

Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Hungary
2020-2022

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Introduction

A lot has changed for this world since 2020, as an entire eternity of lockdowns, mandates, expectations and rather unexpected events ensued with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Somewhat paradoxically yet characteristic of any important event in the world history, we learnt that going “back to normal” will never be possible: still, a still ravaging pandemic is very much taking some and throwing other lives in ever increasing poverty. But pandemic was not the only “crisis” we have come to witness since 2020 in Europe: The Russian aggression in Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis, climate change, the rise of authoritarian and exclusionary regimes and politics have all amounted to this emerging sense of the crisis zeitgeist affecting virtually all spheres of human (and non-human) influence. In fact, the world events from 2020 until today have inevitably changed the very way we “theorize” crisis.¹

The same can be argued about the state of hate speech, which seems to have changed rather substantially since the time before the pandemic, both in frequency and the scope/content.² In this “pandemic of hate”³, online hate speech in particular has been ravaging amid some attempts to curb it through social media policies: in the US and the UK, Anti-Asian hate speech increased by 1662% in 2020 compared to 2019.⁴ Such a situation has in turn also increased the numbers of hate crimes aimed at minorities or underprivileged groups.⁵ Most often, these cases are sparked by celebrity comments related to the presumed expressions of “free speech”, showing once again how volatile the situation in relation to hate speech and hate crime can be.

For hate crime not to be volatile and “flammable”, systems and governments in particular, have to come up with certain responses. For these responses to be effective, a political will paired with adequate capacities is a must. In Hungary, a country well known for its government that has contributed to the erosion of democracy for now more than a decade, the issue of political will becomes fundamental. The state of crisis mentioned at the beginning of this report is in legal terms best explained through “the state of exception”, which has been introduced in Hungary relatively recently, in 2015

¹ Walby, S. (2022). Crisis and society: developing the theory of crisis in the context of COVID-19. *Global Discourse*, 12(3-4), 498-516.

² BBC News. 15 November 2021. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-59292509> Accessed 22 February 2023

³ UN. 2022. A Pandemic of Hate. Available at <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/impact-and-prevention/a-pandemic-of-hate> Accessed 22 February 2023

⁴ Uncovered. 2022. Uncovered: Online Hate Speech in the Covid Era. Available at <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/research-papers/hate-speech-report-2021/> Accessed 22 February 2023

⁵ Human Rights Watch. 2020. Covid-19 Fuelling anti-Asian racism and xenophobia worldwide. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>. Accessed 22 February 2023

following “the state of crisis due to mass migration”. In this particular case, the state of exception granted Hungarian authorities rights to circumvent the EU regulations related to migration, introducing severely restricted transit zones for migrants. For years, the streets of Budapest and other Hungarian cities, towns and even villages were flooded with the calls for “national consultations” against immigration and George Soros⁶, for long perceived as the mastermind behind the refugee crisis who also instructed the European Commission position on the issue. But the Hungarian government did not back down, as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced his government would defy a European Union ruling (such as the one from 2018, criminalizing lawyers and activists who help asylum seekers was in breach of European law) and stick by its controversial immigration laws.⁷

With such a “starting position” and the fact that the ruling Hungarian government coalition led by far-right Fidesz won the 2022 elections by a landslide against the united opposition, expecting a radical change concerning the state of hate crime would have been somewhat ludicrous. The pandemic and the War in Ukraine have certainly affected the trajectories in relation to hate speech between 2020-2023, leading to a set of arguably progressive changes when it comes to mitigating the consequences of hate speech. By focusing on the legislation, law enforcement practices related to minorities and the overall attitude of society towards minorities. This report will also explore how the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine impacted xenophobia. Finally, the report will indicate the most recent activities of the far right and Islamist groups for the timeframe 2020-23.

⁶ Financial Times. 2017. Hungary steps up anti-Soros rhetoric with ‘national consultation’. Available at <https://www.ft.com/content/76ce19e4-a768-11e7-93c5-648314d2c72c> Accessed 22 February 2023

⁷ BBC. 2021. Hungary's Viktor Orban to defy EU over immigration law. 21 December 2021. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59748173> Accessed 28 February 2023

1. Changes (positive or negative) in the legislation affecting the interests of minorities

One domain in which the most negative developments can be noted is associated with the changes in the legislation affecting the interests of minorities in Hungary. The changes in this section are, most often, a continuation of the negative trends is rather visible. Following the 2018 law, stipulating that persons caught helping migrants not entitled to protections seek asylum or gain status in Hungary will be subject to prison⁸, it seemed as if the Hungarian legislation concerning hate crime has been significantly and irreversibly backtracking. However, there have been significant improvements of the anti-immigration and hate crime legislation in the wake of the pandemic. In part, these changes have been conditioned by the May 2020 ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which labeled the practice of retaining asylum seekers for excessively long periods in transit zones as a deprivation of liberty. Following such a ruling, the court did indicate that the transit zones were lawful, but put a cap on the maximum time individuals may be held there to four weeks – leading Hungary to close the transit zones on its borders to Serbia.⁹

Arguably the most resounding legal change was the omnibus bill from 2021, censoring the communication about LGBTQ+ community to underaged citizens. The bill, sponsored by the ruling Fidesz, was framed as “enabling stricter action against pedophile offenders and the protection of children”, which includes a ban on promoting or portraying gender identities different from sex at birth, as well as the promotion of changing one's sex or homosexuality to those under 18.¹⁰ Such a legislative action was met with fierce (albeit still only verbal) resistance from the European Union, including the President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen and the European Commissioners for Justice and the Internal Market.¹¹ Hungarian treatment of minorities has been under the

⁸ Euronews. 2018. Hungary approves “STOP Soros” bills, defying EU and rights groups. 20 June 2020. Available at <https://www.euronews.com/2018/06/20/hungary-approves-stop-soros-bills-defying-eu-and-rights-groups> Accessed 28 February 2023

⁹ OECD Library. 2023. Hungary. Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/2c9eaf3f-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/2c9eaf3f-en> Accessed 28 February 2023

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch. 2021. Hungary: Reject Bill Banning Discussion of LGBT Issues. News: Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/11/hungary-reject-bill-banning-discussion-lgbt-issues> Accessed 27 March 2023

