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OUTSOURCING AUTOCRATIC ANTI-LGBTI SOFT POWER

The Case of the Russian Federation in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

Autocracy and soft power - for the past three decades they did not seem to go hand in hand. Nevertheless - the last decade has proven that populist and illiberal forces in the democratic West are prone to policies undertaken by illiberal autocratic states. In the eyes of Russian policy-makers - the demographic decline in Russia and the world possesses an existential threat to the current world order. An increase in civil rights for sexual and gender minorities would only reinforce this demographic trend - in their views. This research reveals that the Russian Federation has set up a well-thought soft power strategy regarding LGBTI-rights towards the democratic West. Via outsourcing their soft power to the already existing international anti-LGBTI movement, the Kremlin was able to create a network of (financial and ideological) support for possible cooperation between Russian and European policy-makers. This network seems to fit within the Kremlin's broader foreign policy of undermining Western liberal democracies.

By taking a closer look to the Hungarian and Russian involvement within international anti-LGBTI organisations - like the World Congress of Families - the author of this research was able to prove close and structural ties between high-level Hungarian and Russian government officials and oligarchs. The Hungarian government increased the homo- and transphobic political discourse, enforced policies to foster traditional family values and vetoed every pro-LGBTI rights policy proposal in the Council of the European Union since its involvement in the international anti-LGBTI movement.

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With the help of all my interviewees and off-the-record meetings with government officials, diplomats, journalists and activists working on LGBTI-issues in Hungary and Russia, I was able to get a profound insight in the networks that work against LGBTI-equality on an international level.

I want to my supervisor - dr. Akos Kopper - who always critically encouraged me to keep going with my research and helped me question my own work from time to time.

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1. Abstract

Autocracy and soft power - for the past three decades they did not seem to go hand in hand. Nevertheless - the last decade has proven that populist and illiberal forces in the democratic West are prone to policies undertaken by illiberal autocratic states. In the eyes of Russian policy-makers - the demographic decline in Russia and the world possesses an existential threat to the current world order. An increase in civil rights for sexual and gender minorities would only reinforce this demographic trend - in their views. This research reveals that the Russian Federation has set up a well-thought soft power strategy regarding LGBTI-rights towards the democratic West. Via outsourcing their soft power to the already existing international anti-LGBTI movement, the Kremlin was able to create a network of (financial and ideological) support for possible cooperation between Russian and European policy-makers. This network seems to fit within the Kremlin's broader foreign policy of undermining Western liberal democracies.

By taking a closer look to the Hungarian and Russian involvement within international anti-LGBTI organisations - like the World Congress of Families - the author of this research was able to prove close and structural ties between high-level Hungarian and Russian government officials and oligarchs. The Hungarian government increased the homo- and transphobic political discourse, enforced policies to foster traditional family values and vetoed every pro-LGBTI rights policy proposal in the Council of the European Union since its involvement in the international anti-LGBTI movement.

2. Introduction

In the early evening of a Monday in February, I enter Bem Cinema in Budapest. Háttér Társaság - a local Hungarian LGBTI-organisation - invited me to give a lecture on my research and advocacy work for the LGBTI-community in Central and Eastern Europe. When I was setting up my presentation, two police officers entered the venue. They came to *“check if everything was ok”*. One of the LGBTI-activists present during my lecture told me it happens almost every time. *“While we don't ask for their support and we don't even expect any problems, they just show up. It is to show that they follow us and that they know what we are doing.”*

This research questions the definition of 'soft power' as posed by Joseph Nye in 2004. Nye considers soft power as a tool to influence other countries via attraction - which is most successfully used by liberal democracies. The rise of populism in recent decades ultimately questions this statement. With Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban openly referring to Putin's illiberal democracy model as the desired state model (Orban,2014), one must redefine 'soft power' not just as a tool of liberal democracies, but also of autocratic so-called 'illiberal' states. While liberal soft power grows organically, autocratic soft power is a well-thought foreign policy strategy.

This paper argues that the fight against LGBTI-rights is an important part of Russia's 'soft power'. Therefore they have set up a rather unconventional 'soft power'-strategy of outsourcing the execution of their strategy to international non-governmental organisations by both financially and intellectually supporting them.

The whole idea behind setting up such a 'soft power'-strategy is being explained by the Ontological Security Theory (OST). Both Russia and Hungary face a demographic decline. This raises existential questions on the future strength of these nations. Russia sees the decline of traditional family values and the improvement of the rights of sexual minorities as a cause behind this 'demographic winter'. Therefore, it set up a wide range of policies - which also involve foreign policies. Russia is using its autocratic soft power to fight the external threat of LGBTI-rights. Hungary has shown to be attracted by traditional family values ideas.

While the LGBTI-community and its demands increased its visibility on a world level, the debate on homosexuality in a big part of the world also became more fierce. While many countries started to legalise same-sex marriage in the West and Latin America, countries like the Russian Federation started to implement homophobic legislation. Far-right and religious groups in the USA started to organise themselves against non-traditional families.

These evolutions created a network of transnational anti-LGBTI organisations. The most crucial organisation within this network is the World Congress of Families. These networks do not just gather homophobic tools but are part of a geopolitical toolbox of so-called illiberal states like the Russian Federation. More prominent countries have been very present within these organisations, but also smaller countries were prone to active participation within these networks.

This case study investigates whether or not the soft power strategy of the Russian Federation effectively created a network that can via 'affective power' impact decision-making concerning LGBTI-equality.

The assumption will be made and argued that there is on-going coordination between high-level Hungarian government officials and people very close to the Russian government regarding LGBTI-rights

For Russia, homophobia is not just a thing of traditional family values - it is also a political strategy. Even a geopolitical strategy. In their references to 'Gayropa', Russian media and government officials link the deterioration of a strong nation-state with the changes in the definition of a traditional family in Europe. Religion plays a vital role in Russia's contemporary society; therefore, the Russian Orthodox Church directs the governments' stances on LGBTI-rights. Besides that, one could state that Russia's state homophobia is used to consolidate power by the Russian political elite. By creating an internal enemy, Russian government officials consolidate their power. Without them in power, the Russian state would get undermined by a 'European conspiracy', they believe (Ayoub, 2016; Kon, 2010).

Russia is not only using its soft power to slow down or stop the progress the LGBTI-movement made in its neighbourhood - it is also using the LGBTI-movement as a geopolitical tool to be perceived as culturally superior to The West (Kreko et al., 2016, 5-6).

Via the World Congress of Families, Russia has set up an international network to support governments and NGOs around the globe in their fight against, among other things, but most importantly, LGBTI-rights. Especially since 2014, several heads of government have participated in

the conference as keynote speakers: Viktor Orban (Hungary), Igor Dodon (Moldova) and Matteo Salvini (Italy).

Hungary was the first-ever EU member state to send official government representatives to a World Congress of Families-related event in the Russian Federation. Since 2011 they are openly participating. Miklós Soltész - in his capacity as State Secretary for Family and Social Affairs - took part in several conferences affiliated to the World Congress of Families between 2011 and 2014. His successor Katalin Novak took over this role in 2014. Since then she has been participating almost every year in the annual summits of the World Congress of Families. In 2017, Novak organised the World Congress of Families annual summit in Budapest.

This research reveals that Katalin Novak and her team have contacts regularly with Russian officials that have been linked in recent years by several media to the efforts of the Kremlin to (financially) support the populist & far-right movements in the European Union.

