly** (199 members that are elected every 4 years)
- **2022 Elections: Fidesz-KDNP** (Hungarian Civic Alliance and Christian Democratic People's Party)- The ruling coalition led by Prime Minister **Viktor Orbán** holds a **135** seats (54.13%) followed by United for Hungary with 57 seats and Mi Hazánk Mozgalom with 6
- Hungary is divided in **19 counties** (which are split into 174 districts) and Budapest has a special status

### ORBÁN SCORES CRUSHING VICTORY



# Key player in Hungary's domestic politics

## Mr. Viktor Orbán

- Has won **four consecutive terms** as **Prime Minister**
- **Used to be liberal**
- In power **since 2010**
- Holds a **parliamentary supermajority** with his party,
- **Fidesz** Has transformed Hungary into what the European Parliament has denounced as a "**hybrid regime of electoral autocracy**"
- Has **repeatedly clashed with European Union** colleagues on migration and the war in Ukraine.
- Big on **sovereignty!!!!!!**



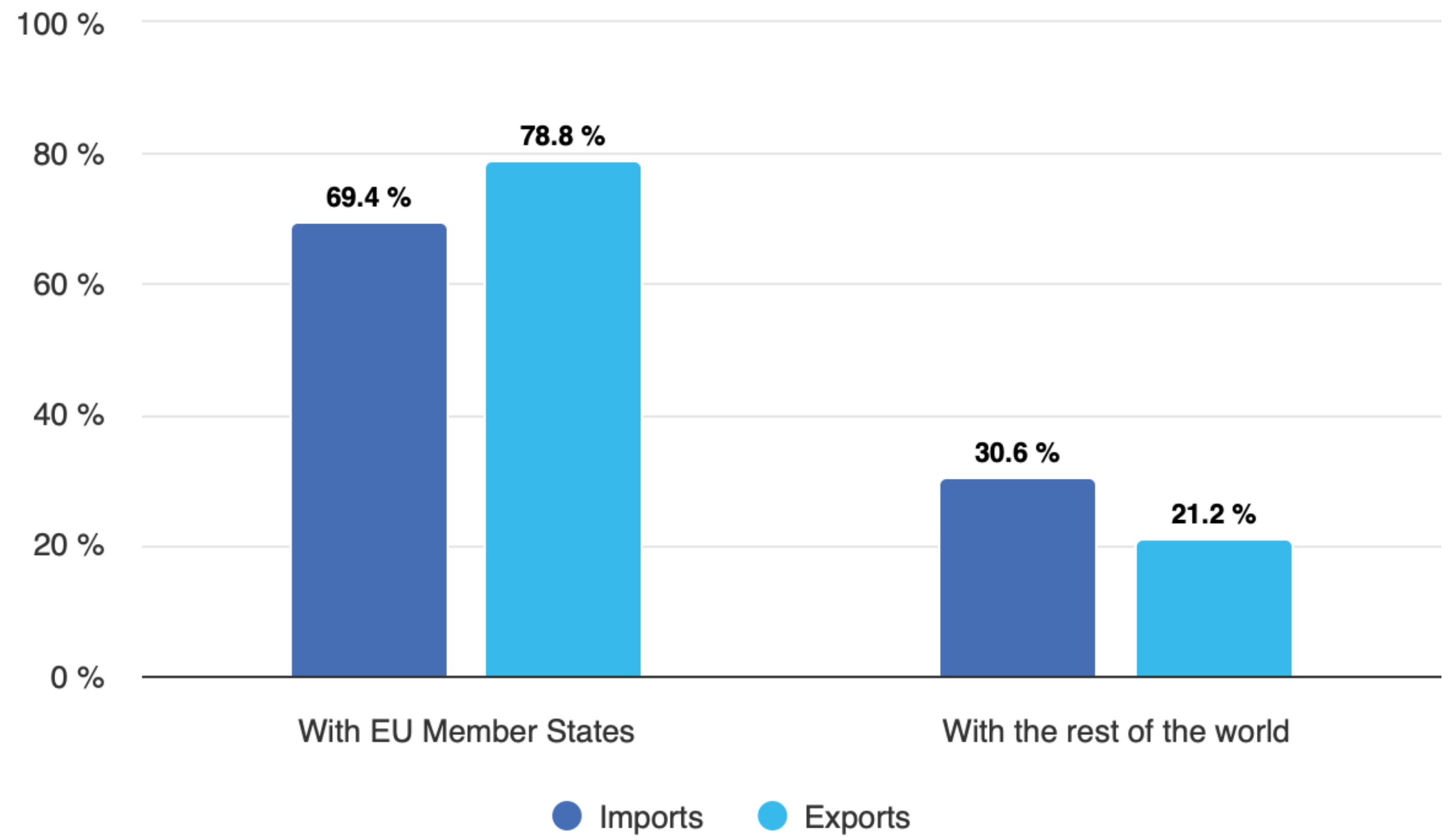
# A. Factors shaping the European policies of Hungary

