

From Deliberation to Pure Mobilisation? The Case of National Consultations in Hungary

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Abstract: *National or supranational consultations on general policy questions are unusual phenomena. Nevertheless, they seem to play an important role in the political life of the community either because they might be considered as rudimentary forms of deliberative practices or because they are important strategic tools in the hands of political actors. Given this salience of consultations from both normative-deliberative and descriptive-strategic perspectives, it is surprising that academic analyses of national consultations are scarce. This paper tries to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on one of the most well-known examples of nation-wide consultations, the series of national consultations in Hungary. It aims to present why national consultations gradually lost their deliberative character and how they have been transformed into a strategic instrument for mobilising supporters.*

Keywords: *deliberative democracy; direct democracy; populism; legitimacy; national consultation*

Introduction

Consultations can be designed as a tool for discussion and collaboration between elected officials and voters. Although it has been one of the most important instruments of the Fidesz party for gaining and staying in power, until now relatively little attention has been paid to analysing the nature of the series of national consultations the party initiated. The relative absence of academic investigations on consultations as a specific form of deliberative or participatory practices seems to be especially striking, since sending out a questionnaire

and organising public events/discussions at the national level on the topics presented on the questionnaire became quite frequent actions organised by the Fidesz party, both in opposition and in government. Since 2005, ten national consultations have been organised by the party, and from 2010 onwards Hungarians have received, almost every year, a questionnaire asking their opinions on various predefined topics without further assistance, balanced information materials or trained moderators of the discussions.

This paper contends that, implemented in this way, national consultations should be assessed as a transitory phenomenon between deliberative practices and plebiscitary referendums strategically used for party interests. Deliberation on political issues aims to listen to and consider all positions and arguments on how public interest should be best defined, and how an acceptable solution to political problems might be found. As presented below, some important instruments for listening to and considering public opinion genuinely have been applied during the series of national consultations in Hungary since 2005. Consequently, consultations might and should be evaluated from the perspective of the best practices and theories of deliberative democracy. On the other hand, since millions of citizens cast their ‘votes’ by sending back answers to multiple-choice or simple yes-or-no questions, the national consultations also resembled advisory referendums where people are given the chance to express their views on predefined questions without binding the hands of the decision makers too tightly. Since consultations are in this sense Janus-faced phenomena, they ought to be analysed from two perspectives: from the normative perspective of deliberative democracy and from the descriptive perspective of direct democracy.

This paper argues that national consultations have served two functions in the politics of the Fidesz party led by the current prime minister Viktor Orbán: in opposition it was a means for the party to improve its poor embeddedness in Hungarian society by sending signals that Fidesz is different from other Hungarian parties that do not listen to the voice of the people. Its significance was two-fold, since the first national consultation organised in 2005 served not only this strategic aim but can also be interpreted as an attempt to establish deliberative practices in Hungary – which had been almost completely absent before. Even in its imperfect form, the 2005 national consultation might also be regarded as a new experiment in deliberative democracy. After 2010, national consultations still preserved this dual character as they combined more controversial questions with more simplistic ones exclusively serving the strategic interests of the governing party. From 2015 at the latest, however, the consultations completely lost their (anyway imperfect) deliberative character and have been used purely as a plebiscitary instrument to reinvigorate the party’s position and mobilise its own supporters.

This paper first provides an overview of recent literature dealing with national consultations in Hungary by highlighting the ways in which our interpretation

differs from previous analyses, as well as briefly explaining the rationale for its case selection. Second, we present the political context of national consultations as far as other consultative and deliberative practices are concerned. Third, we delineate the interpretive framework which will help to better understand this topic. Fourth, the paper briefly describes the process of how national consultations evolved from a tool to reinvigorate activism and awaken the deliberative attitudes of Hungarian citizens into a governmental campaign ‘machine’.

Case selection and literature overview

While advisory public consultations on a local level or at the pre-legislative phase on specific policy issues are not rare in Europe, national or supranational consultations on general policy questions are more of an exception. In Belgium, a country with a wide landscape of the promotion of deliberative and participatory tools only one popular consultation has been organised at the national level (that of 12 March 1950 for or against the return of King Leopold III) and the principle of popular consultation at the local and regional levels got incorporated into Belgian law at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (Gaudin, 2018). The French *Grand Débat National* initiated by the French president (Thillaye 2019; Courant 2019; Ehs – Mokre 2020) or the *Consultation on the Future of Europe* organised by the European Commission (EC 2018) are the most prominent recent examples of such top-down involvement of citizens in policy making processes in Europe.¹ The Swiss *Vernehmlassungsverfahren* is an institutionalised form of consultation in the law-making process. It came into being along with the development of the direct democratic instruments, and was instrumental in transforming the majoritarian democracy into a consensus democracy. While certainly rather sporadic occurrences, when they are conducted such consultations seem to play a very important role in the political life of the community either because they might be considered as rudimentary forms of deliberative practices or because they are important strategic tools in the hands of political actors. Given this salience of consultations from both normative-deliberative and descriptive-strategic perspectives, it is even more surprising that scientific analyses of consultations at the national level are woefully scarce. This paper attempts to fill this gap in the literature by focusing on one of the most well-known examples of nation-wide consultations, the national consultations in Hungary.

While there is an abundance of political science literature on the post-2010 Hungarian political system focusing on populism or regime classification (e.g. Ágh 2016; Batory 2015; Bozóki 2015a, 2015b; Bogaards 2018; Buzogány 2018;

1 Most recently the French president Emmanuel Macron launched a national consultation on police reform (France24 2021). Some signs of prior consultation on national levels might be traceable in Latin America as well – see: Wright and Tomaselli 2019. On referendum in authoritarian regimes: Collin 2019.

Csillag – Szelényi 2015; Enyedi 2015, 2016a; Greskovits 2015; Kornai 2015), these accounts have usually not concerned themselves with giving an in-depth analysis of the series of national consultations, or they focused from the specific perspective of plebiscitary leader democracy (Körösényi et al. 2020). Admittedly, some articles have been published which dealt with consultation processes in Hungary tangentially or at least partially (Gessler 2017; Csehi 2018; Bocskor 2018). Applying a descriptive framework based on a synthesis of previous literature on participatory instruments and focusing on the question of what happens if a populist actor uses participatory methods, Batory and Svensson (2019) explained the paradoxical effects of the practice of national consultation on participation. In a recent article which aimed to build a bridge between the very different literatures on direct democracy and illiberal populism, van Eeden (2019: 710) explained how referendums evolved in Hungary into a perfect catalyst for populists making the country ‘the vanguard of contemporary post-democratic processes’ and analysed referendums initiated by the Fidesz party within the theoretical framework of post-democracy. Both papers approach the phenomenon of national consultations and referendums from the perspective of participatory or direct democracy, and, consequently, broaden the interpretative horizon in a significant way. They, nevertheless, either neglect the deliberative dimension (van Eeden 2019), or do not see differences among the consultations and evaluate them as all having the same characteristics (Batory – Svensson 2019). By contrast, this paper argues that, from the perspective of normative deliberative democratic theory, we can discern some kind of evolution (to be more precise some kind of regression) in the short history of national consultations in Hungary, while, at the same time, all consultations have distinctive strategic features as well. This is why we suggest that another analytical framework, of a partly normative and partly descriptive character, might throw up new insights into the evolution of a series of consultations organised at the national level, answering how the practice of national consultations turned from a more or less deliberative practice into a strategic instrument for mobilising supporters in political struggles.

