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## **The concept of solidarity in cohesion policies of the European Union and Hungary**

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses cohesion policies of the EU and Hungary from the conceptual perspective of solidarity. Continuing recent debates positioned at the intersection of solidarity, welfare state and Europeanization, a multi-scalar approach of solidarity is explored. Although the notion of solidarity – i.e. overcoming inequalities across member states and their regions – was an important conceptual building block at the foundation of the EU, the usage of the term has decreased steadily in recent decades’ EU cohesion policies, and more significantly after the 2008 economic crisis. As a parallel trend, the concept’s meaning has shifted from a more general to a reduced one in narrow policy areas. Based on a document analysis, the paper reviews cohesion policy changes of recent EU programming periods and finds that solidarity has lost importance in main planning and legislative documents, a recent shift being the growth policy relaunch of past years. Contrasting these trends with the national scale, a case study of Hungary found that the concept of solidarity was mobilized according to EU-level cohesion policy ideas during the 1990s and early 2000s, but the current right-wing government put forward a new discourse of solidarity which they related with the refugee crisis.

**Keywords:** solidarity; cohesion policy; European Union; Hungary

## **Introduction**

Solidarity has been an important underlying principle in European welfare states and a widely used concept in the formation of the European Union. How the concept has been used in public policies of the EU and its member states, however, has undergone significant changes over the past decades. Several scholars claim that the last conjuncture was the 2008 crisis, during which many understandings of solidarity were challenged by citizens and political decision-makers (Beck, 2013; Hadjimichalis, 2011). The same changes are traceable in cohesion policies of the European Union: solidarity has been a crucial concept in recent programming periods' legal and conceptual documents, but the past more than ten years are marked by a shift in how the concept has been used.

Cohesion policies of the European Union have been at the forefront of the research agenda in regional studies. These studies either explored conceptual issues about what cohesion means in relation to other concepts used in policy-making (Avdikos and Chardas, 2016; Davoudi, 2005; Faludi, 2007; Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2015), how cohesion policies play out unevenly in geographic terms – many of these refer to the Europeanization of public policy-making (Faragó and Varró, 2016; Farole et al., 2011; Souliotis and Alexandri, 2017) –, or how the institutional architecture of its implementation looked like (Bachtler and Begg, 2017; Blom-hansen, 2005). Within the first group of studies, however, solidarity as an important conceptual building block was rarely at the core of analysis (for an exception see Holder and Layard, 2010). The article addresses this research gap.

The first aim of this paper is to identify major conceptual shifts of solidarity in EU cohesion policy implementation. Cohesion policies are built on indistinct and changing understandings of solidarity, and the relations with other major concepts such as territorial cohesion are also constantly in a state of alteration. The paper builds on a document analysis of a wide range of EU cohesion policy implementation and explains shifts in the usage of the

term solidarity. The main claim is that after the 2008 crisis and with the broadening of growth-oriented approaches in common policies (cf. Avdikos and Chardas, 2016; De Angelis, 2016), the meaning of solidarity has been reduced to a one-sided understanding and even a disappearance of the term in several policy documents.

The second aim of the article is to show in one national context, Hungary, how local political discourses of the solidarity principle are also a result of cohesion policies being implemented by member states. This section follows theoretical literature of past decades on the Europeanization of spatial planning and cohesion policy implementation (see for example Czernielewska et al., 2004; Dąbrowski et al., 2018; Dühr et al., 2007). Until now, most of the accounts in the contexts of Eastern European member states have looked at a unidirectional flow of policies: EU level policy-making materializing differently in national contexts (as for the Hungarian case see for example Faragó and Varró, 2016; Varró, 2008). This article argues that the Hungarian Government has established a new policy narrative in recent years in which solidarity is related to the refugee crisis and the future of EU cohesion policies. Thus, we see a political reframing of who we should be in solidarity with and why.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on relations between solidarity and welfare state formation, including a subsection on the European Union as a political project (Brenner, 1999; Hooghe and Keating, 1994; Jessop, 2004). The empirical part consists of two sections. One explores three decades of cohesion policy making in the European Union, by looking at different levels of cohesion policy implementation from the perspective of how they mobilized the concept of solidarity. The second section of the empirical part moves to the national scale by analysing recent shifts in the Hungarian context, thereby offering a more nuanced and a multi-scalar understanding of the issues raised earlier.

## **The concept of solidarity in European welfare state formation**

Rapid social changes of European societies and the formation of European nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to a new understanding of solidarity as shared responsibility, common interest and belonging. This happened parallel to increasing calls to improve material conditions of the members of society, contributing to the formation of welfare states (Oosterlynck et al., 2016; Stjernø, 2005; Stråth, 2017). How actors or institutions have formulated their politics and policies in the language of solidarity in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century has been constantly changing, and these shifts have often been linked to wider socio-economic restructuring processes.

The contribution of the concept of solidarity to welfare state formation has been scrutinised by several disciplines, ranging from political science (Keating, 2009) to sociology (Frödin, 2013; Ottmann, 2010) to European studies (Dühr et al., 2007) to spatial planning (Giannakourou, 1996). Nevertheless, a research gap exists in how cohesion policies mobilized the concept of solidarity at the level of the European Union. The following discussion shows how solidarity and state-formation interrelate with each other in the formation of European welfare states and the EU as a political project.

