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Civic Participation in Hungary, Part 2¹

Introduction

This article is a continuation of the research presented in “Civic Participation in Hungary, Part 1”² published in the journal *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio M – Balcaniensis et Carpathiensis*. The previous study focused on analyzing the institutional and historical determinants of the development of civil society in Hungary, with particular emphasis on the context of the political transformation, the legal framework for the operation of non-governmental organizations, and the relationship between the state and citizens. This article is a theoretical and review one and serves as a starting point for further, in-depth empirical analyses.

This publication aims to examine citizens’ attitudes towards local government and their actual involvement in public life. The main research question is whether, and to what extent, citizens’ declarations of civic participation and expectations towards local governments translate into specific forms of participation in decision-making processes at the local level. This article hypothesizes

¹ Research carried out under the Tempus Public Foundation (TPF) grant; project theme: “Political Parties, Local Government and Civil Society in Hungary”.

² E. Kancik-Koltun, *Civic Participation in Hungary, Part 1*, “Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio M – Balcaniensis et Carpathiensis”, 2024, vol. 9, pp. 227–240, <https://doi.org/10.17951/bc.2024.9.227-240>.

that in Hungary, there is a high level of declarative interest in local affairs and a desire to influence local government, but this is not always reflected in actual citizen participation in social structures and participatory activities. The reasons for this phenomenon lie in institutional factors, such as the centralization of power and limited autonomy of local governments, as well as socio-cultural factors, including low trust, a lack of transparency in decision-making processes, and fears of politicization of civic activities.³

This article is based on the results of research conducted among Hungarian residents using quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis includes, among other things, self-assessment of social activity, level of interest in local politics, participation in social organizations, experiences with formal forms of participation, and citizens' expectations regarding influence on local government decisions. A special focus is also placed on qualitative analysis of open-ended responses, in which respondents indicated how, in their opinion, citizens can engage in local politics. The aim of the article is not only to diagnose the current state of civic participation at the local level, but also to identify barriers and potential directions of action to strengthen it in conditions of limited democracy.

Self-assessment of social participation

Civic participation is a key element of democracy, especially at the local level. The literature emphasizes that citizens' social engagement can take various forms – from participating in elections and forms of direct democracy, through involvement in non-governmental organizations, to informal activities for the local community.⁴ Ajzen, within the theory of planned behavior, argues that social behavior is largely determined by an individual's intentions, which in turn depend on attitudes, social norms, and perceived control over action.⁵ This means that self-assessment of social participation may not only reflect actual actions but also express normative beliefs and aspirations.

Ekman and Amnå propose a typology of civic participation, distinguishing between visible and formal activities, as well as so-called "silent participation"

³ Eadem, *The Partisanization of Local Government as a Problem of Local Democracies in the Visegrad Group Countries*, [in:] *30 Years of the Visegrad Group. Volume 4: Problems of Contemporary Democracies in the Visegrad Group Countries*, ed. E. Kancik-Kořtun, MCSU Press, Lublin 2025, pp. 249–252.

⁴ R.D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2000, pp. 49–65.

⁵ I. Ajzen, *The Theory of Planned Behavior*, "Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes", 1991, vol. 50(2), pp. 179–211, in particular pp. 181–185.

– less spectacular but significant forms of engagement, such as following information, conversing, or expressing opinions on social media.⁶

In a survey conducted among Hungarian residents, respondents were asked whether they considered themselves socially active citizens, as shown in Figure 1. The vast majority of respondents (74%) considered themselves socially active. This result may indicate a high level of declared civic awareness. However, according to Ajzen's theory, this does not necessarily mean actual involvement in social activities, but may be the result of a socially desirable self-presentation or aspirations for activity.

It is also worth noting that 11% of respondents were unable to clearly assess their activity. This may indicate a lack of clear evaluation criteria or low civic awareness. In the context of Ekman and Amnå's typology, these individuals may engage informally, not equating it with social activity.

