

Frame Analysis of the 2016 Hungarian Referendum Campaign

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Abstract

This thesis is a content analysis of the 2016 Hungarian referendum campaign. It analyzes the frames that appeared in the political posters during the campaign from a political communication perspective. After the identification of relevant frames, it compares the findings with poll survey data in order to make a link between emerging frames and shifts in voting intentions. The main findings suggest that the 'Invalid' campaign, that used the power of humorous frames, was effective in convincing the voters to spoil their votes, which resulted in the highest ever amount of invalid votes in the history of Hungarian referenda. This manifestation of deliberate political action has broader implications to campaigners, as it represents the significance of civic culture and the power of political humor.

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List of Abbreviations

Brexit	Britain leaving the European Union
DK	Democratic Coalition (Demokrata Koalíció)
DRI	Democracy Reporting International
EGYÜTT	Together for Hungary (Együtt Magyarországért)
EU	European Union
FIDESZ	Alliance of Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége)
KDNP	Christian-Democrat People's Party (Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt)
LMP	Politics Can Be Different (Lehet Más a Politika)
MKKP	Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party (Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt)
MLP	Hungarian Liberal Party (Magyar Liberális Párt)
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt)
PM	Dialogue for Hungary (Párbeszéd Magyarországért)
UN	United Nations

Frame Analysis of the 2016 Hungarian Referendum Campaign

1) Introduction

When the results of the Brexit referendum occurred in 2016, it was immediately obvious that referenda may turn out to be dangerous in the hands of campaigners. That day showed the power of a single yes-no question, and how it could alter the lives of 500 million people. Referenda are popular manifestation of public opinion, a tool through which people are able to articulate their positions actively. The hazardous part, however, is formed when that opinion is shaped by campaign frames.

The ways political parties manage campaigning has changed significantly with the spread of Internet and digital communication (Bimber 2003), but the influence of posters remained strong (Dumitrescu 2010) This thesis focuses on the frames that appeared in the campaign posters of the 2016 Hungarian referendum, which is also frequently referred to as the “Quota Referendum”.

My research question is the following: *How did framing of poster messages affect Hungarian voters during the 2016 referendum campaign?*

The main focus of the analysis is set on contrasting the governmental poster campaign and the Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party’s (MKKP) ridiculing counter-posters. The aim is to establish, based on empirical data, a link between the MKKP campaign, which encouraged people to cast an invalid vote, and the highest amount of invalid ballots in the history of Hungarian elections. This thesis is a campaign analysis from a political communication perspective which uses framing theory, the way political messages are presented and interpreted, and Hobolt’s opinion formation model in referenda campaigns, so as to better understand how different frames on posters influenced voting behavior. (Hobolt 2005)

In order to establish a link between the two variables, frames and voting intentions, I first analyzed the relevant campaign posters of all the political parties that launched a campaign in 2016 in relation with the referendum. Then secondly, I examined the survey results of poll companies that measured voting intention in 2016 with regards to the referendum, in order to identify any shifts in them. The referendum question: *The referendum question is the following: “Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the compulsory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary without the approval of the National Assembly?”*

There were four separate groups of campaigners, I used content thematic analysis to extract the frames from the government’s ‘No’ campaign, the Liberal Party’s (MLP) ‘Yes’ campaign, the ‘Boycott’ campaign of the leftist parties, and the ‘Invalid’ campaign of MKKP. After identifying the relevant players, I collected their official posters that could be found on their party websites. All the participating parties uploaded their posters to their Internet surfaces. Having collected them, the frame identification process began, when I inductively examined them so as to find patterns and connected frames in them.

Data showed that the government had three waves of posters in 2016 in which they tried to inform voters about the referendum and urge them to vote ‘No’. They did it in a skewed and biased media environment which acted in their favor and which was highly disadvantageous for other campaigners (DRI 2016). The government intended to convince voters that it was an issue of national security and sovereignty, as with the influx of refugees and irregular migrants the threat of terrorism increased grimly, and the bureaucratic European Union (EU), planned to settle “migrants” to Hungary.

Based on poll measurements prior to the official campaign in August 2016, even the majority of the opposition voters supported the government’s position (Republikon 2016). Therefore, the ‘Boycott’ and the ‘Yes’ campaigners had to come up with counter-frames so as to motivate their own voters to behave differently, and it resulted in the reframing of the referendum as one

about Hungary's EU membership. While the 'Boycott' campaign argued that voters should stay away from participation so as to have an invalid referendum thus ensuring Hungary's staying in the EU, the 'Yes' campaigners urged people to do participate and vote 'Yes' therefore voting for less national sovereignty and more power delegation to the EU.

The final campaigners, the MKKP, approached the issue differently, as they call for active participation while making sure that the government's referendum fails. Their strategy was to convince voters, with the help of humorous posters' frames, that this referendum was based on the government's deliberate misinformation, as the EU did not intend to "settle" anyone to Hungary, especially not "illegal immigrants". Therefore, argued MKKP, since this was a deceiving referendum, with a costly and xenophobic and extremely negative campaign, they launched their own campaign in which they asked people to participate but spoil their ballots, thus having invalid votes. These invalid votes, complying with to the legal regulations of Hungary, were not counted in the referendum results, hence voters would not risk legitimizing the government's position. However, people could show that they were committed to their democratic rights to elections and free will, and that they disapproved of the lying government's propaganda against refugees and the EU.

The results of poll surveys indicate an increase in voters' intention to spoil the ballot as the campaign unfolded from July to September 2016, which ended in an exceptionally high number of invalid votes in the referendum results. The national average was 6.4%, that was four times higher than the historical average (1.28%) of invalid referendum votes. Additionally, the city average of Budapest, the capital city, was 11,76% which is almost two times higher than the national average, and almost ten times higher than the historical national average. Moreover, in some districts of Budapest, the amount of invalid votes was more than 15%, and even in the lowest invalid districts (7.06%) the invalid votes were higher than the national average (valasztas.hu 2016).

This implies that we can suppose a relationship between the MKKP poster campaign's frames and the results, which means that MKKP had an efficient and successful campaign in which it convinced many voters to deliberately present their disapproval of the government's referendum. This meant an act of civic culture, that people wanted to show their democratic commitment while sending a strong message to the government. The MKKP campaign showed that political posters and well-targeted political humor, which is a means of negative campaigning, can meaningfully influence voting behavior even in a less and less democratic (Freedom House 2017, Mérték 2017) country that uses state propaganda (DRI 2016) and billions of public resources for campaigning.

My contribution to political science is that I examine the connection between campaign frames and its influence to voting behavior. More precisely, I explore the ways a counter-campaign are able to cope with biased media environment, overwhelming state propaganda, which is not only relevant in Hungary but in any contemporary society that faces the challenges of rising xenophobia or the decay of democratic values. The thesis shows the power of use of humor against irrationally extreme (DRI 2016) political campaigning, and that unlimited resources are not always enough to win elections because, with the use of sarcasm, public donations and volunteers, significant shifts could be reached in public opinion. My analysis also reveals that posters are not obsolete, but useful tools in the hands of campaigners to influence and convince the public, as they are almost unavoidable by the people, therefore they are capable of reaching the less-politically engaged strata in societies. A combination of textual and imagery messages, posters inform voters about political issues, thus they contribute to their political knowledge which is essential for political decision making.

A great amount of studies has dealt with the effects of political frames and how they influence political opinion formation (Hobolt 2005, 2006, LeDuc 2002), and many scholars, for example Dumitrescu (2010) noted the power and variety of campaign posters worldwide. While opinion

formation is a complex procedure, Zaller (1992) argued for the importance of political knowledge when voters make decisions, and posters are effective tools for enhancing this knowledge. This is the aim of this thesis, to exemplify how political messages are framed and conveyed to the public through posters.

The major limitation of the research is that it focuses only one poster campaign, while MKKP have launched several other successful ones, for example in early 2017 they aided the anti-Budapest Olympics campaign of a new political movement, called Momentum. Therefore, further research should include a broader scope of case selection.

The thesis is divided into six major parts. Firstly, it begins with the introduction of main terms and theories with regards to framing, opinion formation processes, especially in EU related referenda, and the using of frames to influence voting behavior while correcting misinformation. Secondly, the context is presented so as to get a better understanding of the situation in which the referendum took place. The context chapter reveals a brief summary of the history of Hungarian referenda to show that there were many invalid referenda and that the amount of invalid votes was minor. It is followed by an explanation of the “migrant crisis” and the “Quota Proposal” and its Hungarian implications, and finished by a presentation of the unbalanced media environment that was present in Hungary in 2015-2016. The third part of the thesis is the detailing of the theoretical arguments, that is succeeded by the methodology section. Fourthly, the main part of the analysis is presented, with the frame analysis of the poster campaigns and the examination of the poll data and the referendum results. This chapter ends with the establishment of the link between campaign frames and shifts in voting intentions, and finished by the conclusive remarks.

2) Literature review

2.1) Essential Terms

The way issues are presented and interpreted in the media, that is framing, influences what the public considers important (Walgrave 2007; Chong 2013; Zaller 1992). Framing theory implies that media can influence how certain issues are presented and interpreted –thus they have the power to alter how the public perceives matters (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2006). Hobolt (2005) notes, for example, that shifts in the way corporal punishment was framed in the United States in the media caused meaningful shifts in its perception and acceptance by the public, and eventually resulted in change of policy.

The media does not determine how the public thinks, but rather what the public thinks about – this is called *agenda setting*. Also, as for example (Iyengar et al 2007) show, the public adjusts its evaluation about the importance of specific aspects of issues in line with the highlights and placement of coverage in the media – this is called *priming*. This entails that if a news item is placed earlier in newscast, people will consider it more important. Thus the media has the ability to influence what people consider important, merely by repetition and placement. Additionally, as (Barabas and Jennifer Jerit 2009) note, higher coverage leads to higher knowledge of a particular political issue. These theories suggest that the amount of information people are exposed to may influence their political opinions.

Priming also occurs negatively, and one frequent form of it is political humor. Negative frames may be constructed in humorous and sarcastic ways targeting a specific political persona or salient issues. These humorous criticisms usually need prior political knowledge so as to be decoded, therefore political humor is highly context-specific. This type of negative framing often uses satirical language and the power of irony (Baumgartner, Morris, and Walth, 2012).

Baumgartner et al. highlight that exposure to negative satire may influence voting behavior and result in worse assessment of the target of the jokes than prior to the exposure. Moreover,

Lipsitz (2007) argue that negative campaign messages elicit more attention from voters, especially when they build on anger or well-targeted criticism. Other studies, for example Holbert (2005) or Baum (Baum and Jamison 2011) show that soft news, and information presented in an entertaining fashion are likely to result in higher levels of political knowledge, which is required in political opinion formation. This implies that humorous posters are effective tools in the hands of campaigners, as they utilize negative campaign strategies entertainingly.

We saw that the way issues are presented has an effect on its public perception, that is how people consider issues. As for decision making of whether to act according to the framed political messages, individuals use considerations that are a) available, b) accessible and c) applicable to them (Dvorák 2013; LeDuc 2002). Availability means that campaigner create frames for the people in order to assist them in understanding political messages. Accessibility entails that individuals are extensively exposed to these available frames – through various ways of exposure, such as political ads, posters, or television debates –, as the more frequently they meet them, the stronger effect they have. This is one of the reasons why this research focuses on campaign posters; due to their wide placement in public spaces, they are almost unavoidable for people. Dumitrescu (2010) notes that posters are important elements of political campaigning, and parties devote serious amount of resources to them worldwide.

Moreover, accessibility of frames is the most important factor with regards to its success. (Zaller 1992). In order to create strong frames, campaigners have to make frames applicable, meaning that people who are exposed to available and accessible frames should find them relevant and similar to their initially established opinions. LeDuc (2002) says that the more applicable people find frames, the stronger their effect. Strong frames can influence the behavior not only of the knowledgeable but also of those less politically informed (Dvorák 2013). Dvorák also notes that, in referendum campaigns, framing may lead to major shifts in

public opinion and voting intention. The author reports that even though voters have firm views with regards to issues at hand, the expected outcome of the referendum might be reversed by strong counter-frames.

Hobolt (2006) argues that, through frames, parties have the power to meaningfully influence the public in referendum campaigns. However, in case of EU related referenda, voters' EU preferences appear as stronger predictors of their voting behavior, and voters tend to leave the party line and vote according to their stronger EU preference – especially, adds Hobolt (2005) in case of highly intensive campaigns.

2.2) Opinion Formation in EU Referenda

Governments launch referenda in order to strengthen their stance on a given issue or, more generally, because they believe that they would win the majority, thus acquiring more legitimacy and political capital LeDuc (2002). While the motive for initiating a referendum is clear, several new variables are likely to occur during the campaign period that may destroy campaigner strategy and cause different, unexpected outcomes and substantial shifts in public opinion. This refers to new frames in the campaign, or the occurrence of a new campaigner. People get exposed to whole new angles of a story, thus they begin to consider the issue differently.

The LeDuc study refers to three types of referendum campaigns. Firstly, to those in which voters do not have much information about the issues, thus opinion formation can have strong effects. This does not stand for the Hungarian case, as the “migration crisis” had long been a salient issue in the country (Republikon 2015), since the beginning of 2015. Secondly, there are those campaigns in which strong cues and opinions abound, thus the main focus of campaigners is set on the “undecided”. Thirdly, LeDuc refers to campaigns in which the issue is well-known, however, new directions are likely to affect public opinion via strong counter-frames.

Zaller (1992) argues that people's political knowledge reaches different levels and they are unable to have a critical approach to issues unless provided with relevant political information. People do not have constant beliefs and unchangeable opinions, on the contrary, their stance varies issue by issue – in many cases inconsistently with their prior preferences, and sometimes frame by frame, meaning that with the emergence of a new stronger frame they change their opinions. Finally, people forget and get confused in volatile information environment, therefore they rely to a greater extent on the latest information.

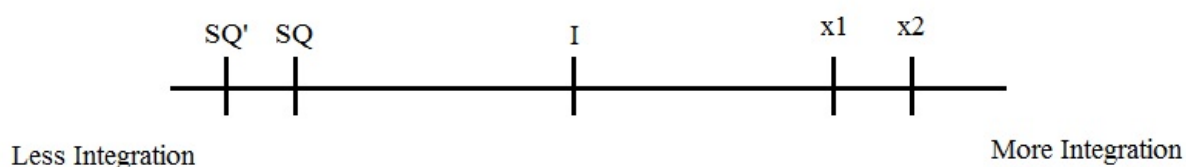


Figure 1. Hobolt's (2005, 88) spatial decision making model in EU referenda.

Decision making process of individuals when considering EU integration related issues can be represented in a spatial model (Hobolt 2005), as it is presented in Figure 1. It has a continuum from Less European integration [on the left] to More European integration [on the right]. The position of each voter is determined by the amount of information they receive. 'I' represents the voters' ideal point, that is between the proposition (x1) and the status quo (SQ). When voters make decisions they have to measure whether the acceptance of the proposal of the referendum is closer or farther away from the ideal point, and conversely, whether the rejection of the proposal will make any changes in the status quo. So, as Hobolt argues, the decision making process is highly influenced by the amount of available information, as it affects people's perception of the proposal's position on the spatial model.