## 5. Economics

- GDP per capita: **28.700 euros** -ranks **bellow EU average** 37.600 euros and accounts for **1.2% of the EU's total GDP**
- **Significant role in international trade/** In 2022 it was ranked as the **world's 35th largest exporter** In **2023, the majority of Hungary's imports and exports** were conducted **with EU member states** (69.4% of Hungary's imports//78.8% of its exports)
- Trade with **the rest of the world** accounted for a **smaller share** (30.6% of imports//21.2% of exports)
- **Dependant on the EU market** (75.3% of its total exports and 71.1% of its imports)
- **Germany** is Hungary's **primary trading partner**
- In 2023, the **debt-to-GDP ratio saw a slight decrease**, reaching **73.5%**
- In 2024, the **budget deficit improved**, falling to **5.4%** of GDP
- **Unemployment rate** stands at **4.5%**, **lower than the EU average** of **6.6%**
- **Had major economic support from the EU – is the 4th biggest net recipient (€4.4 billion in 2023)**

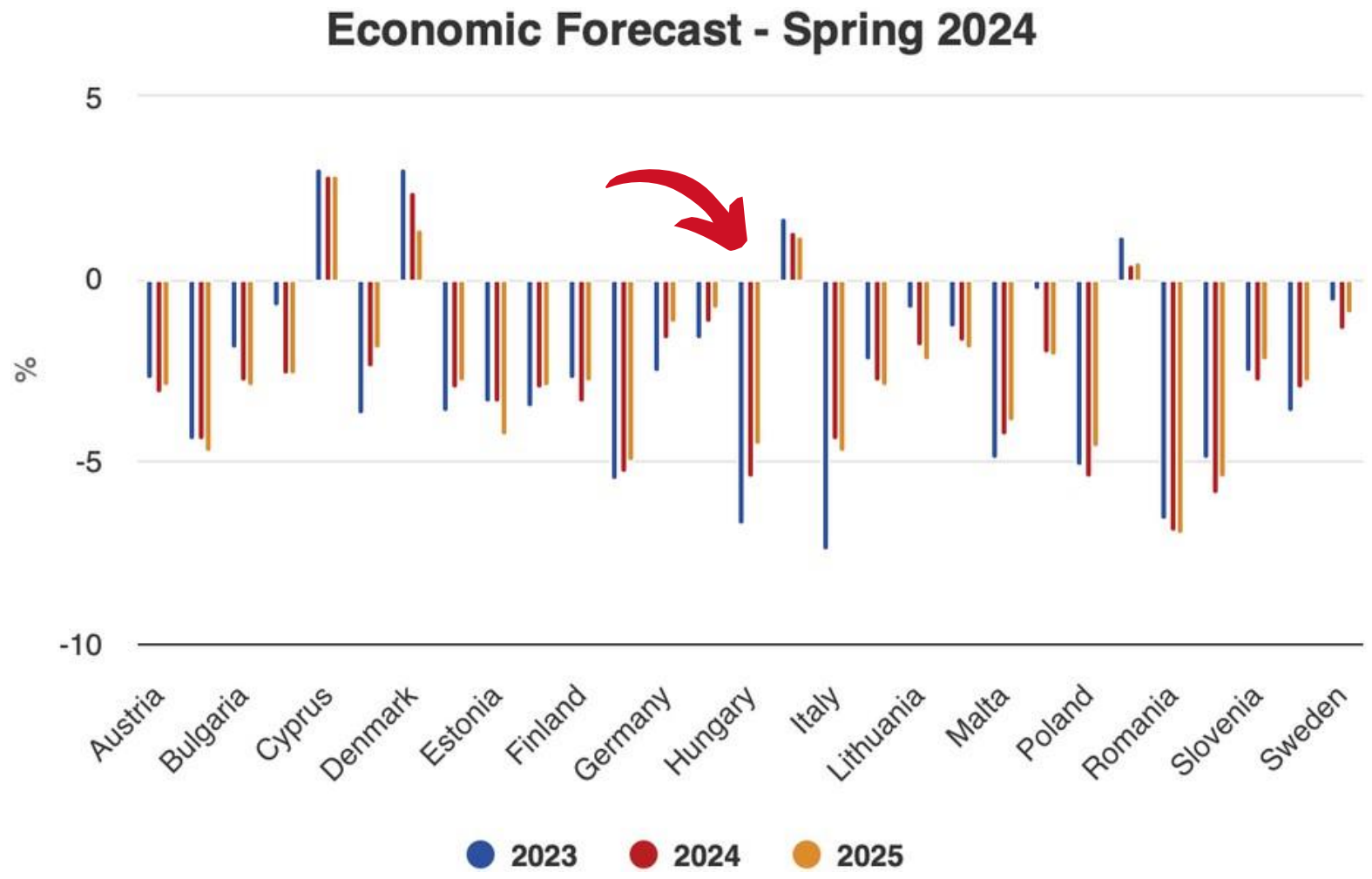


# Hungary's imports and exports in 2023

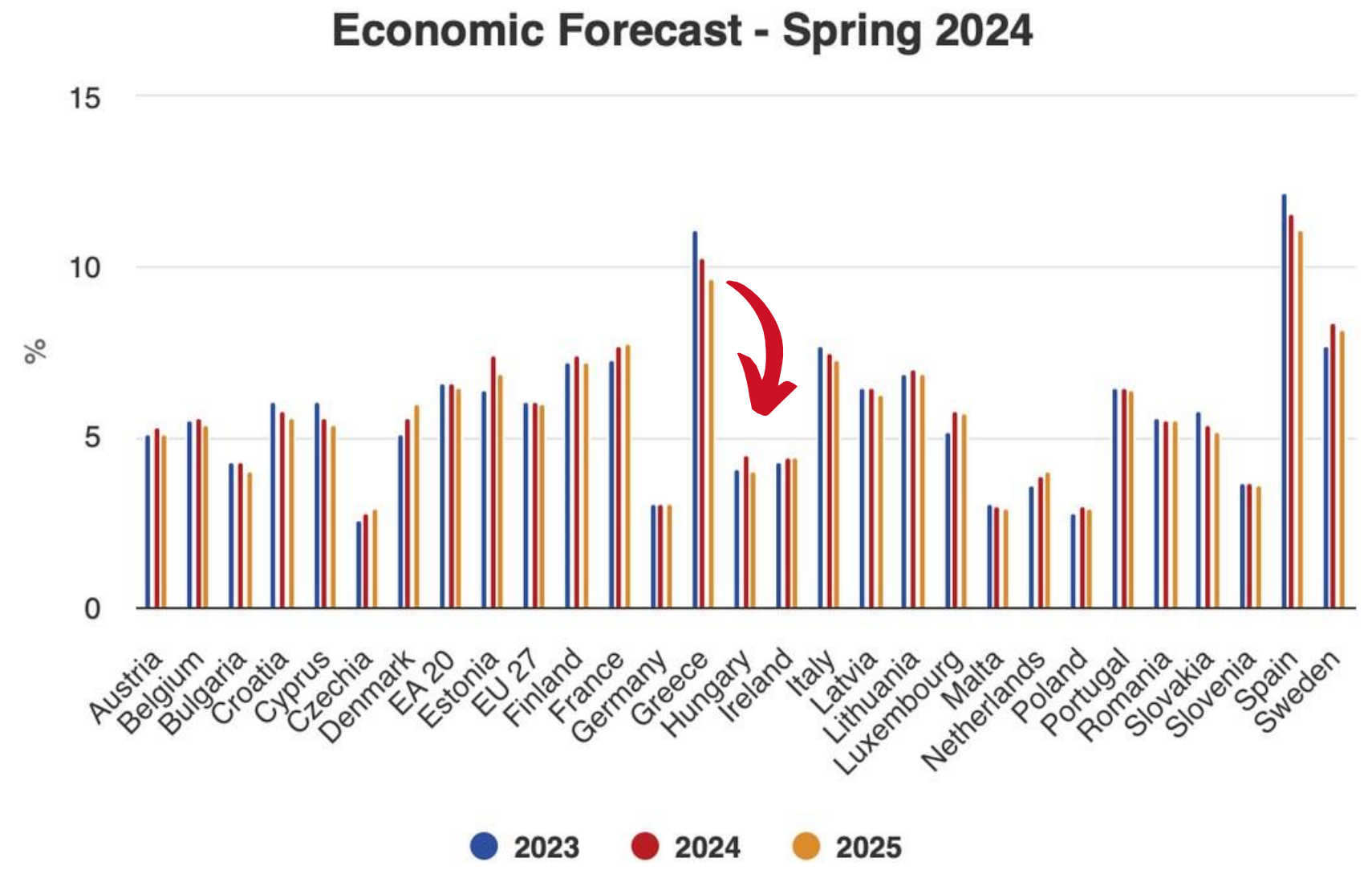


source: European Union

# Budget Balance



# Unemployment Rate



source: Spring 2024 Economic Forecast, European Commission

## B. Why and What Europe

### Why did Hungary join the European Project?

- Hungary **joined the EU on May 1, 2004**, marking a key milestone in European integration
- The process started with an **association agreement in 1994**
- Accession **negotiations began in 1998**