Important to note is that while the World Congress of Families is of geopolitical importance to Russia, it was founded in 1997 in the United States of America. This is why this research speaks about 'outsourcing soft power' to already existing international movements. The USA only started to change its legislation on the LGBTI-community with the first Barack Obama administration. Under this administration, the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'-law was repealed - which prevented LGBTI-soldiers from being open about their sexuality. It was also under the reign of President Obama that the Supreme Court nation-wide introduced marriage equality in 2015. When Donald Trump took over the presidency, the perception of the White House towards LGBTI-people changed. So the World Congress of Families was able to increase its influence on decision-making in the USA. WCF-president Brian Brown has close ties to the American Alt-Right (Open Democracy, 2019).

What this research will not do is assuming that the Russians are waging their possibility to influence concerning LGBTI-issues towards Hungary. It will only prove whether or not a transnational network is set up with the help of the Russian Federation wherein possible influence can be waged. Soft power influence is hard to examine. Nevertheless, this paper will show the links, whether or not the Hungarian government and the Russian government cooperate on LGBTI-rights, but it does not provide practical prove for so-called 'sharp power'-influence. This research does not speak about election interference nor specific propaganda tools. To investigate such a thing, until now, unconventional research methods would be necessary - something that is not possible within the scope of this academic research. Therefore the focus is on the 'soft power'-relationship between Moscow and Budapest.

Through expert interviews, I will examine whether or not the possible lack of awareness of international cooperation from the Hungarian governments forms an imminent threat towards LGBTI-equality in Hungary. To map the possible influence these cooperations might have had, I will not only look to domestic LGBTI-politics in Hungary but also how Hungarian government officials behave in international institutions like the Council of the European Union.

This paper will examine the institutions set up on an international level to wage homophobic policies and their connections to Hungary. This paper is mainly focussing on the links between Russia and Hungary regarding non-traditional family values. Immediately after the theoretical

framework and research design, an entire chapter will deal with the reasons behind the focus of Russia on sexuality in their contemporary policy-making. After that, the relations between Russia and Hungary since the fall of communism on a ‘soft power’-level will be scrutinised. The seventh chapter will dig deeper into the international homophobic institutions, wherein Hungarian policy-makers are involved (e.g. World Congress of Families). It will examine Russia’s and Hungary’s relationship within these organisations and the links that can be found between both countries within these organisations. Before concluding, the last chapter will assess the possible paths of influence of these international conservative organisations on Hungarian and EU policy-making concerning LGBTI-rights.

3. Research Design

The methodology for this research combines field research, expert interviews, and desk research. It departs from a theoretical framework wherein autocratic soft power relationships, and ontological security are framed within the case of possible governmental influence on the transnational anti-LGBTI movement. The field research was conducted both in Hungary and Italy. The expert interviews gathered a range of people involved in Hungarian (geo)politics and the LGBTI-movement. The desk research limited itself to searching the internet for further evidence of contacts between Hungary and the international anti-LGBTI movement. The research design for this paper will not only explain the chosen research design but also why this research is both academically and socially relevant.

This research combines questions of threats towards national security via autocratic soft power strategies and the post-materialist debate on LGBTI-rights. Therefore it is not only essential to outline how the links between several international actors were found, how they might be able to influence each other, but also have an eye for the inclusiveness and language being used in this research.

3.1. Research question

A clear research question is essential for successful research. The research question for this research is:

“How do the links between the Russian Federation and the Hungarian government help Russia’s ‘soft power’-ability in regard to LGBTI-rights?”

The following subquestions are a necessary part to answer the main research question:

- *“What is the connection of the transnational movement against LGBTI-rights with the Russian government? How can the focus on sexuality by the Russians be explained?”*
- *“What is the relationship between the Russians involved in the transnational movement against LGBTI-rights and the Hungarian government?”*
- *“To what extent is the Hungarian opposition aware of international cooperation concerning LGBTI-rights? Does this level of awareness form a threat or advantage for the evolvement of LGBTI-equality?”*

Important here to note is that the term “Hungarian government” and “Russian government” should be interpreted more widely. It should also include NGOs or individuals close to the government. The “transnational movement against LGBTI-rights” should be defined as a group of international-oriented NGOs to prevent society from changing traditional family values regarding sexuality. The decision why I have chosen the term “LGBTI” to describe sexual and gender minorities is explained in section 2.3 on research inclusiveness.

3.2 Hypothesis

Hungary has been one of the leading governments in the Western hemisphere within the transnational movements against LGBTI-rights in recent year. They take an active and open role within these organisations. Besides that, they also try to have an impact on EU decision-making concerning LGBTI-rights.

Since the increase in homophobia and transphobia in the Russian Federation, it seems only logical that Russia does not only want to fight the LGBTI-movement on a domestic level, but also on an international level. They made up a ‘soft power’-strategy wherein they outsource their soft power agenda to a transnational network of anti-LGBTI organisations that they can use as a medium to indirectly influence, coordinate or support other governments’ actions. While they set up these networks, apart from soft power influence, other forms of influence can most probably not be proved within the scope of this research.

Hungary has been prone to cooperate with Russian officials on traditional family values.

3.3. Research relevance

Research on LGBTI-politics within international relations is relatively new and often limits itself to theoretical and philosophical observations within queer theory. An excellent example of this is professor Cynthia Weber’s ‘performative state’-theory (Weber, 1998). There has been quite some research on the development of the transnational LGBTI-movement within European politics. Especially the scholarship on Europeanisation and LGBTI-rights is relatively extensive (Slootmaekers et al. , 2016; Ayoub, 2016).

This paper’s focus “puts on another set of glasses” since it does not look to the evolution and liberal development of LGBTI-rights in a country - but rather the opposite. It fits within the scholarship on illiberalism and global politics. It links classical soft power theories to interpretations of an illiberal autocratic government (see chapter 3). Since this research maps the links the Hungarian government has and the possible threats these links give to LGBTI-equality within the country - this research is also embedded within security studies. Therefore, I use a critical perspective on the theoretical framework within contemporary security studies and ‘soft power’-theory (see chapter 3).

The social and political relevance of this research is evident. It is of utmost importance towards liberal policy-makers in the field of LGBTI-rights to be able to determine their enemies. While most of the organisations nowadays focus on their domestic opposition, this research - by doing a case study on Hungary - reveals that the international network behind these domestic politics possesses a

not to be underestimated threat towards the further development of LGBTI-rights. However, the political relevance goes much further than the (inter)national debate on LGBTI-rights. The number of contacts between Russia and Hungary (an EU and NATO member state) raises questions concerning the sovereignty and national security of Hungary - and even the European Union.

3.4. Research Inclusiveness

This research focusses on a very diverse group in society - the LGBTI-community. Addressing this minority can be done in several ways, but one needs to understand the sensitivities of the several ways to address this group in society. Throughout the years, names as LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTQ, LGBTQI, gays, homosexuals, sexual minorities and queers have been - in many cases wrongly - used interchangeably.

Therefore I will argue why I have chosen for the term 'LGBTI' in this research. The term 'LGBTI' is the term being used by all institutions of the European Union. LGBTI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people. The word itself does not directly contain questioning, queer, pansexual, or asexual people, but that does not mean that whenever I refer to the 'LGBTI'-community that I specifically exclude these communities. Whenever I refer to a specific group within the LGBTI-community, I will use their specific term.

As mentioned above - this research also involved expert interviews. Therefore there was an aspiration to have as much as possible gender equality between the respondents. Since the number of respondents is unequal in this research, three women and four men were interviewed.