To understand voting behavior in EU referenda, Hobolt (2005) provides three types of patterns. Firstly, he describes the attitude driven approach (Attitude-driven elections), in which it is people's attitudes to the EU that determines how they would vote. Secondly, it is party-

endorsements and national issues that affect their voting behavior (second-order elections), meaning that they actually evaluate the government or the parties' performance when casting their votes. And lastly, the utilitarian approach, when voters vote in accordance with their expected economic benefits from the result of the referendum (utilitarian expectations). Dvůrák (2013), along with Hobolt (2005) adds that voters are more likely to have issue based considerations in case of information-rich campaigns.

Factors Influencing Voting Behavior in EU Referenda

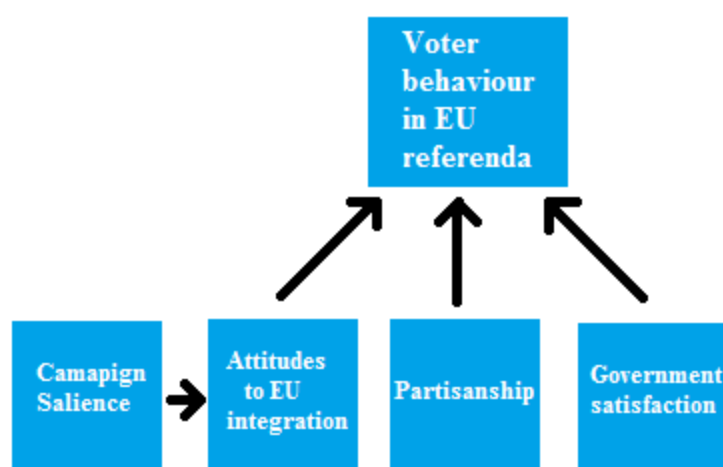


Figure 2. Model of major factors influencing voting behavior in European Union referenda (Hobolt 2005, 91)

As shown in Hobolt's model in Figure 2, voting behavior in the EU referendum is likely to be influenced by three major factors. Firstly, by voters' attitudes to the European Union, meaning whether they prefer less or more EU integration. This may be affected by the salience of the campaign. The second factor is partisanship that plays important role in decision making as people need heuristics and cues to have political opinions, that are party endorsement [frames], poll results, candidates' appearance, and ideology (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lupia 1994). The third factor, government satisfaction suggests that voters evaluate the government's performance rather than the referendum question. The implications of these theories to my thesis are concluded in arguments in the theoretical chapter.

2.3) Frames influencing misinformation correction

Correcting misinformation is a competition between incorrect messages and truths in order to convince people that one frame is sincere while the other lies (Lewandowsky et al 2012). The authors note that governments and politicians are typical and strong sources of misinformation (Reese and Lewis 2009), as they are frequently relied upon by voters for cues and heuristics. A primary source of information gathering, media are also influential factors in misinforming the public (Ladle et al 2005), and, adds Lewandowsky et al, the internet in enhancing its effect by providing unlimited space for false content.

In order for a correction to be effective it has to be, firstly, compatible with the already existing beliefs of the people exposed to the correction, secondly, the correction has to fit into the broader “story” (Lewandowsky et al 2012). The authors, along with Lipsitz (2005), also add that people prefer simple explanations to complex ones, and that too much counterargument may backfire.

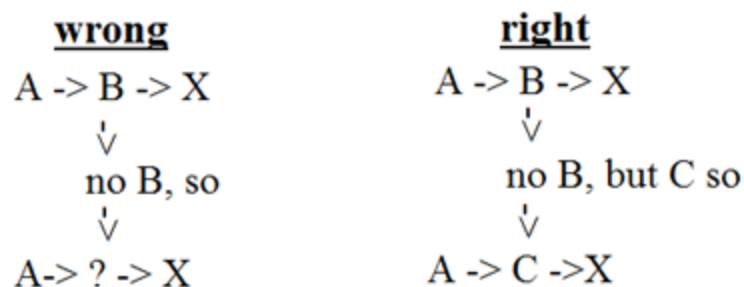


Figure 3. Correcting misinformation model (Lewandowsky et al. 2012)

As shown in Figure 3, correctors must come up with an explanation for the voters so that it complies with their beliefs. In the current example, it was not enough for MKKP to claim that “there is a referendum (A), because the EU plans to settle “migrants” to Hungary (B), so voters should participate (X). They had to set up an alternative explanation (C), namely that Fidesz

wanted to gain political power by lying to the voters, and that was why they launched a referendum, so people should participate but differently, by casting an invalid ballot (X’).

Thirdly, the correcting information has to arrive from a credible source (Eagly and Chaiken 1993), thus, in the current case, MKKP as a new political movement had the advantage of being fresh and more credible than the unpopular MSZP (Republikon 2015_a). Lastly, if people perceive that the correction is widely believed by others, they tend to accept it quicker. Lewandowsky et al. adds that in case of repeated exposure to corrections leads to increased acceptance of it as truth. In the Quota Referendum campaign, people were exposed to the correcting MKKP posters everywhere in Budapest, therefore it possibly resulted in higher levels of invalid votes in the capital city, than in the countryside, as people saw them in higher numbers.

As for campaign strategies against misinformation, Lewandowsky et al. points out that there are three possible ways. First, by warning people that a particular source is providing false information, which strategy was followed by the MKKP in its campaign. Second, by repeating the retraction of the misinformation continuously, a strategy that was followed by MKKP and the Boycott campaign, and third, by telling an alternative story so as to replace the “truth” of the misinformers – mainly used by the Boycott campaign. The authors add that strong believers and partisans tend to be immune to corrections, this is called motivated skepticism, therefore correcting campaigns were not likely to convince Fidesz voters that the government was lying to them (Nyhan and Regler 2010).

In summary, the way a referendum question is framed influences how people judge the same issue, thus it affects their individual decisions whether to participate, and how to vote. This suggests that if a new, strong frame emerges, whether to argue with a previous frame or to correct its misinformation, and it is frequently exposed to voters, this should be reflected in the polls, and eventually in the referendum results.

3) Context

3.1) Referenda in Hungary

There have been seventy-two referenda in the European Union about member state-EU relations, that are about accession or succession, or about the extent of EU integrity. As for Hungary, there have been seven referenda since the 1989 political change, and two of them asked people about the European Union. Firstly, in 2003 when people were asked whether they agree with Hungary's decision to join the EU, and secondly, in 2016, when people were asked whether they would mandate some sovereignty to the EU in relation with refugees (valasztas.hu).

Table 1 Summary of all the referenda since 1989 with turnout and results (valasztas.hu)

Year ¹	Valid	Total Votes in millions	Turnout rates % ****	Yes %	No %	Invalid %
1989*	YES	4.5	n.a	90	4.1	5.9
1990	NO	1.1	n.a.	85.9	4.6	0.8
1997	YES	3.9	49.2	85	14	1.13
2003	YES	3.7	45.6	84	16	0.49
2004**	NO	3.1	37.5	57	41	1.78
2008***	YES	4.1	50.5	83	16	0.79
2016	NO	3.6	44	92	2	6.17

The current referenda regulation was adopted by the Fidesz government in 2013. Referenda could be organized at national and local level, with certain restrictions. In particular, no referenda can be held, on subjects related to constitutional amendments and obligations related to international contracts and agreements. Between 1989 and 1997 the validity threshold was

¹ * There were four questions, the percentage here is the average of the four

** There were two questions, the percentage here is the average of the two

*** There were three questions, the percentage here is the average of the three

**** According to the regulations, invalid votes are not counted in the turnout rates. Here the total number of votes are counted, invalid included.

50%+1, while between 1997-2011 a referendum could be valid if 25% of all eligible voters voted in one direction; this means, for example, if the turnout was only 25% but 100% of these people voted 'yes', then it was a valid referendum. However, the Fidesz government's new constitution in 2011 returned to the original threshold of 50%+1. Many NGOs, for instance TASZ (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union - Társaság a Szabadságjogokért) and opposition parties criticized the Fidesz government for returning to the stricter regulation, and this was a crucial element in the campaign of the opposition preceding the 2016 referendum: people should abstain from voting to make the referendum invalid and use Fidesz's referendum regulation against them.

Table 2 Possible outcomes of a referendum according to the current Hungarian regulation in 2016 (valasztas.hu)

Possible Outcomes	Legal Consequences
Valid and successful	Mandatory action accordingly
Valid but unsuccessful	No consequence
Invalid and unsuccessful	No consequence

The 2016 Hungarian referendum was proposed by the Prime Minister Viktor Orban in February 2016. The referendum, also called the quota referendum, asked Hungarian voters about the emergency, quota-based resettlement of refugees proposed by the European Union in 2015 September.

The referendum question was the following: "Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the compulsory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary without the approval of the National Assembly?"

The referendum was criticized by the opposition for two reasons. Firstly, because it is unconstitutional to have referenda on issues that concern international obligations, and the EU proposal has to be considered as one. Fidesz argued that the EU is not an international

organization as Hungary is part of the EU, thus there can be a referendum. Secondly, opposition parties and movements raised their voices that there was no mandatory resettlement procedure proposed by the EU, therefore the Fidesz government was only trying to divert attention by also deceiving the public.

Voting Intentions in 2016 September

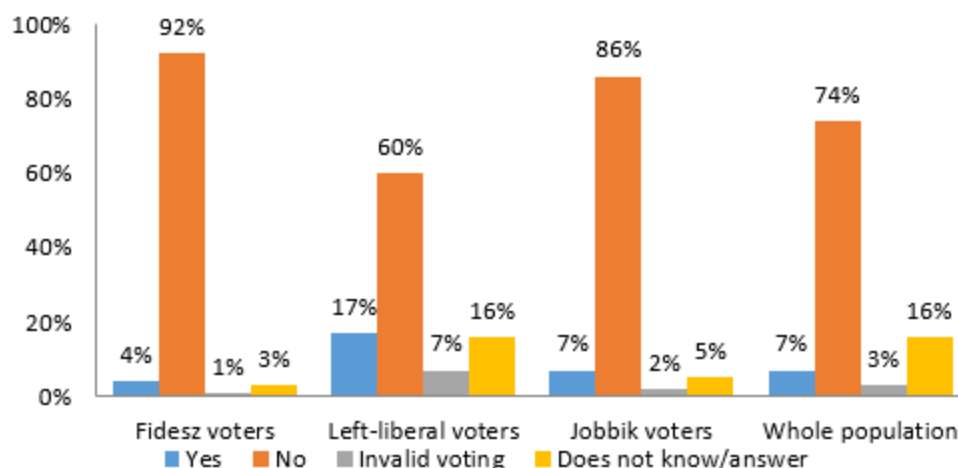


Figure 4. How would you vote on the following referendum question? (Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the compulsory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens in Hungary without the approval of the National Assembly? (Republikon Institute 2016 September)

The opposition strongly objected this question, stating it was a loaded question, since it was clear that even their constituents would answer ‘No’ to the question – and polling data actually supported this assumption. (Republikon 2016_a) As Figure 4 shows, based on a Republikon survey in 2016 August, 60% of opposition voters who indicated participation would vote ‘No’ in the referendum. This made difficult for the opposition to come up with a counter-argument for the government campaign of ‘No’, as the obvious opposing position of ‘Yes’ would not have resonated with the opinion of their voters. This would have meant following the general opposition logic of saying the opposite of what the government does, however, this time it would have been unpopular even within their own constituents.

The initial idea of the majority of the opposition was that no participation was the optimal solution, because if people would not participate in high enough numbers than Orban’s

referendum would be invalid. This idea came from the mainstream opposition parties, especially from MSZP and DK. The Hungarian alternative joke party, MKKP, came up with a different approach by urging voters to cast invalid votes. Hungarian regulations state that invalid votes are not to be counted in the turnout results, so for example if all the voters went to cast their votes and they all cast invalid ballots, the turnout would be 0%. Nevertheless, MKKP argued, by voting invalidly, people could express their democratic commitments and disapproval to the government through one symbolic action, while keeping the turnout low enough for a Fidesz failure.

As a conclusion, it was not only a dishonest, insincere referendum question that asked the voters about an issue that in its current form was non-existent, but it was also asked in a way that opposition parties hands were tied from the very beginning when opposing it. They could not openly urge voters to vote ‘Yes’ – except for the Liberal Party – as they would have broadcast messages that went against the preferences of their own voters. Thus, they had to come up with a new angle by trying to convince the public that it was a false issue with a deceptive question, and the only way showing it to the Fidesz government was to stay at home and not participate or to cast an invalid vote. Therefore, argued the opposition, they would have an invalid referendum, thus they would be turning the new, higher threshold regulation against Fidesz. Their other argument was that immigration was not a threatening problem for Hungary, but an economic necessity, and helping refugees was a humanitarian obligation. The next section of the thesis discusses Hungarian immigration and details the EU quota proposal about which the government held the referendum.

3.2) Immigration in Hungary

The word ‘migration’ refers to the movement of people from one location to another. This movement can be legally controlled [passports, visas] and monitored [border management, that included fences or walls] according to international and domestic regulations and agreements.

Legal, or in other terms regular, migration involves labor [temporary or permanent], educational, humanitarian [asylum seekers, refugees], and social reasons [family reunifications] (Tanaka et al 2008; Münz 2010). As it is defined by the United Nations, international migration pertains to any change of domicile when a migrant spends more than twelve months in another country legally. Any other type of migration, that is when a person crosses a state border against the regulations, shall be seen as illegal or irregular – moral aspects determine the use of terms, this paper refers to this global phenomenon as ‘irregular’ migration (Kosłowski 2011). Whether a person should be regarded as an irregular migrant is determined by a refugee status procedure, which is carried out only if the person applied for the refugee status. If after the decision making procedure the refugee status is denied from the person, then he or she has to leave the country, or the state might temporarily provide shelter to the person. This belongs to national legislature in case of EU member states.

Hungary is considered to be a transit and destination country both for regular and irregular migration. There were 93,000 regular migrants in 2001, this number more than doubled by 2011, at the maximum rate of 206,000. (KSH, 2016). The majority of them arrived from the European Union. The country adopted its new migration strategy in 2013 (IOM 2016), in which it renders the utmost protection for the national labor market, while maintaining that the economy is in ever severe need for skilled migration. IOM reported in 2015 that 50% of Hungarian firms have difficulties finding employees. Hungary adopted the 1951 UN Geneva Convention of refugee rights, and the EU Charta of Fundamental Human Rights.