In terms of case selection, Hungary is an influential case (Seawright-Gerring 2008) from Central Eastern Europe where parties lack stable connections with local associations (Gherghina 2014: 40). The analysis will focus on three consultations (2005, 2011 and 2015) because they had policy implications either on the constitutional level (2011 and 2015) or they led to a nation-wide referendum (in 2008 and 2016). Furthermore, the 2005 national consultation will be examined as this exercise was organised by Fidesz when it was in opposition, and can be contrasted with the other two consultations organised by the party in government after 2010.

Political context of deliberative and participatory practices

A function of an instrument cannot be determined without the overall context of the political system. While we do not want to delve into the details of earlier and most recent developments of the Hungarian political system in general, it is, nevertheless, indispensable to outline the main context and developments of social consultations and civic engagement in the policy-making process. To put it another way, analysis of the series of national consultations should be embedded into the most relevant deliberative and participatory practices of Hungarian politics. There have been two different avenues for the citizenry to get involved in political decision-making processes in the Hungarian context, but the political elite (with some exceptions) had always been well-equipped to push back these involvements to the extent they can live with.

Consultations with social partners, stakeholders and NGOs are traditionally essential parts of the legislative processes in liberal democracies. The relevant Hungarian legal regulations, adopted and revised continuously after the democratic transformation process in 1990, have also given the social actors a say in the legislative process. Nevertheless, the practice of these social consultations differed markedly from the ideal as prescribed in the legal regulations. No government since 1990 has been interested in ‘endless’ deliberations with social partners, consequently each one tried to evade these obligations by selecting government-friendly civic organisations and pressure groups, or by extremely reducing the time period to be at disposal to submit the stakeholders’ reports and opinions (Sebők 2020: 148; Vadál 2019). Certainly, the post-2010 governments found even more creative ways to switch out the anyway defective consultation processes in the pre-legislative phase. Since private members’ bills have always been exempted from obligatory preliminary social consultations, the Orbán-government relied heavily on this channel of the legislative process: approximately 40 % of the adopted bills between 2010 and 2014 were proposed by the MPs of Fidesz (Sebők 2020: 300). To be fair, it should also be admitted that this kind of evasion of social consultation processes peaked right after the Fidesz party came into power, since then the share of adopted laws introduced by private member bills has decreased significantly.²

Popular involvement in policy making processes might also be secured by direct democratic instruments. Although the Hungarian legal context has changed over time, it belongs even today to the more liberal regulations in international comparison based on required signatures and turnout/approval quorums (Morel 2018). Nevertheless, the direction of subsequent changes seems to be unambiguous: while in the first period (1989–1997) it was extremely easy

2 Data of the most recent legislative term (2018–2022) show that it returned to the ‘normal’ distribution (10 %) of the 90s (Adatok 2018; Adatok 2019; Adatok 2020; Adatok 2021).

to launch a facultative referendum or a popular agenda initiative due to the low level of required signatures (1.25 % and 0.75 % of the electorate respectively) to be collected without a time limit and without any preliminary scrutiny of the question proposed by a specialised constitutional body, the turnout quorum was determined with quite a high level (50 % of the electorate). Incomplete regulations were clarified by the 1997 reform (a taboo subject determined in the constitution; the National Electoral Committee preliminarily scrutinised the questions, etc.), which changed rather inconsistently the previous regulations: while the number of required signatures was increased to 200,000 (2.5 % of the electorate) and a time-limit of four months was set, the chances of successful referendums were increased by replacing the turnout quorum with a 25 % approval quorum (Kukorelli 2019: 11; Komáromi 2017). Paradoxically, the number of petitions of national referendums was in the first decade extremely low (10 petitions between 1989 and 1997), it started to increase after the number of required signatures had been doubled and peaked in the 2006–2010 legislative terms (with more than thousand petitions) (Kukorelli 2019: 43). Important changes have followed since the adoption of the Fundamental Law in 2011, mainly reducing the incentives and opportunity structures for referendums. The turnout quorum has been restored to 50 % (approval quorum has been abolished), while the number of required signatures (200,000; 2.5 % of the electorate) was preserved. The president of the National Electoral Committee was invested with the competence of a preliminary formal control of petitions, and the number of required petitioners was increased from one to at least 20 (Komáromi 2020: 49). It should also be mentioned that the popular agenda setting initiative has been abolished, although it has never been a very popular instrument of the citizenry: its role in promoting public deliberation is almost negligible.³ By contrast, the changing attitude of the political actors and the civil servants became a key factor in pushing back bottom-up popular initiatives: political actors withdraw legislation if a sufficient number of signatures has been collected making a referendum irrelevant; jarheads intimidated petitioners preventing them from submitting their petitions timely; or civil servants of the National Electoral Committee rigorously refused petitions arguing that concerns subject taboos determined in the Fundamental Law by a very strict interpretation of the proposed referendum questions (Körösényi et al 2020: 126).

As a general assessment, we can conclude that opportunity structures for social consultations and deliberations in policy making processes have always been very limited (even before 2010), but it is also true that after the landslide victory of the Fidesz party in 2010 the remaining opportunity structures were either completely closed or tightly controlled by the ruling party. But what

3 In 24 years, there were all together 16 popular agenda initiatives, of which four have been approved by the parliament (https://www.parlament.hu/aktual/2011_xcii/index/nepszav/ogy_dont_nepikezd).

about the series of national consultations? How should we evaluate the role of national consultations against this background? Could national consultations be interpreted as rudimentary forms of deliberative practices? Or did they serve merely strategic aims of the Fidesz party *ab initio*? Does the trajectory of national consultations fit into this general assessment or did they create new opportunity structures for deliberations and participations? To answer these questions, we need an analytical framework which will facilitate the evaluation of the practice of national consultations. We should turn now to this analytical framework.

Analytical Framework

The ‘strategic turn’ in the history of the national consultations will be analysed below by using a combination of two theoretical frameworks: one normative and the other descriptive. While the normative framework will investigate the *deliberative* character of the national consultations, the descriptive framework will be useful in assessing its *strategic* character.

Within the analytical framework of *deliberative democracy*, democratic decision-making procedures should be legitimate in their input, throughput and output phases: they have to make sure that the opinions and needs of ordinary citizens are translated through deliberative procedures into positive political outcomes. Based on Caluwaerts and Reuchamps (2015), Eerola and Reuchamps (2016), Suiter and Reuchamps (2016), and Geissel and Gherghina (2016) these normative aspects of legitimate deliberation can be summarised as follows (see Table 1).