- **2003 referendum** (84% of voters supported EU membership but low **46% turnout**)
- Hungary prioritized EU membership post-communism as a **key foreign policy goal**
- **Reasons for joining:** EU membership symbolized **economic growth, stability**, and a "**security guarantee**" in the post-Cold War era.
- Viewed EU membership as a crucial step toward **reuniting a Europe**

# B. Why and What Europe

## What Europe does Hungary want?

- Supports a strong and stable **European Union comprised of sovereign nation-states** (In 2023 passed the Act on the Protection of National Sovereignty)
- Hungary is openly **anti-migrant** → Orban has referred to migrants as “**poison**” and has stated that “**we never let them in**”//**2016 Hungarian migrant quota referendum**//requested to **opt out** of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact (Oct 2024)
- Claims to be **pro-peace** → Its Prime Minister has described the country as a **strong advocate for peace** (“Hungary is pro-peace, we have a vested interest in being left out of the war”)
- **Against military support to Ukraine**
- **Pro-enlargement** but specifically for the **Western Balkans**
- In the topic of security and defense → **supports strengthening European defense cooperation** and has expressed **backing for plans** to establish a **common European army** (is also a member of NATO since 1999 - didn't approve Sweden's application for membership till 2024)

# B. Why and What Europe

## What Europe does Hungary want?

### Politics on the European level

- **21 seats** at the European Parliament//2024 European Elections