3.2.1) The ‘Migrant Crisis’

Although the country is in need of immigration that would provide sufficient amount of workforce and would ease the tension created by an aging society, there are only a few immigrants in Hungary, due to governmental policies, strict regulations, unwelcoming atmosphere and low wages. (IOM 2016, KSH 2016) The government, however, started to frame

the issue of immigration, as the greatest threat to national security, sovereignty, and Hungarian identity. With regard to national security, the government claimed that with the influx of irregular migrants, many terrorists could also enter the country and the European Union. Hungary registered hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants during the 2015 “refugee crisis”, and also let more cross the country unregistered on their way to Western Europe. (IOM 2016)

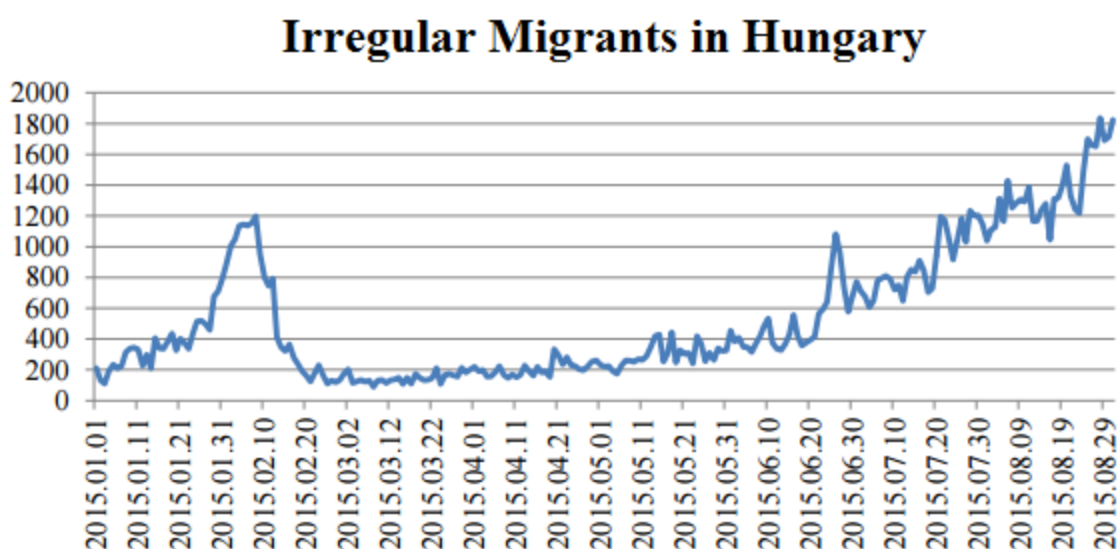


Figure 5 The number of registered people who irregularly crossed the Hungarian border in 2015 between January and August (MTA 2016)

By the end of summer 2015, the government decided to build a fence on the Hungarian-Serbian border, and later on parts of the Hungarian –Croatian border to divert the route of irregular migrants and refugees away from Hungary, while the Prime Minister urged other countries to act similarly. Orban argued that the number of registered irregular migrants reached a critically high level, as showed in Figure 5. In the meantime, stricter refugee laws were passed so that the country does not have to provide refuge to any of the irregular migrants. The border fence has been a controversial issue since its construction, many EU governments criticized it, while many built their own fences for example in Austria, France or Spain. (The Guardian 2015)

The Fidesz government used every criticism as a tool to strengthen its own political position by claiming that foreigners were invading the Southern borders of Hungary, and “Brussels” – which represent the bureaucratic European Union in the Fidesz narrative (MNO 2017) – wanted to enforce them on Hungarians with the assistance of the Hungarian opposition. Thus, the only solution, argued the Orban regime, that can provide protection to Hungarians was the Fidesz government.

In the meantime, the opposition argued that no irregular migrants wished to stay in Hungary longer than twelve hours, which was the necessary time to cross the country so as to reach Western Europe. Political parties such as the MSZP and DK, and several smaller ones such as Együtt, MoMa, and PM urged for the implementation of the Geneva Convention concerning refugee rights, while emphasizing that the government only wanted to divert attention from unpleasant corruption allegations and bad governance (MSZP 2016). Meanwhile, the radical right party, Jobbik (For A Better Hungary), remained relatively silent on the issue.

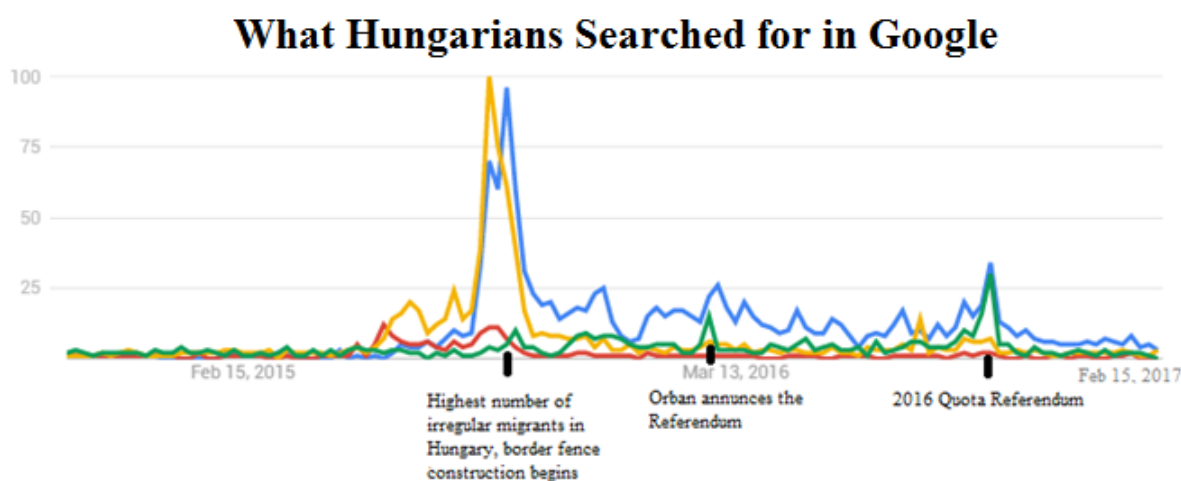


Figure 6 Search for words 'migráns' (blue), 'bevándorló' (red), 'menekült' (yellow), and 'quota' (green) between February 2015 and February 2017 in Google search engine. source: <https://www.google.hu/trends>.

The commonly used word for immigrant in Hungarian is “*bevándorló*”, which literally means a migrant who comes ‘in’. This used to be a neutral term, as Hungary did not experience mass immigration like some other EU member states. However, this changed due to the first governmental anti-immigration campaign in early 2015. The word “*migráns*” is the Hungarian

equivalent of migrant, that was rarely used in public communication before 2015, but got widely popular due to the new governmental narrative. Since the first poster campaign, as Figure 6 indicates, both words have been used frequently, and thanks to the new frames, they now have a pejorative meaning in Hungarian. In the new Fidesz narrative, *‘bevándorló’* and *‘migráns’* refer to threat and danger, to a person or group of people who mean to occupy Hungary and destroy the European culture. Similarly, *“menekült”*, which means refugee, has a different meaning after the extensive governmental framing in 2015 and 2016. *“Menekült”* today refers to people from the Middle-East and Africa who arrive in vast numbers, are usually very poor, and they hide potential threat as well, while they can easily turn out to be a *“migráns”*. The latest element in the discourse was the addition of the ‘terrorist’ narrative, meaning that after the Brussels and Paris attacks in 2015 and 2016, a *“migráns”* or a *“bevándorló”* became almost synonymous with ‘Islamist terrorist’.

As for the quota, the EU announced the quota plan in September, thus a slight rise in the green line indicates more frequent searches for it. It increased again in late February 2016, when the Prime Minister announced the referendum on the quota proposal. Along with the search for *“migráns”*, *“bevándorló”* got more and more salient, while the search for *“menekült”* almost disappeared, as it did disappear from the government’s discourse.

Levels of Xenophobia during the "Migrant Crisis"

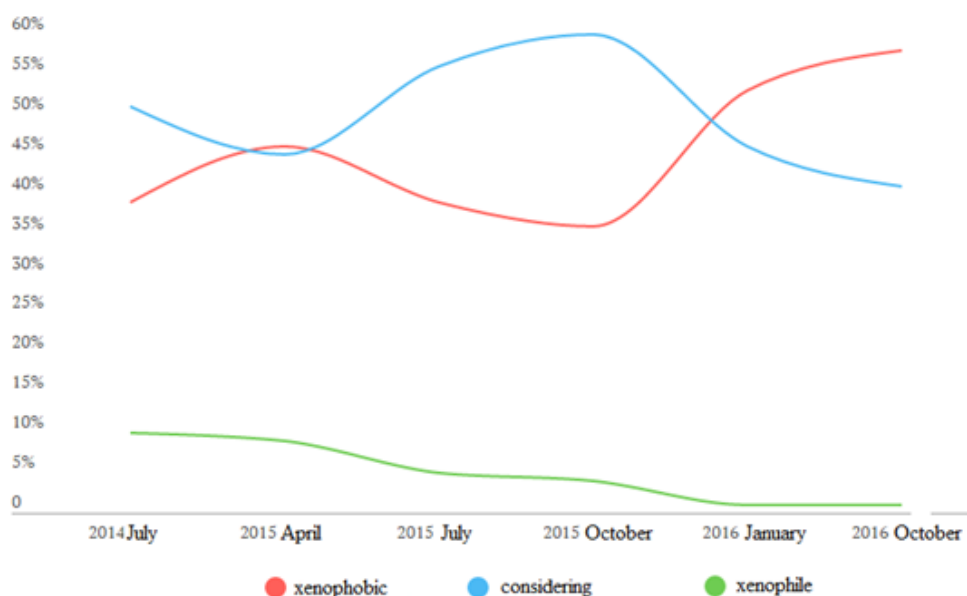


Figure 7 Levels of xenophobia between July 2014 and the Quota Referendum in October 2016 (Zavecz Research)

As a possible result of the new governmental narrative and the extensive coverage of the issue in the media, as Figure 7 shows, xenophobia reached its ever highest rate in Hungary while the rate of xenophile people dropped significantly, and those without a firm opinion also decreased. However, it did not mean that people turned against the European Union. On the contrary, based on the findings of a major Hungarian poll company, Publicus (2016), the number of people considering Hungary's EU membership as positive increased from 57% (2015 July) to 69% (2016 July)². This was the period when pro-governmental media coverage on the refugee crisis was the highest, and also this was the period when the quota referendum campaign was launched. This means that the government could influence people's opinion about the refugees negatively, therefore more people claimed that they would not like to live next to foreigners and they consider immigration as a negative issue, but they could not turn public opinion against the EU.

² It was even higher, 75% among young people and those with higher levels of education (Publicus 2016)

People Considered These the Most Problematic Issues

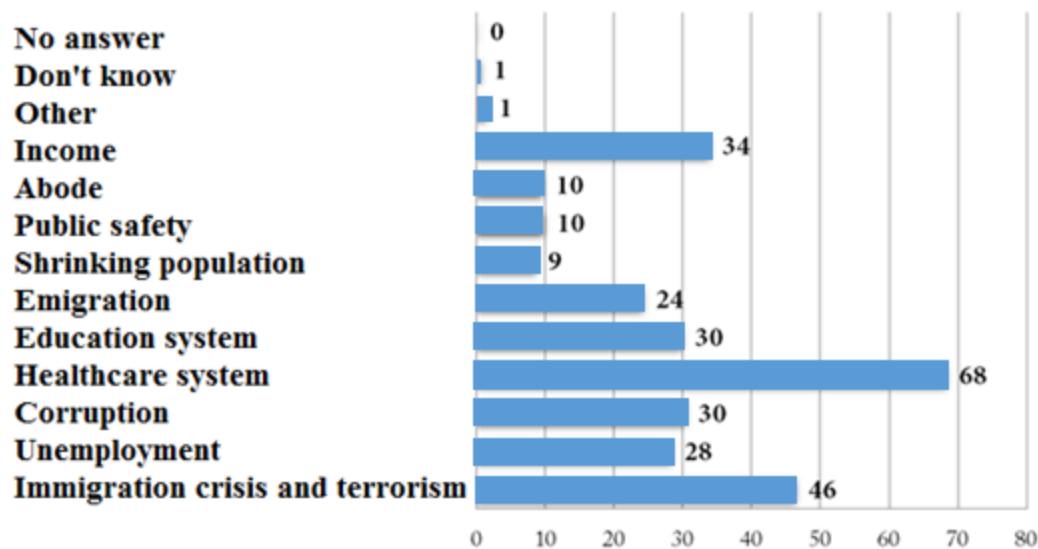


Figure 8 What Hungarians considered most problematic in percentages in October 2016 (Iránytű Intézet)

As Figure 8 shows, based on a representative survey from 2016 October by another poll agency, Iránytű Institute, there was only one issue that Hungarians found more problematic than the “immigration crisis”, that was healthcare (68% of the respondents claimed that it was the most problematic). This was followed by “immigration crisis” and “terrorism”, even though there had been no terrorist attacks in Hungary, and the number of irregular migrants dropped to a minimum with the construction of the border fence in 2015 September, a year before the time of the survey. Though insufficient wages and high taxes caused more problems to Hungarians (IOM 2016), and resulted in massive emigration of native Hungarians and thus in the severe need for immigration, people considered it less serious than the immigration crisis (30% marked it as a problematic issue).

European Union Satisfaction of Hungarians

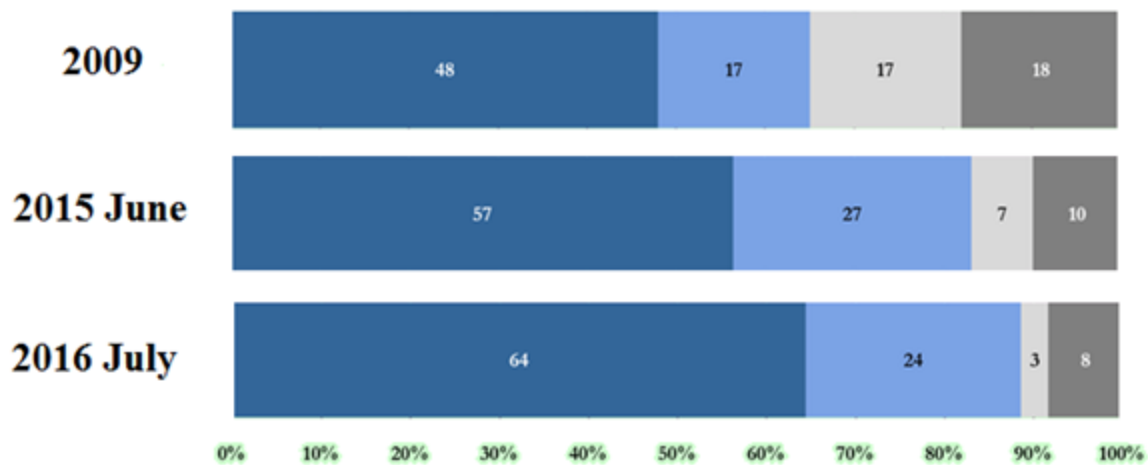


Figure 9 Satisfaction of people with regards to the EU membership of Hungary. Dark blue indicated pro-EU, light blue indicates more towards the EU than against, light gray means slightly more against the EU, dark gray indicates absolutely against the EU (Publicus Intézet 2016)

Along with this, despite all the systematic and overwhelmingly negative campaigning against the European Union, referred to as “Brussels”, Hungarian voters could not be influenced by the negative frames. As Figure 9 shows, the popularity of the EU reached the highest support since 2009, that was five years after the Hungarian succession. Reasons abound, but a major contributing factor might be that hundreds of thousands of Hungarian families had relatives living in another EU member state, and also that people could see the tangible benefits of the country’s membership in refurbished infrastructure and renovated hospitals that were funded by EU money. Also, the European Union, and “belonging to Europe” had long been a symbol of freedom and welfare in the Hungarian society, thus it was a stronger frame than the government’s scheming and bureaucratic “Brussels” narrative.