Input legitimacy deals with citizens’ opportunities to influence the process and the outcomes of the deliberation, and thus it is a measure of the openness of the deliberative events to the demands and needs of the citizens. It consists of several elements: The *quality of representation* entails an epistemically diverse set of participants and a thorough process of argumentation in which all public positions are represented. *Agenda setting* is of crucial importance to understand the dynamics of the process: an open agenda means that the entire population is able to set the agenda while, at the other end of the spectrum, a closed agenda means that it is set by formal institutions with little room for introducing new issues. *Epistemic completeness* is the final last dimension of the input legitimacy of a process of deliberation: it measures the level and quality of information citizens received during the deliberative process. In an ideal situation, all participants have access to all the relevant information about the issues and are competent to assess them, with access to experts and policy-makers.

Throughput legitimacy focuses on the efficacy, accountability, openness and inclusiveness of the democratic processes under consideration. The *quality of participation* investigates the extent to which participants have the chance to take part in deliberation (for example, in a substantively inclusive process every

participant and minority group is given an equal voice in the discussion). The *quality of decision making* is concerned with examining the question of how deliberation is translated into decisions. Decisions should come about through argumentation and should reflect the reasoned opinion and openness to persuasion of all those involved. Finally, *contextual independence* refers to the political context that influences the process of deliberation. A vibrant deliberative democracy should be able to handle outside influences; if participants suffer from coercion, reasoned argument is completely undermined.

The main aim of *output legitimacy* is to assess how the society at large takes up the issues raised by the process (*public endorsement*). For example, political actors can agree from the beginning that the final recommendations of a deliberative process should be put to a popular vote in a referendum. Feedback can also be generated by broadcasting the event. *Weight of the results* focuses on the links of the deliberative process to formal political decision making: output legitimacy can be said to be high if the process has a direct impact on real-world politics (for example when a government expresses its commitment to implementing the final decision). Finally, *responsiveness and accountability* mean that the decisions taken should offer an answer to the problems that were initially identified and there should also be regular feedback to the participants. A transparent chain of responsibility enables the participants to clearly identify who can be held accountable for the results that come out of the deliberations.

Table 1: The Analytical Framework

	First dimension	Second dimension	Third dimension
Input legitimacy	Who deliberates? (<i>quality of representation</i>)	On what will be deliberated? (<i>agenda-setting</i>)	Do citizens have access to all relevant information? (<i>epistemic completeness</i>)
Throughput legitimacy	To what extent were participants able to take part? (<i>inclusiveness</i>)	What method is chosen to arrive at a decision? (<i>quality of decision making</i>)	Are participants independent from outside pressures? (<i>contextual independence</i>)
Output legitimacy	How decisions taken by few individuals can be generalized and explained to the entirety of the population? (<i>public endorsement</i>)	How outcomes and results of the deliberation are linked to formal political decision making processes? (<i>weight of the results</i>)	Are results and outcomes offering an answer to problems initially identified? (<i>responsiveness and accountability</i>)

Source: Caluwaerts – Reuchamps, 2015.; Suiter-Reuchamps, 2016; Eerola-Reuchamps, 2016:321)

Beyond this kind of *normative* evaluation of the legitimacy of deliberative practices it is also worth analysing the series of national consultations from the perspective of a *descriptive* theoretical framework. Since advisory and semi-

-official consultations like the series of national consultations in Hungary might be located somewhere between rudimentary forms of deliberation and the kind of plebiscitary decision-making realised in referendums, especially if the consultation was followed by a real referendum or other forms of policy implementation (or both), they should also be connected to another stream of literature which focuses on the strategic use of referendums.⁴

The number of papers investigating why referendums are held and the reasons why they succeed has only increased with the number of referendums held in the world over the last 30 years. The optimistic view, that the general and rising discontent of citizens with representative democracy induces norm-driven and responsive political elites to 'give the control back to the people' (Cronin 1999; Mendelsohn and Parkin 2001; Scarrow 2001; Dalton et al. 2003) is challenged by authors who argue that the strategic interests of the political elite lie behind the increasing number of referendums, and that expansion of direct democratic instruments is not, in reality, universally characteristic of all democratic countries (Butler – Ranney 1978; Setälä 1999; Morel 2001; Walker 2003; Qvortrup 2007; Morel 2007; Closa 2007; Rahat 2009; Oppermann 2013; Mendez 2014; Sottillotta 2017; Qvortrup 2017; Hollander 2019; López and Sanjaume-Calvet 2020). Beyond the theoretical framework of rational choice institutionalism, empirical surveys also confirm the view that members of the political elite have a strategic approach to referendums: referendums initiated by the executive or the legislative minorities are supported by elites which anticipate winning, and, by contrast, are rejected by prospective losers (Svensson 2017).

Based on the insights of rational choice institutionalism, this strand of literature argues that referendums are employed by political elites to solve a particular problem or to justify a particular solution. It is an additional tool in the hands of the political elite to play the political game, one that serves the purposes of the elite (Bjørklund 1982; Morel 2001; Walker 2003; Rahat 2009). Empirical analysis of all the referendums held in Europe between 1950 and 2017 also confirms that these premises of rational choice institutionalism are corroborated while other factors proposed by sociological, historical or classical institutionalism (like public demands or commitment to political values, past referendum experiences, number of veto players or the type of democracy) have significantly less or no explanatory power (Hollander 2019: 267). Consequently, we will use these insights when analysing the practice of national consultations, interpreted in this paper as advisory referendums, from the perspective of rational choice institutionalism.

4 Although the number of responses has been fluctuating (just as the percentage of likely Fidesz voters within the population), it is justified to consider the series of National Consultation as manifestations of mass participation – even if observers might have some reservations concerning the semi-official data on respondents and results.

This rational choice approach distinguishes three strategic reasons (Rahat 2009; Hollander 2019) why referendums might be called by members of the political elite: (1) referendums might be designed to resolve intra-party or inter-party divisions of the governing coalition, or a division between the party and its supporters (*conflict mediation* or *avoidance*). As such, European integration or ethical issues might freeze political alignments and cause a deadlock which might be avoided or resolved by referendums; (2) referendums might be necessary in order to advance the legislative agenda of a party which fears that their policy choice would be voted down in the parliament (*policy-seeking* and *contradiction*). This type of referendum has been frequently used as a bargaining tool in an EU context to protect interests challenged by other member states or EU institutions; (3) referendums might also serve power consolidation and electoral functions (*empowerment* and *additional legitimacy*). In this case referendums may not be necessary, since the initiator has enough support for a decision, but a referendum might provide additional legitimacy to the political majority. This type of referendum might be used not only in domestic politics but also to secure a more favourable outcome in international negotiations by increasing the legitimacy of the domestic political majority. On the other hand, such referendums might also have an empowering effect on the political minority by securing them issue ownership and mobilising their voters (Mendez and Mendez 2017; Beach 2018). It is also important to note that these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive: policy-seeking goals might coincide with the aim of the governing party or coalition to consolidate its power and obtain additional legitimacy (Morel 2001; Qvortrup 2006; Rahat 2009; Qvortrup 2017; Altmann 2019; Hollander 2019).