¹¹ ILGA Europe. 2021. Anti-LGBTI legislation in Hungary violates children's rights. Available at <https://www.ilga-europe.org/blog/how-new-anti-lgbti-legislation-hungary-violates-childrens-rights/> Accessed 28 February 2023

spotlight also in the early stages of the pandemic, when the parliament voted for the omnibus bill (in Article 33) that replaced ‘gender’ with ‘gender at birth’ in the civil registry, effectively banning transgender and intersex people from accessing legal gender recognition – a decision which has been later annulled by the Constitutional Court of the country.¹²

As per the other, more positive developments that could be linked to policy change, a new anti-trafficking strategy (2020-23) and its Action Plan for 2020–2021 was adopted in February 2020. Based on the 4P “paradigm”: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, its implementation was hindered by the pandemic.¹³ Among other things, the Government called on the Minister of Justice to review the definition of human trafficking in the Criminal Code with the involvement of the Minister of Interior to better meet international standards. The government also allocated 91 million Hungarian forints (about 250,000 EUR) for the implementation of the plan. Some of the most relevant objectives included, among other things, the underage victims of trafficking, especially women. What the strategy also focused on was the role of internet in sex trafficking as well as the procedural gaps such as the „Revision of legislation concerning the means of proof acquisition, and acts of proof, as well as the examination of the possibility for victims to be exempted from liability for offenses committed in their vulnerable position.”¹⁴

While the anti-trafficking strategy implicitly deals with the prevention of hate crime, the National Crime Prevention Strategy and Action Plan did not include any specific measures aimed at countering hate crime. Hungary also has a Working Group against hate crime (GYEM), established in January 2012 by Amnesty International Hungary, Háttér Society, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union. The working group

¹² Ilga Europe. 2020. Hungary Rolls back Legal Protections, puts trans and intersex people at risk. 19 May 2020. Available at <https://ilga-europe.org/press-release/hungary-rolls-back-legal-protections-puts-trans-intersex-people-at-risk/> Accessed 14 March 2023

¹³ European Commission. Migration and Home Affairs. Available at https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/organised-crime-and-human-trafficking/together-against-trafficking-human-beings/eu-countries/hungary_en#:~:text=On%2018%20February%202020%2C%20the,%2C%20protection%2C%20prosecution%20and%20partnership. Accessed 28 February 2023

¹⁴ Kormany (Hungarian Government). 2020. National Strategy Against Trafficking in Human Beings 2020-2023. Available at <https://thb.kormany.hu/download/d/f2/c2000/National%20Strategy%20Against%20Trafficking%20in%20Human%20Beings%202020-2023.pdf> Accessed 28 February 2023

contributed to training of law enforcement agents at the EU level and has taken part in making scholarly research in the field publicly available through the organization of conferences.¹⁵

Hungarian immigration policy has remained a matter of fierce criticism, both within and outside of the country. As the Court of Justice of the European Union had ruled in May 2020, “Hungary’s practice of automatically placing the quasi-totality of asylum-seekers in closed land-border transit zones during the entire asylum procedure constitutes unlawful detention”.¹⁶ To address this, Hungarian government introduced a new asylum seeking system, based on submitting the statement of intent, which could then only be submitted at the Hungarian embassies in Serbia (Belgrade) or Ukraine (Kyiv), except for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, family members of those who are recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, those subject to forced measures, and measures or punishments affecting personal liberty.¹⁷ if this statement is rendered successful, the individual could obtain a special travel permit for entering Hungary in order to apply for asylum there.¹⁸ The relevant documents remain the Interior Minister Decree no. 16/2020 (VI. 17.) on the procedure concerning the statement of intent for the purpose of lodging an asylum application 16/2020. (VI. 17.) BM (rendelet a menedékjogi kérelem benyújtására irányuló szándéknyilatkozattal kapcsolatos eljárásról). The security agencies are not obliged to provide justification of why an individual may be considered a threat to national security. In practice, following the introduction of this policy, mostly converted Christians from Iran facing persecution in their homecountry arrived to Hungary in this way.^{19,20} Another issue of asylum policy is related to pushbacks occurring in spite of the ECtHR judgments, mostly on the border

¹⁵ Gyűlölet-bűncselekmények Elleni Munkacsoport. 2023. Aktualitasok. Available at <https://www.gyulotellen.hu/aktualitasok> Accessed 27 March 2023

¹⁶ Hungarian Helsinki Committee. 2020. Hungary de facto removes itself from the Common European Asylum System. Available at <https://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/new-Hungarian-asylum-system-HHC-Aug-2020.pdf> Accessed 03 March 2023

¹⁷ Asylum Information Database (AIDA). 2021. Available at <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/hungary/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/> Accessed 03 March 2023

¹⁸ Hungarian Government Decree 292/2020. (VI. 17.) Korm. Rendelet a menedékjogi kérelem benyújtására irányuló szándéknyilatkozattal kapcsolatban nagykövetségek kijelöléséről

¹⁹ Bosnewslife. 2021. Iran Christians get shelter in Hungary after international outcry. Available at <https://bosnewslife.com/2021/03/13/iran-christians-get-shelter-in-hungary-after-international-outcry/> Accessed 04 April 2023

²⁰ Asylum Information Database (AIDA). 2021. Available at <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/hungary/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/> Accessed 03 March 2023

with Serbia.²¹ Since 1 January 2022 a foreigner shall not be granted subsidiary protection/protection is withdrawn if there are reasonable grounds for believing that, prior to his or her admission by Hungary if they have committed an offence in his or her country of origin punishable in Hungary by a term of imprisonment of up to three years or more and there are reasonable grounds for believing that the applicant left his or her country of origin only in order to avoid the penalty for the offence. Although this amendment per se is not incompliant with the Qualification Directive, the Hungarian asylum provisions on exclusion from international protection due to serious crime are still not compliant with EU law, pointing to an array of issues overall related to the immigration policy of Hungary. The well-known hard-line stance on immigration taken by Orbán's government has continuously amounted to mistreating and abusing refugees and asylum seekers who attempt to enter the country. In some cases, these incidents have been classified as hate crimes. However, it still remains unclear whether there is a potential for change: following the expiration of the previous Migration Strategy (2014-20), Hungarian government has not developed an alternative to this date.