3.3) Quota Proposal in 2015

Table 3 The evolution of the Quota proposal of the EU (EU council 2016)

Summary of the EU Quota System		
2015	September	Member states voluntarily agree to relocate 40,000 refugees' case.
	September	Previous proposal extended to 120,000 cases, Hungary votes no.
	December	Hungary and Slovakia starts lawsuit against the 120,000 relocation.
2016	February	Prime Minister Orban announces Quota Referendum in October
	May	EU Council proposes constant relocation procedure
	October	Invalid Hungarian referendum
	November	Failed constitutional amendment in Hungary

The increasing migratory pressure challenged European solidarity and unity since the beginning of 2015. The number of refugees increased greatly and thousands of irregular migrants crossed European borders (IOM 2016). The EU could not create a unitary solution for the emerging crisis in which hundreds of thousands of people had to walk through countries or had to face lethal boat crossings in the Mediterranean fleeing from wars. This led to individual measures, including the temporary abandonment of the Schengen system by Germany and Austria, erecting border fences and to violent atrocities by xenophobe political movements throughout Europe (The Guardian 2015).

The first proposal of a common solution appeared in the form of voluntary redistribution of refugees, that meant countries accepting refugees from destination member states. The reason for this was that refugees and irregular migrants planned to migrate to wealthier countries with generous welfare systems, such as Germany, Austria and Sweden. This put a major pressure on these societies and economies, thus, according to the relocation proposal, other member states

should help them by accepting some of the refugees through relocation. Enormous pressure was on the front states also, mainly on Greece and Italy, where thousands of refugees arrived every day in 2015. The redistribution procedure would have been carried out in accordance with the host countries' economic and social power, which was also referred to as 'quotas', hence the 'Quota Proposal' name.

The initial plan contained the immediate relocation of 40,000 refugees from Italy and Greece, and this was extended gradually to first 120,000 in September and to 160,000 in October 2015. The proposed Hungarian quota would have meant the relocation of 1294 people. Hungary and Slovakia started a lawsuit against the 120,000 proposal in 2015 December. (EU Commission 2016) Hungary also denied to be regarded as a front state, as the EU had proposed so, due to the fact that hundreds of thousands of refugees and irregular migrants crossed Hungary when travelling to the destination countries. Hungary emphasized that it was not a front state, as, according to the Hungarian government, these people all crossed the Greek borders, thus the first time entering the EU happened there, consequently Hungary cannot be a front state. This was relevant because the Dublin regulation ordered that a refugee could only get asylum in the first country he or she stepped into the European Union (The Refugee Council 2002)

As of September 2016, only 5,651 refugees were relocated from Greece and Italy, and the further implementation of the quota proposal is yet to come. However, by the end of 2015 almost 2 million people arrived to Germany and Sweden (EU Commission 2016) and hundreds of thousands to other EU member states. The EU council proposed a constant quota system in May 2016, but as of May 2017 it has not been implemented, and there are only cautious considerations of the relaunch of the quota mechanism. The EU made a deal with Turkey in 2016 February, thus the number of irregular border crossings dropped significantly, and with the erection of the border fence in Hungary, the Hungarian government managed to drop the

numbers to almost zero. Nevertheless, the Orban administration kept the issue salient through state propaganda (DRI 2016).

3.4) The Hungarian Quota Referendum

In February 2016, Prime Minister Viktor Orban announced that Hungary was to hold a referendum on the quota proposal of the EU, hence the name ‘Quota Referendum’. The referendum question was the following:

“Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the compulsory settlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary without the approval of the National Assembly?”

In accordance with the legal regulations of Hungary, the campaign started fifty days prior to the referendum, that is on 13th August 2016. (valsztas.hu) Along with TV advertisements, informative letters, and radio broadcasts, posters played a dominant role in the campaign. The major parties with referendum campaign posters were the following:

3.4.1) Fidesz and the Right

The main actor of the ‘No’ campaign was the Fidesz Party. Fidesz (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége – Alliance of Young Democrats) was the governing party in Hungary, in coalition with KDNP (Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt - Christian-Democrat People’s Party). Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was the dominant, charismatic leader of the party coalition, many argued that he had an authoritarian regime that derailed from democratic practices so as to gain and maintain political power. Orbán personally initiated the referendum in February 2016. The government party Fidesz spent almost one billion forints for campaigning in the general elections in 2014, while they spent 8.4 billion forints on the Quota Referendum campaign. As for posters, Fidesz had 5,523 posters in 2014, the government had further 2,767, which equals to 8,290 posters in total (Index.hu 2016). During the 2016 referendum campaign, the government had 12,585 posters. While the former was about winning the national elections and

deciding who was going to lead the country for the next four years, the latter was a single issue referendum; the government devoted significantly higher amount of resources to it.

Jobbik did not launch any campaign posters, and remained rather silent during the campaigning, with the exception of one campaign video in which they urged their voters to vote 'No'. LMP (Lehet Más a Politika, Politics Can Be Different), did not have any posters either, nor did they participate in any other way in the campaign, however, they suggested their voters to 'boycott' the referendum.

3.4.2) Liberals and Leftist Parties

The Hungarian Liberal Party was a small political party in the Hungarian Parliament. They got one seat during the 2014 general elections. They urged their voters to participate and vote 'yes'. Leftist parties, including MSZP, DK, Együtt, PM and MoMa all urged their voters to boycott the referendum.

3.4.3) MKKP

MKKP (Magyar Kétfarkú Kutya Párt – Hungarian Two-tailed Dog Party) was established by critical young activists – or as they call themselves, 'passivists' – in the Hungarian countryside in 2006. Their initial goal was to reveal the corruptness and dysfunctioning of the political system by the power of parody and ridiculing, thus reflecting on the nonsensical nature of politics. They used a variety of tools and performances, including posters, streetart, graffiti, stickers, and the Internet to spread their messages and to reach further audiences. They soon became famous all over the country, while their basis moved to the capital city, Budapest.

After the 2010 general elections, when the new Orban government got elected by two-third majority, MKKP started to focus more actively on mocking the government and to critically highlight their misdeeds by humor. Moreover, they initiated their official registry as a party in 2013, in order to be able to get elected in some local council elections in 2014. (MKKP online)

The new regulation by the government made it compulsory for every candidate intending to participate in the 2014 elections to register themselves, and it was for the judges to decide whether a party could be registered or not. Consequently, judges could influence the establishment of new political parties, thus the compilation of running candidates. Initially, the court ordered that the name of MKKP – Two-tailed Dog Party – was misleading and confusing for voters, hence it denied its registry. After appealing to the Supreme Court, MKKP could be eventually registered, however, only after the election, therefore, in the first time of the third republic in Hungary, a court hindered the participation of a party.

MKKP represents civic culture that uses sarcasm and stark criticism humorously, and by doing so they break out of the conventional opposition role of dull press conferences and party memoranda. Donations and volunteer work provide the core of their movement that they manage transparently. They raise awareness to already salient issues by providing a different angle on posters and websites. Their core strategy is to take a controversial issue, something that the majority of the voters find outrageous like corruption or political scheming, and they set up ridiculing counter-frames and challenging narratives. MKKP uses Internet as a tool to reach wider audiences, while their presence is active on the streets with witty and meaningful stickers or sidewalk paintings.

3.5) TV Coverage of the Referendum

This section discusses the TV broadcasting campaign of the 2016 referendum. It is a small detour from the strict thesis analysis, as it is intended to reveal the media environment in which the poster campaign was embedded. Democracy Reporting International (DRI 2016) content-analyzed the political TV advertisements during the campaign and found that it was heavily unbalanced and skewed to the government's position. According to Nielsen Ltd (2017), the major TV channels are M1 (part of the MTVA group that is the state-funded national TV channel), ATV (private), HírTv (private), TV2 (government-oriented private) and RTL KLUB

(private). In their research, DRI looked at these TV channels' content in the heat of the campaign in September 2016, when all the campaigns had already started, and political posters were present everywhere.

DRI examined the frequency, tone and placement of news related to “refugees” and the ‘EU’, and found that M1 put referendum related issues in the first news item in 86% of the cases, while it was 0% on the most watched RTL KLUB news. Also, M1 devoted 42% of its total airtime to discuss referendum related subjects, while it was 5% in case of RTL.

TV Channel	Negative	Neutral	Positive
M1	91	9	0
TV2	83	4	13
RTL	42	46	12
ATV	65	30	5
HírTv	36	35	29

Figure 10 How the five major TV channels framed refugees and the EU in their news programs in September 2016 (DRI 2016)

DRI experts reported, as shown in Figure 10, that refugees and the EU were 91% of the cases framed negatively on M1 while 42% of the cases negatively on RTL. Most balanced was HírTV on which in almost 30-30% of the cases all aspects of the issues were framed. The state-funded TV channel M1 devoted zero amount of coverage to present refugees or the EU positively, thus it did not comply with the state media regulation of being balanced and unbiased.

TV Channel	M1	Tv2	RTLklub	ATV	HírTv
Percentage of time that supports or promotes the government's position	95%	89%	39%	46%	53%
Percentage of time that supports or promotes a position that is different to the government's	5%	11%	61%	54%	47%

Figure 11 Distribution of opinion diversity in the five major TV channels in September 2016 (DRI 2016)

As shown in Figure 11, M1 also supported almost exclusively the government's position, that is 95% of the cases, while it was 39% on RTL. As for influencing voting intention, M1 tried to encourage viewers to participate in the referendum 76% of the cases, while only 10% of total

airtime was devoted to the boycotting, which was one of the major campaigning groups. RTL did not intend to influence voting intention in 69% of the cases, while it devoted twice as much time to call for participation in the election than for boycotting it.

TV Channel	Encourages to Vote	Encourage not to Vote	Both	Not Mentioned
M1	76%	10%	6%	8%
TV2	46%	0%	29%	25%
RTL	15%	8%	8%	69%
ATV	19%	19%	17%	45%
HírTV	19%	8%	16%	57%

Figure 12 How the five major TV channels tried to influence voting intentions in September 2016 (DRI 2016)

As for voting behavior, Figure 12 and 13 indicates that M1 tried to urge people to vote ‘No’ in 59% of the cases, while in 7% of the cases they represented the ‘yes’ campaign’s argument. RTL did not indicate what behavior is encouraged from voters in 77% of the cases, and only in 8% of the cases did they encourage people to vote ‘No’. DRI (2016) noted that it was only HírTV that urged people to submit an invalid vote, that is the MKKP argument and the main focus of this thesis, and only in 5% of the cases. None of the other TV channels represented the ‘Invalid’ campaign in their coverage.

TV Channel	Encourages to vote “no”	Encourages to vote “yes”	Encourages to submit an invalid vote	Presents several potential viewpoints	Does not indicate how one should vote
M1	59%	7%	0%	7%	27%
TV2	42%	4%	0%	21%	23%
RTL	8%	0%	0%	15%	77%
ATV	14%	6%	0%	19%	61%
HírTV	11%	0%	5%	11%	27%

Figure 13 How the five major TV channels tried to influence voting behavior in September 2016 (DRI 2016)

As a conclusion, M1 devoted extraordinary time to the referendum in main campaign period, and did it heavily biasedly towards the government, against legal regulations, journalistic morals and personal ethics. It gave a one-sided opinion about the refugees and European Union,

instead of revealing a diverse picture about the quota system and the points-of-view of the different campaign groups. DRI (2016) concludes that the state media functioned as a propaganda tool. This provides a better understanding of the media environment in which non-governmental campaigning groups had to participate.

4) Theoretical Arguments

The Fidesz government decided to hold a referendum in October 2016, because they thought they were able to win it. Eventually, despite their overwhelming power in the media system (DRI 2016), and extensive and costly campaigning, the referendum ended up being invalid, with the highest level of invalid votes in the history of Hungarian referenda

My argument is that the 2016 Hungarian campaign belonged to the third category in Hobolt's model, because, due to the government's extensive campaign, people were informed about the referendum, and even great numbers of opposition voters shared the Prime Minister's position (Republikon 2016). However, new frames created shifts in public opinion that resulted either in the boycotting of the referendum participation or in casting invalid votes, therefore people were evaluating the government and not its position in the referendum

I will show in my analysis that the Hungarian referendum was initially a second-order election (Hobolt 2005), even though the Fidesz government tried to frame the question as a utilitarian-driven one. Fidesz argued that Hungary was in danger, both economically and societally, and the only "weapon" in the hands of Hungarians was to prevent the threat by voting 'No' in the referendum – thus gaining the maximum utility. They claimed that it was a "national issue", that was above the traditional political arguments of parties, as such, according to the government, it could unify voters in agreement for defending the nation against invaders. My argument is that voters already considered the referendum as an ordinary party issue, and when they cast their votes they evaluated the government, therefore it was one of the reasons why the referendum failed.

The analysis contrasts the governmental campaign posters, as it was the most expensive campaign in the history of Hungarian elections, and the 'Invalid' poster campaign of MKKP, which was one of the smallest of the campaigns, using only donation money and volunteers.

The former used more than 20 billion forints for the whole campaign, that includes not only posters, but TV ads, letters etc., while the latter used 30 million forints on posters, that provided almost exclusively the whole campaign. This represents the fight between ‘David and Goliath’, the power of an unlimited, overwhelmingly extensive campaign and civic culture’s potentials against it. MKKP used the power of humorous posters to ridicule the government’s narratives, which was part of a negative campaigning.

The main argument is that it was such an unbalanced arena of political contest, and such an extreme amount of state propaganda was used that the power of ridiculing sarcasm could convince people in high enough numbers to stay away from the referendum or to cast invalid votes. The analysis intends to refer to potentials of political humor and sarcastic frames, with special focus on posters, and how they can manage in partly-democratic systems (Freedom House 2017). This stands especially for overwhelming political dominance of one actor, thus analyzing and understanding this could be relevant not only for democratic endeavors in semi-authoritarian regimes, but for all the campaigners that do not receive any financial support from the national budget.

Posters are still very important parts of campaigning, and even though they are usually labelled as “premodern” (Norris 2001) in an electronic age, they still give significant parts of campaign strategies (Dumitrescu 2010). My argument is that posters have not been abandoned due to modernity but been rejuvenated by the opportunities provided by social networking. They convey strong message on limited spaces where they combine textuality with visual elements that are more easy to process for human brains (Lipsitz 2007). They contain simple and understandable messages that help voters learn about issues, they are unavoidable for people as they can be located in all public areas, therefore they are accessible and available (Hobolt 2005, Zaller 1992).