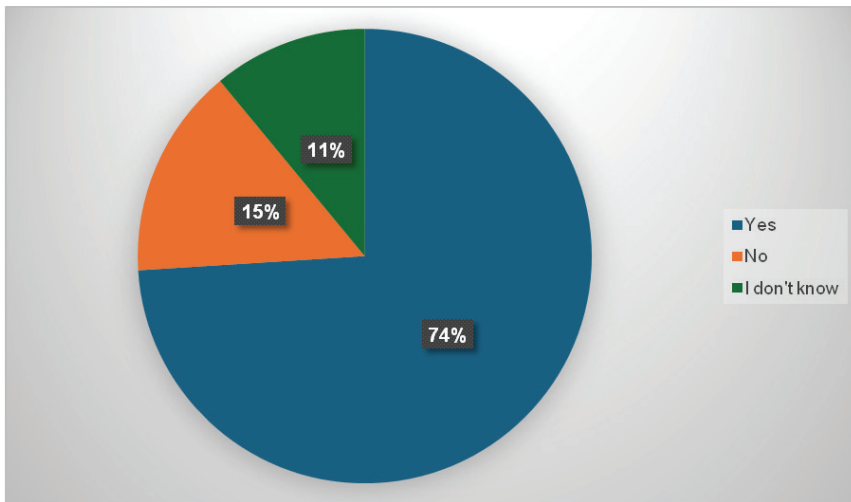


Figure 1. Do you consider yourself a socially active citizen?

Source: Author's own study (survey implementation date: 15.06–15.07.2022, location: Hungary, research sample: 339 people).

A high level of declared civic activity can be a positive sign for the development of local democracy, but requires verification in the context of actual actions. However, the hesitation of some respondents indicates the need for civic education and the promotion of specific and recognizable forms of social engagement. The results confirm the importance of distinguishing between

⁶ J. Ekman, E. Amnå, *Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a New Typology*, "Human Affairs", 2012, vol. 22(3), pp. 283–300, in particular pp. 287–289.

declarative and actual civic activity, which has important implications for local policy and resident engagement strategies.

Participation in social organizations and barriers to participation in Hungary

Civic participation in social organizations is a key indicator of the development of civil society and the quality of local democracy. Non-governmental organizations, associations, and civic initiatives serve as intermediaries between citizens and public institutions, enabling the expression of interests, social control, and co-decision-making on local matters. Robert Putnam emphasizes that participation in such structures fosters the building of social capital, strengthens trust and community, and develops civic competences.⁷

The survey asked respondents whether they participated in any local social, non-governmental, or civic organizations (Figure 2). The responses were almost evenly distributed: 48% of respondents declared participation in such organizations, while 52% responded negatively. This result can be considered moderate, yet promising, considering the socio-political context of Hungary. The presence of nearly half of the respondents in social structures demonstrates the potential for the development of civil society at the local level.

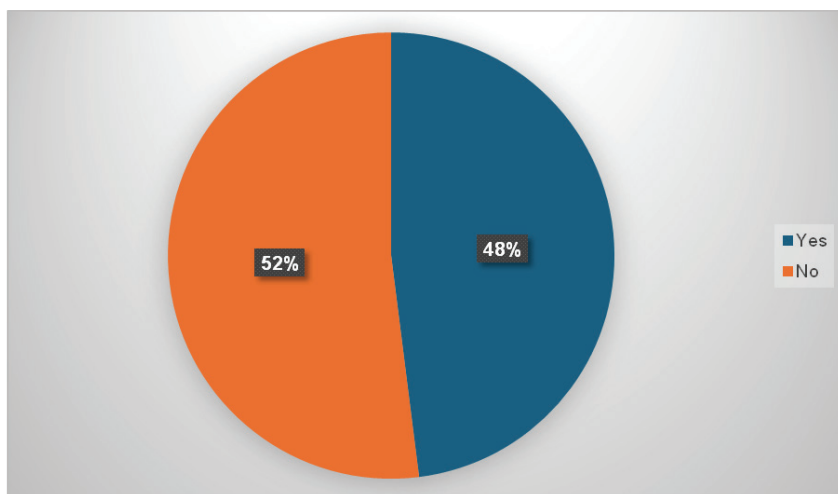


Figure 2. Are you involved in the work of any local social/non-governmental/civil society organizations?

Source: As in Figure 1.