- The **Fidesz-KDNP coalition** (Patriots for Europe), led by **Viktor Orbán**, dominates Hungary's European Parliament representation with **44.82% of the vote (11 seats)**
- The **TISZA party**, led by **Péter Magyar**, aligns with the EPP and secured **29.60% of the vote (7 seats)**, making it **Hungary's second-largest European Parliament contingent**
- DK-MSZP-P (aligned with the S&D group) received 8.03% of the vote (2 seats) Mi
- Hazánk, aligned with the ESN group, garnered 6.71% of the vote (1 seat)

**! TISZA achieved the highest opposition vote percentage since Orbán's rise to power, positioning Magyar as a strong competitor to Orbán (they used to be on the same team)**

**! Fidesz is a part of the Patriots for Europe group, a new right-wing political alliance formed in June 2024 by Orbán (its leader), Herbert Kickl, and Andrej Babiš (Fidesz left EPP in 2021) (Jordan Bardella (RN) is PfE's president)**

## B. Why and What Europe

### What Europe does Hungary want?

#### Presidency of the EU Council (July - December 2024)

- It was very **controversial**
- **"Make Europe Great Again"** campaign (a variation of the infamous **MAGA**)
- On the **first week of Budapest's presidency** Orbán **visited Moscow** and **met Putin** (called it a **"peace mission"**) ( the **EU Parliament condemned** the meeting => **"blatant violation of the EU's treaties and common foreign policy"**)
- Several **EU countries** distanced themselves from Hungary, **boycotting EU meetings hosted by Budapest**, including the European Commission.