2. Law Enforcement Practices Affecting Minorities

Discriminatory Practices

While it may appear invisible, the practice of the law enforcement sets the tone for the relationship of a society towards minorities and, consequently, the level of hate crime in a given country. In the case of Hungary, the bar has been set rather low. In 2019, hence a year before the threshold for this report, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) expressed "its repeated concerns at the persistence of structural discrimination, segregation, and the extreme poverty", including "the alarming reports on the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers who were already in Hungary's territory".²² This is not the sole or even a rare example of an event in which the international bodies expressed concerns about the treatment of minorities, coming after years of maltreatment amid the refugee crisis. It could be argued that the situation has slightly improved ever since but the overarching problems remain vivid.

One of these problems has to do with the lack of political will, epitomized in the fact that the Hungarian authorities have also been rather lenient with respect to the cases

²¹ Shahzad v. Hungary, Appl. no. 12625/17, 8 October 2021.

²² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. 2019. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination considers report of Hungary. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2019/04/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-considers-report-hungary> Accessed 06 March 2023

of police brutality. This is also a finding by the Deputies from the Committee of Ministers in December 2021. The Committee found particularly problematic the lack of “discernable strategy” in systemically addressing the cases of ill-treatment of law enforcement agents and officers. This is also obvious in the verdicts by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) against Hungary, reached in the timeframe 2020-23: in yet another case of police brutality against Roma (Mata v. Hungary 7 July 2022), ECtHR awarded the applicant €19,500 following an incident back in 2014, when the individual-applicant was assaulted by Hungarian police officers. This is only one among the many cases of police brutality against the Roma (another being Gubacsi vs. Hungary, which is actually a group of cases pointing to the ill-treatment of Roma by the police officers), all signaling a profound systemic injustice and antigypsyism in the way Romani communities are being policed.²³ The reports on the local police were imposing fines on Roma for petty offences as a means of maintaining ‘public order’ and an undeclared policy of racial harassment have been a long-standing issue for the Hungarian society.²⁴

Law Enforcement Practices as a Manifestation of the Conflict between the Democratic Values and Security Interests

The Hungarian Police still maintains an elaborate overview of illegal immigration incidents, provided on a weekly basis.²⁵ The state usually provides an elaborate overview of immigration-related incidents, maintaining a securitization discourse throughout. Some of the examples are particularly telling, including the statement of the state secretary of the ministry of interior, such as that “the Hungarian Southern border is under siege” or that “illegal migrants are becoming more and more aggressive and that more and more alarming phenomena are visible at the Hungarian border.”²⁶ Yet, according to the official statements, illegal immigration has been on the rise, with more than 269,254 being apprehended in 2022, in comparison to 122,239 in 2021.²⁷ What remains unclear is

²³ European Roma Rights Center. 2022. European Court Awards Romani Applicant 19,500 EUR in police brutality case. 19 July 2022. Available at <http://www.errc.org/news/hungary-european-court-awards-romani-applicant-19500-EUR-in-police-brutality-case> Accessed 06 March 2023

²⁴ European Roma Rights Center. 2021. Brutal and Bigoted: Policing Roma in the EU. Available at http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5397_file1_brutal-and-bigoted-policing-roma-in-the-eu.pdf

²⁵ Hungarian Police. 2023. Information on illegal migration. Available at https://www.police.hu/hu/hirek-es-informaciok/hatarinfo/illegalis-migracio-alakulasa?weekly_migration_created%5Bmin%5D=2022-01-01+00%3A00%3A00&weekly_migration_created%5Bmax%5D=2023-01-01+00%3A00%3A00 Accessed 09 March 2023

²⁶ BEOL. 2023. Óriási közbiztonsági kockázatot jelent a tömeges és illegális migráció Európában [Mass and illegal migration in Europe poses a major public safety risk]. Available at: <https://www.beol.hu/orszag-vilag/2023/01/oriasi-kozbiztonsagi-kockazatot-jelent-a-tomeges-es-illegalis-migracio-europaban> Accessed 09 March 2023

²⁷ SchengenvisaInfo. 2022. Hungarian Police to continue to protect borders and prevent illegal entries in 2022. Available at <https://www.schengenvisaInfo.com/news/hungarian-police-to-continue-to-protect-borders-prevent-illegal-entries-in-2022/> Accessed 09 March 2023

whether the ill-treatment by the law enforcement officers has changed with time: aside from a few anecdotal statements, there is little evidence of systemic shifts.

Criminal Proceedings and the Guilty Verdicts

Another issue has to do with the enforcement of the verdicts. According to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, detailed statistics on the number of cases where court decisions are not executed, including those where state authorities are the ones failing to execute the decision, are not publicly available. The enforcement process is hindered by practical inadequacies that need to be addressed, and the current sanction system and court practices do not effectively deter non-compliance. State authorities also have the option of circumventing ordinary court judgments by utilizing the Constitutional Court. This is made possible by a new form of constitutional complaint introduced in 2019, which allows public authorities to challenge final court decisions by claiming a violation of their rights. As a result, constitutional complaints not only protect individuals' rights against state powers, but also provide constitutional protection to public authorities in their lawsuits against individuals.²⁸

Anti-discrimination Practices

Some positive developments have nonetheless been noted. For the academic year 2022/2023, the National Police Headquarters launched a tender to support young individuals of Roma origin who are pursuing full-time or correspondence studies in law, administration, economics, technical, IT or medicine at higher education institutions. The aim was to encourage them to successfully complete their studies and consider a career in the police force.²⁹ The same is also the case with the border patrol: Organized by the Tolna County Territorial Minority Liaison Working Group, with the participation of 13 local, county and national Roma self-government representatives, the Tolna County Police Headquarters provided information on contract border officers and other opportunities for police work, and scholarship applications.³⁰ In addition to these affirmative action policies, the police also took to iron out its reputation: among other things, the head of police in Pest county apologized to the Roma woman whom they stripped to her underwear in 2019 in Vác.³¹ Overall, there had been some improvements

²⁸ Hungarian Helsinki Committee. 2021. Non-execution of domestic and international court judgments in Hungary. Available at https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/01/HHC_Non-Execution_of_Court_Judgments_2021_summary.pdf Accessed 09 March 2023

²⁹ Police. 2022. Roma Tender. Available at <https://www.police.hu/hu/a-rendorsegrol/kepzes/roma-palyazatok> Accessed 13 March 2023

³⁰ Police. 2022. Opportunity: Young people of Roma origin can now become police officers. Avaočabče at <https://www.police.hu/hu/hirek-es-informaciok/legfrissebb-hireink/szervezeti-hirek/lehetoseg-roma-szarmazasu-fiatalok> Accessed 13 March 2023

³¹ Helsinki Committee Hungary. 2021. Available at <https://helsinki.hu/a-rendorseg-bocsanatot-ker-es-serelemdijat-fizet-az-alsonemure-vetkozttetett-nonek/> Accessed 13 March 2023

in the attitude of law enforcement officers towards minorities but it is difficult to argue that these developments have been indicative of a fundamental shift in the way in which the law enforcement treats minorities in Hungary.