⁷ R.D. Putnam, *op. cit.*

At the same time, the high percentage of people not participating in social organizations may indicate the existence of barriers limiting civic engagement. The most frequently identified obstacles in the literature include lack of time resulting from work and family overload, a lack of information about the existence and activities of local organizations, low confidence in their effectiveness, and fear of politicization of social activities. Verba et al. point out that participation in social organizations depends on three main factors: available resources (such as time, money, and knowledge), individual motivation, and recruitment mechanisms, i.e. the accessibility and openness of social structures.⁸ Archon Fung adds that the effectiveness of social organizations depends on their ability to engage citizens in a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative manner.⁹

In the context of Hungary, Howard notes that the legacy of the political system, low levels of institutional trust, and the central government's restriction of space for independent civic organizations can effectively discourage participation.¹⁰ In recent years, many NGOs in Hungary have experienced political pressure, which may have contributed to their perception as non-autonomous or politicized institutions. The study's findings therefore point to the need to strengthen local social structures, improve communication, and build trust between citizens and organizations. It is also crucial to provide institutional space for independent civic initiatives that can operate without fear of political repercussions.

Interest in local politics

Interest in local politics is a fundamental component of civic engagement and a prerequisite for the effective functioning of democracy at the local government level. The literature emphasizes that citizens' awareness and involvement in local affairs influence the quality of governance, the transparency of decision-making processes, and the level of trust in public institutions. As Almond and Verba note, interest in politics is an element of civic culture, which fosters democratic stability and social activism.¹¹ Interest in local politics does

⁸ S. Verba, K.L. Schlozman, H.E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1995, pp. 271–290.

⁹ A. Fung, *Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance*, "Public Administration Review", 2006, vol. 66(s1), pp. 66–75.

¹⁰ M.M. Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, pp. 98–101.

¹¹ G.A. Almond, S. Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1963.

not necessarily mean direct participation in political activities, but can manifest itself in following news, participating in public debates, talking with neighbors, or expressing opinions on social media. Ekman and Amnå define such attitudes as “silent participation” – a form of engagement that is not directly visible but constitutes an important element of civic capital.¹²

In the context of Central and Eastern Europe, interest in local politics can be limited by low levels of trust in institutions, a lack of transparency in government actions, and a belief that citizens have no real influence on public decisions.¹³ The survey asked respondents whether they were interested in community and local political issues in their area of residence (Table 1).

Table 1. Are you interested in community and local political issues (in your area of residence)? (in %)

Yes	84
No	10
It's hard to say	6

Source: As in Figure 1.

The vast majority of respondents (84%) declared interest in local affairs. This result can be considered very high and positive in the context of building an active civil society. This high level of interest may be the result of growing civic awareness, but also the result of local issues that directly impact the daily lives of residents. At the same time, 10% of respondents were not interested in local politics, and 6% were unable to clearly identify their interests. This may indicate a lack of access to information, a low level of civic education, or a belief in a lack of influence on local government decisions. It is worth noting that interest in politics does not always translate into activity – it can be passive, limited to observation, without taking action. The survey results indicate a high level of declared interest in local affairs, which provides a solid foundation for developing mechanisms for civic participation. At the same time, it is important to remember that interest does not always mean activity, therefore, it is crucial to create spaces and tools that enable citizens to move from observation to action. In the Hungarian context, where space for independent public debate can be limited, such a high level of interest in local politics may also reflect the need for greater transparency and influence on decisions made by local authorities.

¹² J. Ekman, E. Amnå, *op. cit.*

¹³ M.M. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–105.

To deepen the analysis of civic attitudes, a study was conducted to examine the relationship between three key variables: interest in local politics, self-assessment of social activity, and participation in social organizations, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Statistical analysis revealed that individuals declaring interest in local affairs were significantly more likely to consider themselves socially active and to participate in social organizations. The Pearson correlation coefficient between interest in local politics and social activity was $r = 0.50$, indicating a moderate, positive correlation. The correlation between interest in local politics and participation in organizations was slightly weaker ($r = 0.39$), but still significant. The strongest relationship was observed between social activity and participation in organizations ($r = 0.55$), confirming that socially active individuals are much more likely to engage in organized structures (Figure 3).