### ***Solidarity and the European welfare state***

The current institutionalization of solidarity within state policies is a rather recent phenomenon, having appeared only in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe. The formation of modern nation states, and the European welfare state especially, is a story of upscaling local forms of solidarity to normative and institutionalized forms on the scale of the nation state (Stjernø, 2005). Esping-Andersen (1989) nevertheless maintains that the welfare state is based on three other principles: social rights with the decommodification of individuals' welfare; social stratification (the welfare state creating inequalities and ordering

social relations); and negotiating interrelations of the market, the family and the state.

Solidarity aspects may inform these three principles, but not axiomatically.

Comparative studies within political science have classified European welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1989; Pfaller et al. 1991) according to different sets of ideas about solidarity. As for Eastern Europe, considerable research has been conducted on the extent post-1945 Eastern European state socialism applied conceptions of the welfare state (Haney, 2002).

Despite the transformation of the European welfare state following the crisis of the 1970s and the roll-out neoliberalism of the 1990s (Peck and Tickell, 2002), solidarity has remained a vantage point from which changes of the welfare state can be viewed. On the one hand, solidarity has been used as an effective discursive tool with which social-democratic parties have argued for its reform and preservation (Stjernø, 2005). On the other hand, with the reforms of the welfare state, the perception of solidarity within society has also changed to a large extent. In many current policies, solidarity discourse has been narrowed down, for example to equate solidarity with labour market inclusion (Drahokoupil, 2007; Ottmann, 2010).

Structural changes in the economy resulted in the emergence of transnational state spatial projects, such as the European Union (Ross, 2010; Stjernø, 2005; Wissel and Wolff, 2017). EU institutions, however, have significantly fewer responsibilities in terms of welfare than those traditionally had by national governments, which means that the EU level is not necessarily seen important in providing solidarity across society (Ross, 2010). Moreover, separate EU policies function differently, cohesion policy being one interesting example.

It remains important that spatial dimensions of solidarity ‘draw on and construct sets of interconnected socio-spatial relations across different scales. Even the most local of actions typically affect and reflect national or even international systems of regulation, power

and control, and yet this should not mean that there are no hierarchies and power relations at play at a local level' (McDowell et al., 2015: 10). Within the geographical literature, spatial relations through which solidarity is constructed are also in the focus of Doreen Massey's (2008) and David Featherstone's (2012) theorization of solidarity and how the international scale is connected to social movements acting politically 'from below'. However, as Kelliher (2018) notes, geographers have not primarily touched upon the welfare state in their studies on solidarity. Therefore, the article also aims at bringing back some discussion about the role of the state in constructing meanings and practices of solidarity.

### ***Solidarity and the European Union as a political project***

Solidarity has been a widely-used concept in EU political and legislative discourse, firstly because of its welfare and social policy attributes from the beginnings of the integration, secondly because of direct links to the emerging cohesion policies from the 1980s.

At the time of establishing the European Union in the early 1950s, a Christian democratic understanding of solidarity was formative (Stjernø, 2005); but without an actual use of the term in EU founding treaties. This process was basically not different from constructing the community around the key concept of solidarity in European nation states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Stråth, 2017). Ross (2010) extends this argument with the analysis of EU governance and EU political visions and finds that accepting difference within the European Union provides a foundation for solidarity, and that solidarity gives shape to a new form of Europeanized cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, a paradox persists between the welfarist past of the European Union, its market orientation and the subsequent enlargements (Giannakourou, 1996). Following the crisis of the 1970s (Stråth, 2017), European solidarity as identity politics contradicted with the economic interests of capitalizing on and sustaining differences within the integration.

The creation and the expansion of EU cohesion policies aimed at closing the gap of GDP per capita and livelihood differences between countries and regions of the integration, and at counteracting market processes. This aspect will be considered in length in the following section of this article.

Apart from economic differences, power relations between member states made it increasingly challenging to build the foundations of the EU cohesion policies and EU enlargement around the concept of solidarity. This has become evident after the accession of Southern European countries in the 1980s: Hadjimichalis (2011) has argued that uneven economic and power relations have persisted in Southern European countries' positions within the European Union. An exacerbation of this was seen after 2008, as the European Commission and the European Central Bank (backed by the International Monetary Fund) handled the monetary crisis contrary to the solidarity and cohesion ideas of the European Union (Bulmer, 2014; De Angelis, 2016; Greer, 2014).

During the Eastern enlargement of the EU in the 2000s solidarity as equality was overridden by fear of large-scale labour migration from newly-accessing countries (Böröcz, 2001). Regionalization and changes in the functions performed by the state at different scales was a precondition for EU accession. This kind of Europeanization was also an expression of unequal power relations (Varró, 2008).

In sum, the formation of the European Union as a political project led to changes in how welfare is provided to members of society, and economic turning-points have also been turning-points in welfare policies. A research gap exists, however, in understanding how solidarity is linked to EU-level cohesion policies, and how this plays out in national contexts of welfare state formation.