It is rather difficult to point to the particular measures aimed at preventing the spread of extremist views in society or the (more deliberate attempts of) financing of terrorism, since there is no data to which these can be linked. As per the criminal cases and the guilty verdicts in relation to discrimination, these can be found in the Section 9: Hate Crime, Violence and Terror (p. 22). Overall, it can be argued that the number of reported hate crimes is slowly decreasing, the number of legal outcomes/sentences is increasing. This can be deemed as a positive outcome but legal stats are not necessarily resembling reality, defined by the dominance of right-wing and far-right political forces in the country.

3. The attitude of society towards immigrants, foreigners

Changes in the general attitude of the society

The political developments noted in Hungary do not seem to indicate much potential for a positive outlook of the society towards immigrants and foreigners. Years of intensive propaganda and the tropes used in reference to migrants and foreigners (“hordes”) or the references to the invasion of the Ottomans³² have had an effect on how these groups have been perceived in Hungarian society over the last couple of decades. Adding to this the rejection of multiculturalism from the Hungarian high officials³³ paired with the continuous and relentless process of othering of migrants and foreigners, even resulting in the expulsion of Central European University from Budapest in 2018, the Hungarian society had a rather low bar for developing positive attitudes towards immigrants and foreigners to begin with. It is in these settings that the changes have been indicated.

Research on the issue

While being far from a reliable indicator of what the situation in this domain is, the public polling can be an interesting galvanizer of debates in relation to the issue. The anti-immigrant attitudes are the most explicit and widespread in Europe and remain so even

³² Washington Post. 2015. Hungary’s Orban invokes Ottoman invasion to justify keeping refugees out. 4 September 2015. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/04/hungarys-orban-invokes-ottoman-invasion-to-justify-keeping-refugees-out/> Accessed 13 March 2023

³³ Voice of America. 2018. Hungarian FM: Multicultural Societies Not Necessarily Better Than Homogeneous Ones. 4 April 2018. Available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/hungarian-foreign-minister-multicultural-society/4333350.html> Accessed 13 March 2023

after a slight decrease since 2016, a new study found.³⁴ Fifty-seven percent of Hungarians do not want to see immigrants in their country, compared to 3 percent in Sweden and 2 percent in Norway, according to the biennial European Social Survey (ESS), commissioned by the European Union. Within the EU the negative attitude of Hungarians remains so extreme, that it even exceeds the attitudes of countries currently involved in open military conflicts, such as Russia, Turkey and Israel.³⁵ Although being unrelated to the immigrants/minorities, one of the interesting public polls, conducted in 2020, shows that 23 percent of Hungarians felt that Western societies and their way of living threatened their identities and values. Approximately 20 percent of Hungarians felt the same way about the European Union and the United States of America, respectively.³⁶ A comparative analysis of racist attitudes in the V4 region has shown that Hungary is (together with Czech Republic) “the regional champion of racism”. In terms of the crosstabulations, it has been shown that the age has an effect in Hungary and Poland, showing that older individuals have more racist attitudes.³⁷ In a right-wing political landscape, research suggests that incumbents in the local elections (although in 2015) are punished by voters skeptical of immigration regardless of their policy position: while this research has not been repeated in recent times, it shows an important political outcome of such situations.³⁸

Negative Manifestations

Discrimination against the Roma is not only visible in the practices of the law enforcement, as shown in the previous section, but also in the local self-governments. An instance of this is the construction of a National Roma Methodological and Education Centre in Kisvárda for HUF 700 million (around EUR 2.25 million) built in 2017. An interesting and no less concerning development has been shown with respect to foster care system in Hungary. In December 2021, the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Human Resources. The basis of the lawsuit was that children from Roma families were more frequently placed in foster care than children from other ethnic backgrounds. According to the ERRC's research, although Roma people make up less than 20 percent of the population in the Nograd district, more than 80

³⁴ Genge, E., & Bartolucci, F. (2022). Are attitudes toward immigration changing in Europe? An analysis based on latent class IRT models. *Advances in Data Analysis and Classification*, 16(2), 235-271.

³⁵ Hungary Today. 2022. Hungarians Have Most Negative Attitude Towards Migration in Europe. Available at <https://hungarytoday.hu/hungarians-negative-attitude-towards-migration-europe/> Accessed 13 March 2023

³⁶ Statista. 2020. Hungary: Perceived threats from other countries or groups. Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1128082/hungary-perceived-threats-from-other-countries-or-groups/> Accessed 13 March 2023

³⁷ Bell, D. A., Strabac, Z., & Valenta, M. (2022). The Importance of Skin Colour in Central Eastern Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Racist Attitudes in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, 11(1), 5-22.

³⁸ Gessler, T., Tóth, G., & Wachs, J. (2021). No country for asylum seekers? How short-term exposure to refugees influences attitudes and voting behavior in Hungary. *Political Behavior*, 1-29.

percent of children placed in state care are from Roma families. Although Hungarian law prohibits removing children from their families solely for material reasons, poverty was a significant factor in most of the removals. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly urged Hungary, most recently in February 2020, to fully implement the ban on separating children from their families and placing them in alternative care based on their families' economic circumstances.³⁹

The Hungarian healthcare system also reflects significant issues in relation to the societal and systemic attitude towards minorities and foreigners. Inadequate maternity wards and frequent reports about gynecological violence remain present, similar to the report from 2017, which found that the rate of stillbirths is higher among the Roma than in the rest of the population, which still coincides with the data from previous surveys, showing that the life expectancy among Roma is ten years shorter than in the average population in the country.⁴⁰ The same was the case during the pandemic of COVID-19, which caused greater deaths among the Roma population in comparison to the rest of the population, due to pre-existing health conditions.⁴²