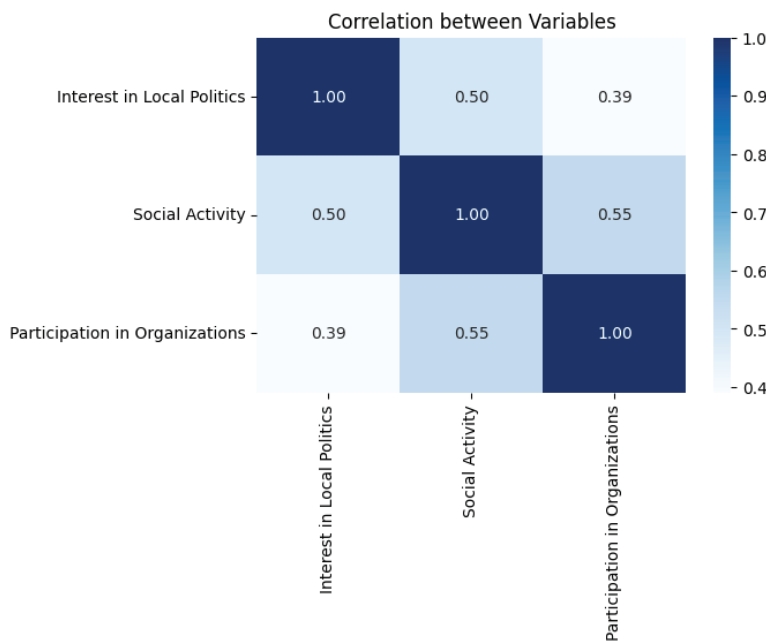


Figure 3. Correlation between variables

Source: As in Figure 1.

Forms and channels of participation in local politics

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide an open-ended response to the question: "How, in your opinion, can citizens engage in local

politics?" The responses varied in both content and tone – from constructive proposals to expressions of frustration and helplessness.

For qualitative analysis, the responses were grouped thematically. The most frequently mentioned category was citizen initiative, encompassing forms such as petitions, public forums, public consultations, participation in local meetings, and grassroots activities. Respondents emphasized that citizens can become involved by collectively advocating on specific issues, organizing into social groups, or using available participatory tools.

The second most common category was the inability to engage, in which respondents expressed the belief that citizens have no real opportunity to influence local decisions. They cited a lack of transparency, the sham of consultations, and a lack of influence on key decisions.

The third place was occupied by statements regarding the role of local government, in which respondents expected greater involvement from local authorities in creating a space for dialogue. They pointed to the need for more frequent meetings with local government representatives, greater openness, and genuine support for civic initiatives.

There were also voices pointing to collective action and protests as a form of exerting pressure on the authorities. This group included statements referring to demonstrations, civil disobedience, and public expressions of dissent.

Few responses referred to a lack of interest or ignorance, suggesting that some members of society lack the need to engage in local affairs. The remaining responses were vague or difficult to categorize. These results confirm that citizens recognize diverse opportunities for engaging in public life, but they also point to numerous barriers – both institutional and cultural. As Fung notes, effective civic participation requires not only accessible mechanisms but also transparency, openness, and real influence on decisions.¹⁴ Almond and Verba, in turn, emphasize that civic culture is based on individuals' belief in their agency and the importance of their voice in political processes.¹⁵ In the context of Central and Eastern Europe, Howard points out that institutional constraints and low levels of social trust can effectively hinder the development of civil society.¹⁶

Experiences with forms of participation

¹⁴ A. Fung, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–75.

¹⁵ G.A. Almond, S. Verba, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ M.M. Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–105.

Formal forms of civic participation – such as public consultations, public forums, information meetings, and on-call meetings of local government representatives – are an important element of democratic local governance. They enable residents to directly express their opinions, express their needs, and influence decisions made by local authorities. In the analyzed study, respondents were asked whether they had ever participated in such events (Figure 4).