## Analytical framework and methodology

The analytical framework of this paper is summarized in Table 1. Several levels of cohesion policy formation are analysed by a keyword search and a document analysis of written sources, both at the level of the European Union and Hungary. In line with the previous section, different thematic areas related to solidarity are identified, with a primary aim of pinpointing shifts in interconnectedness of solidarity and cohesion.

Table 1: Analytical framework of the study

<i>Level of analysis</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>Hungary</i>
Framework legislation	EU treaties	Act on regional development and modifications
Policy development	Intergovernmental strategic documents on cohesion policy	National Spatial Development Concepts
Cohesion policy spending	EU regulations on cohesion policies	Main documents on EU regional development fund spending
Policy evaluation	Cohesion policy evaluation documents (e.g. cohesion reports)	National Spatial Development Concepts
Political discourses	DG REGIO News, Commissioner blog posts	Government News (including political speeches)



The analysis at the EU level considers developments between the early 1990s and 2018. It is based on a systematic keyword search of the term ‘solidarity’ of a) current and previous EU treaties, b) strategic documents produced through intergovernmental process to define key directions of EU cohesion policies (such as the European Spatial Development Perspective or the Territorial Agenda), c) EU regulations on cohesion policies of the seven-year programming periods, d) documents which evaluate the results of the cohesion policies (such as cohesion reports or other independent reports), as well as e) political discourses (News section of the EU Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, as well as blog posts of the Commissioner for Regional Policy between 2014–2018).

The Hungarian case study presents a document analysis of spatial development legislation, national spatial development concepts and programming documents for receiving EU cohesion funding, parallel to the EU level discussion. To follow conceptual shifts, the analysis starts in 1996 (when the Act on regional development was accepted by Parliament, as this was one of the first moves of complying with EU regulations) and ends with an outlook to cohesion policies after 2020. This analysis of the Europeanization of cohesion policies from the perspective of solidarity is followed by a summary of the usage of the term by the Hungarian Government in other areas of Hungary-EU relations. The empirical focus of the analysis of political discourses will be how governments of Viktor Orbán mobilized the idea of solidarity in public policy issues outside of cohesion policies in recent years. The empirical material consists of a keyword search of the News section of the Hungarian Government’s website ([www.kormany.hu](http://www.kormany.hu)), grouped into thematic areas.

The analytical framework covers a large range of conceptual levels in cohesion policy implementation. Several primary sources were not available either at the EU or at the Hungarian scale, therefore a comparative analysis would not have been possible. This was the case with some sources on policy-making at the EU level (such as Informal Meeting of

Regional Policy Ministers conclusions) which have no parallels in Hungary. Several Hungarian sources are either not present (e.g. policy evaluations) or not publicly accessible. In the case of political discourses, only the years 2014–2018 were analysed, because of the availability of comparable sources (websites in their current structure and form). At the level of the EU this corresponds with the Juncker Commission (with Regional Policy Commissioner Corina Crețu), in the case of Hungary the third Government of Viktor Orbán.

The methodology is inspired by critical discourse analysis. As previous research has shown, this approach is valuable in providing knowledge of how the concept of solidarity is mobilised in different ways in different textual sources (for a similar approach with different empirical material see Prokkola, 2020; Zappettini, 2019; for an analysis of similar EU textual material on different concepts, see Damurski and Oleksy, 2018). Elissalde et al. (2014) as well as Zappettini (2019) have also shown how key analytical categories (discourse topics) as well as argumentations can be mapped with this methodology. Varró (2008) has also shown how through an analysis of such discourses we can also understand politics of re-scaling. Following this approach, particular attention was paid to different topics and different argumentations at different geographical scales.

### **Solidarity and cohesion policies of the European Union**

Territorial cohesion aims to enhance solidarity across its member states with the help of cohesion policies, alongside aspects of solidarity. This part examines how the European Union has aimed to enhance solidarity across its member states via cohesion policies. The section deals with the interweaving concepts of solidarity and cohesion, tells about the introduction of other concepts related to solidarity as well as the disappearance of the term.

#### ***Cohesion and solidarity***

The cohesion aspect of EU regional policy took shape in the late 1980s – early 1990s with the

reform of the Structural Funds. At that time, the integration was deepening (competences were upscaled from the national to the intergovernmental level) and was widening geographically (with subsequent enlargements). An interregional redistribution mechanism was developed to compensate for growing inequalities across member states and regions (Giannakourou, 1996).

At that time, solidarity was closely linked to the idea of cohesion, in line with the welfare state ideas. The 1992 Treaty on European Union named economic and social cohesion as a part of the objectives of the Union. Solidarity, understood as between people and between member state relations, has become one of the two organizing principles of the EU (Article A). '[E]conomic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States' (European Commission, 1992: Article 2) has become one of the tasks of the Community. These parts remained unchanged in later modifications of the treaty, with the term territorial cohesion appearing in 1997. The 2004 Constitution and the road towards the Lisbon Treaty (Hilpold, 2015; Ross, 2010) changed Article 2 by amending social and economic cohesion with territorial cohesion.