There had also been several legal outcomes of the segregation of Roma, as the case of a Hungarian school in Gyöngyöspata has shown. The school unlawfully segregated minority Roma students for years, and the country's Supreme Court (Kúria) granted 100 million forints (\$310,000) in compensation to the children's families, in May 2020.⁴³ Overall, these negative manifestations continue to occasionally reveal the profound societal fissures, resembled also in the attitude of Hungarian society towards minorities. This is further bolstered by the radical nationalists: László Toroczkai, the leader of "Our Homeland", the most popular radical-right party in the country (with the ruling Fidesz), often fueled these sentiments by claiming that "Hungary will not be a gypsy country", also organizing protests against the Roma settlements in Törökszentmiklós due to "gypsy crime".⁴⁴

³⁹ Civic-nation. 2022. Discriminatory Practices against minorities. Available at https://civic-nation.org/hungary/government/law_enforcement_practices/discriminatory_practices_against_minorities/ Accessed 13 March 2023

⁴⁰ Gyukits, G. (2000). Az egészségügy vesztesei. Beszélő Online. Available at <http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/az-egeszsegugy-vesztese> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴¹ Forray, R. K. (2013). Cigány egészség, cigány betegség. Available at www.hier.iif.hu/hu/letoltes.php?fid=tartalomsor/2244 Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴² Koller, I. Z. (2022). Health Disparities and Ethnic Classification in Hungary. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 21(1), 23–43.

⁴³ Reuters. (2020). Hungarian top court confirms Roma unlawfully segregated, awards damages. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/hungary-roma-segregation-ruling-idUKL8N2CU61V> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴⁴ 24.hu. Available at <https://24.hu/kozelet/2019/05/22/torokszentmiklos-a-mi-hazank-ciganysag/> Accessed 04 April 2023

4. Covid Pandemic and its impact on the level of xenophobia and the radicalization of society

Being the two crises that defined the period between 2020-23 (including the attitudes towards minorities), the pandemic and the Russian attack on Ukraine have significantly altered the demographic situation in Hungary. Similar to other countries, the beginning of the pandemic saw the unprecedented scale of lockdowns and other preventive measures. With time, the support for these measures and especially vaccination has become partisan – somewhat similar to other contexts.⁴⁵ The response of Hungarian government to the pandemic has, among other things, stirred up a lot of attention.

The early stages of the pandemic in Hungary were marked by the series of incidents related to Iranian students, who were targeted for “bringing the virus into the country”, and some of which were even expelled, officially for “violating quarantine rules”.⁴⁶ In the early stages of the pandemic, Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán was accused of using the pandemic to suspend asylum rights in Hungary.⁴⁷ At the beginning of March 2020, Hungary also announced that admission to the two transit zones on its border with Serbia will cease indefinitely, saying that asylum seekers on the Serbian side of the border waiting to be admitted into the zones come from then-high risk countries like Iran, irrespective of the fact that most of these individuals have been stranded on the Serbian side on average nearly 18 months, hence away from any areas thought to be of high risk.⁴⁸ Some of the restrictive measures inaugurated at the time remain to be in place, including visits to the reception centers by the NGOs.⁴⁹ The same can be argued about the various support programs related to integration (such as those provided by the European Social Fund or Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund suspended already in 2018), access to the labor market, healthcare or the like, which have all been significantly impeded by the pandemic.⁵⁰ True, there had also been some positive examples, including the attempts to

⁴⁵ The Loop. 2022. Public attitudes to coronavirus in highly polarized Hungary. Available at <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/public-attitudes-to-coronavirus-in-highly-polarised-hungary/> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴⁶ Hungary Today. 2020. Coronavirus: Another 13 Iranian Students Expelled for Violating Quarantine Rules. 16 March 2020. Available at <https://hungarytoday.hu/coronavirus-iranian-students-hungary-expelled/> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴⁷ Euronews. 2020. Orban uses Coronavirus as excuse to suspend asylum rights in Hungary. 03 March 2020. Available at <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/03/orban-uses-coronavirus-as-excuse-to-suspend-asylum-rights-in-hungary> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch. 2020. Hungary weaponizes coronavirus to stoke xenophobia. 19 March 2020. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/19/hungary-weaponizes-coronavirus-stoke-xenophobia> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁴⁹ Asylum Europe. 2022. Hungary: Country Report. Edited by The Hungarian Helsinki Committee. Available at <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/hungary/overview-main-changes-previous-report-update/> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁵⁰ ibid

formulate a toolkit for providing support to minorities in the workplace during the pandemic.⁵¹ However, the negative attitudes towards minorities have only been amplified by the pandemic and its related inequalities.

5. Armed Conflict in Ukraine and its Impact on the level of xenophobia and the activities of radical groups

Since 24 February 2022, the puzzle of hate and the overall relationship towards minorities became even more complex with the War in Ukraine. The response of the Hungarian government has been rather slow vis-à-vis condemning the Russian aggression, later blocking the EU support for the war-torn country, implying that this is not a “Hungarian war”.⁵² Fast-forwarding to 2023 and hundreds of thousands of casualties, the official stance of the Hungarian government has not significantly changed. This had much to do with the economic ties Hungary has with Russia, with Hungary exporting around 2 billion USD of goods per year.⁵³

Much like any other war, the Russian aggression has contributed to another refugee crisis. As of 05 February 2023, there have been 2,350,357 border crossings from Ukraine to Hungary (and 1,9 million crossings from the Romanian border), out of which 34,248 refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Hungary.⁵⁴ The exact numbers are unknown to this date (as only cumulative statistics about refugees per year are provided in the official documents) but it has been clear that the majority of refugees are those who were deemed unfit for combat: women, children and the elderly.⁵⁵ As the influx of refugees has brought about solidarity, it has also been affected by the rising costs of living, especially in the housing sector.⁵⁶

⁵¹ WeAreOpen. 2021. “What can employers do? COVID-19 Impact Report on Women, LGBTQ+, Roma & Disabled People”. Available at <https://nyitottakvagyunk.hu/en/2020/06/09/covid-impact-report-2020/> Accessed 14 March 2023

⁵² DW. 2022. Hungary: What’s Viktor Orban’s Problem with Ukraine. Available at <https://www.dw.com/en/hungary-whats-viktor-orbans-problem-with-ukraine/a-64063750> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵³ OEC World. 2023. Hungary-Russia exchange. Available at <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/rus/partner/hun> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵⁴ UNHCR. 2023. Operational Data Portal: Ukrainian Refugee Situation. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10783> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵⁵ Reliefweb. 2022. UNHCR Hungary: Ukraine refugee situation operational update (15 June – 31 August 2022). Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/hungary/unhcr-hungary-ukraine-refugee-situation-operational-update-15-june-31-august-2022#:~:text=Since%20the%20war%20in%20Ukraine,people%20and%20those%20with%20disabilities> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵⁶ UNHCR. 2023. Hungary Chapter: Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Ukraine Situation 2023. Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99521> Accessed 16 March 2023