By combining the *normative* theoretical framework of input, throughput and output legitimacy, on the one hand, and the *descriptive* theoretical framework of strategic use of referendums, on the other hand, we will focus on the following questions in our empirical analysis: (1) what kind of legitimacy structures dominated the input, throughput and output phase of the consultations; and (2) which dimensions of the consultation served exclusively the strategic interests of the Fidesz party (since 2010 the government) and which contributed, even if as a side effect of strategic political actions, to the emergence of rudimentary forms of democratic deliberation.

Two important remarks are in order before starting with the empirical analysis. First, evaluating national consultations from the perspective of deliberative democracy does not imply the assumption that politicians initiating consultations are frankly committed to the idea of deliberative democracy. Even if politicians have their own strategic aims motivated by political self-interest, which is usually the case, the consequences of their actions might also be evaluated separately from their strategic considerations. In this context, this means that the process of national consultations should be analysed from both the strategic-

-descriptive perspective of the political actors and the deliberative-normative perspective of political theory.

Second, it should be stressed that our analysis focuses strictly on the legitimacy structures of and the strategic interests behind the national consultations. Narrowing down the focus on the national consultations means that this paper does not offer a general assessment of the quality of deliberative democracy or that of the direct democracy in Hungary. Presenting and analysing all developments loosely connected to the idea of deliberation and direct democracy in Hungary (like the legal and extra-legal restrictions on and obstacles to referendums at large; the atrophy of tripartite neo-corporatist interest reconciliation forums; the selective crack-down on certain hotbeds of direct democracy and citizen deliberation within civil society) is almost an impossible undertaking in a short article. Consequently, the aim of this paper should certainly be more modest in this regard. On the other hand, national consultations have played such a prominent role in Hungarian politics since 2005 that it seems to be legitimate to analyse them separately.

National Consultation: from deliberative practice to plebiscitary instrument

As argued above we will focus on three national consultations, selected on the principle that they had direct policy implications. We will first evaluate them normatively, before showing how the changes in arranging the consultation process transformed these national consultations from a (partly) deliberative tool to primarily an instrument for mobilising party supporters.

The first step: reinvigorating the activism of Fidesz supporters through deliberation

In 2002, after 4 years in a coalition government, Fidesz lost the parliamentary elections and became a party in opposition. To explain the reasons behind the electoral defeat the party's weak embeddedness in society was highlighted. In order to reorganise the party and to dominate the right-wing camp Orbán launched the national-conservative Movements of Civic Circles (Enyedi, 2005; Greskovits, 2019), while mass mobilisation was also realised through direct political and cultural activities. In February 2005 Viktor Orbán announced in his annual state of the nation address that a national consultation process would be organised in order to bring citizens back to politics and to ensure that public life is about the will of the people.

The Hungarian National Consultation was born in a context where Fidesz faced low levels of party identification, which led Orbán to offer deliberative forums to send a signal that his party had learned from earlier mistakes and

made changes. The body responsible for the 2005 national consultation was a Consultative Board that was (officially) not linked to the party. Following the inaugural meeting a press conference was organised where Viktor Orbán emphasised the organisation's civil character. On 28 April 2005 a questionnaire (consisting of both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions) was presented to the press that included seven questions about citizens' perception of Hungary's democratic transition (see Table A1 in Appendix). The deadline for filling in and sending back the questionnaire was 30 July. On 18 May the National Consultation Center was opened for citizens who wanted to discuss public life, to consult members of the Board or wanted to submit a consultation questionnaire. On 17 June four buses of the National Consultation Centre started a one-month tour of the country, visiting nearly 700 settlements. The results of the consultation were presented on the Conclusion Day (16 October) by the members of the Consultative Board. A large outdoor event was held where board members responded to participant's questions and the event ended with a concert.

The consultation process was financed by the National Consultation Foundation. According to the final report of the Foundation, 1.6 million people participated in various forums of the National Consultation (village parliaments, the events of the Centre and the meetings of the bus trip). To finance the program organisers also relied on the support of citizens (more than 20,000 individuals supported the consultation financially). As for the results, it should be stressed that transparency and public control over the data collection, evaluation and publication of the consultation results were almost completely missing, consequently reliability of the presented results are rather low. Nevertheless, the organisers announced that to the question 'What are the reasons for your disappointment (in the transition)?' 59 % of the respondents answered that they were dissatisfied with their standard of living and to the question 'What should be changed?' 50 % of the respondents referred to factors determining the standard of living: price increases and taxes. As Fidesz was in opposition these answers had no direct impact on policy-making but they confirmed the evidence from previous opinion polls commissioned by the party that topics related to the standard of living are important for Hungarian voters.

From the perspective of the normative theoretical framework of input, throughput and output legitimacy the 2005 national consultation process can be evaluated as a Janus-faced process. In terms of input legitimacy, in 2005 the national consultation facilitated a deliberative process for those citizens who visited the National Consultation Centre or decided to meet members of the board during the events of the consultation (*quality of representation*). The Centre was open for a period of 3 months for citizens who wanted to talk about public life, to consult members of the Board or wanted to submit a consultation questionnaire. The agenda of the discussions was pre-determined in the sense that the participants were invited to answer seven questions on the broad topic of how

they imagined the future of Hungary. However, five out of the seven questions posed were open ended, allowing participants to raise their own ideas, while the personal meetings with board members allowed for a dialogue (even though those dialogues were not recorded) (*agenda setting*). As for *epistemic completeness*, members of the board held speeches at different events of the consultation about the aims of the consultation and about Hungary's democratic transition, but there were no small-group discussions organised (with a facilitator) and no information booklet was provided to participants during the events.

As regards *throughput legitimacy*, participants were allowed to consult members of the board and to fill in a questionnaire. At the local level, village parliaments were organised and a bus trip was also organised for the members of the board to create a contact with 700 settlements of Hungary. As an incentive, a lottery was organised by the foundation: those who filled in the questionnaire had the chance to win prizes (the jackpot was a family car). Nevertheless, engaging minority and/or marginalised groups to participate in the consultation process was not a priority of the organisers (*inclusiveness*). Some incentives to generate wide participation were introduced into the process which might have had the effect of not only Fidesz supporters replying to the questionnaire. Nevertheless, we can safely assume that the overwhelming majority of the respondents sympathised with the Fidesz party (limiting the *contextual independence* of the process). Participants could talk to board members and tell them their ideas. Activists (many of them Fidesz members) helped to organise events and they were also in charge of collecting questionnaires. There was no incentive to help participants to reach a consensus or confront different positions, and the events did not end up in any form of voting or decision making: the citizens' role in the decision-making process was restricted to filling in the questionnaires (*quality of decision making*). Consequently, in this sense the consultation process somewhat resembled a political rally except that it was not organised during an electoral campaign period and the speakers were not political candidates for any position.