Linkages between territorial cohesion and solidarity were also present at the level of cohesion policy planning documents adopted in intergovernmental meetings. This was the case with the European Spatial Development Perspective (1999) which aimed to establish a more even spatial pattern of growth throughout the European Communities (Holder and Layard, 2010; Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2015). In this document, the relation between the two terms focused mainly on economic disparities across regions (Holder and Layard, 2010). The Territorial Agenda from 2007 remains rather unclear about the relationship between solidarity and territorial cohesion: 'Through the Territorial Agenda we will help – in terms of territorial solidarity – to secure better living conditions and quality of life with equal opportunities, oriented towards regional and local potentials, irrespective of where people

live – whether in the European core area or in the periphery’ (German Presidency, 2007: 1); and ‘territorial cohesion of the EU is prerequisite for achieving sustainable economic growth and implementing social and economic cohesion – a European social model. In this context, we regard it as an essential task and act of solidarity to develop preconditions in all regions to enable equal opportunities for its citizens and development perspectives for entrepreneurship’ (German Presidency, 2007: 2). Therefore, the differentiated understanding of solidarity put forward by the Lisbon Treaty is not reflected in the document.

The treaties did not undergo significant changes after 2008. Cohesion policies’ strategic guidelines nonetheless responded to the effects of the economic crisis with a reformulation of the relationship between solidarity and cohesion. The revision of the Territorial Agenda during the Hungarian Presidency in 2011 (Territorial Agenda 2020) slightly changed the relationship between the concepts cohesion and solidarity, rendering them complementary: ‘Territorial cohesion reinforces the principle of solidarity to promote convergence between the economies of better-off territories and those whose development is lagging behind’; as well as ‘Territorial cohesion complements solidarity mechanisms with a qualitative approach and clarifies that development opportunities are best tailored to the specificities of an area’ (Hungarian Presidency, 2011: 3).

These modifications also stem from the evaluation of EU cohesion policies, mainly from cohesion reports summarizing main developments of cohesion trends and policies every 3-5 years. The first report (European Commission, 1996) uses the word solidarity 19 times. Solidarity is seen as a principle that maintains the social market economy across the European Union, therefore most mentions think about solidarity as supporting members of society. Other geographical scales are also crucial in the definition of solidarity: First, as funding of cohesion policies is channelled through regions, regional policy is equated with being in solidarity with less-developed areas. Second, as the Union also operates at the

intergovernmental level, the role of member states in national social policies, as well as solidarity across member states are also touched upon. Moreover, solidarity is considered important in European citizenship and identity building.

The second and the fifth cohesion reports were also formative in defining linkages between solidarity and cohesion. The second cohesion report from 2001 was entitled ‘Unity, solidarity, diversity for Europe, its people and its territory’, although the word solidarity only appears in the Commissioner’s preface and not in the main text of the report. This is likely since the document treated solidarity and cohesion as synonyms (European Commission, 2001). The 5<sup>th</sup> cohesion report’s preface (2010) mentioned a commitment to solidarity with the meaning of supporting the poorest regions. Following the Territorial Agenda’s conceptual changes, territorial cohesion was featured in the subtitle of this policy evaluation document for the first time.

The relationship between solidarity and cohesion is strengthened in political discourse by the Commissioner for Regional Policy. In the official blog posts of Commissioner Crețu between 2014 and 2018, 10 out of 20 posts mentioning solidarity were about cohesion policy. For example, in a February 2017 post she wrote that ‘At the end of the day, Cohesion policy is the most concrete expression of European solidarity.’ (Crețu, 2017). However, this understanding, traditionally central in the formation of cohesion policies, is currently in the background.

### ***Solidarity and other themes***

Solidarity was not only linked to cohesion and its territorial aspects, but the concept emerged also in relation to other themes in the analysed sources.

At the level of EU treaties, the Lisbon Treaty defines solidarity as a constitutional value with different meanings: between men and women, intergenerationally, and between

member states. Martinović (2015) as well as Thierry and Martinsen (2018) argue that this change shaped European institutions: solidarity has been increasingly called upon in Court of Justice of the EU cases about provision of basic services, and serves as an effective instrument for keeping differences across Europe to within politically manageable limits. This aspect sustains welfare state ideas of solidarity on the European Union agenda.

Contrasting the concepts of competition and cohesion in relation to solidarity is present since the early 1990s. In a 2004 document, the Commission argued that ‘the conflict between solidarity and efficiency in cohesion policy can be overcome using a notion of territorial capital, or “place-based” policy’ (Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2015). This focus prevails in the third cohesion report (2004) which equates solidarity with the convergence element of the Lisbon objectives. The growth policy relaunch after the 2008 crisis also put the solidarity aspect into background.

A probable agenda for post-2020 cohesion policies will also feature solidarity in the competition-related aspect. Bachtler and Begg (2018) argue that the focus of recent years’ policy discussions has been on short-term concerns about macroeconomic and fiscal imbalances. Notwithstanding, there are academic claims that cohesion policies shall mean less ‘growth’ and more ‘territorial development and cooperation’, somewhat returning to previous solidarity principles (Medeiros, 2017). This idea was not taken up by legislative proposals (European Commission, 2018) for the post-2020 period. Investment for growth and jobs seems to prevail as a basis for cohesion policies. Much of the funding will feed into promoting innovative and smart economic transformation, as well as a greener, low-carbon Europe.