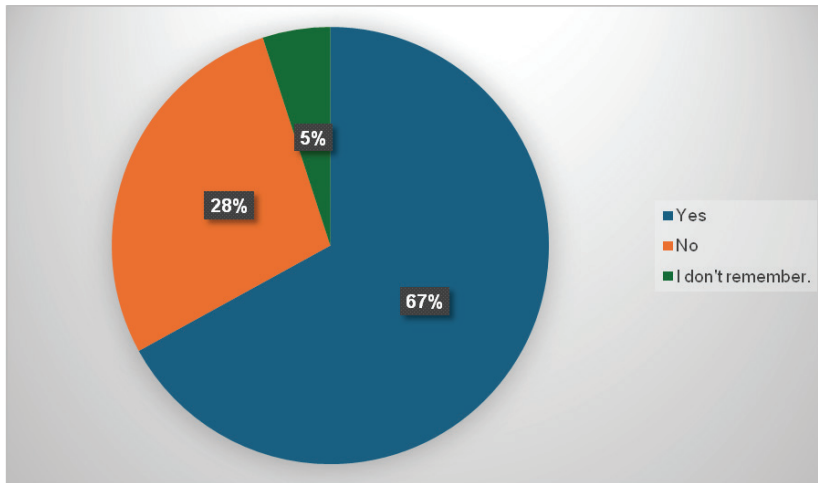


Figure 4. Have you ever participated in a public consultation, public information/forum/reception hour?

Source: As in Figure 1.

The vast majority of respondents – 67% – declared that they had participated in at least one of these forms of participation. This result may indicate the existence of an active group of citizens who, despite systemic limitations, strive to participate in public life. 28% of respondents admitted that they had never participated in such events, and 5% could not recall whether they had.

When interpreting these data, it is impossible to ignore the broader political context. Since 2010, Hungary has been under the rule of the Fidesz party, led by Viktor Orbán, which has introduced a series of changes restricting the independence of public institutions, media freedom, and mechanisms of social control.¹⁷

¹⁷ E. Kancik-Koltun, *The State of Civil Society and the Functioning of Democracy in the Visegrad Countries*, [in:] *Region v rozvoji společnosti 2024. Sborník příspěvků z 12. z mezinárodní vědecké konference*, eds. J. Smolik, J. Nesiba, Mendelova Univerzita, Brno 2025, p. 61, <https://doi.org/10.11118/978-80-7701-030-6-0055>.

Academic literature increasingly refers to an “illiberal democracy” or “hybrid regime”, in which formal democratic institutions exist, but their functioning is subordinated to the interests of the ruling party.¹⁸ In this context, a high level of declared participation in formal forms of participation can have two meanings. On the one hand, it may indicate genuine civic activity and a desire to influence local decisions. On the other, it may be the result of superficial activities, where consultations and meetings are organized primarily for image purposes, without any real impact on decision-making. Hungarian local governments, especially after the centralization reforms, have limited autonomy, which further weakens the importance of local participation.¹⁹

It is also worth considering the quality of these experiences. Mere attendance at consultations does not necessarily mean real influence on decisions. In conditions of limited political pluralism and strong centralization of power, participation can take the form of “fake democracy”, where citizens are invited to participate but their voices are not taken into account in practice. Such experiences can lead to a decline in trust in public institutions and discourage further engagement.

Expectations of citizen influence on local government

One of the key indicators of civic attitudes towards local democracy is the belief in the need for greater citizen influence on decision-making processes. According to research by van Deth, civic participation should be understood not only as participation in organizations but also as the ability to influence public decisions through various forms of engagement.²⁰ The survey asked respondents whether they believed citizens should have greater influence on local government. The responses reveal clear social expectations regarding local government (Figure 5).

As many as 79% of respondents responded affirmatively to the question about the need to increase citizen influence on local government. Only 10.5% felt that the current level of influence was sufficient, and 10.5% had no opinion on this matter.

¹⁸ M. Bogaards, *De-Democratization in Hungary: Diffusely Defective Democracy*, “Democratization”, 2018, vol. 25(8), pp. 1481–1499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1485015>

¹⁹ G. Soós, *Local Government and Decentralization in Hungary*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Local and Regional Democracy in Europe*, eds. J. Loughlin, F. Hendriks, A. Lidström, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011.