3.5. Data collection

This paper is the result of a combination of field research, desk research, and expert interviews. The main object of the field research was a stay from February 2019 till July 2019 in the Hungarian capital Budapest. In Budapest, I attended several events, demonstrations, debates, and protests from both the government and opposition side. I interacted off-the-record with experts such as activists, high-level diplomats, journalists, politicians, scholars, etc. to better understand the general political situation in Hungary and its relations to other states. A part of the field research was also a field trip to the World Congress of Families' XIII summit in Verona - Italy on March 29. While being registered both as a journalist and researcher - and have sent an e-mail to the organisation - I was denied access to the conference venue. Nevertheless, I was able to conduct on- and off-the-record interviews with people attending the conference at the entrance of the venue. I also attended a counter-conference organised by Family, LGBTI and Women' NGOs in Verona on March 30: "Italia Laica, Verona Libera".

For the desk research, data that could be openly retrieved from the internet has been compared and analysed. This data involves conference participant lists, conference schedules, e-mails, letters of gratitude, etc. . A participant list and some e-mails have been retrieved via unconventional methods. These methods involved hacking and academical ethical questions can be raised by this method. However, this research was not involved in these unconventional methods. All information has been openly retrieved from the internet, and throughout this paper, I make several notions to the relativeness of the documents retrieved via hacking.

The on-the-record expert interviews were a crucial part in the collection of data to map the possibilities to wage influence on Hungarian anti-LGBTI politics and to understand the broader perspectives on LGBTI-politics in Hungary. Several e-mails were sent to both Hungarian and Russian actors within the anti-LGBTI movement. Initially some of them agreed or showed interest to an interview, but in the end, none of them wanted to talk on-the-record. Because of privacy reasons, the names of these persons or organisations will not be published in this paper.

From the opposition towards the anti-LGBTI lobby, several people wanted to talk on-the-record. The expert interviews with these people were semi-structured. Essentially their views on LGBTI-issues in Hungary were polled and their awareness and opinion on a possible collaboration with international conservative organisations and states. There was a specific focus during all interviews on the links between Hungary and Russia.

The first person to be interviewed was Tamas Dombos. He is the advocacy director of Háttér Társaság - one of the main LGBTI-organisations in Hungary. He was able to give a detailed overview of the contemporary history of the LGBTI-movement in Hungary. He also gave some tips on where to find possible international cooperation between the Global Right and Hungarians. The second NGO representative was Orsalya Fülöp. She is the policy director of Energieklub. Energieklub is a Hungarian NGO that investigates energy corruption in Hungary. While they do not have a specific interest in LGBTI-rights, they have much experience with Russian-Hungarian corruption cases in the energy sector. So she was extremely interesting to have a better understanding of the way the Hungarian government(s) cooperate(d) with Russia.

The first interview with politicians was conducted with two representatives of MSZP - traditionally the biggest social-democratic party in Hungary. Balázs Bárány is the international secretary and board member of National Presidency of MSZP. Tüttő Kata is the vice-president of MSZP Budapest Regional Association and member of the National Board of MSZP. The second political party that has been interviewed for this paper is Momentum. Momentum is relatively new in the Hungarian political landscape and positions itself as a pro-European centre-liberal party. Katalin Cseh is elected as a member of the European Parliament on 26 May 2019. Dániel Turgonyi is the leader of the LGBTI-section of Momentum. They were able to give insights on how their parties deal with LGBTI-issues and how they see possible cooperation on these issues with other international actors.

As an Associate Professor at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University and expert in Russia-EU relations, András Rácz has much experience with Hungarian-Russian economic and defence relations. While not being an expert in soft power, he was able to give some background to the relations between Budapest and Moscow since the fall of the Iron Curtain. He was also able to give some intel on the background of some of the Russian oligarchs involved in this research.

3.6. Theoretical Framework

This paper departs from a theoretical framework wherein it challenges Joseph Nye's definition of soft power with the contemporary developments around the transnational anti-LGBTI movement. It redefines soft power in a framework wherein also autocratic and illiberal governments can wage soft power.

Therefore it is also embedded in a more critical approach towards security studies. Ontological security is inherently part of the theoretical framework. The data collected for the case study will be used as proof for the theoretical framework.

3.7. Data Analysis

The data obtained via desk research, a literature review, field research, and expert interviews have been analysed through a three-step method. The first step generalises the LGBTI-politics of Russia and Hungary and their soft power relationship (see 3.6.1.). The second step reveals the links of Hungary's relationship towards the transnational anti-LGBTI network and their connection to the Russian Federation (see 3.6.2). The last step explains the way this research checks whether Hungarian participation plays a significant role within the transnational anti-LGBTI movement (see 3.6.3.).

3.7.1. Generalising Hungarian-Russian LGBTI-politics and soft power relationship

Before starting to analyse the collected data, I analysed both the Hungarian and Russian stances towards LGBTI-rights via a literature review. This literature review included both academic and more popular sources. For instance, in the case of Russia also, the National Security Strategy was analysed because this document had explicit mentions to the decline of traditional family values.

Chapter 4 and 5 assess Russia's autocratic soft power strategy and the reasons behind it. Therefore it starts with a brief introduction on how the definition of 'soft power' as posed by Joseph Nye relates to autocratic states. After that, I assess where Russia's foreign policy is based on, why Russia focusses on sexuality by - as mentioned above - analysing Russia's National Security Strategy and what Russia has been doing on an international level concerning sexuality.

Chapter 6 gives an overview of the Hungarian political perspective towards the LGBTI-community and how this relates to Russia's autocratic soft power strategy. The chapter also assesses reports of, for instance, the Hungarian think-tank Political Capital, articles in popular media and links these findings with quotes from the expert interviews conducted for this research. It does compare policy measures from Russia with similar policy measures in Hungary.

3.7.2. Mapping the relationship between Hungary and the Global Anti-LGBTI Lobby

Within this step, the material collected through desk research and field research gets analysed to reveal the transnational anti-LGBTI network wherein Hungary and Russia are involved. Therefore three leading organisations were defined for having a particular interest in the Hungarian government and vice versa: the World Congress of Families, CitizenGO and The Political Network For Values. This step gets elaborated in chapter 7.

Within these organisations, the research paper also takes a particular interest in the relationship from these organisations with the people close to the leadership of the Russian Federation. After summing up these individual country relationships to the transnational anti-LGBTI network, their

mutual relationships is also scrutinised. The main idea behind this is to identify the primary liaisons of both Hungary and Russia and to what extent they interact with each other.

3.7.3. Evaluating the Hungarian involvement in the Global Anti-LGBTI Lobby

This step evaluates whether or not the Hungarian involvement in the transnational anti-LGBTI movement possesses domestic threats towards LGBTI-equality in Hungary and the European Union. It also opens the debate whether these soft power influences possess a threat to not only the LGBTI-community but also the general national security. Chapter 8 focusses on this step.

Therefore this research firstly identifies the forces within the European Union who can positively influence LGBTI-equality. This is being done by linking academic literature on the impact of Europeanisation on LGBTI-research on (candidate) member states and quotes from the expert interviews executed for this research.

After that, the transcripts of the interviews to analyse whether or not the people I identified in section 3.5 are aware of the transnational cooperation of the Hungarian government regarding LGBTI-rights. In most interviews, I also polled the respondents to their knowledge of general cooperation from the Hungarian government with the Russian Federation. After that, I analysed whether or not the respondents find the links of their government with the transnational anti-LGBTI lobby and Russia's state-sponsored homophobes a threat towards LGBTI-equality and national security or sovereignty. These parts play a crucial role in evaluating whether or not the transnational cooperation of Hungary form a threat towards LGBTI-equality because I assume that a lack awareness and threat perception can be a crucial factor for the successful waging of influence by for instance the Russian Federation concerning LGBTI-rights.