Another key topic in the current programming period regarding solidarity and other themes has been the European Solidarity Fund which is a disaster management tool and therefore not directly related to cohesion policies. For example, in the 2014 and 2017

volumes of the cohesion report, the only mentions of the word solidarity (4 and 2, respectively) are in this context. In Commissioner Crețu's blog posts mentioning the word 'solidarity' between 2014 and 2018, the European Solidarity Fund was the second most prevailing topic after cohesion policy. In the News section of the EU Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, 15 of 19 articles mentioned the term solidarity in this context, becoming more popular since 2016.

Solidarity related to migration is a new discursive topic emerging in recent years. Commissioner Crețu had also taken up this aspect in her speeches: in February 2017 she stated that 'Integrating migrants is not only our duty of solidarity as European citizens, it is also a great opportunity to make our society more inclusive and cohesive as a whole, enriched by diversity.' (European Commission, 2017). In the same vein, the migration issue is present in post-2020 proposed regulation on cohesion policy: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) shall contribute to the long-term integration of migrants within member states. The aspect of migration is more present in the Hungarian context than on the EU scale, which will be discussed in the next section.

Also, regarding the post-2020 programming period, solidarity emerges in a new context by associating cohesion policies with the EU rule of law. Several accounts hint to the fact that linking EU cohesion policy funding to policy conditionalities would significantly change the practice of the solidarity principle (Bachtler et al., 2018; Kölling, 2017). Redistribution via cohesion policies is seen less often as an 'unconditional' transfer of money to less-developed member states and regions; redefining also the welfare aspect. This claim will be also examined empirically in the Hungarian case study.

### ***Solidarity disappearing***

Apart from establishing conceptual linkages between solidarity and cohesion as well as

solidarity and other topics, we can also observe the disappearance of the term. This is traceable predominantly at the levels of Council regulations of EU multiannual financial frameworks (the EU's budget) and in policy evaluation documents.

Only one of legislative documents on multiannual financial frameworks had used the word solidarity before the 2008 crisis: the preamble of the 1164/1994 Council Regulation, where the document cites the Treaty of the European Union. This finding is in line with Kölling (2015), who claims that the establishment of the EU budget was originally not related to the issue of solidarity, but subsidising less-developed member states was gradually introduced as a conceptual building-block.

In recent years, the shifting focus of the Juncker Commission (2014–2019) on competitiveness has played a distinctive role in the relative disappearance of the solidarity aspect. The Commission's communication on the Juncker Plan, for example, does not feature the word solidarity (European Commission, 2014); the 1017/2015 regulation on the European Structural and Investment Fund (the main financial means of the Juncker Plan) uses only the principle of solidarity economy in two technical points.

The current 2014–2020 programming period decreased spending on economic, social and territorial cohesion, as well as introduced tougher monetary regulations at the EU level, in approving cohesion funds and in the impact monitoring of 'balanced development' (Avdikos and Chardas, 2016; Faragó and Varró, 2016; Kölling, 2015; Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, 2015). The background idea has been that endogenous factors on different scales explain why territorial cohesion was not successful and why tougher regulations would solve the issue. This shift put effectiveness before the cohesion-cum-solidarity discourse in a time 'when a frontal attack against neoliberalism' and its diverse policy formulations would have been needed (Hadjimichalis, 2011: 265), and led to an erasure of the solidarity discourse from European regional development discussions.



The disappearance of the term solidarity is also reflected by the fact that most of the main legislative documents of cohesion policies 2014–2020 do not mention the term (Regulations 1299/2013, 1300/2013, 1301/2013, 1302/2013, 1303/2013, 1305/2013 and 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council). Diverse understandings of solidarity present before the crisis (including intergenerational or between-member-state solidarity, for example) are also missing. The single context in which solidarity is mentioned is solidarity economy employment as an investment priority in the 1304/2013 regulation on the European Social Fund (European Parliament and European Council, 2013).

The disappearance of the term solidarity is similarly visible in policy evaluation documents. In cohesion reports there is a clear shift from the first report in 1996 with solidarity being a main concept, to the fourth report in 2007 where it was only mentioned once in a footnote.

The absence of the term in different contexts (compared to fundamental treaties of the EU and that of background policy documents) reveals that policies never represent a fully coherent picture, and if viewed at different parts of their formation and implementation at the EU level are polysemic in nature (Elissalde et al., 2014). This polysemy of the concept solidarity is also true for the Hungarian context to which I turn to in the next section.

### **Hungary in solidarity debates: cohesion policies and the refugee crisis**

The previous section analysed changing meanings as well as the partial disappearance of solidarity as a concept in EU level cohesion policies. Previous work on the Europeanization of public policies, especially policies related to spatial development, have called for more research on how Europeanization takes place in domestic contexts, both at the scale of the nation state and in regional level institutions (Dąbrowski and Piskorek 2018; Giannakourou 2012; Lingua 2018).