Regarding the *output legitimacy*, the National Consultation Foundation published a book (Meghallgattuk Magyarországot Nemzeti Konzultáció 2005) about the results of the consultation, providing not only the stories of the board members and the main results of the questionnaire, but also a statistical analysis of the preferences of participants (*public endorsement*). Although only the politicians of Fidesz (especially Viktor Orbán) made references to those results, the evidence taken from the consultation was made public and theoretically was available to any decision maker (*weight of the results*). The results of the consultation made it clear that the majority of its participants were tired of the daily worries of living. A higher standard of living was identified as a common aim of Hungarians. On 23 October 2006 Viktor Orbán announced that Fidesz had submitted seven questions to the National Election Office that were related to the standard of living, fees and prices (in line with the results of the national

consultation, thus indicating some extent of *responsiveness*). After three of the questions (on abolishing co-payments, daily fees at hospitals and college tuition fees) were officially approved on 17 December 2007, a referendum was held on 9 March 2008. As the referendum reached the threshold for validity (50.5 % of voters participated) and all three proposals were supported by a majority (82–84 %) of the voters, the outcome of the referendum was legally binding (consequently the *weight of the results* of the national consultation process increased significantly). The socialist-liberal coalition in power at the time had to abolish the three fees. On 17 March 2008, the National Assembly voted to repeal them. The referendum helped Fidesz to retain momentum until the next general elections in 2010, in which they gained a landslide victory (Pállinger 2016).

Generally speaking, from the perspective of deliberative democracy the first national consultation from 2005 could be evaluated as a Janus-faced phenomenon: while proving to be highly defective as far as input and throughput legitimacy are concerned, the possibility of setting the agenda by including open-ended questions or increasing inclusiveness by novel ways of attracting publicity (lottery) should not be completely ignored. It should also be stressed that the 2005 national consultation process became highly consequential and partly responsive to the demands of the citizens, which contributed to the increase of the output legitimacy of the process. Three of the questions from the referendum from 2008 were directly connected to the results of the first national consultation, and the results of the referendum provided an indirect implementation of the results of the consultation process. From this perspective, it is rather surprising how well the 2005 national consultation performed as far as its output legitimacy is concerned. Furthermore, it should also be acknowledged that rudimentary forms of deliberative democracy were connected by direct democratic decision making (2008 referendum).

It is also clear that the first consultation served the strategic aims of the Fidesz party in opposition. It advanced the party's *legislative agenda* which otherwise would have been blocked by the left-wing-liberal parliamentary majority and strengthened the embeddedness of the party in Hungarian society. While it had no direct consequences as far as the 2006 parliamentary elections are concerned, in tandem with the 2008 referendum the first national consultation certainly played an important role in the 2010 land-slide victory of the Fidesz party: issue ownership and the mobilisation of voters were crucial factors during the 2010 election campaign (*empowerment* and *additional legitimacy*).

The second step: Questions of the prime minister to the people

Fidesz won the 2010 parliamentary elections with 53 % of the votes which, due to the electoral system of Hungary, led to a two-thirds majority (68 % of the mandates) in the Hungarian Parliament. After 2010 national consultations

became institutionalised and turned into a communication tool of the prime minister: a government-funded questionnaire that is sent to Hungarian citizens by mail. Since 2010 each consultation has had a specific topic. Given the nature of these letters and questionnaires, it is safe to conclude that they have served both as instruments of top-down rule and as an agenda-setting tool of the government to influence public opinion. The number of questions and the format of the questionnaire has been simplified over the years (see Table 2).

Table 2. Topics and questions of National Consultations

Title (Year)	Number of questions	Type of questions	Number of responses*
National Consultation (2005)	10	9 Multiple choice questions, 1 open ended question	1 600 000
National Consultation about the Pension System (2010)	5	4 Multiple choice questions, 1 open ended question	200 000
National Consultation about the New Constitution (2011)	12	12 Multiple choice questions (4 options)	920 000
National Consultation about Social Policy (2011)	10	10 Multiple choice questions (4 options)	1 000 000
National Consultation about the Economy (2012)	16	16 Multiple choice questions (3 options)	700 000
National Consultation about Immigration and Terrorism (2015)	12	12 Multiple choice questions (3 options)	1 000 000
National Consultation 'Let's stop Brussels!' (2017)	6	Dichotomous questions (Yes/ No)	1 700 000
National Consultation about the Soros Plan (2017)	7	Dichotomous questions (Yes/ No)	2 300 000
National Consultation about the Protection of Families (2018)	10	Dichotomous questions (Yes/ No)	1 300 000
National Consultation about the COVID-19 virus (2020)	9	Dichotomous questions (Yes/ No)	1 796 988

Source: www.nemzetikonkultacio.kormany.hu

* The number of responses should not be taken at face value due to the lack of transparency and public control over the consultation processes.

As mentioned above, we will focus here on two consultation processes which had significant consequences: the 2010 consultation on the new constitution and the 2015 consultation on migration. Although the 2010 consultation on the constitution did not upturn into a referendum on the new Fundamental Law adopted by the two-thirds right-wing parliamentary majority in 2011, it had some effects on the final version of the constitution (*output legitimacy*). Nevertheless,

the 2010 national consultation was more defective than its 2005 counterpart as far as its input and throughput legitimacy are concerned.

Concerning the tools that were made available to the participants to acquire sound information in 2010, (*epistemic completeness*) an advisory body was appointed by the prime minister to draft the principles and guidelines of the new Fundamental Law of Hungary. József Szájer was put in charge of leading the National Consultation Committee, which prepared the formula and the questionnaire for the public consultations (*agenda setting*). Debates about the text of the new constitution were organised among the members of the body thus *agenda setting* was this time completely restricted to the advisory body. When the draft constitution was announced in late February/early March 2011, a questionnaire with 12 questions was sent out to citizens (see Table A2 in Appendix). Members of the body informed journalists about the planned constitutional changes, but no events were held to reach out to the public thus the participatory dimension (*quality of representation*) was completely limited to sending back the answers to the questionnaire by mail. As no face-to-face public hearings or discussions were organised, the only way citizens could communicate their views was by replying to the questionnaire. The balance between deliberation and interest aggregation had shifted, and the complete neglect of open-ended questions (as a tool of *agenda setting*) certainly did not increase the anyway doubtful input legitimacy of the process.