In the last section of chapter 8, I evaluate how Hungary has been behaving concerning LGBTI-rights on a supranational level (within the European Council). This is crucial to eventually state how far-reaching the Hungarian stances on LGBTI-rights are and whether or not these conferences and organisations the Hungarian government has been participating in are effective in possible influencing policy-making.

4. The Global Right and their Soft Power ability as a threat to national security

This study is not only embedded within the scholarship of LGBTI-politics but should also be seen as an assessment within the scholarship within Critical Security Studies. It critically questions the underlying assumptions of Joseph Nye's 'soft power' definition. The hypothesis possesses that key Hungarian officials cooperate with Russian individuals close to international intelligence operations of the Russian government - which is internationally perceived as an autocratic government.

The international dimensions to LGBTI-issues can possess a threat to a country's national security. That is not only my point of view but for instance, also the point of view of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States of America. In 2019 they forced the Chinese stockholders to sell their stocks back to American stockholders in gay dating app Grindr. Their reading of the

deal is that it gives the Chinese too much power over critical information of Americans, and therefore, it possesses a threat towards national security.

On the other end of the spectrum, Russia also sees the Western involvement on LGBTI-rights as a threat towards its national security. According to The Nation correspondent Sean Guillory, sexuality is seen in Russia as “a kind of new sexual sovereignty defending Orthodox Christian morality against the corrosive influence of Western decadence.” ([The Nation](#), 2013). Indeed, on the website of the Russian News Official Agency RIA, they speak about a new iron curtain around sexual values ([RIA](#), 2013). As I will elaborate on later, the Russian National Security Strategy sees the defence of traditional family values as a critical challenge for Russia’s national security.

So the question raises how this all relates to the classic ‘soft power’-theory. The coming paragraphs compare Joseph Nye’s ‘soft power’-findings to more recent scholarship on populist and global right politics.

4.1. Soft Power and autocratic illiberal democracies

The existence of soft power and all related theories has been food for thought for the past three decades. While many do agree about the existence of soft power, the importance and efficiency of it is still up to debate. To understand the basic concepts of this theory, a reading of ‘Soft Power’-father Joseph Nye is necessary.

According to Nye: Soft Power is “*getting others to want the outcomes that you want*”. They do it by using their “*attractive power*”. He sees three resources for countries’ their soft power: (1) culture, (2) political values, and (3) foreign policies (Nye, 2004: 5-11).

By reading his work, it becomes clear that Nye assumes that soft power strategies better work “*within liberal democracies*”. Therefore, he often refers to the USA as an excellent example. “*Narrow values and parochial cultures*” seem to have less ‘soft power’-ability (Nye, 2004: 6, 11, 13, 17).

Nye also assumes that “*no country likes to feel manipulated, even by soft power*” (Nye, 2004: 25).

These assumptions may have been accurate during the (early post)-Cold War period, however in an age where populism is flourishing the words of Nye should be read with more caution.

Indeed - the link between ‘soft power’-strategies and autocratic foreign policies is not an apparent relationship. While some aspects of ‘soft power’-strategies can easily be found back in the international political contemporary reality, that does not exactly mean that these autocracies follow the ‘soft power’-paths as described by Joseph Nye.

However, with increased strength¹ on several levels of autocratic states, one must not underestimate the ‘promotional factor’ these autocracies have.

Already in 1997, Fareed Zakaria² wrote about so-called ‘illiberal democracies’. These are states that have “elections [that] are rarely as free and fair as in the West today, but they do reflect the reality of popular participation in politics and support for those elected.”. These illiberal democratic leaders often go beyond constitutional limits without a lot of scrutiny (Zakaria, 1997: 22-23). These illiberal democracies also fit in this research focus on autocracies. Zakaria also speaks about liberal(ising) autocracies³ (Zakaria, 1997: 26, 27, 29, 40). The terms illiberal democracy and autocracy do not entirely mean the same, but one can assume that illiberal democracies form a category within autocracies. Both terms will, therefore, be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

The promotion of illiberal autocratic democracies has been food for thought over the years. As described above, the strict definition of Nye’s ‘soft power’ does not allow autocracies to be embodied in that. Christopher Walker⁴ describes it as follows: “*the application of the term soft power—a benign concept generally applied to efforts made to bolster a country’s image, contribute to open debate, and win friends and allies—to the ideas-related efforts of the authoritarians is problematic. What the authoritarian regimes are practicing is instead a more malign mirror image of soft power.*” (Walker, 2016: 61).

While democratic states often base their ‘soft power’-ability on a mix of international NGOs and free press, autocratic states that want to use ‘soft power’-tactics use government-led media channels⁵ and so-called GONGO’s⁶ to influence international institutions or politics outside their own countries (Walker, 2016).

In a Foreign Affairs article, Walker releases the term ‘sharp power’ for soft power being waged by autocracies (Walker, 2017). Autocracies were able to wage sharp power in countries that underwent a “*democratic downturn*”. He describes sharp power as “*This is an approach to international affairs that typically involves efforts at censorship, or the use of manipulation to sap the integrity of independent institutions. Sharp power has the effect of limiting free expression and distorting the political environment*”. The election interference of Russia in 2017 is an example of this (Walker, 2018: 10-12).

¹ “In 1990, countries rated “not free” by Freedom House (the lowest category, which excludes “partially free” countries such as Singapore) accounted for just 12 percent of global income. Now, they are responsible for 33 percent, matching the level they achieved in the early 1930s, during the rise of fascism in Europe, and surpassing the heights they reached in the Cold War when Soviet power was at its apex.” (Mounk & Foa, 2018: 30).

² Fareed Zakaria wrote the article on ‘*The Rise Of Illiberal Democracies*’ in his capacity of managing editor of Foreign Affairs in the magazines 1997 November/December edition.

³ The Austro-Hungarian empire of the 19th century is given as an example for a classic liberal autocracy (Zakaria, 1997: 29).

⁴ Christopher Walker is the director of the National Endowment For Democracy.

⁵ E.g.: The Chinese CCTV or Russian RT are excellent examples of government owned media channels with the goal to spread the government’s view on international politics to an international audience (Walker, 2016: 51 & 59).

⁶ Government Owned Non-Governmental Organisations are NGOs who serve the government’s interest and often receive a considerable amount of their finances from the government (Walker, 2016).

Still, 'sharp power' does not entirely embody autocratic soft power. The structure behind autocracies' their 'soft power'-ability is intrinsically different from the structure of liberal democracies' their 'soft power'-ability. While soft power in liberal democracies is often something that exists organically, autocracies need to establish a well-thought 'soft power'-strategy via (financially) supporting international media channels and GONGOs. This paper adds another category to the 'soft power'-toolbox of autocracies: supporting already existing international networks in liberal democracies that support their values. The international pro-family movement is an excellent example of this.

Therefore soft power in this research is not solely defined as a weapon of liberal democracies. It does, however, depart from the basic idea of 'attracting the other' - something that Nye already posed in his first works on the issue. But besides that, autocratic soft power departs from two other assumptions: a well-thought financially supported strategy (1), the channels are government-owned media, GONGOs, and already existing international organisations (2). The means exist out of state-financed propaganda via these channels and interactions between befriended ideologists, oligarchs, academics and government officials via for instance conferences. These strategies make a differentiation in their target groups as well: ordinary citizens (1) and political elites (2). To reach ordinary citizens, the autocratic soft power might rather focus on their media channels and GONGOs that can support befriended movements in other countries. If the focus is on the political elite, preference will be given to outsourcing their soft power to already existing international organisations. Outsourcing soft power means that the autocracy jumps on an already existing international movement with both financial and ideological means, so the movement can further grow and increase its reach. This research researches explicitly a case wherein this idea fits.