## B. Why and What Europe

### What Europe does Hungary want?

#### Level of integration

- Hungary is a member of the **EU** and the **Schengen Area** but not a member of the
- **Eurozone**
- It is considered to be **preparing to adopt the euro**, but **there isn't a target date** set  
In 2023 **Gyorgy Matolcsy** stated that the adoption could take place "**perhaps around 2030 or a bit later**" and called the Eurozone "**club of the rich**"

## B. Why and What Europe

### What Europe does Hungary want?

## Hungary and the EU

- **strained relationship** between Hungary and the EU
- the **European Union (EU)** and Members of the European Parliament have expressed **serious concerns about the actions of the Hungarian government**
- in 2018, The European Parliament had called on EU member states to assess, under **Article 7** of the Treaty, whether Hungary is in danger of violating the EU's foundational values
- **Article 7** of the Treaty on European Union is a procedure in the treaties of the European Union (EU) that can suspend certain rights from a member state
- the European Union **has frozen certain funds toward Hungary** due to concerns over rule-of-law violations and alleged misuse of EU funds
- In December 2024 it was announced that Hungary will lose **€1.04 billion** in EU funds **permanently**—the first such case under the bloc's conditionality mechanism—part of **€6.3 billion frozen** over rule-of-law concerns.



## c. Major crises and Euroscepticism

### The Rule of Law Crisis

- **Democratic Backsliding** ⇒ Hungary has transformed into a **hybrid democratic-autocratic regime**
- EU officials- Hungary is **no longer considered a full democracy** but a “hybrid regime of electoral autocracy” (2022)
- There is a development of a **corrupt electoral system** (the root of the problem)
- Hungary's rule-of-law crisis can be **traced back to 2012**, when the Fidesz government introduced a reformed electoral system that provided substantial advantages to the ruling party
- Fidesz and Orban: that's where the corruption begins – **the government is obtaining control of fundamental democratic institutions**
- Orban is continually criticized for **violating EU values**

## c. Major crises and Euroscepticism

### The Migration Crisis

- Hungary has a **key role in migration** due to its geographical position → functions as a **transit source and destination country for both regular and irregular migration**
- Was **heavily affected** by the 2015 migration crisis
- In **2015 174.000** migrants applied for asylum -**13%** of Europe's asylum seekers -**1770 first time asylum seekers per 100.000 people** in Hungary's population (**highest in the EU**)
- In 2015, Hungary ranked as the **second EU country**, after Greece, in terms of irregular migrant apprehensions, with **411,515 crossings recorded**
- **72% of Hungarians disapproved of the way the EU handled the situation** (Pew Research Center, 2016)
- In order to fight migration Hungary has built **fences** along its southern borders with Serbia and Croatia and has **restricted asylum applications**
- Hungary's asylum policy caused **tension with Germany** (Angela Merkel had adopted a more welcoming approach towards migrants)