My major argument can be summarized in the following points:

Argument 1: It was such a ridiculously extreme campaign by the government that one of the possible reactions was to come up with a ridiculing counter-frame campaign by MKKP. They encouraged voters to spoil their votes, and people reacted to it well as, eventually, there was a very high amount of invalid vote ratio.

Argument 2: Since the EU was very popular among Hungarian voters, this aspect turned out to be more important than the referendum question, even though people agreed with the government's position in great numbers.

Assumption 3: Even though people agreed with the government's position in great numbers, new frames in the campaign convinced them to stay at home or cast invalid votes, and posters were effective tools for these.

Although they have become more and more popular in Hungarian political campaigning (Vliegenthart 2012), the realm of political posters is an understudied area of research, thus it is worth studying. Posters gave a large part of the 2016 Hungarian campaign, since many of the major Hungarian parties and the government relied on them during the campaign period. Another drive for analyzing the potential of posters is that they are unavoidable for voters. Unlike television debates and campaign events that are targeting the politically active part of the society, poster campaigns are present everywhere in public spaces, on roads, on public transportation, and they may appear in printed and online versions too. My analysis provides a better understanding of conveying strong frames with relatively few words while combining textual and imagery content. These contents are able to then trigger emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses, thus aiding the learning process that can eventually motivate voters to behave according to the campaigners' political intentions (Lipsitz 2007; Lipsitz and Grossman 2010) These campaign-strategically important features suggest that posters will provide a rather large extent of future campaigns too, therefore they are worth analyzing.

5) Methodology

In my research I analyze all the official referendum-related campaign posters of all registered political parties and the government in 2016. It is a content analysis of political posters' frames of campaign messages with regards to the referendum and their influence to voting behavior. The analysis takes into consideration the breadth of the campaigns, including their length and budget. After identifying the relevant frames, I examine whether there were any changes in the voting intentions during the campaign period. Public opinion shifts were measured by poll companies, thus I rely on their data and check differences and movements in their measured dataset. Furthermore, I also examine the referendum results to reveal how the campaigners eventually managed to convince voters to behave.

Data selection included all the posters by all the officially registered political parties that posted during the official campaign period - August and September 2016 –, and also every relevant poster created in the year 2016 after the announcement of the referendum in February. The posters were uploaded to the party website, therefore accessing them was without difficulties during the data selection period.

Parties campaigned for different reasons and urged for different types of voting behavior. Firstly, I gathered all the government posters from their digital database. The government campaign had three waves of posters. They launched the first set of posters in May 2016 (kormany.hu), the second set in July 2016, and the last set in September 2016. Altogether the government poster campaign had eight different posters, one for the first set, six for the second set, and one for the final set. I analyzed their content following a temporal order set by set, and identified the frames and themes they contained. Secondly, I examined the posters of the opposition parties that urged for boycotting the referendum, namely MSZP, DK Együtt, PM, and MoMa. They had nine different types of posters with similar messages in different styles.

Thirdly, I looked at the posters of the Yes campaign that urged for participation for a different reason, that meant they tried to reframe the referendum as one about Hungary's European Union membership, hence they encouraged people to vote 'Yes' so as to stay in the EU. They had two official posters, while their campaign strategy also focused on internet appearance with campaign videos and an official campaign website. However, I narrowed down the frame analysis to the two official and traditional type of campaign posters.

Lastly, I gathered the official posters of the Hungarian Two Tailed Dog Party (MKKP). They posted twenty-six different posters in September 2016 in different size formats on the streets nationwide, and also online. They also encouraged people to create their own posters to mock the government, and had a cell phone application that could alter all government posters so as to look similar to the MKKP posters. However, I excluded these from the analysis and concentrated only on the official twenty-six party posters uploaded to the party's website.

I coded every poster according to its content in order to identify different and similar frames and themes. In the beginning of each campaign section, I added tables to summarize all the identified frames. These tables are followed by the description of a selected set of posters. In case of the eight government posters, all of them are detailed in the analysis, as they gave the bulk of the campaign in breadth. The two posters of the 'Yes' campaign were also included and described, however, the 'Boycott' and the 'Invalid' posters were only partly inserted in the text due to their numeracy, while their narratives and codes were all included in the analysis.

The second half of the analysis focuses on shifts in voting behavior and intentions based on representative national survey data that measured voting intention and expected voting behavior. All major poll companies measured voting intentions with regards to the 2016 Referendum during the campaign, while it was only Republikon Institute that conveyed surveys throughout the whole campaign period. I compiled data from all poll companies, as they were all accessible online, and listed them in the analysis chapter and the Appendix. Data reveal that

there was a clear increasing tendency with regards to intentions to cast invalid votes after their appearance in the campaign posters, and my assumption is that it was due to the emergence of the invalid campaign. Though establishing a direct causality between the 'Invalid' campaign and the number of invalid votes casted is impossible, there is strong empirical evidence suggesting that this strategy was highly effective. As for the results of the referendum, the average rate of invalid votes was 6.17% at the national level and over 10% in some districts of Budapest. This stands in stark contrast with the average rate of invalid votes casted in Hungarian referenda since 1989, which is around 1.815 % of the total votes cast.

5.1) Limitations

My analysis examines only one poster campaign period of Hungary, while the Fidesz government have used them systematically since the beginning of 2010. Similarly, MKKP utilized posters, stickers since their movement started, and many of them were reflections to governmental posters, or direct messages to the government policies. Therefore, further research should widen the scope of case selection and examine several other instances of similar poster campaigns.

Also, the 2016 campaign did not comprise only of posters, but it relied on several other channels like TV news, brochures, and Internet advertisements. Nevertheless, the government spent enormous amount of public money on poster which indicate the importance of posters. The major limitation is with establishing causality between new poster frames and shifts in opinions. However, in political communication studies this a frequently used methodology, when researchers have a content analysis and compare their findings to opinion polls.

6) Analysis

This chapter is divided into two sub-chapter. The first one details the findings of the thesis, as it discusses the poster analysis results with the frames. This is organized according to the campaigners, starts with the government campaign, followed by the ‘Boycott’ and the Yes campaign, and then the MKKP analysis. The second half of the chapter reveals the poll companies’ data and highlights the shifts in voting intentions, and also shows the referendum results.

6.1) Campaign Posters

6.1.1) Vote ‘No’ campaign

The ‘No’ campaign had three waves of posters, therefore this section is also divided into three sub-chapters that discuss each of the sets separately. This is the reason for not starting this subchapter with a frame-summarizing table as it is in case of the other campaigners. However, they all had the same campaign strategy of framing the referendum, which can be summarized the following way: **Immigrants** are a great **threat** to the Hungarian **community**, while **Brussels cannot** handle it, **the government knows** how to save Hungary, so let’s **vote NO** on 2nd October.

4.2.1.1) “Let us message Brussels!”



Picture 1 “Let us message Brussels, so that they can also understand!” First governmental poster in 2016 (kormany.hu)

The government started the first referendum related poster campaign in May 2016. There was only one version of the poster that read: “*Let us message Brussels, so that they can also understand!*” (see Picture 1) The only other information on the poster was on the top layer that read “*Referendum against the Compulsory Settlement 2016*”. This latter message informed the readers that there would be a referendum in 2016, yet it did not state the exact date, nor did it tell what sort of voting behavior is expected from the voters. It also failed to inform the readers who posted this poster with what intention. Furthermore, the poster did not mention what “we” should message to Brussels so that they can “also” understand. The “also” part of the sentences presupposes that the readers, Hungarian voters, have already understood the message, thus it is only “Brussels” who needs further assistance.

As a summary, this poster, without the knowledge of the wider context, does not contain any valuable information to the consumers. Nevertheless, having been exposed to government propaganda for more than a year by that time, it is highly likely that the majority of voters were familiar with the context, and were able to decode the meaning behind the words. Firstly, the part referring to “compulsory resettlement” could be decoded as the EU quota proposal, since

considerable amount of state propaganda had been devoted to the issue (DRI 2016). The campaign strategy did not involve at that point the mentioning of the exact date of the referendum for either because it was way before the legally regulated official campaign period – August 13 - or because it was not the most relevant message at that time.

Secondly, a usual metaphoric reference to the bureaucratic EU establishment, “Brussels” was easily decodable for the majority of the voters, since the government’s campaigns had always made a distinction between the positively framed ‘Europe’, and the negatively framed ‘Brussels’. The former represented freedom, welfare, and a cultural belonging together with other European nations, while the latter referred to bureaucracy and loss of sovereignty. This way government spokespeople could easily refute eurosceptic allegations by claiming that they were only criticizing EU bureaucracy but not Europe as a cultural entity.

Lastly, the “so that they can also understand” could have a negative connotation for the Hungarian readers as, by phrasing the sentence this way, it could be read as something referring to the lack of proper comprehensive skills of EU bureaucrats. Applying this type of reading to the text could be seen as the “predecessor” of the following campaign posters that would start as “Did you know?”. This way the government tried to frame the issue so that they would appear as experts, while EU bureaucrats are either misinformed or misinforming. Thus one of the key frames of this poster was that “the government knows better”, therefore “we, Hungarians”, should try to explain “Brussels”, that “we, Hungarians” do not want “compulsory resettlement here”.

4.2.1.2) “Did you know?”



Picture 2 “Did you know that 1.5 million illegal immigrants (bevándorló) arrived to Europe last year?” and “Did you know that the terrorist attacks in Paris were done by immigrants (bevándorló)” (kormany.hu)

The second round of unofficial governmental campaigning started in July 2016 with the new sets of posters that read: “Did you know?”. (see Picture 2) There were six different posters, each of which started with this question and was followed by some “facts” there meant to inform the voters. Four of the posters are analyzed in the following chapter that describes the ‘Invalid’ campaign.

These posters no longer mentioned the purpose of the referendum, however, they do indicate the exact date of it. There is no information about the authors of the poster, as the government could not campaign legally and the parties were also not allowed to launch their campaigns before August 13. When confronted with the question why they launched an illegal campaign, Government officials actually replied that the government was not campaigning but simply they were informing the voters about a salient issue.

This practice was also attacked by the leader of the Liberal Party, Gabor Fodor, however, the Hungarian Supreme Court ruled that the government was not violating the campaign regulations, as they were not campaigning for a specific stance with regards to the referendum. Thus, emphasized the Supreme Court, posters that had messages like “Let us message Brussels”, or “Referendum against the compulsory settlement” or “Referendum 2016” did not urge voters to politically take any actions, these were mere informative messages from the government. The leader of the Fidesz faction in the Parliament also announced that the

regulation is for parties and not for the government, and the governing Fidesz party is the same as Fidesz party, because the former is the government while the latter is a political party in the national assembly.

This practice seems unconstitutional, illegal, and unethical. The government, as a responsible political body, represents the whole population, thus it cannot use public money to propagate only one aspect of a referendum proposal, especially not before the legally determined campaign period. However, ministries and other government offices spent 7.2 billion forints (Index.hu 2016) by the beginning of August on campaigning and propaganda, that not only included posters but also TV commercials, letters, and internet ads.

The two above presented posters contain the following texts: 1) “Did you know that 1.5 million illegal immigrants (bevándorló) arrived to Europe last year?” and “Did you know that the terrorist attacks in Paris were done by immigrants (bevándorló). I chose to put these two posters together as they convey the same message, that is immigration is a threat to Europeans and there is a direct link between immigrants and illegality and terrorism.

Firstly, the poster states that everybody who arrived to Europe in 2015 was an immigrant, yet the definition of immigrant is not clarified. In the government vocabulary, presumed by the context, immigration means something negative, it became synonymous with invader. An immigrant is a person who arrives from a poor country with a different, non-European culture, has anything but white skin, and wants to rape women, steal jobs from hardworking whites while not wanting to work and exploit the welfare system in the same time, and eventually wants to convert Europe to Islam. Government officials later added that the whole activity was backed by international corporatist money, mainly by George Soros, as they plan to invade Europe by using “immigrants” from the Middle-East. (Magyar Idők 2017) This argument is supported by the second poster, as it informs the readers: the terrorist attacks in Paris were done

by immigrants. Thus, every “immigrant” is a sleeping agent as well, they are waiting to be called and commit terrible crimes against the indigenous Europeans.

“Immigration” in the above mentioned sense had a key aspect in the ‘No’ campaign. That was the basis for the xenophobia and the fearmongering. First it enhanced xenophobia, that everything that is different is undesired, then it told people that foreigners are dangerous. Lastly, the government propaganda told the voters the EU bureaucrats, ‘Brussels’, want to plant these dangerous people among Hungarians – possibly as part of a greater conspiracy – thus the country needs immediate protection, that can only arrive from the government. The “Did you know?” campaign created fertile ground for the last phase of the campaign, the “Do not risk the future of Hungary”.

4.2.1.3) “Do not risk the future of Hungary!”



Picture 3 “Let us not risk the future of Hungary! We shall vote No! October 2.” (*kormany.hu*)

The last round of the government campaign posters was launched at the end of August. This one had only one type of poster with the message: “*Let us not risk the future of Hungary! We shall vote No! October 2.*” (see Picture 3) This is the first poster that informs voters what voting behavior is expected from them in the referendum. The author of the poster is not indicated in it clearly; neither is that there is a referendum on October 2. The colors of the poster do not resemble that of the previous blue posters, nevertheless red-white-green, the colors of the Hungarian national banner, suggest that it is a national cause.

However, after careful zooming in the poster, almost invisibly, it is indicated in the right bottom corner that it is the government, not Fidesz party, that created the poster. Thus again, the government failed to fulfill its duty to remain neutral, nevertheless, they did so in this instance in the legal campaign period. They claim that it is only by voting ‘No’ that voters can avert risking the future of the country. It is not evident how the future of Hungary would be risked should anyone decide to vote differently, nor is it clear whose future is at risk and for what reasons. This poster suggests, with its tone, with its appearance, with the tiny reference to its

creators, that the government informs the citizens that the nation is at risk, therefore people should participate and vote no, thus averting the danger that threatens the future of Hungary. Consequently, this poster follows the same fearmongering and misleading campaign that is built on half-truths and deception.

6.1.2) 'Boycott' the referendum campaign

BOYCOTT	THEME	FRAME	FREQUENCY
40 million FT 1,000 posters	Divert Attention	Negative	11
	False Information	Negative	9
	EU Referendum	Positive	7

The “Boycott” campaign’s main messages and frames can be summarized in short the following way; The government wants to **divert public attention** from the real problems (corruption, healthcare, and education) by using **lies and misinformation**, while this referendum is actually about **the EU membership**, so **voters should boycott** it by staying at home, so as to punish the government and staying in the EU.

The Boycott campaign was represented by the major leftist parties of Hungary. The greatest of these was MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party) that spent 10-15 million forints on the campaign that they launched in the beginning of September 2016. Their strategy was focused on “moving-posters”, which means that instead of sporadically scattering posters around the country, they created seven posters and erected them on main squares of towns.