The aim of this part of the paper is to understand how the concept of solidarity has been used on multiple scales of politics and policy-making in the domestic context of Hungary. It was previously showed that the significance of solidarity changed significantly in EU cohesion policy discourse. If this is the case, national contexts may also redefine how and between whom the state pursues solidarity. The redefinition might be in cohesion policies themselves, but also in other public policies and political discourses linked to solidarity as pursuing common interest, as a feeling of belonging, or as a building block of national and territorial identities (cf. Capello, 2018; Stråth, 2017). These shifts on the national scale also make an impact on how discourses are changing on the EU level.

Hungary as a member state joining the European Union in 2004 represents an interesting case study for several reasons. First, the pre-accession period involved several measures at the national level to comply with already-existing EU cohesion policies, spatial planning regulations and recommendations. In the literature, this Europeanization process has largely been understood as a unidirectional flow of ideas and practices from the EU level to domestic contexts which have been incomplete or ‘shallow’, involving asymmetrical power relations between the EU and new member states (cf. Czernielewska et al., 2004; Dąbrowski and Piskorek 2018; Faragó, 2016). In this sense, Hungary during the 1990s and 2000s was an eminent student of policy reforms complying with EU standards. An analysis of how one specific concept, solidarity, has been applied in the Hungarian context might offer new insights into both previous literature on the Europeanization of cohesion policies.

Second, Hungary has been in the forefront of challenging basic assumptions of European integration at the EU level, with right-wing neo-illiberal Prime Minister Viktor Orbán incumbent since 2010. Historical accounts have showed that solidarity as a concept was present in the political agendas of both the European left and the right during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Stjernø 2005), therefore a redefinition of solidarity by the current Hungarian

Government allows us to more fully understand post-crisis domestic politics in relation to that of the European Union. With the diminishing role of solidarity linked to territorial cohesion at the EU level, it has become possible to use the term in the Hungary-EU relationship for other thematic areas, namely the refugee crisis.

### ***Cohesion policy and solidarity***

Contrary to the EU level, main Hungarian legislative documents only sparsely mentioned the term solidarity in relation to cohesion and regional development. Despite the explicit aim of harmonization with EU regional policy, the Act on regional development (Act 21/1996) adopted by Parliament in 1996 (and its modifications ever since) have not mentioned solidarity as a goal of regional development. Aims defined in the document referred to ‘helping building the social market economy’, and later to ‘strengthening territorial cohesion in all parts of the country’, as well as reducing spatial differences in living conditions and providing equal social rights. The act featured growth-focused development aims, by promoting attractive entrepreneurial environment for investors, inter alia. This political discourse reflected the political views of the then ruling coalition of the social democratic and liberal parties which promoted both the EU accession as it would automatically lead to ‘catching-up’ to Western European countries and political ideas of regionalisation within the European Union.

Solidarity in relation to regional development have been marginally present in both national spatial development concepts and strategic documents on EU cohesion funds spending. Larger significance can be traced at times when the concept was dominant at the EU level. This is a result of direct contact between researchers, research institutes and the national planning authority with the EU level institutions and the people responsible for cohesion policy planning (for details see Horváth, 2014; Józsa, 2016). Until 2014, background institutions of the Hungarian government with relative independence, relatively

stable mandates and staff were important gatekeepers in this policy formation and policy transfer, such as by preparing legislation and planning documents. Since 2014, all this work is done within ministries under direct ministerial control; background agencies of regional development were dissolved.

For example, in the 1998 version of the National Spatial Development Concept solidarity was one of the main principles: ‘in accordance with the principles of the social market economy, social solidarity and long-term economic interests must be enforced in the spatially differentiated distribution of central resources’ (A Magyar Köztársaság Kormánya, 1998: 27). The word solidarity, however, was not featured elsewhere in the main text. Territorial cohesion as such was not present in the text either – at the EU level the concept was introduced at about that time. In the 2005 version of the document (Országos Területfejlesztési Hivatal, 2005) – also written by a social democratic-liberal coalition government – solidarity was mentioned in only two rather marginal sections. Regional cohesion was touched upon once in the main text but had its own entry in the glossary, with a definition coinciding with then-current EU understanding. In the 2014 adopted version (Nemzetgazdasági Tervezési Hivatal, 2013) prepared by the second Orbán administration ‘value-conscious and solidary, self-contained society’ features as one of the seven specific objectives to be implemented by sectoral policies with contradictory goals both emphasizing the collective nature of solidarity and individual responsibility.

Regarding strategic documents on how to spend EU regional development funds marginal appearances can be traced. In the 2004–2006 programming period solidarity was operationalized as the development of human resources within society (Prime Minister’s Office, 2003). EU-understanding of relations between solidarity and territorial cohesion was included in the National Strategic Reference Framework for the 2007–2013 programming period: ‘Social and regional cohesion is the manifestation of the principle of solidarity.’ (The

Government of the Republic of Hungary, 2007: ii). The previous idea reappeared in the Partnership Agreement for the 2014–2020 programming period (the basic planning document for the distribution of EU funding in a member state) in which solidarity is thought to lead to social inclusion within the society. While the usage of solidarity was limited to a few mentions in local communities, other interpretations disappeared completely (Miniszterelnökség, 2014).