While not disagreeing - this paper does not follow the purely 'sharp power'- definition as posed by Christopher Walker. As will be proven further, the outsourcing of Russia's soft power, in this case, does not happen as secretive as for instance, the Russian interference in the USA Presidential Elections. The way Russia creates an attraction via outsourcing soft power to international movements towards its policies on sexuality can be openly (be it indirectly) found on the websites of these organisations. Therefore I stay using the term 'autocratic soft power' instead of 'sharp power'. The nature of both concepts is not entirely the same.

4.2. Ontological security

The practicalities of Russia's soft power strategy will be discussed in the next chapter. The following paragraphs will draw a theoretical framework that explains the causes of autocracies to make a soft power strategy. This theoretical framework is based on Anthony Giddens' ontological security theory and the scholarship that fits these ideas within international relations.

Professor Filip Ejdus defines ontological security within international relations as follows: "*Ontological Security Theory (OST) which is based on a premise that actors in world politics are often ready to compromise physical security and other important material gains in order to protect their sense of continuity in the world.*" (Ejdus, 2018: 883).

When certain realities lead to notable changes in a country, countries can become ontologically insecure (Ejdus, 2018: 884). In the case of the Russian Federation, this could, for instance, be the fall of the Soviet Union, but also the demographic decline.

This kind of realities that lead to ontological insecurity are called critical situations. These critical situations emerge when the existence of what is taken for granted is under threat (Ejdus, 2018: 887).

According to Steele and Homolar, three features are essential if it comes to the study of ontological insecurity within populist world politics. The first one is the special relationship between *routines and anxiety*. Certain routines being disrupted will lead to anxiety. This anxiety leads to a change in how the world is governed. Already in 1957, Neumann linked the “perceptions of alienation” to the spectrum wherein politicians take decisions (Neumann, 1957). When anxiety grows, states do no longer depend on rational experts, but “*expertise itself*”. This turning back to routines opens up a window for populist politics (Steele & Homolar, 2019: 2).

The second feature is the relationship between *narratives and memory*. Populist politicians their narrative is often set on certain routines or realities from the past. This is not just the content and the way that they talk, but they also relate to their future policy proposals (Steele & Homolar, 2019: 3).

The last feature is the relationship between *crisis and insecurity*. The changes or disruptions that are related to late-modernity are often perceived as a crisis. These crises lead to an increased feeling of insecurity (Steele & Homolar, 2019: 3). Again, this paves the way for populist politicians to pave the way for propagating pre-modernity realities.

These critical situations can also lead to a collective outburst of anxiety, according to Professor Ejdus (Ejdus, 2018: 887). This fits in the idea of the international movement against LGBTI-rights. As will be elaborated on in the next section, this is a very diverse movement existing out of several religions, ethnicities, and nationalities. Also, the motives are sometimes different to unite in an international movement. A good example is again the existing threat of a declining demography as posed by the ‘demographic winter theory’.

4.3. The International Traditional Family Value Movement and its impact

Where the exact origins lay for the international movement behind the advocacy for traditional family values lays is not entirely clear.

Buss and Herman date it back to what they call the ‘Christian Right’ and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population. The third UN Conference on Population received a lot of criticism by conservative groups linked to the Vatican to be too feminist. Indeed - feminist groups lobbied successfully during the leading-up to the conference to influence the outcomes on abortion in the final conference text. The Vatican revealed a bold statement against it. Moreover, right-wing Christian groups saw this event as a sign to better international coordinate themselves (Buss & Herman, 2003: 60-62).

Scholars also see the origins of the World Congress of Families (*see later*) in the Christian Right movement (Buss & Herman, 2003: 81-82). This paper will show that this interpretation is dated and

that there is also an important autocratic ‘soft power’ geopolitical & multi-religious component to WCF.

What the two scholars rightfully point out is that at the time of writing, LGBTI-rights were not the focus of the Christian Right movement. Women’s rights - like abortion and contraception - was their primary focus. It was only because domestic partners of the international Christian Right movement -in the West- started to advocate against LGBTI-rights that there was also an increased focus on it (Buss & Herman, 2003: 121,125). This assumption might have been correct in 2003, but is not in 2019. Back then, only two countries recognised marriages between same-sex couples, but in the meantime, LGBTI-rights became in many countries at the centre of the political debate. This led to a considerable shift in the focus of the international traditional family values movement.

While the demands of male homosexuals were basically ignored before the start of this decade by the Christian Right, this is less true for the rights of lesbians. During the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Christian groups - like the United Families International (UFI) - took considerable efforts to fight the demands of the lesbian community. It was also unprecedented that they reached out to Muslim countries like Pakistan and Egypt to find support. In 2011 Professor Bob Clifford pointed out correctly that there is a “baptist-burqa” alliance and therefore speaks about the “Global Right” instead of the “Christian Right” (Clifford, 2011: 36-37).

According to Clifford, besides some The Vatican, primarily NGOs play a vital role in the “Global Right”-movement. The Howard Center For Family, Religion, and Society - founded in 1976 by later World Congress Of Families-founder Allan Carlson - is seen as one of the founding NGOs in “Global Right”-advocacy work (Clifford, 2011: 42).

Whether to call it the ‘Christian Right’ or ‘Global Right’, the origins are the same. They date back to times where the right-wing organisations within the Vatican were organising themselves on an international level. Since then the network has moved beyond Christianity and now unites several religious groups - like Muslim and Russian Orthodox leaders - in their fight for traditional values.

Autocratic governments jumped on this international network of pro-family organisations aimed at influencing international decision-making. From the study of ontological security, one must see this as a part of the existential feature of a state. As proven above, the entrance ticket to the international pro-family movement is not only for one specific religion or state. Several groups, states, and religions join the campaigns against LGBTI-rights with several interests. As the next chapter will prove, Russia joined and supports these networks out of a geopolitical autocratic ‘soft power’-reasons.

5. Russia’s Soft & Sexual Power

There has been written a lot on the rise of pro-Russian political and social movements in Europe in recent years. The events that happened in 2013 and 2014 in Ukraine showed that Putin’s administration takes a serious interest in keeping or increasing Russia’s grip on its direct neighbourhood. This so-called ‘Putinism’ was developed by the Russian government as “a toolkit of political, economic, informational, and military mechanisms aimed at progressing its foreign policy interests” (Polyakova, 2015).

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, from a 'soft power'-view traditional views on sexuality play a significant role in Russia's foreign policy towards Europe. The following pages will prove that certain political elites in Russia see the on-going debate on LGBTI-rights - especially in Central Eastern Europe - as one of the only debates where Russia can still be morally superior towards the West. Russia's foreign policy is partly based on a linkage between its internal and external opposition.

5.1. Russia's power consolidates on external threats

When the USSR fell, and Russia's governmental structure was weakened on all levels, the demand to rebuild a strong nation-state was strong. This can be historically explained since there has always been a perception that a robust Russian empire led to a form of security towards its citizens. This conviction dates back to Napoleon and Mongol times. Between 1996 and 2012, opinion polls suggest that one of the primary expectations of the Russian society from their president was to "restore or maintain Russia's superpower status" (Grigas, 2016:17).

Since Putin serves as president of the Russian Federation, the government's (foreign) policies have been set up to restore the superpower status it once had during the USSR. Putin's actions to restore Russia's superpower status can be distinguished in the groups their policy strategy targets: Russian compatriots & non-Russians (Grigas, 2016: 2).