## c. Major crises and Euroscepticism

### The Russia-Ukraine War

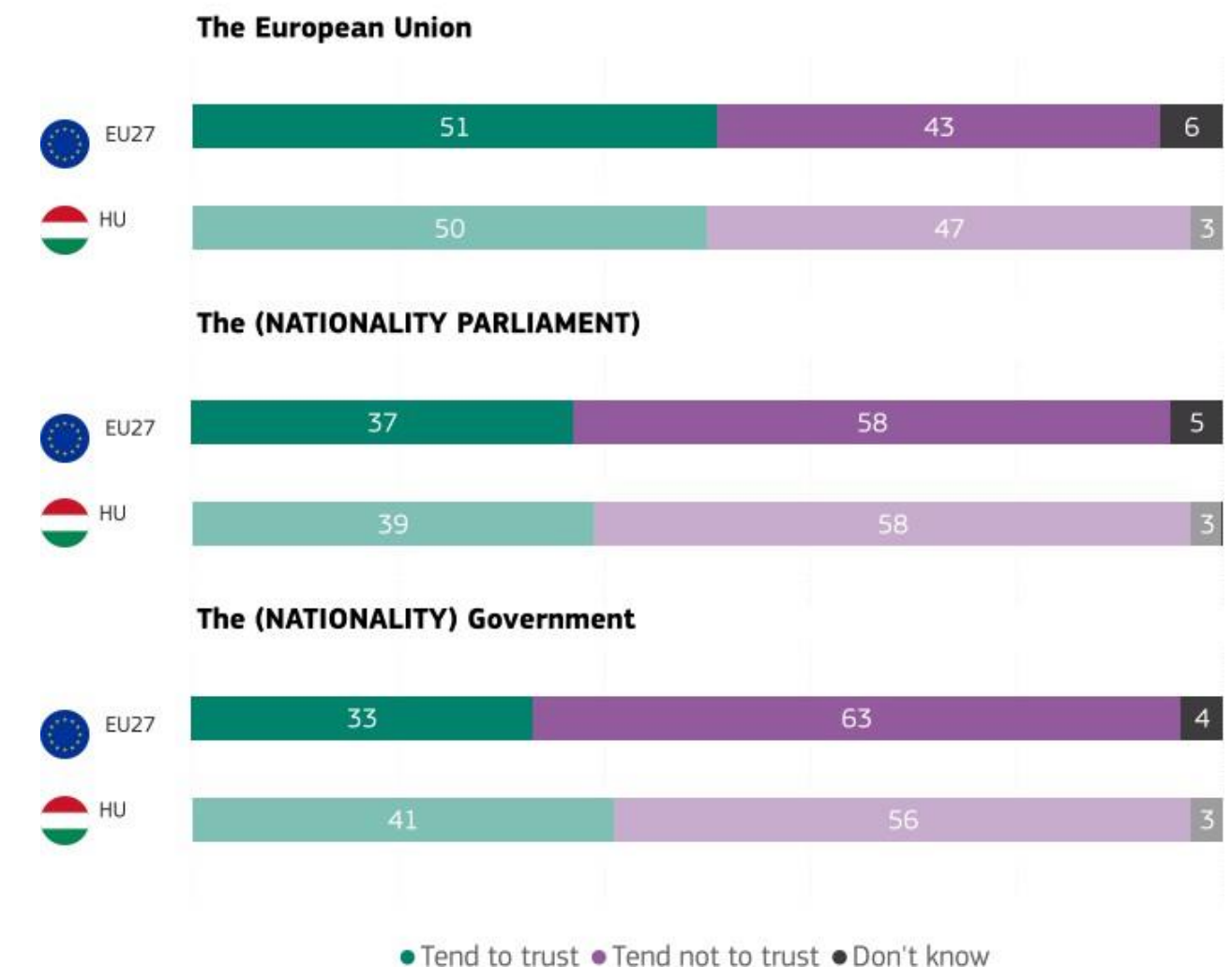
- **complex** and often **controversial** stance on the war in Ukraine → **critical view of Western support for Ukraine**
- and an **friendly approach toward Russia**
- Orbán is regarded as **Putin's closest ally** within the European Union
- Hungary continues to purchase **Russian natural gas**
- Orbán has repeatedly called for an **immediate ceasefire** and the **initiation of negotiations** between Russia and Ukraine
- Hungary has repeatedly **obstructed** the European Union's provision of **military aid to Ukraine** → **vetoed a €50 billion EU aid package intended to support Ukraine (2023)**
- **Miklós Soltész** (General Parliamentary Secretary for the Prime Minister's Office) stated that Hungary has provided substantial humanitarian aid to Ukraine and has hosted over 1.4 million refugees and has provided
- 98.5 billion forints (239.8 million euros) in aid to Ukraine
- Hungary is **affected by the refugee wave** the war has caused (around **31.000 Ukrainian refugees**)
- **New law** threatens to **push** Ukrainian refugees → it is estimated that **2,000 to 3,000 refugees will lose access to subsidized housing**