As for the *throughput legitimacy*, the 2011 national consultation became a tool for both determining the public mood on certain questions (i.e. interest aggregation) and reinforcing the planned policy choices of the Fidesz party: participants were allowed to fill in and send back, free of charge (by post, using pre-paid envelopes), the questionnaires worded by politicians and experts. Consequently, there was no space for lively debates, confronting positions, forming a consensus and taking decisions. Lively deliberation was also impeded by the questions themselves which became more and more tendentious, presupposing an existing consensus within the Hungarian society or at least within that part of Hungarian society which was presumed to be completing the questionnaires. All these shifts had a clear negative effect on the *quality of decision making*. No efforts had been made to increase inclusivity of the process, participants were mainly Fidesz supporters, and there were no signs that citizens with various political backgrounds had been involved in the consultation process (*inclusiveness*). This kind of presupposed self-selection of the respondents was also reflected in the results of the national consultation – even if we should consider the results rather as factoids due to the lack of transparency and public control over data collection and evaluation. Answers which promoted a conservative agenda of Fidesz won a clear majority, with mainly between 80 and 90 percent supporting the position of the governing right-wing party. Thus, a presupposed existing consensus among Fidesz supporters was confirmed rather than formed

through the consultation process. Some questions, nevertheless, were more controversial and had a real stake (e.g. family or plural) voting rights). Here, the agenda setter tested public opinion but efforts to argue for or against any of the propositions, and, consequently, try to find a compromise or consensus among participants were not part of the game (*quality of decision making*). The number of alternatives to the questions was also dramatically decreased in comparison to the 2005 national consultation (see Table 2) (*agenda setting*). While participants were free from outside pressures, biased questions nudged the respondents in a certain way and did not really offer alternative responses (*contextual independence*).

The 2011 questionnaire was a mixture of some controversial questions and others which were formulated with latent suggestions implicitly promoting the 'right answer' (*agenda setting*). The questions on plural or family voting and on limiting the state debt in the constitution clearly fall in the former category, while the question on entrenching the conservative approach of the family in the constitution belongs in the second. A third category consisted of questions which were low-profile enough in the sense that they were not supposed to spark heavy debates in the Hungarian electorate (see question numbers 7, 9 and 10 for example). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that decision-makers included regulations (or, on the contrary, abandoned the regulation of the family vote) in the new Fundamental Law, which reflected the results of the 2011 national consultation (*weight of the results*). However biased the answers might have been due to the self-selection of participants in the national consultation process (see above), the options which allegedly gained an overwhelming majority (question numbers 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11) were more or less faithfully included in the new constitution. The overwhelming majority of the respondents rejected the anyway controversial idea of plural voting rights and the new constitution did not change the one citizen one vote principle, thus the answers to question 4 were also considered by the decision makers (*responsiveness*). Question numbers 5, 7 and 12 did not have any consequences for policy implementation.

It is also worth mentioning that the draft constitution was presented to the parliament only two weeks after the deadline for sending back the questionnaire, which gave opposition circles grounds to doubt whether the answers provided by the respondents had really been taken into account (*responsiveness and accountability*). Nevertheless, as far as *output legitimacy* is concerned the 2011 National Consultation performed quite well, with two important restrictions. The self-selection of respondents (*input legitimacy*) might have distorted the results and some questions served to reinforce the preexisting consensus within the right-wing electorate rather than generate discussion.

All in all, the 2011 national consultation on the new constitution had serious flaws as far as input and throughput legitimacy are concerned: participation was not only self-selective, but it was also restricted to sending back the question-

naire. There were no public events, mini-publics or personal gatherings with lively debates supported by trained moderators, and no balanced information was provided to the participants. Since personal meetings and debates were completely absent, decision-making was also impossible. While input and throughput legitimacy were even more limited than in 2005, as far as output legitimacy is concerned the 2011 national consultation performed slightly better: some answers to the more controversial questions (plural voting, public debt) certainly influenced the decision makers. Nevertheless, most of the questions chiefly served the strategic interests of the governing right-wing party: while it was obvious that the leaders of the Fidesz party rejected the idea of holding a referendum on the newly adopted constitution (mainly due to their fear of being defeated), they were looking for a tool which could guarantee positive results and, at the same time, provide semi-official evidence of popular support and public involvement. The national consultation provided this additional (sham) legitimacy to the new constitution and mobilised the supporters of the Fidesz party. Since the party had a two-thirds majority in the parliament, its *policy agenda* was not really threatened by a blocking minority (i.e. its legislative agenda was not in danger). Consequently, the national consultation of 2011 was primarily used to *consolidate* its power and *mobilise* its voters.

Third step: National Consultation and the strategic use of a referendum

In May 2015, a questionnaire ‘on immigration and terrorism’ was sent to the Hungarian citizens (see Table A3 in Appendix). The questionnaire contained 12 questions related to terrorism, refugees and immigrants without any open-ended questions, thus the *agenda setting* power was once again exclusively in the hands of the government. Some of the questions did not even refer to alternative courses of action, but simply inquired about whether citizens were aware of some facts. The fourth question was worded as follows: *Did you know that immigrants cross the Hungarian border illegally and that the number of immigrants in Hungary has increased twenty times over the past period?* Such questions did not even try to instigate debates or deliberation, but simply drew attention to some momentous political issues. Consequently, they simply reinforced the agenda-setting power of the government. Instead of being responsive to constituents who organise and present their opinion in packages, the government was employing ‘push polls’: attempts to manipulate voters’ views/beliefs under the guise of conducting an opinion poll. Furthermore, the results of the national consultation questionnaires were interpreted as if they were responses taken from a public opinion survey, but the consultation did not meet any of the methodological standards of opinion polls. Consequently, the national consultation from 2015 could no longer be classed as a rudimentary form of deliberation

(*quality of representation*), and the third dimension of the input legitimacy, i.e. the criterion of *epistemic completeness* not only suffered from serious deficiencies but was completely neglected. Similarly, the consultation's throughput legitimacy was highly doubtful: instead of open pressure respondents were pushed in a particular direction by the way that the questions were formulated and the information provided by public broadcasts (*contextual independence*). Since no official public events, mini-publics or personal gathering were organised, there was no chance for official decision-making (*quality of decision making*), and the principle of inclusivity was once again not honoured since most of the respondents were Fidesz supporters. The questions from the 2015 national consultation about immigration and terrorism paved the way for the question of the 2016 referendum on migration (*weight of the results*). Thus, the national consultation process clearly served campaign aims: it was designed to mobilise supporters for the 2016 referendum. It is a clear manifestation of the strategic and plebiscitary turn in the history of national consultation processes in Hungary: as a precursor and an instrument of the referendum the national consultation completely lost its deliberative character.