Since the wars in Ukraine and Georgia, the strategy towards Russian compatriots became quite clear. According to Agnia Grigas (2016), "*Moscow has pursued an increasingly consistent seven-stage reimperialisation policy trajectory toward its compatriots*": (1) *Soft power*, (2) *humanitarian policies*, (3) *compatriot policies*, (4) *passportisation*, (5) *information warfare*, (6) *protection* and (7) *informal control or formal annexation of the compatriots' territories*" (Grigas, 2016: 26).

If it comes to non-Russian actors in international politics, Russia has used its weakness and corrupt institutions to (re)gain its power. Via energy deals, they, for instance, increased the dependence on Russian natural resources considerably. This has not only happened in post-Soviet spheres, but also in European Union' member states (Grigas, 2016: 20).

All this comes together in a government who wisely combines soft power with hard power strategies. They do not see both forms of power as something completely different but instead use soft power to increase the effectiveness of their hard power actions. Business and cultural interests are being linked to security issues (Grigas, 2016: 29).

Professor Bill Bowring theorises another reading of the increased hostility towards the West and its liberal institutions by Russia. According to him, there is a renewed urge towards more sovereignty by the Russians. By joining international institutions like the Council of Europe and the ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights, policy-makers often felt powerless (Bowring, 2013: 193-205).

Bowring cites the Chairman of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation Valeriy Zorking (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2010) on the power and rulings of the European Court of Human Rights:

“When such a decision is taken in the interests of the protection of the rights and freedoms of the citizen and the development of our country, Russia will always precisely obey it. But when it or another decision of the Strasbourg court is doubtful from the point of view of the goal of the European Convention on Human Rights and moreover in a directions fashion concerns national sovereignty, and fundamental constitutional principles, Russia has the right to work out a defence mechanism against such a decisions. [...] Like any other European state, Russia must fight as much for the preservation of its sovereignty, as for the careful relationship with the European Convention, and defence of its sovereignty against inadequate, doubtful decisions.” (Bowring, 2013: 194-195)

As Russia decided that it will never become a member of the EU and NATO, they also decided not to challenge the organisations anymore but undermine them (Hanley, 2017:152) from inside. They do that by, for instance, trying to ‘decouple’ Central and Eastern European countries from the EU (Federov, 2013: 320). This happens through the support of far-right parties and the establishment of a framework for policy-makers to consolidate conservative and illiberal values in the EU (Klapisis, 2015: 35-36; Hanley, 2017: 152).

Russia’s foreign policy should be theorised as an egocentric power tool for the current political elite in Russia. It departs from fundamental realist theories within international relations. It is in the own interest of the Russian state to look morally superior to the West via, for instance, taking and supporting conservative family policy measures. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation tries to serve the Kremlin’s national interest as efficient as possible by focussing both on soft power and hard power and independently from each other on Russians living abroad and non-Russians. Besides that, it shows a revival in the lost national proudness. This is being reproduced in their ‘sovereign fights’ against institutions like the NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe.

5.2. Domestic focus on sexuality

As discussed in chapter 3, ontological security explains the negative focus of the Russian Federation on the development of rights for sexual and gender minorities. However, next to an existential explanation, also a more practical and political strategical explanation can be given.

The negative focus of the Russian government on sexual minorities became apparent after the presidential election in 2011. Academics link the questions on the legitimacy of Vladimir Putin in 2011 with the rise of hatred towards the West and the increasing emphasis on traditional Russian values (Mole, 2016: 144).

Already during the anti-Kremlin protests after the presidential elections, homophobic discourse became more frequent. Both the pro- and anti-Kremlin demonstrators used homophobia to scrutinise each other. This rose all the way up to the highest level of government. At some point, Vladimir Putin even compared the protesters their symbol - a white ribbon - with condoms. He said that he thought they were ‘AIDS-activists’ (which was at that time very much linked to the LGBTI-community) (Sperling, 2015:116).

As mentioned above, also the opposition suggested that Vladimir Putin and his entourage are homosexuals. Slogans that are translated to “One, two, three: Putin get out! Three, two, one: Putin is a fag!” were very common during opposition protests (Sperling, 2015: 119).

Valerie Sperling correctly refers to the Russian sociologist Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova to explain these positions: *“the Russian political realm is practically female free ... and emphasise the under spread understanding that Russia’s leadership is male and heterosexual. Manifestations of politicised sexism and homophobia thus serve to reinforce each other and ongoing male domination in the political realm”* (Sperling, 2015: 206-207).

But how and why does the Russian government target LGBTI-people so specifically? I argue that the creation of an internal enemy was a trick from the past. The USSR its power-consolidation was based on the threat towards its internal and external enemies. Since the USSR’s internal enemy - religion - took power after the fall of communism, the Kremlin needed to find another enemy. In their exploration to a new internal enemy, already in the nineties, the focus was on non-traditionalism. However, the specific focus on LGBTI-issues came in 2011. When Vladimir Putin was facing growing protests against his re-election, he was looking for a way to re-unite the Russians. He wanted to pinpoint a common enemy and threat to the ‘Russian Motherland’.

While the political discourse in Russia was becoming more and more homophobic, the real start of Russia’s state-sponsored homophobia was 2013. In 2013 the Russian Duma introduced an anti-propaganda law for LGBTI-issues. The law prohibits positively promoting LGBTI-issues in places where minors might be present. Since then, the visibility of the LGBTI-movement and community deteriorated. One might also suggest that the crime rate towards LGBTI-people increased dramatically. The far-right group Occupy Pedophilia - with origins in Ukraine - started to lure young gays via dating apps to deserted places to beat them up or even murder them. A 2016 report by the Equal Rights Trust suggests that the police received 200 cases on homophobic attacks in that year. None of them led to prosecution (Equal Rights Trust, 2016).

Interestingly, the fight for traditional family values and the interaction of state homophobia is primarily essential to the Russian Federation’s foreign policy towards Europe (Klipsas, 2015: 36). Russia tries to get Central and Eastern European countries to block the development of LGBTI-rights because it sees it as a way of stagnating the liberal developments within the European Union (Hanley, 2017: 153).

Especially since the crisis in Ukraine and Crimea, Russia started to link their internal enemy to their external enemy: The West. While the EuroMaidan revolution was still going on, billboards linking the joining of the EU with same-sex marriage were showing up all around the post-Soviet republic. Later investigations suggest that these were paid by Russian oligarchs close to the Kremlin (Ayoub, 2016). However, chapter 7 will prove that Russia is already much longer involved in the international homophobic and transphobic movement - let it be less active and publicly.

5.2.1 Russian National Security Strategy

The assumption of Russia's focus on traditional values gets confirmed after reading their December 2015 declassified National Security Strategy. In several occasions, this document underlines that securing the traditional values of the Russian society is fundamental.

Knowing that Russia's population is declining, ensuring a "*stable demographic development*" (III. 30) is seen as key towards the long-term national strategic interests. That is why "*respect for family and faith traditions*" is listed amongst the foundations of Russia's statehood (11).

Individuals and groups who want to "*destroy[ing] traditional Russian religious and moral values*" are listed amongst the main threats to "*state and public security*"(43).

"Traditional Russian spiritual and moral values' are defined as follows: "the priority over the material, protection of human life and of human right and, freedoms, the family, [...], the normals of morals and morality, [...]" (78).

Later on, the National Security Strategy assesses the main threats in several themes. Traditional values come back in the paragraphs about culture. In that sense, the Russian Federation commits itself to ensure traditional moral values amongst children and young people (76). This does explain the 2013 introduction of an anti-propaganda law against the LGBTI movement in spheres where minors might be present.

As mentioned above, LGBTI rights are being seen by the Russian Federation as an ideology created in the West. Therefore they want to strengthen their national security by "*ensuring*" that "*external expansion of ideologies and values*" is impossible (82).