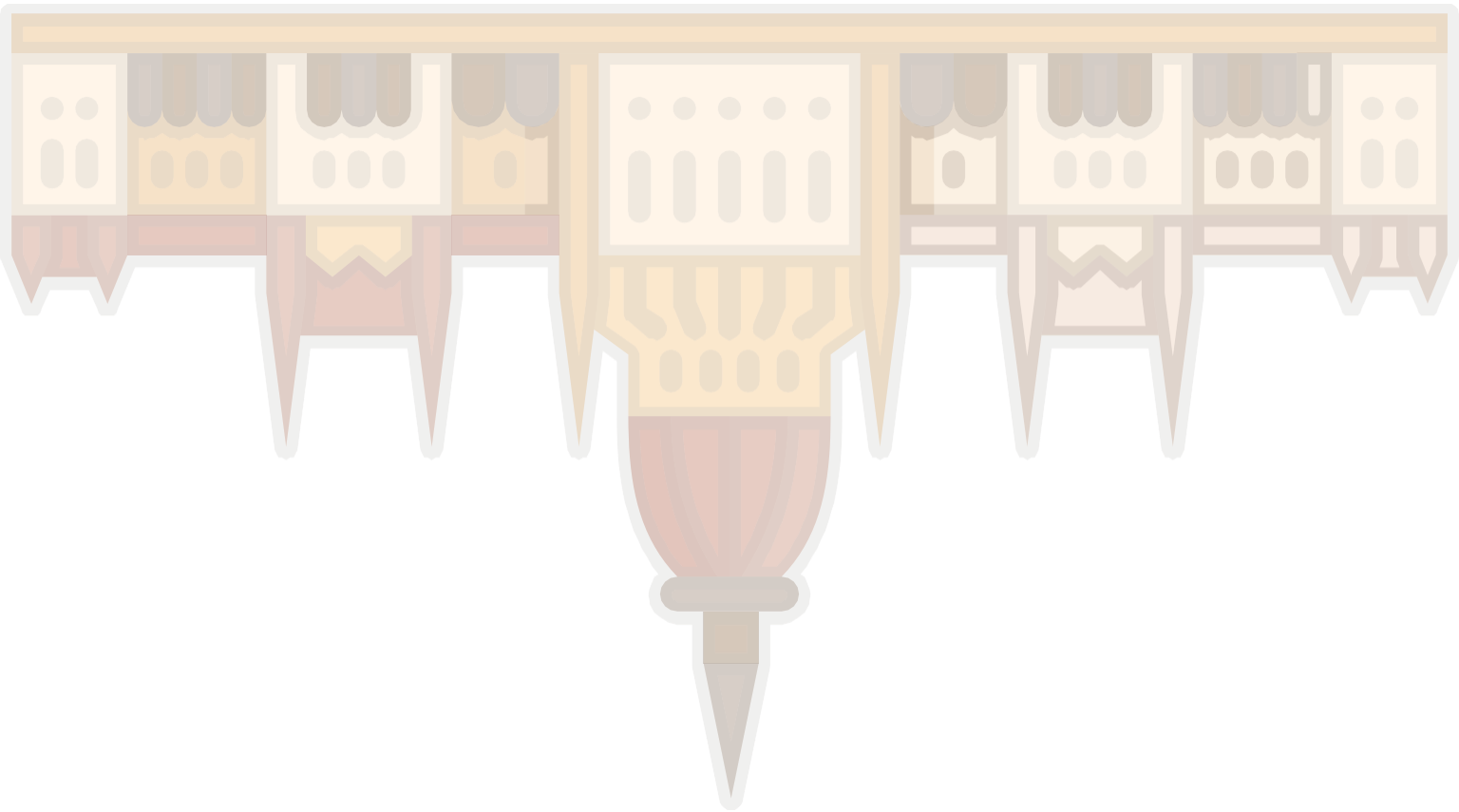
## c. Major crises and Euroscepticism

### Euroscepticism

- Since Orbán's return to power, Hungary **been considered very Eurosceptic** from everyone (considered to be aligned with its leadership)
- **Paradox: Eurosceptic government but pro-European**
- **people 51% trusts the EU** -43% doesn't
- At the same time when asked "**How attached do you feel to the EU?**", **77%** of them answered that they **feel attached** to the Union
- **leading party and PM are Eurosceptic**
- **Fidesz/Orban** → great example of **soft euroscepticism/regime**
- **skepticism // Europe of the nation states**
- Also, **Jobbik** and **Mi hazánk Mozgalom** are **Eurosceptic**

QA6. How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? (%)





**Thank you all for being here today**