In spite of the deficiencies of the 2015 national consultation and the 2016 referendum as far as *input* and *throughput* legitimacy are concerned, it is again possible to evaluate their *output legitimacy* separately. While opponents of the government opted for abstention in the 2016 referendum, thus the required turnout rate for a valid referendum was not reached, the Fidesz party was able to find support even among voters of the opposition. Of a turnout of 44 %, more than 98 % of the votes were cast in line with the government's position. Consequently, the government argued that although the referendum was invalid, a huge majority backed the government's proposition. In consequence, the government initiated a constitutional amendment in November 2016 which would have prohibited the 'settlement of foreign population in Hungary'. Nevertheless, Fidesz temporarily lost (from February 2015 to April 2018) its two-thirds majority in the parliament and even the radical right-wing *Jobbik* party was not willing to support the constitutional amendment. Consequently, the national consultation and the 2016 referendum did not have direct policy effects. While having no direct consequences in 2016, the cumulative effects of the national consultation from 2015, the 2016 referendum and the national consultations on 'Let's stop Brussels' (2017), and on the so-called 'Soros-plan' (2017) certainly contributed to the victory of Fidesz in the 2018 general elections. A two-thirds majority for the third consecutive election secured once again a constitutional majority for Fidesz which amended the constitution shortly after the new parliament assembled (May 2018) in line with the national consultations from 2015 and 2017, and in line with the 2016 referendum. In this sense, some kind of *output legitimacy* was achieved for the national consultation from 2015 (along with the referendum and the two other consultations), since policy implementations

in line with the consultations have been effectuated. Once again, however, due to the low levels of input and throughput legitimacy of the consultations, the relatively modest *output legitimacy* alone could not compensate for the losses of the first two dimensions if the deliberative practices are considered normatively.

Arguably, the 2015 consultation and its follow-up political action, the 2016 referendum on migration, exclusively served the *strategic interests* of the Fidesz party in a *triple sense*: the party tried to advance its *legislative agenda*, it *mobilised* its supporters and gained new supporters and it gained *additional legitimacy* to support its position in international negotiations on migration issues. As mentioned above, after Fidesz candidates were defeated at two by-elections in February and April 2015, the government lost its parliamentary two-thirds majority and could no longer amend the constitution on its own until 2018. Consequently, the results of the 2015 national consultation and the 2016 referendum on migration were also used to pressure the extreme right-wing parliamentary opposition (*Jobbik*) to conform with the *legislative agenda* of the government as far as migration policy is concerned. This pressure, however, ultimately proved to be futile, since the *Jobbik* voted down the constitutional amendment in November 2016 which would have prohibited the ‘settlement of foreign population in Hungary’.

By contrast, the 2015 national consultation and its politically even more consequential aftermath, the 2016 referendum on immigration, became an efficient and almost perfect instrument to further another strategic aim, the *mobilisation* of the party’s supporter base. While the data on the number of respondents of the 2015 national consultation are rather unreliable, it is striking that the 2016 referendum showed a certain kind of ‘quantum leap’ in support for the migration policy of the government. From 2008 on, the party’s supporter base totalled 2–2.5 million voters, but in 2016 more than 3.3 million voters supported the government’s position by saying ‘no’ to the question of the referendum.⁵ This does not mean that Fidesz gained 1 million voters, but it is also clear that some voters of the opposition parties also agreed with the policy preferences of the government on this question. This enormous mobilisation and increase of support regarding one important political issue shows that the 2015 consultation, combined with the 2016 referendum, was a highly effective political tool in the hands of the government, even if the turnout of the 2016 referendum was too low (44 %) and, consequently, it was officially declared invalid.

Thirdly, the 2015 national consultation and its political aftermath, the 2016 referendum increased, more or less effectively, the legitimacy of the government’s position in international negotiations (*additional legitimacy*). Both were initiated by the government and the questions of the consultation and the ref-

5 ‘Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?’

erendum were worded in a way which paralleled Viktor Orbán's arguments in opposition to the European Union's proposals to impose mandatory migrant quotas on member states. Citizens were carefully prepared for the issue by a governmental campaign, while the merits of the question were already decided by the authorities (the government voted 'no' in the European Council to assisting with settling migrants, filed a petition before the Court of Justice of the EU and had the clear support of the Hungarian Parliament). The government used both the consultation and the referendum to gain *additional legitimacy* for its foreign policy (Pállinger, 2016: 19). Although the referendum had no legal effect, the government emphasised that over 98 % of valid votes were cast for 'no'.

From the descriptive-strategic perspective, the 2015 consultation and its political aftermath, along with the 2016 referendum, proved to be fairly effective tools in advancing the *legislative agenda* of the government, effectively *strengthening the position* of the government in international negotiations and giving *additional legitimacy* to the migration policy of the government while consolidating the power of the Fidesz party. Thus, while the consultation lost its deliberative character completely, it proved to be a highly effective strategic instrument to realise the political aims of the Fidesz party and the government.

Conclusions

National consultations are rare phenomena but given their importance in the political life of the community from both a deliberative-normative and a descriptive-strategic perspective, it is striking how neglected and under-researched they have been in political science up to now. Focusing on one of the most well-known examples, the series of national consultations in Hungary, this article aimed to highlight and explain the evolution of the series of consultations from a defective but innovative deliberative tool to a strategic instrument in the hands of the Fidesz party both in opposition and in government (see Table 3).

We have argued in this paper that the Fidesz party invented an innovative deliberative practice (with several deficiencies) when the party was in opposition, but after it came to power in 2010 these national consultations gradually lost their deliberative character and lacked normative input and throughput legitimacy. We noted that the 2011 national consultation was even more constrained in its normative legitimacy than the 2005 consultation, but some controversial questions were still included in the questionnaire. Even if the self-selection of respondents might have distorted the results and the reliability of the results is rather limited due to the lack of transparency and public control over the process, the options which gained an overwhelming majority were more or less accurately included in the new constitution. Nevertheless, diminishing legitimacy and increasingly strategic effects are characteristics of the 2011 national consultation. By 2015, the consultations had transformed into

Table 3: Main Findings

		2005	2011	2015
Input legitimacy	Quality of representation	High	Very Low	Very low
	Agenda setting	Limited	Low	No
	Epistemic completeness	Limited	Low	No
Throughput legitimacy	Inclusiveness	High	Low	Low
	Quality of decision making	Limited	Low	No
	Contextual independence	Limited	Low	No
Output legitimacy	Public endorsement	High	Low	Limited
	Weight of the results	Medium	Limited	No
	Responsiveness and accountability	Medium	Low	Limited

Source: own estimation (based on Caluwaerts – Reuchamps, 2015.; Suiter-Reuchamps, 2016; Eerola-Reuchamps, 2016:321).

a strategic instrument for mobilising supporters in political struggles against the migration policies of the EU (external strategic use of consultations and referendum) and into a tool for political campaigning in both the 2016 referendum and the 2018 general elections. By the time of the 2015 consultation and the 2016 referendums, they almost completely lacked deliberative dimensions and served almost exclusively strategic aims of the party (advancing legislative agenda, consolidating power and gaining additional legitimacy in international negotiations).