Hungarian government officials even claimed that “1 million refugees have arrived in Hungary from Ukraine, and more than 500,000 of them received aid”.⁵⁷ Stories of mayors of Hungarian towns helping refugees have hit the headlines, assisting in finding housing, food and medical care and the similar happened with the Hungarian interchurch.⁵⁸

Returning to the data, it can be argued that Hungarians, together with Poles, have the most favorable views towards Hungarian refugees, in comparison to Czechia and Slovakia. When asked about their personal experience, 81% of Hungarians indicated they had never observed any inappropriate behavior by Ukrainian refugees, which is by far the most in comparison to other countries of the V4 region.⁵⁹ There is little to be inferred as per the comparison between the attitudes of Hungarians towards Ukrainian refugees vis-à-vis other refugees but these findings certainly indicate a more favorable outlook on the Ukrainians in comparison to others. Little is also known about how the War impacted the Russian population living in Ukraine: to date, there is no publicly available information on the potential conflicts between the Russian and the Ukrainians. This is in part due to the fact that a majority of ethnic Hungarians living in Ukraine fled to Hungary following the outbreak of the war – however, the exact number remains unknown. Thanks to Air Serbia, the only European carrier that continued routes to and from Russia, which also recently established a flight connection between Budapest and Belgrade, it is highly likely that the population of Russians in Hungary will also increase.⁶⁰

In spite of these positive developments, Hungarian society remains one with the least favorable tally in its treatment of refugees⁶¹ – an unsurprising finding having in mind how important the issue of migration overall had been for the domestic politics over the last decade. In part, refugees have been denoted as a cultural threat. In part, this attitude has been bolstered by the activities of radical (predominantly right) groups, to which this report turns next.

⁵⁷ Hungary Today. 2023. State Secretary: Hungary will continue to shoulder solidarity with Ukraine. 9 March 2023. Available at <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/state-secretary-hungary-will-continue-to-shoulder-solidarity-with-ukraine> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵⁸ UNHCR. 2022. Mayor of Hungarian border town gears up to welcome Ukrainian refugees. 15 September 2022. Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2022/9/6322e4b44/mayor-hungarian-border-town-gears-welcome-ukrainian-refugees.html> Accessed 16 March 2023

⁵⁹ GLOBSEC. 2023. Despite challenges, V4 societies generally remain supportive of Ukrainian refugees, with more negative attitudes apparent in Slovakia. 18 January 2023. Available at <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/press-releases/despite-challenges-v4-societies-generally-remain-supportive-ukrainian> Accessed 04 April 2023

⁶⁰ Euractiv. 2023. Air Serbia announces more flights to Hungary in convenient move for Russians. 14 March 2023. Available at <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/air-serbia-announces-more-flights-to-hungary-in-convenient-move-for-russians/> Accessed 04 April 2023

⁶¹ Drazanova, L., and Geddes, A. 2022. Attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees and governmental responses in 8 European countries. Forum on the EU Temporary Protection Responses to the Ukraine War, 6 September 2022. Available at <https://www.asileproject.eu/attitudes-towards-ukrainian-refugees-and-governmental-responses-in-8-european-countries/> Accessed 16 March 2023

6. Activities of Radical Groups: Radical Right Movements and parties

The last decade (2010s) saw the rise of radical right movements and parties in Hungary but also elsewhere. Being a part of the broader issue of mainstreaming the far right⁶², its ideas and discourses, meaning that the far right has become mainstreamed but also that the mainstream has shifted towards the far right⁶³, Hungarian politics have always had established radical-right parties since 2006: first Jobbik. Following Jobbik's rebranding as a "national conservative" party, that is, a shift towards the center around mid-2010s, Mi Hazánk and Fidesz took most of Jobbik's electorate. Thus, as of 2020-23, and especially after 2022 Parliamentary elections, the main radical-right parties in the country remain the ruling Fidesz, with almost 54.13 percent of the votes (in coalition with KDNP, a minority partner) and Our Homeland (*Mi Hazánk*), with 5.88 percent. Being one of the rare European countries with the radical right in power and in the opposition, Hungarian radical-right politics have a relatively solid leverage in engaging with a variety of issues, including minorities.

As of 2006 and the protests against the then-Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány⁶⁴, the Hungarian radical-right landscape has been organized around the main extremist party (Jobbik, later Our Homeland) and a network of smaller concomitant extreme-right organizations. Of course, it is of equal importance not to leave other relevant actors out of the picture, such as a variety of intellectual organizations and right-leaning think tanks later supported by Fidesz and its *Polgari Korok* network.⁶⁵ This network has become more dispersed and seemingly less centered around the dominant party since the beginning of the pandemic. These organizing patterns continue to inform the ways in which the radical right affects politics in Hungary to this day.

In terms of comparing the actual effects of far-right movements and parties in the timeframe 2020-23, those were, as in other cases, conditioned by the pandemic and the war. As per the former, the supporters of both Fidesz and Mi Hazánk were highly skeptical of the measures taken amid the pandemic. The same cannot be argued about the party leadership in the case of Fidesz, which is somewhat understandable given that the party is in government. However, Mi Hazánk was among the leaders of the antivaxx movement (together with the so-called "health influencers"), pushing for a plethora of

⁶² Mudde, C. (2019). *The far right today*. John Wiley & Sons.

⁶³ Mondon, A., & Winter, A. (2020). *Reactionary democracy: How racism and the populist far right became mainstream*. Verso Books.

⁶⁴ Krekó, P., & Juhász, A. (2017). *The Hungarian far right: Social demand, political supply, and international context*. Ibidem Press.