Russia's National Security Strategy proves the assumption that sexuality and traditional family values are a crucial part of Russia's domestic political goals. The preservation and fight against the demographic decline are seen as critical challenges for the Russian Federation. Therefore non-traditional sexualities are seen as a real threat towards overcoming these challenges within this National Security Strategy. The fact that liberal democracies have been introducing and promote all around the world LGBTI-rights is within the optics of this National Security Strategy seen as a considerable threat towards Russia's sovereignty. The toolbox against this threat exists out a mix of domestic anti-LGBTI policies and a well-thought autocratic soft power strategy.

5.3. Russia's Soft Power

In Today's increasingly populist world, the illiberal ideas as embodied by Putin's administration are gaining more and more popularity (Van Herpen, 2016: 23). Viktor Orban, but also Matteo Salvini from Italy, Thierry Baudet from The Netherlands, or Nigel Farage from the UK have referred to so-called 'Putinism' as a good way of governing.

Just like other autocracies, Russia's 'soft power'-strategy is based on selling their interpretation on current issues in international politics to an international audience. From a media perspective,

Russia Today is responsible for this. However, while Russia organised a crackdown on its domestic NGOs, it also set up a network of GONGOs that have to influence international decision-making⁷ (Walker, 2016).

Inside Putin's ideological advisors, Aleksandr Dugin⁸ is considered essential. While 'Eurasian' theories exist out of a wide range of autocratic, fascist, and mystic ideas, they had a not-to-be-underestimated impact on Russia's contemporary politics (Van Herpen, 2016: 9).

The increase of conservative policies in Russia can be easily explained by the increase of power of the Russian Orthodox Church in contemporary politics. It is even part of the Kremlin's interest to make from the Russian Orthodox Church, an international church (Van Herpen, 2016: 12).

5.3.1. International defender of traditional family values

One of the only times, Russia is referring in a positive way to human rights on an international level, is when it is to defend their Russians living abroad (Grigas, 2016: 34). In most other cases, it uses the several international forums to question the universality of human rights⁹ (Van Herpen, 2015: 143-144).

In 2009 Russia launched an initiative within the UN Human Rights Council for "Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values". In the official explanations they most of the times referred to female genital mutilation, but after some time it became clear that this also included Russia's fight against LGBT-rights. After the acceptance of the initiative, a workshop was organised around it by the UN in 2010. Many representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church took part in the workshop (Van Herpen, 2015: 144-145).

Besides the UN and USA, also regional international organisations - like the OSCE and Council of Europe - openly criticised Russia's 'traditional values'-interpretation of the human rights conventions. The European Court of Human Rights has condemned Russia several times for its domestic attacks on the LGBTI-community, but they seem to ignore the rulings (Van Herpen, 2015: 146-148).

As Van Herpen notes, Russia's attempts to change the interpretation of the universality of human rights have been quite effective (Van Herpen, 2015: 146-148). While direct influence is impossible to examine, it is also impossible to ignore the negative discourse on human rights by an increasing number of government officials in the Western hemisphere in the last few years.

⁷ Walker refers to the annual meeting of civil society NGOs during the OSCE's Human Dimension Implementation Meetings (HDIMs). Russia (among other autocracies within OSCE) is prone to send GONGOs to these meetings and by doing this silences Russia's civil society view on human rights within OSCE (Walker, 2016: 57).

⁸ Dugin is a neo-fascist conservative thinker from Russia. He is well-known for his theory which is called "Eurasianism" and has close ties to the Kremlin.

⁹ Both the UN and USA openly criticised this narrow interpretation of the universality of human rights - explicitly referring to LGBTI-people as an inherent part of the human rights conventions (Van Herpen, 2015: 145).

It is evident that the fight against the international demands of the LGBTI-movement is an integral part of Russia's soft power strategy. It links the Russia's domestic goals with an on-going debate in many countries around the world. They see sexuality and the on-going debate in many non-Russian speaking countries as one of the only fields where they can still show off as morally superior. Especially in countries who were formerly in the sphere of influence of the USSR, they perceive their chances to have an impact on local policies still plausible. As I will prove more in detail later, this is why Russia puts so much effort in supporting anti-LGBTI organisations around the world. As part of the argumentation for that, the next chapter will focus on the 'soft power'-relationship between Moscow and Budapest since the fall of the Iron Curtain.

6. Hungary-Russia: The Christian-Soviet Paradox

As in most Central European former Eastern Bloc countries, Russian politics are not popular in the Hungarian society. This can - of course - be explained by the very close relationship between Budapest and Moscow during the Socialist rule. Opinion polls on LGBTI-issues also do not suggest that Russia is effectively influencing the Hungarian population. 67% of the Hungarians answered positively on the question if LGB-people should have the same rights as heterosexuals (ILGA-Europe, 2017).

That can be explained by the fact that already since the end of the Second World War, sexuality has been a part of the political discussion in Hungary¹⁰. Both conservative and progressive political elites towards the LGBTI-community have alternated each other since the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The general political discourse changed drastically since the second election of the Christian Democrats Fidesz as the leading political party in Hungary. Prime minister Viktor Orbán is a massive supporter of what is increasingly called an 'illiberal democracy' (Orbán, 2014). Nationalism, strict migration policy, and Christianity are the core characteristics of his political

¹⁰ In the first years after World War II (the Rákosi era), very hostile policies towards homosexuals were still in place. The 'unnatural fornication' act (§241, 1878 Hungarian Penal Code) introduced under Habsburg rule in the 19th century was still being used. People found guilty of 'perversion against nature' could be punished with imprisonment up to one year (Takács, 2017: 157-158).

In the late 1950s a change in the attitudes of government officials towards homosexuals can be noted. Instead of a criminalisation approach, a biological/medical approach towards homosexuality became more common. This led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1961. This decriminalisation did not entirely wipe all basic inequalities since the age of consent was set on 20 for homosexual relationships. The age of consent for heterosexual relationships was 14. In 1978 the age of consent for homosexual intercourse was lowered to 18, but it took until after the fall of communism to make the age of consent equal for heterosexual and homosexual relationships (Takács, 2017: 165).

For several purposes, before and during World War II, the police authorities made lists of suspected homosexuals. These practises persisted during the Communist Rule as well. Lists of homosexuals were made as an addition to a common practise within communist police states: blackmailing (Takács, 2017: 164-165).

According to Tamás Dombos (Háttér Society), the first non-governmental organisation focussed on homosexual men Humerus (National Association for Hungarian Homosexuals) (*LA Times*, 1988) was recognised in 1988 - one year before the fall of communism. As a grassroots organisation, the Ministry of Health found that the NGO could be helpful to reach out to one of the main target groups in their policies for HIV/AIDS prevention (Interview Tamás Dombos).

ideology. Globalisation, multiculturalism, and liberalism seem to be the opposite to his world views¹¹.

Before Fidesz took over, Hungary's government - led by social-democrats - implemented a lot of liberal legislation. For instance, in 2007, they introduced registered partnerships for same-sex couples. One may argue that this was mainly because of EU-influence, but the opposite is true. Already since the nineties, the LGBTI-movement has known a rapid evolvement. With many organisations focussed on the gay community (Buzogány, 2012). A queer identity has found its entrance in Hungary's political and civil society for more than two decades¹². While Russia has little impact on the Hungarian public opinion, it does have an impact on Hungarian politics. Especially Jobbik - but also Fidesz - proved to have a good relationship with high-ranking Russian government officials and ideologists close to the Kremlin. A 2016 report by Political Capital puts it as follows: "*Jobbik and Fidesz have cultivated political/ideological networks that have the possibility to serve the Kremlin's interest.*" (Political Capital, 2016, 30). The cooperation between Budapest and Moscow is both on an economical and 'soft power'-level.