### ***Solidarity and the refugee crisis***

The analysis of EU cohesion policy implementation in Hungary showed that the concept of solidarity was only marginally alluded to. This does not mean, however, that the concept was not important in Hungary-EU relations as debates and discourses of the Hungarian Government revolve around the interrelation between the refugee crisis and solidarity since 2015. The analysis of the Hungarian Government website's News section between 2014 and 2018 reveals that the mention of the term 'solidarity' has seen a three-to-fourfold increase since 2015, and previous narratives of solidarity (such as intergenerational solidarity, social policies, solidarity as a basic value in society, and solidarity with Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries) have almost disappeared. (The analysis did not consider expressions of solidarity by the Hungarian state with other states in events of terrorist attacks, natural disasters and similar events, as well as rare coverage of international aid.)

The prominent discourse of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán since autumn 2016 has been that he and his country stopped migration from outside the EU by building a fence on the Serbian-Hungarian border in 2015, which was an act of solidarity with Western European EU member states. The country leaders at the same time rejected the resettlement of refugees within Europe as a means of solidarity (Orbán, 2018). The Ministry for Justice argued that the EU *acquis communautaire* does not contain any definition of solidarity in relation to immigration, thereby it is unjust to raise any political critique of Hungary's reaction to the

refugee crisis. The same arguments were prominent on the Hungarian Government website's News section in September 2015, as the European Council decided to relocate asylum seekers across its member states with the use of quotas; in autumn 2016 when a national referendum took place to reject the EU's relocation plan; as well as in 2017 when the European Court of Justice ruled against the Hungarian-Slovak challenge of the rule for refugee relocation quotas. This latter procedure is also an interesting evidence of how the European Court of Justice shapes Europeanization in relation to solidarity (cf. Thierry and Martinsen, 2018).

The cooperation of the Visegrád Four countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia – a formalized cultural and political alliance since 1991) found a new ideology in recent years in a unanimous rejection of how the European Union has managed the refugee crisis, of multiculturalism and of a perceived non-Christian future of the EU (Balogh, 2017). This new Visegrád Four narrative is also linked to solidarity: in a recent interview, the Hungarian Government's spokesperson claimed that '[d]uring the past three years the countries of the Visegrád Group (V4) have acted against illegal migration while showing true European solidarity' (MTI, 2018) – referring to the fact that police officers from Czechia, Poland and Slovakia helped protect the Hungary-Serbia border during the 2015 refugee crisis. The analysis of the Government website uncovered that the solidarity narrative has been evoked by Poland and Hungary when expressing solidarity with the other country's government during EU infringement procedures in recent years.

### ***Cohesion, solidarity and the refugee crisis***

Parallel to changes at the EU level, discourses of the Hungarian Government shifted in combining the three concepts of solidarity, cohesion and the refugee crisis. This understanding emerged in the Hungarian Government's arguments in mid-2017, as some European Union leaders and member state politicians insisted on stopping cohesion policy

funding for member states which did not implement relocation of asylum seekers as decided on the EU level. Prime Minister Orbán expressed his disavowal:

We undoubtedly receive funds from the European Union, but I believe that in Hungary much higher amounts are received by Western corporations and companies from Western countries contributing to the Cohesion Fund. (...) Adding everything up, the current arrangement is good for the Hungarians, good for the Germans and good for Brussels: so it's good for everyone. If we start arguing that 'you get money through this channel', and forget that the other side benefits through another channel, and we build political positions which claim that receiving funds from the Cohesion Fund means that one has to do this or that, then we will upset this fragile balance and develop the feeling that others are the only ones benefiting, and we are not. So I reject all such arguments, not only on the grounds of Hungarian pride and national interest, but also as a European, because they upset the balance of the existential foundations of the European Union: the balance of interests. (Orbán, 2017)

The Hungarian Government presents the view that a larger budget without political conditionalities (especially without conditionalities regarding migration) is leading to a more competitive EU (Ministry of Finance, 2018). Europeanization, therefore, from the perspective of current Hungarian Government, cannot mean imposing any ideas about identity politics or basic values on an EU member state.

These claims have been invoked regarding cohesion policies beyond 2020. The Hungarian Government rejects plans to decrease the EU budget in general, and in particular the budget of cohesion policies, with rejection of the latter being supported by other Visegrád Four countries. Common interest of several countries being net beneficiaries of EU cohesion policy formed the 'Friends of Cohesion' group, declaring the need for maintaining the level of funding for cohesion purposes.

As neo-illiberal or right-wing populist political parties are increasingly becoming coalition leaders or coalition partners in EU member states, we might expect a proactive bottom-up rethinking of the 'core values' of European integration by these politicians,

including the relationship of territorial cohesion and solidarity, pushing former welfare state ideas in the background. This fact also calls for more empirical research on the relation of domestic politics and Europeanization, for which Hungary and other member states will offer valuable insights.