²⁰ J. van Deth, *A Conceptual Map of Political Participation*, “Acta Politica”, 2014, vol. 49(3), pp. 349–367.

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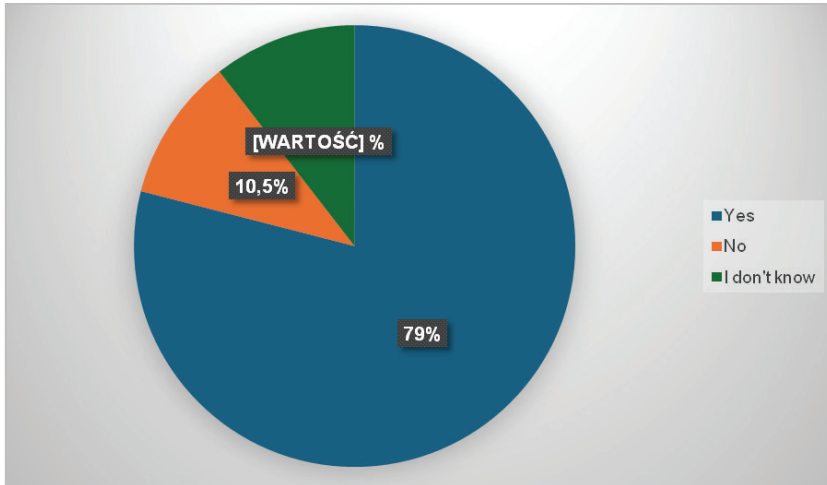


Figure 5. Do you think citizens should have more influence on local governance?

Source: As in Figure 1.

Such a high level of support for increased participation can be interpreted as an expression of dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and a need for greater transparency and responsiveness from local authorities. In the Hungarian context, where processes of centralization and limiting local government autonomy have been observed for over a decade, these results take on particular significance.²¹

Since 2010, Hungary has undergone a series of reforms that have significantly limited the independence of local governments. Central authorities have assumed control over many competencies, and local budgets have become largely dependent on central government decisions. The literature indicates that under such conditions, local citizen participation may be perceived as symbolic rather than real.²²

High expectations for increased citizen influence may therefore be a response to feelings of marginalization and a lack of real opportunities to influence deci-

²¹ G. Soós, *op. cit.*

²² M. Bogaards, *op. cit.*

sions made at the local level. In conditions of limited political pluralism, citizens may perceive formal participation mechanisms as insufficient or ineffective.

The study results indicate a strong public demand for more open, active, and responsive forms of local governance. These expectations could serve as a starting point for reforms strengthening participatory mechanisms, such as participatory budgets, local referendums, and digital consultation platforms. In conditions of limited democracy, even partial opening of space for civic voice can be significant for rebuilding trust and legitimizing local authorities.

The specificity of Hungary

Civic participation and social engagement are key indicators of the quality of local democracy. In democratic societies, active citizens not only participate in elections but also engage in social organizations, take an interest in local politics, and monitor the actions of local governments. The Hungarian political context, characterized by increasing centralization and a shrinking space for civil society,²³ makes the analysis of these phenomena particularly important.

The conducted research allows for the formulation of several important conclusions regarding the state and prospects of civic participation at the local level in Hungary. The research question – concerning the relationship between citizens' declarations and their actual involvement in public life – was addressed through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative empirical data. The results confirmed the hypothesis that there is a clear discrepancy between a high level of declared interest in local affairs and expectations towards local governments, and limited participation in formal social structures and decision-making processes. On the one hand, respondents demonstrate a strong sense of civic responsibility and a need to influence local decisions – as many as 79% of respondents supported increasing citizen influence on local government. On the other hand, actual participation in consultations, forums, and social organizations remains moderate, and some respondents express skepticism about the effectiveness of these forms of engagement. This discrepancy can be interpreted as a result of institutional and political constraints that shape the functioning of civil society in Hungary.