⁶⁵ Greskovits, B. (2020). Rebuilding the Hungarian right through conquering civil society: The Civic Circles Movement. *East European Politics*, 36(2), 247-266.

conspiracy theories - including those with antisemitic undertones.⁶⁶ Not only the party organized street protests but actively engaged in disseminating anti-vaxx propaganda through their media outlets. Some of the activities entailed calling out politicians in the Council of Europe, even organizing “expert roundtables” with anti-vax doctors which were then streamed on the party’s Youtube channel.⁶⁷

As per the war in Ukraine, the Hungarian radical-right was less vocal about the conflict, at least when it comes to taking sides. What was more present is the overall obsession with the military conflict, weaponry and the tactics. In the extreme-right circles, there was even a discussion of presenting a paramilitary squad to the authorities that could ideally be integrated as a reserve force. Expectedly (even for a country with a radical-right leadership), such a move was rejected by the government, which even (allegedly) laid off a number of employees for their ties with the extreme right.⁶⁸

In terms of the relationship towards minorities and hate crime, some of the organizations such as Betyársereg, continue to perform their vigilante activities, patrolling trams in Budapest in an aim to “eradicate anti-social behavior”.⁶⁹ What these activities often boil down to abusing minorities or foreigners. The anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI propaganda and mobilization coming from the radical right has also continued, being mostly heralded by the ruling Fidesz and supported by the radical right in the opposition. At times, the content of this communication and mobilization is oddly resembling that of Putin’s Russia or American conservative organizations (Mathias Corvinus Collegium and the Center for Fundamental Rights).⁷⁰ Being in a relatively comfortable political position, radical-right parties and groups also extend their influence to other domains not directly related to minorities, such as the environment. However, the discourse of these parties on the environment is often parroting the talking points on immigration, e.g., linking

⁶⁶ Media Diversity. 2021. Antisemitism and anti-vax discourse in Europe. Available at https://www.media-diversity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Antisemitism-and-anti-vax-discourse-in-Europe_MDI_GTTO.pdf Accessed 19 March 2023

⁶⁷ Mi Hazank Youtube. 2023. "You lied to the people!" (Debate on Covid vaccines in the Council of Europe). Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufEfG8l_gk0 Accessed 19 March 2023

⁶⁸ Betyársereg. 2023. The extreme right as a national defense force [“A szélsőjobb, mint egy potenciális honvédő erő” – Incze Béla gondolatai]. Available at <https://betvarsereg.hu/a-szelsojobb-mint-egy-potencialis-honvedo-ero-incze-bela-gondolatai/> Accessed 19 March 2023

⁶⁹ Betyársereg. 2023. Újra az 1-es villamos vonalán a Betyársereg [“Betyársereg is back on tram line 1]. Available at <https://betvarsereg.hu/ujra-az-1-es-villamos-vonalan-a-betvarsereg/> Accessed 19 March 2023

⁷⁰ Political Capital. 2022. Anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ Mobilisation in Hungary. Available at https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/bejegyzesek/Zinc%20gender%202022/Short%20Report_Anti-gender%20and%20anti-LGBTIQ%20mobilisation%20in%20Hungary_PolCap_2022-07-21.pdf Accessed 19 March 2023

climate change to illegal immigration or emphasizing the danger migrants pose to the ecosystem.⁷¹

7. Activities of Radical Groups: Islamists

While there is usually little publicly available data on the activities of islamists in Hungary, it is clear that, despite not being in the public spotlight, Islamism in Hungary (or elsewhere, for that matter) is certainly not belonging to the past. Since the rhetoric of the Hungarian government towards Muslims has not been significantly assuaged over the past three years, the tension persists. In his extensive criticisms of the EU migration policy, Viktor Orbán seldom made exclusionary remarks towards Muslims. An example is his claim that Hungary will not support a “parallel” society of a Christian and Muslim mixture.⁷² Moving from these remarks to the actual policies, the Organization of Muslims in Hungary reiterated that Muslims serving prison sentences continued to receive meals containing pork meat or pork fat regularly, despite complaints that it violated their religious dietary practices.⁷³

Thus, the context still seems to be favorable for the rise of Islamist organizations and radicalized individuals. Yet, there is very little evidence of this being the case. Perhaps the only event over the last two years was the arrest of a Hungarian man who allegedly spread Islamist propaganda over the internet. The excerpt from the arrest report noted that:

The suspect registered on a music sharing platform in Germany and uploaded content under two usernames, several of which were produced by Islamic State press offices. In these, the Islamic State was glorified or indirectly incited to use terrorist methods. The channel set up by the suspect had 41 followers and the content uploaded could be viewed by anyone. Some of the songs received 733 likes.⁷⁴

A more serious event occurred also in 2022, when a 22-year old man who had previously sworn allegiance to the Islamic state intended to drive his car into a crowd while his

⁷¹ Lubarda, B. 2023. *Far-Right Ecologism: Environmental Politics and the Far Right in Hungary and Poland*. Routledge

⁷² Daily Sabah. 2020. Mix of Muslim and Christian society not possibly peaceful Hungary's Orbán says. Available at <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/europe/mix-of-muslim-christian-society-not-possibly-peaceful-hungarys-orban-says> Accessed 20 March 2023

⁷³ US Government. 2021 Report on Religious Freedoms: Hungary. Available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/hungary/> Accessed 20 March 2023

⁷⁴ Hungary Today. 2022. Hungarian man charged for spreading Islamist propaganda. Available at <https://hungarytoday.hu/hungarian-man-charged-for-spreading-islamic-state-propaganda/> Accessed 20 March 2023

partner would detonate a pipe bomb during the European Football Championship in 2020.⁷⁵ But besides these two cases, little is known about the active (or potentially new) Islamist groups operating in Hungary or radicalized leaders.

8. Radical Left groups

The radical left in Hungary has been on the rise since 2010 and the return of Fidesz into power. However, this rise has not been followed by electoral results and victories, save for 2019 elections for the mayor of Budapest, won by Gergely Karácsony (Dialogue), an eco-socialist party. That the radical left has been gradually decaying amid shrinking space for political manoeuvring, show the demise of activists groups such as the Hungarian chapter of DiEM25, which dissolved in 2022 following its lack of success among the Hungarians and the lack of support from the (international) movement leadership.⁷⁶ The Hungarian Workers Party (*Magyar Munkáspárt*), led by Gyula Thürmer and Táncsics – Radical Left party continue to exist to this day albeit as extraparliamentary groups since both failed to enter the Parliament in 2022 elections.