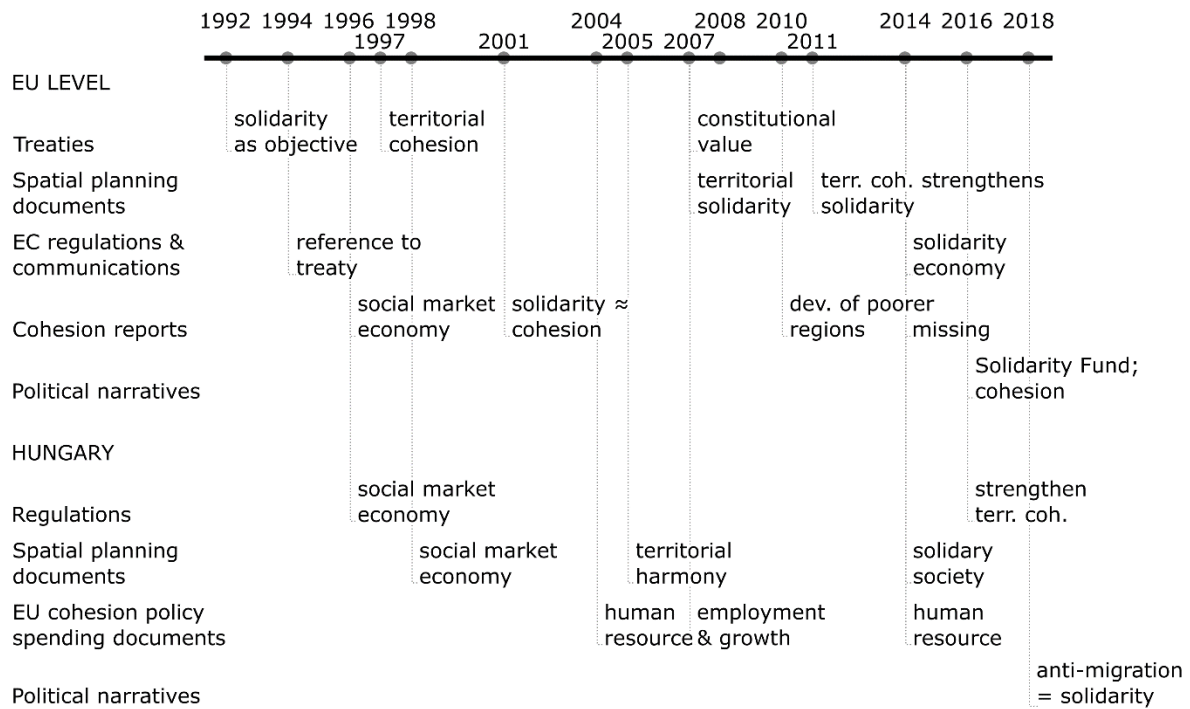
## **Conclusion**

Solidarity in its current form as a European political agenda stems from a general, post-World-War-II Western European understanding, which connects values of equality, social justice, social security, and standard of living with the concept of solidarity (Stjernø, 2005). From the vast literature on the topic, this article focussed on the formation of the welfare state interlinked with the concept of solidarity. The empirical part of the paper showed how EU level cohesion policies and a Europeanization of solidarity discourses in Hungarian regional development policies changed. By this, some insights could be offered on the often unclear relation between solidarity and cohesion policies (see for example Holder and Layard, 2010).

A general result of this analysis is that the 2008 crisis was a turning point in how the concept of solidarity has been mobilized in cohesion policies, both at the EU-level and in a national context. The timeline of these changes is summarized in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Changing understandings of solidarity at the EU level and in Hungary, at different levels of cohesion policy implementation



First, the historical analysis of this article referred to major shifts of solidarity-related concepts in cohesion policies at the EU level. The paper argued that these conceptual shifts have often gone together with economic crises of the European integration as well as welfare state aspects fading, and the analysis hinted at a general trend of the past decades in which the term solidarity has been substituted for social, economic and territorial cohesion. The most recent development is a certain erasure of the word solidarity from the broader cohesion policy discourse, despite the presence of the term with diverse meanings in founding treaties of the European Union.

Second, a solidarity-based analysis of EU cohesion policies revealed that, despite the original usage of the term considering the society ‘as a whole’, the usage is currently narrowed down to understandings not related to cohesion. In the light of current neo-illiberal

political tendencies in several member states of the EU (Hendrikse, 2018), a further shift of solidarity within and across societies in Europe and elsewhere might be foreseen (such as solidarity within a nation or against migrants coming from third countries).

Third, the Hungarian case study presented differences in the usage of the term at multiple scales, and therefore also the need for more nuanced analyses of member state specificities. Whereas some cohesion policy ideas around solidarity were taken directly from EU level policy-making (such as social market economy), others (linking the refugee crisis to questions of solidarity and cohesion) were developed in the Hungarian context and are in the process of upscaling to the international level, be it that of the Visegrád Four countries or the European Union as a whole.

In sum, solidarity might remain a useful concept in scientific discussions around cohesion policies, also as an indicator of policy shifts. The methodological approach of this study enabled to identify discursive shifts on different scales and institutions of politics and policy-making. Therefore, this study extends the growing literature which has analysed recent crises of the European integration by examining political discourses (see for example Ramalho, 2020; Zappettini, 2019). The findings can be used as entry points for further analysis with mixed methods, including interviews, questionnaires and participant observation (for such a mixed-method approach about solidarity see Prokkola, 2018). With this research strategy, complex, bidirectional formation, rescaling and usage of political discourses can be understood. Comparative studies in national contexts similar to the Hungarian case would also enrich knowledge about the interrelatedness of cohesion and solidarity in current policies.

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