Picture 4 “Concentrate! If you repeat ‘migrant’ frequently enough, you will not even notice that I destroyed the education. Do not help Viktor, stay at home on 2nd October” (mszp.hu, index.hu)

Their main message on the posters was that Orban, who represents the government, tries to manipulate the public with lies and falsehoods. On almost every poster they pictured Orban as a hypnotizer, or charlatan or a ridiculous liar who wants to deceive the public. (see Picture 4) The Orban on the posters was doing this because he wanted to divert attention from the real problems such as corruption, healthcare, and the necessity of economic reforms.

MSZP also tried to fight lies with facts, that is why on different posters they presented “five facts about the referendum” with short explanations that were the following:

- a) *“This referendum was not about refugees”*
- b) *“This referendum isolated Hungary”*
- c) *“This referendum was a bluff”*
- d) *“This referendum was xenophobic”*
- e) *“This referendum was only advantageous for Orban”*

Facts, if repeated as strong frames (Hobolt 2005) can have informative power, but they are more likely to influence hesitant voters rather than affecting strong partisans. When people are exposed to facts confronting with their beliefs, they tend to ignore them or take them as lies instead (Lipsitz 2007). Also, MSZP did not scatter these myth busting, correcting posters nationwide, so their actual influence should be considered minor.

As for colors, they chose red, as it was the official color of MSZP, and also they included their party logo. They encouraged people to stay at home on October 2nd, so as “not to help Viktor” in hypnotizing the public with tricks and lies. The layout, the positioning of images was distinctive from any other poster campaigns from that period.

The second largest ‘Boycott’ campaign was created by DK (led by former MSZP Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsany). They spent 10 million forints on the poster campaign, and posted five hundred of them nationwide. Their team created one type of poster, that portrays the party leader smiling. He looked directly in the camera which creates the feeling of trust and honesty

in the viewers (Keating 1976) Even though Gyurcsány is well-known politician (Median 2016_a), they added his name and his position to the poster. They used the party colors on the posters, that are blue and yellow, and included their party logo on the upper left corner.



Picture 5 “Stay at home, stay in Europe! Do not go to the anti-EU pseudo-referendum” (dk.hu)

The poster reads the following: “Stay at home, stay in Europe on October 2nd!”. And continues: “Do not participate in the anti-European pseudo-referendum of Fidesz!”. (see Picture 5) The latter refers to the same thing as that of MSZP. DK emphasized that the referendum was about Hungary’s position and status in the European Union, and also that Orban took a stance that was against the common European solution. Additionally, they also referred to the loaded question of the referendum, that is it did not ask voters about a “real” thing, but about a misleading half-truth. Their slogan “stay at home, stay in Europe” means that they, like MSZP, urged people to boycott the referendum participation, as they were interested in a Fidesz failure. Nevertheless, they did not mention the word ‘boycott’, or did not explain why it was necessary.

The third wave of the ‘Boycott’ campaign was done by three smaller opposition parties, namely Együtt (Together for Hungary, small liberal party), PM (Dialogue for Hungary, small liberal party), and MoMa (Movement for Modern Hungary, a self-allegedly conservative right-wing

party). They noted in their financial report that they spent 10-20 million forints on the campaign, and thus created 3-400 posters that they distributed nationwide.



Picture 6 “This is the answer to a stupid question. The one who stays at home, votes for Europe” (hvg.hu)

Their slogan on the poster read “This is the answer to a stupid question” (see Picture 6) and the poster shows two people with their middle fingers held up as they watch the television. This phrase was really similar to the MKKP posters that read: “Stupid answers to stupid questions”. The TV ad they are watching is that of the second wave of the government posters, one of the “Did you know?” posters. The two people are sitting at home, which refers to the second slogan of the poster: “The one who stays at home, stays in Europe”. This resonated with MSZP and DK messages, that is they encouraged voters to ‘boycott’ the referendum, because it was about Hungary’s European membership and dignity, and it asked a “false” question. The additional visual element on the poster is the word “Referendum 2016” that is crossed out by a red line.

The intention of including 2016 might have been to show that the parties are only against this particular referendum, and not the institution of referenda in general. They also included their party logos at the bottom of the posters.

This poster did not mention Orban, Fidesz, or the government. However, it took for granted that people would recognize the Fidesz poster in the background, even though it was blurred. It means that the government campaign had such a breadth, that even opposition parties acknowledged that voters were familiar with them. Having added the government poster on their own one, nevertheless, means that their poster was a reaction to Orban's messages, but, by showing no respect to it, people should ignore the false referendum.

In conclusion the 'Boycott' campaign's initial stance was that the referendum was used by the government to divert attention from the real domestic issues of Hungary. They all argued that Orban used lies and misinformation to deceive voters, and that the loaded referendum question was xenophobic. The campaign tried to come up with counter-frames by urging people to stay at home so as to maintain Hungary's European Union membership.

6.1.3) Vote 'Yes' campaign

YES	THEME	FRAME	FREQUENCY
	Europe	Positive	4
	Government	Negative	2
	Opposition	Negative	1

The “YES” campaign’s main messages and frames can be summarized in short the following way; **The EU membership** is very important and positive, **neither the government, nor the opposition** can or will understand that this referendum is actually **about the membership**, therefore voters should **vote YES**, so as to stay in the EU.

The ‘Yes’ campaign was represented and launched by the small opposition party, Magyar Liberális Párt (MLP - Hungarian Liberal Party). The party had one seat in the Hungarian National Assembly in 2016, and poll companies measured that they did not have the sufficient amount of support to pass the threshold and get seats in the parliament (Republikon 2016). Nevertheless, the party started its own campaign, urging people to vote ‘Yes’ on the referendum question, that is they would like the European Union to be able to relocate people to Hungary without the approval of the Hungarian National Assembly.

Their message was that the referendum was about Hungary’s European Union membership, and as a pro-EU integration party, they supported more EU authority, and urged for the decrease of nation sovereignty, in order to have more EU-level power. For them, it would not have meant giving up national interest, since, according to the party, Hungary’s interest was in the tighter cooperation of member states via the EU.



Picture 7 “Orban shall leave, we should say ‘yes’ to Europe” and “Yes. Referendum about the EU. If you stay at home, Orban stays with us. Vote “yes” on 2nd October!” (pictures taken by me in September 2016)

Main themes in their campaigns were reactions to the governmental posters, with frames indicating that this referendum was about the EU membership, and Hungary’s relation to the European Union. Their posters (see Picture 7) read: “Orban shall go, we shall say ‘Yes’ to Europe!”, and “If you stay at home, Orban stays ‘on our neck’³” These messages target Orban and the opposition as well. They also added “Referendum about the Union [EU]”, which is different from posters of the ‘Boycott’ campaign, as those posters merely referred to the EU, and hinted that the referendum was about “Europe”, but did not directly claim that it was a referendum about the EU.

The European Union appeared as a positive frame on their posters, and pro-EU attitude was conspicuous. Unlike any other campaigns, they created negative frames not only about the governmental campaign, but also about the opposition ones, that are the ‘Boycott’ campaign and the vote ‘Invalid’ campaign. As for colors, they used light blue and lemon yellow that are the official party colors, and they included the party logo on the poster.

³ Stay on somebody’s neck is a Hungarian saying that means that an annoying person would not leave somebody alone.

6.1.4) Vote 'Invalid' campaign

INVALID	THEME	FRAME	FREQUENCY
MKKP	Silly/Funny	Ridiculing	13
	Government	Negative/ Ridiculing	14

The “Invalid” campaign’s main messages and frames can be summarized in short the following way: This was **not a real and serious referendum**, the **government is treating the voters as if they were fools**, so let’s show them and **make fun** of them and spoil their false referendum by **voting invalidly**.

MKKP decided to actively participate in the campaign, with actual political goals. Their intention was to ridicule the government not only by funny counter-posters, but through a deliberate political act they urged voters for. As Hungarian regulations order that casting an invalid vote is not counted for the validity threshold, MKKP encouraged voters to turn out, but cast an invalid ballot by answering both ‘Yes’ and ‘No’, or drawing something funny on it, or by leaving a message to the Prime Minister. This way people are able to actively show to the government that they consider the democratic right to hold and participate in referenda seriously, however, they do not approve of the government and its loaded question. Should people cast invalid votes in high enough numbers, they would still have an invalid referendum and a strong indication of dissatisfaction with Orban. This could appear motivational for voters, as they have the possibility to actively do something against the government.

MKKP launched their Quota Referendum poster campaign in the beginning of September 2016. They raised money through donations, and collected approximately 34,530,099 forints, while their costs were 35 126 432 forints – the difference was covered by party money. While asking for financial aid from individuals, volunteers could also contribute to the success of the campaign by helping posting the posters.

They managed to purchase 450 commercial sized posters, 500 citylight posters⁴, 300 posters on ELMŰ boxes⁵, 120,000 A4 sized posters, 100,000 A3 sized posters, and even rented an airplane with a banner. This represent creativity and transparency, as all their invoices are uploaded to their website. They also created a mobile phone application that could turn any governmental poster into a funny MKKP poster. (MKKP Online) They also uploaded all their posters to their websites and encouraged everybody to download and print them wherever they could. Thus there was an uncountable amount and variations of MKKP posters. The main area of the campaign was the capital city, but they also targeted the countryside, therefore they had a broad nationwide campaign.

6.1.4.1) Silly Posters



Picture 8 “Did you know? An average Hungarian sees more UFOs than immigrants” and “The public water company could put LSD into the tap water system anytime” and “If 42 black and with horses stand closely together they could create a giant mutant zebra anytime” and the main message: “Stupid answers to stupid questions, vote invalidly” (mkkp.hu)

The first set of MKKP posters comprised of funny messages and ridiculous statements. (see Picture 8) They were intended to represent how twisted and embarrassing the government posters were. These types of posters are considered typical of the MKKP as they resemble their

⁴ These appear in bus stops.

⁵ ELMŰ is a Hungarian electricity provider, and they have transformer stations scattered in the country.

previous actions. Their argument was that the blue posters had the same type of made up and nonsensical claims just as theirs.

The first poster reads “*Did you know that an average Hungarian sees more UFOs than immigrants?*” or the second one,” *Did you know The public water company could put LSD into the tap water system anytime?*” – this one was actually refuted by the Water Company, while the third one had the text: “*If 42 black and white horses line next to each other, together they could create a giant mutant zebra anytime*”.

These posters used the power of humor to create a counter-frame for the negative and fearmongering atmosphere of the blue posters. Satirical and mocking parodies may have a negative effect on political players’ evaluation (Baumgartner et al 2012), and well targeted political humor can influence public opinion. The intention of MKKP was to make fun of the government just as, they noted, the government was taking the voters as if they were fools. The government, as it was stated by MKKP, lied and created made-up data, thus the party created fake facts and numbers in humorous ways to make it visible for the voters how Fidesz’s misleading campaign worked.

6.1.4.2) Government

The second type of MKKP posters consisted of those reacting to the government. This category was divided into further two subcategories: those sending a message to the government by referring to one of their policy related issues, and those copying the blue posters and turning them into ridiculing frames or responding to them in a humorous way.



Picture 9 “Did you know that there is war in Syria” and “Did you know that Moscow wants to settle a nuclear power plant to Hungary” and “Did you know that people are not stupid” and the main message: “Stupid answers to stupid questions, vote invalidly” (mkkp.hu)

Three posters were selected to introduce the first subcategory of the MKKP government-related posters. These one also start with the “Did you know?” question, however, they can be read as addressed to voters so as to inform them – and these are actual informative messages, and also as addressed to the government so that they might be enlightened by ‘reality’.

The first poster has the following text: “Did you know that there is war in Syria”. (see Picture 9) If the first reading is applied to the posters – meaning that they are addressed to the voters – the sentence refers to the fact that the majority of “influx of illegal immigrants” is of Syrian origin, and these people were fleeing from war in their country, thus they are refugees. The word ‘war’ is highlighted, copying the style of the blue posters, so as to raise awareness. The intention of the poster, as it is clearly stated in the bottom section, is to urge people to vote invalidly in the “silly” referendum. However, if the second reading is applied, that is these messages are addressed to the government officials, the statement “There is war in Syria” has the meaning of shaming. It means that government official should not take part in “silly referenda” where irregular migration and refugees are enmeshed, where loaded questions are asked from voters while spending billions of public money.

The second poster, raises the issue of the ever growing influence of Russian politics in Hungary. According to the latest polls, 26% of the people think that domestic politics is influenced by Russia, while this number was 9% in November 2016, and even lower during the referendum campaign (Nepszava Online). The government signed a contract with the Russian government on building a new nuclear reactor using Russian technology and loans financed by Russian banks. That is why the second poster reads: *“Did you know that Moscow wants to settle a nuclear power plant to Hungary?”* This refers to the blue poster that reads: *“Did you know that Brussels wants to settle illegal immigrants to Hungary?”* The MKKP poster also refers to a country by mentioning its capital city, a technique usually used in journalism, and referred to Russia that decided to “settle” a nuclear reactor in Hungary. Since it was the government’s major argument that they were fighting for national sovereignty over bureaucratic Brussels, MKKP highlighted the fact that they were reluctant to do similarly with the Russians.

The third poster has the following statement on it: *“Did you know that people are not stupid?”* This poster clearly addressed the government instead of the voters, therefore the second reading should be applied to it, and it tried to tell them that people cannot be manipulated limitlessly and without consequences. This also provides an insight into the logic and motivation behind the MKKP posters, that is to inform people about the misleading and deceptive governmental campaign and also to show the creators of the blue posters how faulty and spoiled their campaign strategy was.

Copying Them- Comparison

I chose four pair of posters that show a governmental poster on the left and an MKKP reflection to it on the right. The reflections are usually twisted versions of the blue posters and reveal the logic and conception of using the power of ridiculing.



Picture 10 “Did you know that there are about one million immigrants only in Libya who want to come to Europe” on the blue poster, and on the MKKP poster “There are about one million people in Hungary who want to go to Europe!”
(kormany.hu, mkkp.hu)

The blue governmental poster has three sections that are divided by dotted lines. The upmost section starts with the question “Tudta?” which means “Did you know?”, and it is followed by six different types of “facts” by the government concerning the “immigration crisis” in the middle section. The bottom section always contains the following information: “Referendum, October 2nd 2016”. There is no reference to the poster, the source of the “facts” or even to what type of voting behavior is expected by the unknown posters. However, it was still obvious for anyone that the blue posters are from the government.

On this particular poster it reads: “*There are about one million immigrants only in Libya who want to come to Europe*”. (see Picture 10) This information is presented as something worrying, given the context in which it was presented. The government had been framing immigration as worrisome and threatening for more than a year when this poster appeared, thus readers know “how they should understand it”. The part “only from Libya” made the numbers even scarier, as it implied that there are more areas from where “immigrants” would want to come to “Europe”. There is a systematic distinction on government posters between the EU, which is

referred to as ‘Brussels’, and Europe, which is to be defended not only from “immigrants” but from ‘Brussels’ too.

Interestingly, the poster does not make any distinction between Syrian refugees, who actually arrive from the Middle East, and the African refugees and irregular migrants who do arrive from Libya – however, they never set foot in Hungary. It is not clear how it is related to the Quota Referendum and how the Hungarian government got the information about Libyan people intending to leave their homeland. Nevertheless, the “one million immigrants” are highlighted with different color, so as to make it easier for the consumers to focus on the most important part of the message.