Politically, since 2010, Hungary has experienced a systematic centralization of power and a weakening of local government autonomy. Reforms introduced by the ruling elite have limited the independence of local institutions and the

²³ G. Halmai, *Illiberal Constitutionalism in Hungary and Beyond*, "German Law Journal", 2019, vol. 20(3), pp. 296–314.

space for NGOs to operate. The literature increasingly refers to a model of “il-liberal democracy”, in which formal mechanisms of participation exist, but their operation is subordinated to the political interests of the central government. In such conditions, civic participation can become symbolic rather than real, leading to frustration and discouragement among citizens. Despite these limitations, the study’s findings indicate potential for the development of civil society at the local level. The high level of declared interest in local politics, willingness to act, and critical reflection on existing barriers can provide a foundation for future change. Creating institutional space for authentic civic dialogue, strengthening the transparency of local government activities, and supporting independent civic initiatives will be crucial.

The future of civic participation in Hungary will depend on several factors: the political will for decentralization and openness of the authorities, the ability of society to self-organize, and the international context and pressure to adhere to democratic standards. Although current conditions do not favor the full development of local democracy, visible citizen activity and their expectations of local governments may, in the long term, contribute to rebuilding trust and strengthening mechanisms for co-decision-making.

On the other hand, despite clear public support for increased citizen participation in local governance, many Hungarians continue to vote for the centralized form of government represented by the Fidesz party. This phenomenon can be interpreted as the result of a complex interaction between dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, limited opportunities to truly influence political decisions, and the effective political narrative driven by the central government. Since 2010, Hungary has undergone a series of reforms that significantly limited the autonomy of local governments. Local competences have largely been taken over by the central administration, and local government budgets have become dependent on government decisions. The literature on the subject indicates that, under such conditions, civic participation mechanisms may be perceived as illusory, lacking real agency. High public expectations for increased citizen influence on local affairs may therefore be a response to feelings of marginalization and a lack of real opportunities to influence decisions made at the local level. At the same time, centralization is perceived by many citizens as a guarantee of stability and order, especially in the context of economic, geopolitical, and cultural uncertainty. Fidesz effectively exploits the narrative of external threats, such as migration and interference by EU institutions, to build an image of a strong state protecting national interests. In conditions of limited political pluralism and the dominance of government-controlled media, alternative political voices are often portrayed as inconsistent, incompetent, or threatening the stability of the state.

Furthermore, clientelistic networks operate in many regions, where access to public resources and services can be contingent on loyalty to the ruling party. In such circumstances, voting for Fidesz becomes not only an ideological choice but also a pragmatic one, especially in lower-income communities. It is also worth noting that the ruling party's conservative rhetoric, which appeals to traditional values and national identity, resonates with a broad base of voters, strengthening their support for centralized government. The paradox between declared support for more open and participatory forms of local governance and actual support for centralized authority indicates a deep crisis of trust in local institutions and limited confidence in the effectiveness of democratic mechanisms at the local level. In this context, even partial opening of space for civic voice – through participatory budgets, local referenda, or digital consultation platforms – can be crucial in rebuilding public trust and legitimizing local authorities.

Conclusion

This study focuses on analyzing empirical data collected directly from respondents, which allowed us to capture their subjective experiences and attitudes toward civic participation mechanisms at the local level. This perspective, although limited to a single data source, provides a significant contribution to understanding the social determinants of participation in public life under conditions of limited local government autonomy.

In response to a possible objection regarding the lack of data triangulation, it is worth emphasizing that the study aimed to capture the social dimension of participation – how it is perceived and evaluated by citizens in a political context that is not conducive to the development of civil society. In this sense, respondents' subjective opinions not only reflect their individual experiences but also provide evidence of the broader political and institutional processes that shape public space in Hungary.

To deepen the analysis, it is worthwhile to compare the obtained results with data from other sources. The Freedom in the World 2025 report prepared by Freedom House classifies Hungary as a “partly free” country with a score of 65/100, indicating a systematic restriction of the independence of democratic institutions, including NGOs and the media.²⁴ The Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 published by Transparency International ranks Hungary last among

²⁴ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2025 – Hungary*, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2123534.html>, access 09 X 2025.