In terms of a future research agenda, it would certainly be highly instructive to compare the practices and transformation of national consultations in Hungary with the French *Grand Débat National* from both normative-deliberative and descriptive-strategic perspectives. Since France could be considered the homeland of plebiscitary direct democracy, the *Grand Débat National* also displays some elements of deliberative practices – even if they, too, are defective ones. Nevertheless, the comparison could also highlight what kind of strategic reasons induced Macron to initiate the *Grand Débat* and the study could also

exhibit whether there are substantial differences between the consultations in an embedded Western European democracy and a fragile Eastern European one. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to embed the results of the present analysis to a broader horizon which takes further developments and deficiencies of deliberative and direct democracy in Hungary into account. The lessons drawn from this prospective study could substantively contribute to our understanding of the relationship between deliberative and direct democracy in liberal and illiberal regimes.

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APPENDIX

Table A1

Questions and most supported responses of the “We have listened to Hungary” National Consultation 2005 (Number of responses: 1 600 000)

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer
What has the country done for us?	10	Family aid (39 %)
What are the reasons for your disappointment?	9	Development of living standards (5 %)
How was life before 1990?	3	Better and more secure life (59 %)
What are you afraid of?	10	Unemployment (64 %)
What decisions would you like to influence?	7	Accountability of politicians (69 %)
What should be changed?	10	Increase of the price of energy and medication (50 %)
What should be our common goal?	3	Creating safe living conditions (97 %)

Source: Meghallgattuk Magyarországot. Nemzeti Konzultáció 2005.

Table A2

Questions and most supported responses of the “Citizens’ Questionnaire on Fundamental Law” (Number of responses: 920 000)

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer	Policy impact
Q1: Some people say that the new Hungarian constitution should only declare the rights of citizens and not obligations. Others argue that, in addition to securing rights, the most important civic obligations that express our responsibility to the community (work, learning, defense, protection of our environment) should be included in the document. What do you think?	3	In addition to rights, the new Hungarian constitution should also include civic obligations. (91 %)	Yes

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer	Policy impact
Q2: Some people suggest that the new Hungarian constitution should limit the level of indebtedness of the state, thereby taking responsibility for future generations. Others argue that there is no need to require such guarantee. What do you think?	4	The new Hungarian constitution should set a maximum level above which public debt should not rise. This limit should be respected by all future governments in all circumstances. (53 %)	Yes
Q3: Some people suggest that the new Hungarian constitution should protect common values such as family, order, home, work, and health. Others do not think this is necessary. What do you think?	4	In addition to the protection of human rights, the new Hungarian constitution should protect commonly accepted social values (work, home, family, order, health). (91 %)	Yes
Q4: Some people suggest that in accordance with the new Hungarian constitution parents who raise a minor child may exercise their children's right to vote in some way. What do you think?	3	According to the new Hungarian constitution, parents or families with minor children should not be entitled to exercise further voting rights. (74 %)	No
Q5: Some people suggest that the new Hungarian constitution should not allow the government to tax the costs of raising a child (i.e. the cost of raising a child should be recognized by the tax system). Others argue that this is not necessary, and that governments should be allowed to tax these costs. What do you think?	4	The new Hungarian constitution should not allow the government to tax the costs of raising children. (72 %)	No
Q6: Some people suggest that the new Hungarian constitution should commit to future generations. Others say that no such commitment is required. What do you think?	3	The new Hungarian constitution should include a commitment to future generations. (86 %)	Yes
Q7: Some people suggest that the new Hungarian constitution should allow public procurement or state support only for companies with a transparent ownership structure. What do you think?	3	According to the new Hungarian constitution only those enterprises should be allowed to get state support or to take part in public procurement opportunities, whose ownership structure is transparent and all of whose owners can be identified. (92 %)	No
Q8: Some people suggest that Hungary's new constitution should express the value of national cohesion to Hungarians living beyond the borders, others do not think it is necessary. What do you think?	4	The new Hungarian constitution should express the value of national belonging to Hungarians living beyond the borders and oblige the government to protect this value. (61 %)	Yes

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer	Policy impact
Q9: Some people suggest that Hungary's new constitution should protect the natural diversity of the Carpathian Basin, animal and plant species, and the Hungaricums. What do you think?	4	The new Hungarian constitution should protect both the natural environment and traditional specialities. (78 %)	Yes
Q10: Some people think that the new constitution should protect national wealth, especially land and water resources. Others do not consider it important. What do you think?	3	The new Hungarian constitution should protect national wealth. (97 %)	Yes
Q11: Some people suggest that Hungary's new constitution should allow courts to impose actual life imprisonment for especially serious crimes. What do you think?	3	The new Hungarian constitution should allow the courts to impose actual life imprisonment for crimes of high severity. (94 %)	Yes
Q12: Some people suggest that Hungary's new constitution should make participation compulsory for anyone summoned to a hearing by a parliamentary committee of inquiry and to impose a penalty on those who stay away. What do you think?	3	The new Hungarian constitution should make participation compulsory for a person who is summoned to a parliamentary committee of inquiry. (83 %)	No

Source: www.nemzetikonzultacio.kormany.hu

Table A3

Questions and most supported responses of the “National Consultation about Immigration and Terrorism” 2016 (Number of responses: 1 000 000)

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer
There are many opinions to be heard about the growing number of terrorist attacks. How important do you consider the rise of terrorism for your own life?	3	Very important (70 %)
In your opinion, can Hungary be the target of a terrorist act in the coming years?	3	It can happen (57 %)
Some people say that immigration (which is) poorly handled by Brussels is linked to the rise of terrorism. Do you agree with this opinion?	3	I agree (61 %)
Did you know that immigrants cross the Hungarian border illegally, and the number of immigrants in Hungary has increased twentyfold recently?	3	Yes (73 %)

Question	Number of answer options	Most popular answer
There are different opinions on the issue of immigration. Some say that living immigrants (sic = economic migrants) endanger the jobs and livelihoods of Hungarians. Do you agree with these opinions?	3	I completely agree (73 %)
Some say that Brussels' policy on immigration and terrorism has failed and therefore a new approach to these issues is needed. Do you agree with these opinions?	4	I agree (73 %)
Would you support the Hungarian government introducing stricter immigration rules against Brussels permissible policy?	3	Yes, I completely support it (90 %)
Would you support the Hungarian government in introducing stricter rules for the detention of illegal immigrants crossing the Hungarian border?	3	Yes, I completely support it (88 %)
Do you agree with the opinion that immigrants who cross the Hungarian border illegally should be returned to their home country as soon as possible?	3	I agree (83 %)
Do you agree that immigrants, while staying in Hungary, should cover their cost of living themselves?	3	I agree (83 %)
Do you agree that the best way to combat immigration is for the Member States of the European Union to help the countries from which immigrants come?		I agree (61 %)
Do you agree with the government that instead of allocating funds to immigration we should support Hungarian families and those children yet to be born?	3	I agree (93 %)

Source: www.nemzetikonzultacio.kormany.hu

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