The grey MKKP poster follows the same logic, as it is also divided to three sections separated by dotted lines. The upper section starts with the same ‘Did you know?’ question, that has the same font, but different color. The middle section varies on every poster, just as on the government ones, and while it does not name the author of the poster it has two of the distinctive logo of the MKKP, the two-tailed dog.

The bottom section always has the following information: “Stupid answers to stupid questions! Vote Invalid!” The former can refer to either the referendum question or to the blue posters messages. “*Hülye*” mean stupid, nonsensical, and funny in Hungarian, thus a funny comment to the government’s lies shall also be considered as a “*hülye*” answer. Nevertheless, MKKP clearly states their intention to influence voting behavior, as they highlighted –with the same color as Fidesz - on each of their posters: “Vote Invalid!”.

On this poster the middle section memes the Libyan “fact” of the government by saying: “*There are about one million people in Hungary who want to go to Europe!*”. Firstly, it refers to the bad economic policy of Hungarian government that led to hundreds of thousands to leave the country for the EU. Secondly, it mentions Europe, and not the EU, thus, content specifically, it

can be read as to “Europe” which symbolizes freedom and democracy from “from Hungary” that no longer has these qualities. It highlights the difference between cultural Europe and political Hungary.

Pair Two



Picture 11 “Did you know that Brussels wants to settle a whole town’s worth of illegal immigrants in Hungary?” and Did you know? Not-Brussels does not want to not-settle not-a-whole-town’s-worth of non-illegal immigrants in Hungary?” (kormany.hu, mkkp.hu)

The second blue poster has the same structure as the previous one, thus only the middle section is considered, which reads: “Brussels wants to settle a whole town’s worth of illegal immigrants in Hungary?” (see Picture 11) Brussels refers to – in the government’s vocabulary – the bureaucratic EU machinery; an artificial enemy against which Orban has been fighting a war of independence. Apart from the fact that the EU did not intend to settle anyone in Hungary, the poster also misleads the readers, as it does not specify how large that “town” is. Town has a meaning of something with greater population, thus it implies that the EU means to forcefully settle a huge number of “illegal immigrants” in Hungary. The phrase “illegal immigrant” is also an artificial creation of the government that was first used in 2015 in broader sense. It represents the mass of people who are related to terrorism, security threat and invasion. Therefore, the poster’s narrative was that bureaucrats in Brussels intend to settle terrorists and illegal

dangerous people to Hungary. Nevertheless, the government already is aware of that, hence it informs the voters with the help of this poster, and there is a referendum in October.

The MKKP poster tried to react to this poster by stating facts contradicting the government's claims. In a word-by-word translation, their poster reads: "Did you know? Not-*Brussels does not want to not-settle not-a-whole-town's-worth of non-illegal immigrants in Hungary?*" Literal translation has its difficulties; however, the key message is that MKKP denies almost every part of the blue poster. Firstly, "not-Brussels" means that the government-created 'Brussels' narrative of evil bureaucrats is fake. Secondly, the "does not want" part refers to the fact that the EU does not intend to impose the settlement of refugees anywhere. Thirdly, the "not-settle" section tries to highlight that the quota proposal is not about the settlement of people, only about the relocation of the decision making procedure of possible refugees. Fourthly, the "not-a-whole-town's-worth of" part shows that the actual quota proposal would mean in the case of Hungary the relocation of 1,200 people, which cannot be considered as an average town's worth of population. Lastly, MKKP refers to the phrase "illegal" negatively, highlighting that according to international regulation, such as the Geneva Convention in 1951, which was adopted by the Hungarian legislation too, it is not illegal to cross any borders for refugees when fleeing from wars. The fact that Hungary did not want to accelerate the decision making procedure means that Hungary actually hindered the act that could decide whether these people "illegally" crossed the borders or not.



Picture 12 “Did you know that more than 300 people died in terrorist attacks in Europe since the beginning of the refugee crisis?” and “Did you know that there are more blue posters than immigrants in Hungary since the beginning of the immigration crisis?” (*kormany.hu, mkkp.hu*)

The third governmental poster reads: “*Did you know that more than 300 people died in terrorist attacks in Europe since the beginning of the refugee crisis?*” (see Picture 12) This message is one of the most exemplifying indicators of the logic of the blue posters. It uses all the tools the government created to reframe the issue of refugees. Firstly, it refers to the previously established term “immigration crisis” without explaining it. Thus it repeats again what voters already learned that it was a crisis created by immigrants, foreigners who came illegally to Europe. Therefore, the reference point is a time period people probably remember as turmoil. Secondly, the new theme of the poster is “terrorism”, an even higher level of danger than a mere crisis, as in these instance people died in great numbers. It tries to create a direct link between immigrants and murder. The poster does not distinguish between refugees, irregular migrants, terrorists and third-generation descendants of immigrants. It does not mention either that in various cases the same terrorist organization committed a terrorist attack from which thousands of refugees were fleeing from to Europe.

This poster is one of the greatest examples of fearmongering, as it is put in the context of the quota proposal of the EU, thus it entails that “Brussels” want to distribute these terrorists among EU citizens, and therefore there would be more terrorist attacks, even in Hungary. Nevertheless, the government provides the solution in the bottom part of the poster: “Referendum 2016”. This way Orban calls for action to defend the country against terrorism, so by casting their votes, citizens can participate in the defense and fight against terrorists and bureaucrats.

The MKKP reflection plays on the same logic, using the government’s tools against them. Firstly, they state *“Did you know that there are more blue posters than immigrants in Hungary since the beginning of the immigration crisis?”* This sentence refers to the fact that immigration is not an actual problem in Hungary, as almost none of the hundreds of thousands of people who crossed the borders in 2015 stayed in Hungary (IOM 2016). Nevertheless, it mentions that the number of blue posters, that is governmental propaganda has grown considerably, on which Orban tries to persuade voters to answer a “silly question”, therefore, similarly to the blue posters, MKKP offers a solution; “vote invalidly in October 2016”,



Picture 13 “Did you know that there has been an overwhelming increase in sexual harassments against women since the beginning of the immigration crisis? and: “Did you know that there has been less money spent on healthcare since the beginning of the immigration crisis?” (kormany.hu, mkkp.hu)

The last compared blue poster reads: “*Did you know that there has been an overwhelming increase in sexual harassments against women since the beginning of the immigration crisis?*” (see Picture 13) This poster follows the same logic as the previous one, and states that it is not only a lethal threat of terrorists, but also a grave danger for women to accommodate “immigrants” in their countries. This poster also lacks explanations, and complex arguments describing where and why horrible incidents happened in various cases. The purpose of the poster is simple; to frame the issue of refugees as a great threat to the lives and culture of Europeans, regardless of any other considerations.

That is why the MKKP poster is a fitting reflection on the government poster as it reads: “*Did you know that there has been less money spent on healthcare since the beginning of the immigration crisis?*” Healthcare is the most salient issue in Hungary, even during the most heightened period of the campaign, people considered it more important than anything else, let alone immigration. (Iránytű 2016) MKKP refers to the fact that the government had neglected healthcare for years, and similarly to the Boycott campaign’s logic, they also pointed out that

Orban's regime tried to divert attention from important issues by using the xenophobic card and spreading fear.

6.2) Shifts in Public Opinion and the Referendum Results

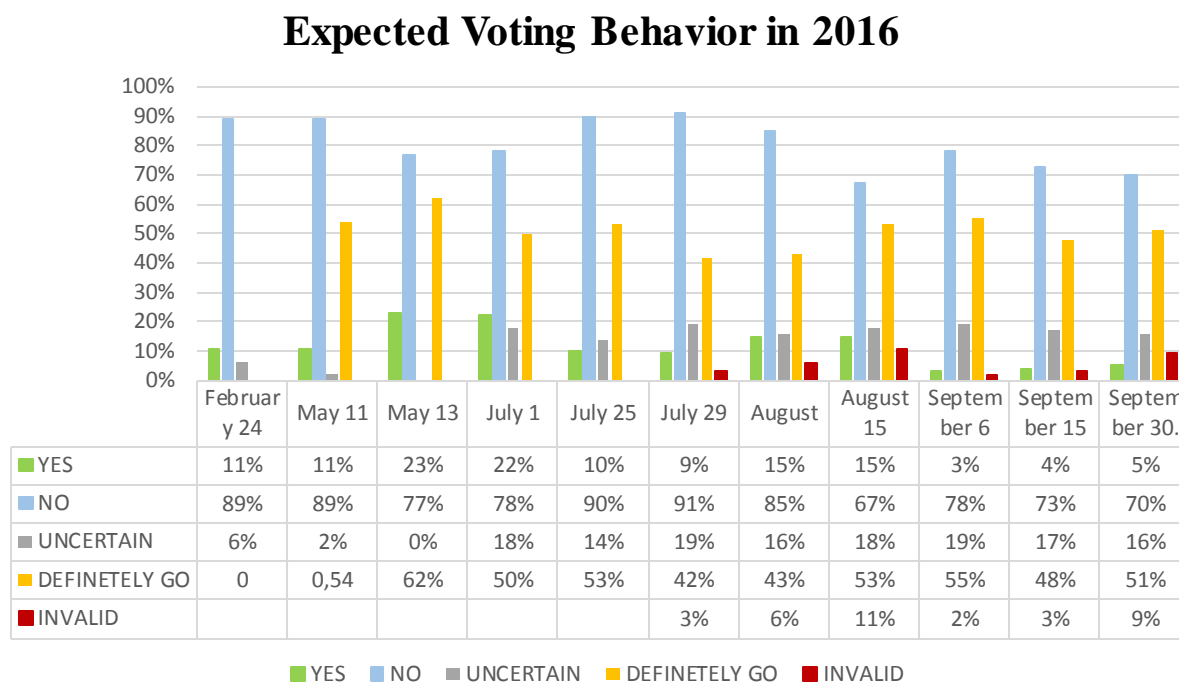


Figure 14 Expected voting behavior, based on the data of the major Hungarian poll companies. The detailed list of them can be found in the Appendix.

Figure 14 is the summary of the measured expected voting behavior, done by the major poll companies in Hungary. The tendency in the ‘Yes’ answers dropped from a high 11% in February to 5% in late September, and resulted in a low 1.64% in the referendum results on 2nd October. The initial 11% might come down to the fact that it was measured right after the announcement of the referendum in February, thus voters were exposed to no campaign messages, therefore they were uninformed about the referendum.

There is a declining tendency in the ‘No’ answers too, as it dropped from the initial 89% to 70%, while it was highest, 91%, before the launch of any opposition campaigns and the official campaigning period and after the second wave of the governmental posters (“Did you know”). This suggests that as long as only one campaigner framed the issue, people were exposed to one side of the story, thus this is represented in the poll data. However, as soon as new frames appeared in August, there was a significant decline in the ‘No’ answers. Nevertheless, these do not show voters’ intentions for boycotting the campaign, as it represents only those who

answered that they would participate, or at least they are considering to participate. On the referendum day, 98% of the people answered ‘No’, but the number on invalid votes – 6.4% - are not counted in this number, thus approximately 92% of the people answered ‘No’.

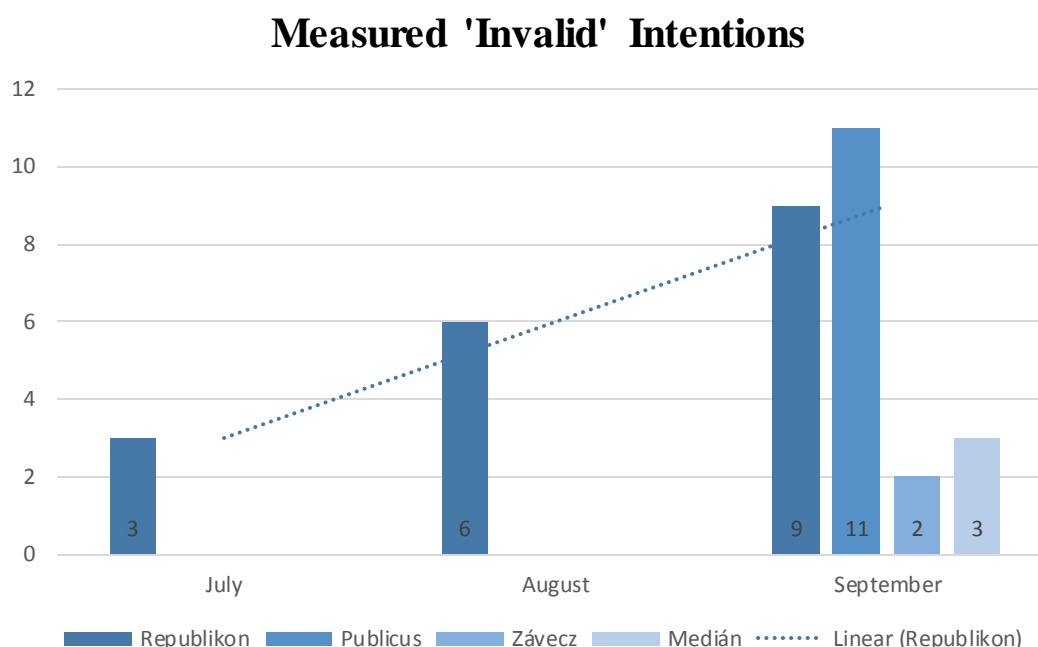


Figure 15 Measured 'Invalid' intentions based on poll data (sources indicated in the legend) during the campaign.

As for the ‘Invalid’ campaign’s efficiency, measured intentions vary, as Figure 15 indicates. It was only Republikon Institute that measured ‘Invalid’ intentions for more than one month, and it shows a gradual increase with the emergence of the ‘Invalid’ campaign by MKKP. As the party started communicating about their poster campaign in August, the number of people who answered they would cast an invalid ballot doubled from 3% to 6% in the Republikon data, and went even higher in September to 9%, while Publicus measured and even higher 11% in September. ‘Invalid’ intentions also were detectable in Závész and Medián polls.