European Union countries with a score of 41/100, representing the highest level of perceived corruption in the region.²⁵

Furthermore, the Civic Space Report 2025 – Hungary prepared by the European Civic Forum points to increasing restrictions on the functioning of NGOs, including the use of laws as a tool to control and repress independent civic initiatives.²⁶ Similar conclusions are drawn from Dejusticia's analysis, which describes Hungary's anti-NGO laws as an example of the systemic restriction of civic space.²⁷ It is also worth noting the data on attendance at public consultations. Although the Hungarian government regularly organizes so-called "national consultations", their actual attendance and the transparency of the process are questionable. As indicated by an analysis by Daily News Hungary, the lack of independent oversight and the biased nature of the questions mean that these consultations serve a legitimizing rather than participatory function.²⁸

This data aligns with the results of our own research, in which respondents express a strong sense of civic responsibility and the need to influence local decisions – as many as 79% of respondents support increasing citizen influence on local government activities. At the same time, the actual level of participation in formal social structures and decision-making processes remains moderate, and some respondents express skepticism about the effectiveness of available forms of engagement. This discrepancy can be interpreted as a result of institutional and political constraints, which make civic participation more symbolic than real. In conditions of limited political pluralism, even formally available participation mechanisms may be perceived as ineffective or subordinated to the interests of the central government. Despite these limitations, the high level of declared interest in local affairs and critical reflection on existing barriers indicate the potential for civil society development. Creating institutional spaces for authentic civic dialogue, strengthening the transparency of local government activities, and supporting independent social initiatives remain crucial to rebuilding trust and legitimizing local governance structures.

²⁵ Transparency International Hungary, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2024*, <https://transparency.hu/en/adatok-a-korrupcirol/korrupcio-erzekelesi-index/cpi-2024/>, access 09 X 2025.

²⁶ Ökotárs Foundation, *Civic Space Report 2025 – Hungary*, European Civic Forum, <https://civic-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Civic-Space-Report-2025-Hungary.pdf>, access 09 X 2025.

²⁷ Dejusticia, *The Hungarian Case and Its Anti-NGO Laws*, <https://www.dejusticia.org/en/the-hungarian-case-and-its-anti-ngo-laws/>, access 09 X 2025.

²⁸ Daily News Hungary, *Hungarian Government Says National Consultation Was a Success: But Was It?*, <https://dailynewshungary.com/hungarian-government-says-national-consultation-was-a-success-but-was-it/>, access 09 X 2025.

This article attempts to capture this dynamic process and encourages further research on the transformation of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Abstract: This article continues previous research on civil society in Hungary, focusing this time on an empirical analysis of citizens' attitudes towards local government. The main goal is to assess the extent to which declared interest in local affairs translates into actual forms of participation in public life. The author hypothesizes the existence of a gap between citizens' declarations and actions, resulting from institutional barriers (centralization, limited local government autonomy) and socio-cultural barriers (low trust, lack of transparency, fear of politicization). The analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative research conducted among Hungarian residents. The article provides a diagnosis of the state of local participation and suggests possible directions for strengthening it in conditions of limited democracy.

Keywords: civil society; active citizenship; Hungary; social research

Uczestnictwo obywatelskie na Węgrzech, cz. 2

Streszczenie: Artykuł stanowi kontynuację wcześniejszych badań nad społeczeństwem obywatelskim na Węgrzech, koncentrując się tym razem na empirycznej analizie postaw obywateli wobec samorządności lokalnej. Głównym celem jest ocena, w jakim stopniu deklarowane zainteresowanie sprawami lokalnymi przekłada się na rzeczywiste formy uczestnictwa w życiu publicznym. Autorka stawia hipotezę o istnieniu luki między deklaracjami a działaniami obywateli, wynikającej z barier instytucjonalnych (centralizacja, ograniczona autonomia samorządów) oraz społeczno-kulturowych (niski poziom zaufania, brak przejrzystości, obawy przed upolitycznieniem). Analiza oparta jest na badaniach ilościowych i jakościowych przeprowadzonych wśród mieszkańców Węgier. Artykuł dostarcza diagnozy stanu partycypacji lokalnej oraz wskazuje możliwe kierunki jej wzmocnienia w warunkach ograniczonej demokracji.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczeństwo obywatelskie; aktywność obywatelska; Węgry; badania społeczne