The position and influence of the radical left in Hungary is further challenged by the grip ruling Fidesz and the concomitant right-wing and far-right organizations have on the media and the public space. Following Central European University's (re)move(al) from Hungary in 2018, the now virtually inactive Szabad Egyetem (Free University) was constituting one of the many pockets of radical-left resistance in Budapest. Others include musicians but also Pink Blokk and a number of LGBTIQ+ organizations. The influence of these radical-left pockets is most often limited to cities and university centers, such as Budapest and Szeged, without much likelihood of seriously disrupting the current political situation. The same can be argued about the radical left overall impact on (reducing) the level of xenophobia and radical nationalism in Hungary: besides individual events and motivations, there is very little evidence that the radical left can be an important corrective factor in reducing xenophobia and hatred towards minorities in Hungary.

⁷⁵ Origo. 2022. Elítélte a bíróság az Iszlám Állam terroristáját, aki a budapesti foci-Eb-n akart robbantani. 25 February 2022. Available at <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20220225-tobb-merenyletet-tervezett-magyarorszagon-a-birosag-elitelte.html> Accessed 20 March 2023

⁷⁶ DiEM25 Blog. 2022. Available at <https://diem25budapest.wordpress.com/blog/> Accessed 20 March 2023

9. Hate Crime, Violence and Terror

Similar to other parts of this report, the situation in relation to hate crime, violence and terror seems to have been less eventful than in the past. Hungary regularly reports hate crime data to ODIHR, and in 2012, the National Police Headquarters established a hate crime network, in charge of supervising hate crime investigations. The number of hate crimes has been continuously decreasing in the period 2017-2021 – however, the number of prosecutions increased in the year 2021.⁷⁷ In February 2021, the Police Headquarters printed and distributed 22,000 copies of a booklet entitled "Let's act together against hate crime". The resource was developed in 2020 and provides useful information and advice for the victims of hate crime. However, ODIHR observes that Hungary would benefit from reviewing the existing legal framework in order to ensure that bias motivations can be effectively acknowledged and that appropriate penalties can be imposed on the perpetrators. While 'official' hate crime data, usually provided by police reports, are the most cited source for answers to these questions, they only tell a small part of this complex story because, among other things, the connection between civil society and public authority is often very limited and fraught with difficulties within the process.⁷⁸

Vandalism of cemeteries continued to persist following the beginning of the pandemic: Jewish tombstones in Kecel, South of Budapest have been smashed and others desecrated with human feces or the Nazi insignia.⁷⁹ In 2022, gravestones in Budakeszi, on the outskirts of the Hungarian capital, were vandalized.⁸⁰ Interethnic clashes are still common in Hungary, particularly with the Roma communities. Radical right Mi Hazánk continued to push for the 'Roma Crime' and 'No-go Zones' frame, particularly putting pressure on the local governments such as the one in Miskolc.⁸¹ Such a frame is usually counterposed to the "Decent working Roma whom should be respected" but in essence frames the issue in ethnic lights. In spite of these tensions and sporadic clashes, there had been no hate killings or terrorist attacks in the country to date. What is also missing are the statistics on sentencing for hate crimes, available only for year 2021 (8,979), 2016 (39) and 2013 (14), showing glaring discrepancies in the number of sentences.

⁷⁷ OSCE. 2023. Hate Crime in Hungary. Available at <https://hatecrime.osce.org/hungary> Accessed 23 March 2023

⁷⁸ Perry, J. Tamás Dombos, T., Kozáry, A (2019). *Connecting on Hate Crime Data in Hungary*. Brussels: CEJI. Design & graphics: Jonathan Brennan.

⁷⁹ I24News. 2020. Jewish Cemeteries Vandalized in Hungary and Moldova. Available at <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/europe/1604423070-jewish-cemeteries-vandalized-in-hungary-moldova> Accessed 23 March 2023

⁸⁰ Hungary Today. 2022. Gravestones vandalized in Jewish Cemetery in Budakeszi. Available at <https://hungarytoday.hu/gravestones-vandalised-jewish-cemetery-budakeszi-budapest/> Accessed 23 March 2023

⁸¹ Hungary Today. 2020. Mi Hazánk Protests Against 'Roma Crime' and 'No-go Zones' in Hungary. Available at <https://hungarytoday.hu/mi-hazank-protest-roma-crime-no-go-zones-hungary/> Accessed 23 March 2023

Conclusions and Recommendations

Between 2020-2023, Xenophobia, radical nationalism, and expressions of hatred were shaped by two major events - the Covid pandemic and the War in Ukraine. The current trends are linked to Fidesz's significant influence on domestic politics and increased media pressure on civil society. These factors create an atmosphere of fear (of minorities and migrants in particular) that is conducive to hate crimes. Unfortunately, the international community's support in combating hate crime appears to have declined.

While hate crime prosecutions are on the rise, reported incidents have decreased, and more individuals have been sentenced in 2021 (see the previous page), indicating progress in treating hate speech. However, the vandalism of Jewish cemeteries remains an ongoing problem in Hungarian society. Statistics alone cannot fully capture the developments in minority rights and radical nationalism. The transphobic law and the government's failure to enforce ECtHR verdicts demonstrate a disregard for both minorities and international obligations. The inflammatory rhetoric from high-ranking officials in the Hungarian Parliament contributes to the stagnation in addressing radical nationalism and xenophobia. Based on these findings, this report recommends measures to improve the situation concerning minority rights and radical nationalism.

- Establish a special unit responsible for recording and investigating hate crimes
- Provide free state support to hate crime victims
- Establish separate police protocols for recording and investigating hate crimes
- Focus on the victims of hate crimes in smaller towns and settlements by establishing local focal points of support
- Provide a more detailed and regular and consistent (year-to-year) outlook into the number and the types of sentences in relation to hate crime
- Establish programs against bullying in Hungarian elementary and high schools
- In line with the ECRI recommendations, the Hungarian authorities commission an independent review of the legislative measures adopted during the period of "state of danger" and its effect on the role of national minorities⁸²
- Besides revoking the controversial anti-LGBTIQ+ law, an action plan concerning the rights of LGBTIQ+ minorities should be developed, with a principal aim to raise awareness and protect the rights of these individuals.
- Introduce "racist motivation" to the Criminal Code as a specific aggravating circumstance for the criminal acts.
- Support projects in relation to mainstreaming far-right ideas in Hungarian politics

⁸² ECRI. 2023. 6th ECRI Report on Hungary. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-6th-report-on-hungary-translation-in-hungarian-/1680aa687b> Accessed 27 March 2023