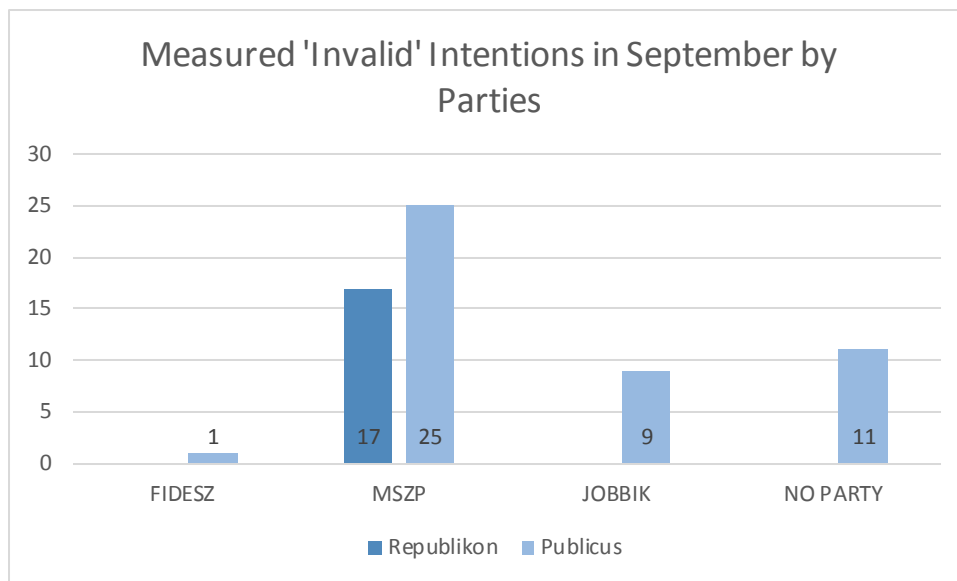


Figure 16 Measured 'Invalid' intentions in September 2016, distributed by parties (sources indicated in the legend)

Publicus carried out a detailed measurement for the 'Invalid' intentions in September, see Figure 16, and found that left-wing opposition voters [MSZP] with the intention of participation on the referendum campaign planned to vote 'Invalid' by a high 25%, that is every fourth person intended to spoil their votes. It was despite the fact that major leftist opposition parties called for the boycott of the referendum in their campaigns, which can indicate the success of the 'Invalid' campaign to overcome the mainstream parties' frame of 'Boycott', and the inefficiency of the left wing messages. Republikon measured MSZP voters planning to vote 'Invalid' a similarly high 17%. In the meantime, Jobbik supporters answered in 9% that they wished to spoil their votes, while Jobbik politicians urged their voters to vote 'No' – even though Jobbik did not participate in the poster campaign. One per cent of supporters answered that they would vote 'Invalid', while those without any parties intended to do so in 11%.

The final turnout rate was 44.08% which was below the 50%+1 validity threshold for referenda. Thus, in spite of excessive and costly campaigning, Fidesz government lost the referendum, as they failed to convince the majority of Hungarian voters to participate and vote 'No'.

In the countryside, highest was the turnout in *Vas* and *Győr-Moson-Sopron* counties (both are in Western Hungary) – 52.01% in the former and 51.11% in the latter – the only two counties where they exceeded the validity threshold. In all the other seventeen counties, and in Budapest the turnout was not high enough so as to have a valid referendum. In the history of Hungarian referenda since 1989, the average turnout rate was 1.8 per cent, and only one of all the referenda had a turnout higher than 50%. It meant, however, no obstacle for the validity, as there was a different regulation concerning validity prior to the 2010 Fidesz government, as mentioned earlier. The turnout was the lowest in Budapest with 39.43%, the capital city, where there was the highest number of opposition voters (Republikon 2016), and the counter ‘No’ campaign was the most extended (Index.hu 2016) Also people are the most politically active in the capital city (Republikon 2017),

As for the rate of invalid votes, the average had been 1.8% in the referenda, with a high 5.9% in the 1989 referendum. The nationwide average in 2016 was 6.2%, the highest invalid result ever. As for the nineteen Hungarian counties, excluding Budapest, highest was the invalid rate in *Csongrád* with 7.26%, and lowest in *Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg* county with 4.45% - that is almost three times higher than the historical national average. The capital city produced exceptional numbers. The average of invalids was 11.76, that is almost twice that of the national average, 61% higher than the second highest invalid rate in *Csongrád*, and almost six times more than the historical average of the country since 1989.

Invalid Referendum Results

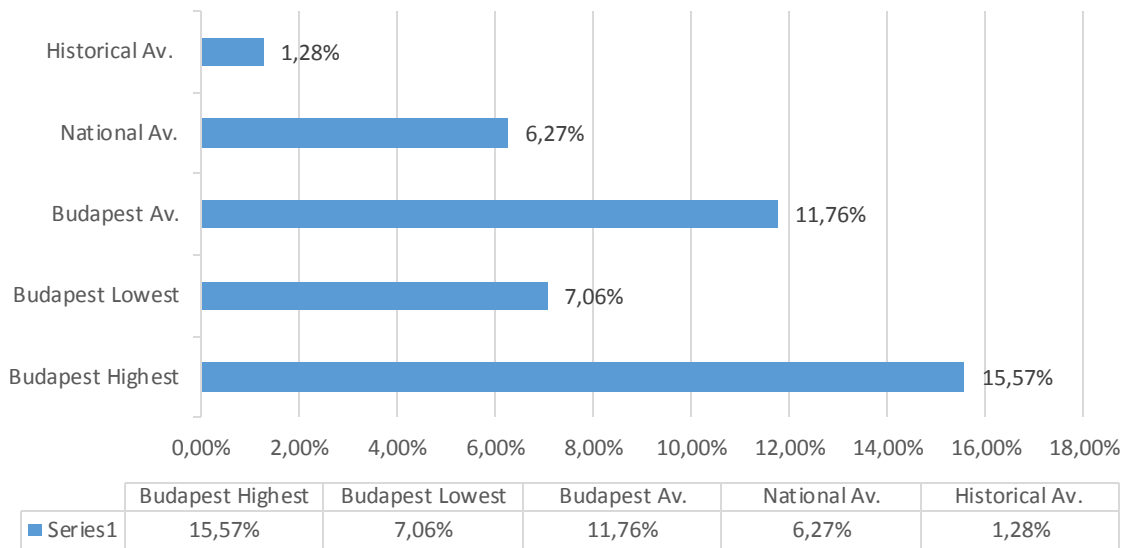


Figure 17 The amount of invalid votes in the referendum (valasztas.hu)

None of the twenty-three districts had high enough turnouts for the 50% validity threshold (see Appendix for the detailed, district by district table of Budapest results). Six of the districts had a non-Fidesz majority local government in 2016; these are districts IV, IX, XIII, XIV, XIX, XXI, while all the other districts had Fidesz-led local governments. As it is shown in Figure 17, lowest was the turnout in district VIII (Fidesz) with 32.45% – even though they had a separate poster campaign urging for participation and voting ‘No’ – and highest in district XII (Fidesz) with 46.06%.

As for the rate of invalid votes, numbers were higher in every district than the national average, and in more than half of the districts invalid rates were higher than the city-wide average [11.76%]. It was the highest in district XIII (Opposition) and XV (Opposition). Turnouts were also below (32.84% and 38.22%) the city-wide average (43.42%) in these districts. Compared to the total population eligible to vote, it was the lowest in district XIII (Opposition) with only 27.61% turnout.

Those answering ‘Yes’ are only a little above the national average (1.66%) on a city-wide scale with a low 2.11%. It was the highest in district VI (Fidesz) with 2.75%, and the lowest in district XV (Fidesz) with 1.64%. These numbers indicate that the ‘Yes’ campaign could not convince voters in great numbers to vote ‘Yes’ on the referendum, thus their European Union counter-frame campaign could not result in a significant change in voting behavior.

The poll data and the exceptionally high number of invalid votes in the referendum results show that the “Invalid” campaign was efficient in convincing people that they should spoil their votes. There were many people on social media who took photos of their drawn and distorted ballots and posted them online (Index.hu 2016_a). People left messages to the government and showed their disapproval of the referendum question and of the government’s policies in general. The high number of votes show that people understood the reframed message of the MKKP campaign, and deliberately decided to express their opinion. Naturally, not all invalid votes were cast because of the MKKP posters, as there are always some wrongly filled ballots. However, the fact that the national average was four times more than the historical national average, and that in some districts of the capital it was more than fifteen per cent shows that we can, based on this empirical evidence, establish a strong and direct relationship between the ridiculing “Invalid” campaign and the deliberate act of spoiled ballots. This relationship is stronger than that of between the “Boycott” campaign and the number of people not participating, as there may have been countless of potential variables contributing to their staying away. But the outstandingly high numbers of invalid votes are very unlikely to be the results of mere chance. Thus, due to the MKKP campaign, along with the “Boycott” campaign, could contribute to the failure of the government’s referendum, as it turned out to be an invalid referendum with not high enough turnout.

7) Conclusion

Even though it was an invalid referendum, the government launched an additional poster campaign in which they tried to frame their failed action as a success. They argued that even though the turnout was not high enough, 98% of the people voted for the government's proposal, which means 3.3 million votes. That number was actually higher than Fidesz's voters, thus the government could highlight that they managed to convince, in great numbers, non-Fidesz voters too. The government also initiated a constitutional amendment that would have established a constitutional ban for the "mandatory settlement" of non-Hungarians to the territory of Hungary without the approval of national assembly, all the opposition parties voted against their amendment, therefore it failed too. This was, eventually, a double defeat for the Orban government, and it resulted in the changing in the discourse.

The broader implications of the campaign results in Hungarian politics were that the opposition, for the first time since the 2010 Fidesz victory, managed to efficiently and successfully fight against the government's proposal. They did that in an extremely skewed and biased media environment, with incomparably less financial resources (tens of millions against tens of billions), and, in case of the MKKP, with the help of donations and voluntary work. This, especially the latest, showed the power of civic culture, the potential in private initiations and voluntary work. This might be one reason why the government, after this political defeat, began to politically fight against NGOs in Hungary, denouncing them to be foreign agents, which, eventually, resulted in a law in April 2017 that threatens the academic freedom and the very existence of Central European University.

The intentions of this thesis were to analyze the 2016 Referendum campaign and examine how the framing of the referendum influenced voting behavior. The answer is that one part of the campaign that reframed the issue with the use of humor and managed to influence voters to

express their political opinion deliberately. Thus voters could show the government that they did not approve of its anti-democratic, fearmongering and lying campaign against refugees or the European Union. This is in line with my argument, that it was a Hoboltian second order referendum, one about voters' government satisfaction.

Moreover, polls in October 2016 revealed that the number of pro-EU people reached its ever highest level in Hungary. This stands with my second main argument, that people relied on their EU preferences when making their decisions. Nevertheless, the governmental campaign may also be considered to be efficient and partly successful, as it managed to motivate every third Hungarian person, that is more than 40% of the voters, to actively participate and vote in accordance with Orban's position.

Therefore, the conclusion is that even unlimited amount of money and a loaded referendum question backed by a year-long extensive campaigning are not enough to convince people. The number of variables that contributed to the failure abound, but there is room for hope for small organizations and political movements even in semi-democratic countries that have state propaganda. Posters, may them be called pre-modern or obsolete, still give significant part of campaigning and, with the help of strong frames, are able to influence voting behavior in exceptionally great numbers. They are effective tools in the hands of campaigners to raise awareness, correct misinformation, and to motivate people for political action.

Further research could focus on the evolution of MKKP posters, as they have played an important part in the public communication of the movement since their establishment. Also, MKKP participated with posters in another successful campaign in early 2017, when they aided the anti-Olympics movement which resulted in the withdrawal of the Hungarian application. This would provide a more thorough understanding of the power of humorous posters that are intended to raise attention while ridiculing the opponent.

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of all the companies that measured voting intentions during the campaign in 2016.

DATE (2016)	YES	NO	UNCERTA IN	DEFINETELY GO	POLL COMP.
September 30.	5%	70%	16%	51%	Republikon
September 15	4%	73%	17%	48%	Republikon
September 6	3%	78%	19%	55%	Századvég
August 15	15%	67%	18%	53%	Publicus
August	15%	85%	16%	43%	Tárki
July 29	9%	91%	19%	42%	Republikon
July 25	10%	90%	14%	53%	Závecz
July 1	22%	78%	18%	50%	Publicus
May 13	23%	77%	0%	62%	Nézőpont
May 11	11%	89%	2%	54%	Századvég
February 24	11%	89%	6%	N/A	Századvég

Source: (valasztas.hu)

Appendix 2. Complete table of the referendum results in all the Hungarian counties, the capital and other sources

County	Turnout	Invalid	Yes	No
Budapest	39,43 %	11,76 %	2,11 %	97,89 %
Baranya	40,74 %	5,75 %	1,99 %	98,01 %
Bács-Kiskun	45,95 %	4,68 %	1,45 %	98,55 %
Békés	43,15 %	5,23 %	1,71 %	98,29 %
Borsod-Abaúj Zemplén	41,71 %	5,18 %	1,92 %	98,08 %
Csongrád	44,70 %	7,26 %	1,69 %	98,31 %
Fejér	45,04 %	5,80 %	1,66 %	98,34 %
Győr-Moson- Sopron	51,11 %	4,90 %	1,40 %	98,60 %
Hajdú-Bihar	43,15 %	4,64 %	1,43 %	98,57 %
Heves	46,04 %	5,23 %	1,56 %	98,44 %
Jász-Nagykun- Szolnok	42,55 %	5,10 %	1,66 %	98,34 %
Komárom- Esztergom	43,73 %	5,75 %	1,59 %	98,41 %
Nógrád	45,08 %	4,67 %	1,51 %	98,49 %
Pest	43,60 %	6,66 %	1,52 %	98,48 %
Somogy	44,63 %	4,92 %	1,65 %	98,35 %
Szabolcs- Szatmár-Bereg	44,58 %	4,45 %	1,70 %	98,30 %
Tolna	45,67 %	4,59 %	1,71 %	98,29 %
Vas	52,01 %	5,04 %	1,61 %	98,39 %
Veszprém	47,56 %	5,37 %	1,51 %	98,49 %
Zala	48,62 %	5,06 %	1,56 %	98,44 %
Embassies	83,34 %	13,28 %	2,99 %	97,01 %
Letter	47,47 %	0,29 %	0,77 %	99,23 %
Nationwide results	44.08%	6.17%	1.64%	98.36%

Source: (valasztas.hu)

Appendix 3. The list of all the districts with the detailed referendum results

%	YES	NO	INVALID	VALID	TURNOUT
Budapest	2,11	97,89	11,76	34,74	39,43
I.	2,57	97,43	15,08	38,65	45,62
II.	2,16	97,84	15,29	37,67	44,54
III.	2,1	97,9	12,2	35,11	40,05
IV.	2,17	97,83	11,3	33,42	37,73
V.	2,66	97,34	15,33	36,17	42,82
VI.	2,75	97,25	15,53	30,04	35,61
VII.	2,47	97,53	15	28,34	33,39
VIII.	2,53	97,47	12,89	28,23	32,45
IX.	2,5	97,5	13,69	31,61	36,7
X.	2,32	97,68	9,44	32,77	36,21
XI.	2,07	97,93	13,17	37,33	43,06
XII.	2,05	97,95	14,67	39,23	46,06
XIII.	2,39	97,61	15,75	27,61	32,84
XIV.	2,41	97,59	12,54	33,07	37,88
XV.	1,64	98,36	15,75	34,92	38,22
XVI.	1,91	98,09	10,44	40,88	45,69
XVII.	1,71	98,29	9,21	38,81	42,79
XVIII.	1,98	98,02	8,84	36,98	40,61
XIX.	1,98	98,02	9,77	34,88	38,72
XX.	1,85	98,15	7,6	33,94	36,76
XXI.	1,97	98,03	8,71	35,47	38,94
XXII.	1,65	98,35	10,37	39,16	43,75
XXIII.	2,11	97,89	8,71	37,76	41,46
national average	1,66	98,34	6,27	40,41	43,42

Source: (valasztas.hu)

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