¹¹ From 2010 Viktor Orban and his party Fidesz took over the power from the social-democrats. Since then the political discourse towards LGBTI-people became more conservative and aggressive.

In 2011, the Fidesz-led Hungarian government limited marriage to a union between two persons of the opposite sex in the constitution (Kovacs, 2012:193). This could be seen to prevent an attempt to legalise same-sex marriages by a court ruling of the Hungarian Constitutional Court (Interview Tamás Dombos).

In 2019, the Orban administration banned the degree of Gender Studies in Hungary. This specifically targets the transgender community. He sees gender issues rather as an ideology instead of something academic (Independent, 2018).

Prominent Hungarian government officials have also been giving more and more homophobic and transphobic comments in recent years. For instance, the president of the Hungarian Parliament László Kövér said that adoption by LGBTI-people is equally to pedophilia (index, 2019).

Since 2011 Hungary also takes a conservative stance towards LGBTI-rights on an international level - with blocking several pro-LGBTI directives in the Council of Europe and attending ultra-conservative conferences all over the world (see later).

¹² The NGO-scene behind the LGBTI-community really started to flourish after the fall of communism. In the early nineties several openly LGBTI-organisations and venues were established - sometimes differentiating on subcategories within the LGBTI-community (e.g. Jewish gays). In 1994 the Rainbow Alliance was found, but they got refused by the courts based on a too informal name for the organisation ('Mellek'). When the case went to the Constitutional Court, the court ruled that the NGO could exist as long as no people under the age of 18 would be involved in its activities. The NGO declined this request (Interview Tamás Dombos).

The debate about the recognition of the Rainbow Alliance gave a lot of visibility to the LGBTI-community. The back then by social-democratic led government had some supportive cabinet members towards the LGBTI-community. This led to a decision by the Hungarian Constitutional Court in 1995 stating that in Hungary marriages are traditionally a "*union between a man and woman*". Therefore - the Court said - the government should think about other forms of cohabitation for same-sex couples (Interview Tamás Dombos; Takács, 2007: 37)

A major milestone in LGBTI-politics in Hungary was the 2002 equalisation of the age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual couples by the Hungarian Constitutional Court. This was directly due to the request of the European Union during Hungary's pre-accession period. A 1998 Special Declaration of the European Parliament stated that the EP would not support the "*membership of countries who don't recognise the human rights of homosexuals*" (Takács, 2007: 3).

Another milestone during the reign of the social-democrats was the introduction of civil partnerships for same-sex couples in 2007. With this law same-sex couples can get their relationships recognised in Hungary since the 1st of January 2009 (Pinknews, 2007).

In the first two decades after communism, the Hungarian governments' political direction was Europe. This led obviously to an increase in the rights of LGBTI-citizens in the country. Russia was not the preferred partner during these decades. This also includes the period between 1998 and 2002 - when Fidesz was in power.

The turning point was an informal meeting between Viktor Orban and Vladimir Putin in 2009. The meeting was set up by the former Hungarian ambassador to Russia Keskeny (Political Capital, 2016, 35)

This chapter will examine the general 'soft power'-relationship between the Russian Federation and Hungary. There are three ways of waging soft power in Hungary for Russia - according to Political Capital: via the media, via institutions and via persons.

6.1. Russia's weak influence on Hungarian media

While a recent report of the Freedom House suggests the Hungarian media landscape is becoming less and less free, there are no Russian-owned mainstream media companies in Hungary.

The far-right media channels are also not directly owned by Russia. Nevertheless, the Jobbik-owned alfahir.hu "addresses all important issues on the Kremlin's agenda" - including anti-gay legislation (Political Capital, 2016: 32). The news-site conducted interviews with Russian far-right ideologist Alexander Dugin and reported on several occasions on Orthodox countries "banning the LGBT parade or morally condemning the LGBT communities" (Political Capital, 2016: 33).

If it comes to social media, scholars assume there are a few Russian affiliated Facebook pages - which have been created especially since the crisis in Crimea. However, the influence of them remains rather marginal - since none of them have more than 20.000 likes (Political Capital, 2016: 33).

While Russia's Foreign Minister Lavrov expressed interest in opening a Russian-owned Hungarian media channel, Russia seems not to be able to wage its soft power strategy via the media.

6.2. Russia's institutional influence on Hungary

In their report, Political Capital sees two institutional factors where Russia might much more effectively wage influence on Hungary. The first category is political parties - specifically Jobbik and Fidesz. The second category is NGOs, which have clear links with Russia. The following two sections dig deeper into these connections.

6.2.1. Jobbik & Fidesz, serving the Kremlin's interest?

“There has been significant progress in terms of equal treatment legislation, recognition of registered partnerships, so there were a lot of things happening. But then in 2010 Fidesz came back - and you know - it goes backwards... .”

- Tamás Dombos, Advocacy Director Háttér Society

While Fidesz its relationship with the Kremlin is more ambiguous than the one of Jobbik, Russia's interest can be much more served by Fidesz. Fidesz has been in power since 2009 and was able to change Hungary a lot in those ten years.

While the former MSZP-led government introduced registered partnerships for same-sex couples in 2008, Fidesz limited marriage constitutionally to opposite-sex couples in 2011. The political discourse has become more and more homophobic over the years as well - by for instance trying to limit the gay pride parade (Political Capital, 2016: 35).

Jobbik's cooperation with Russia is more explicit. MEP Bela Kovacs has been publicly accused of spying for Russia (Reuters, 2017). Also, German investigators found out that the Kremlin donated - via Belarussian oligarch Alyaksandr Usovsky - money to the far-right party (HVG, 2017).

According to Political Capital, *“there is a systematic illiberal values agenda represented by Fidesz and its coalition partners”* (Political Capital, 2016: 35). On the other hand, they state - in reference to the current Polish government's policies - that these policies are not an *“import”* of Russia, but rather an *“expression of right-wing Christian (mainly Catholic) traditionalism”* (Political Capital, 2016: 36).

While it is of course hard to prove whether or not the policies implemented by Fidesz in recent years are because of the influence of Russia, it is hard to deny the fact the similarities between them.

In a blog post, Péter Krekó stated that the Hungarian government is cracking down civil society *“à la Russe”*. Therefore he refers to the way the Hungarian government has dealt with the Central European University in recent years, but he also refers to a new NGO-law in Hungary. This new law weakens the position and strength of NGOs, according to Krekó. He sees in these new policies many similarities with what the Russian government has been doing before (Krekó, 2017).

6.2.2. NGOs: Non-Hungarian Organisations?

There are two main NGOs serving Russian interest regarding traditional family values in Hungary. The first one is the Association of Christian Intellectuals. The NGO - who was founded by the Christian political party KDNP (coalition partner of Fidesz) - was the first to “ratify” a petition in support for the Russian anti-propaganda bill. The other NGO who signed the petition was Together For Life. Both organisations are led by Edit Frivaldszky (Political Capital, 2016: 37).

Another activity of Frivaldszky is the Oikosz Foundation. Oikosz is founded by Ervin Nagy - former chairman of Jobbik. Nowadays, it serves as a compilation of “*fake NGOs established by Fidesz for political marketing purposes*” (Political Capital, 2016: 37).

Frivaldszky seems to be a notable figure in the conservative international relations of Hungary. Besides her domestic activities, she is also behind the homophobic French movement Mannif Pour Tous and the conservative counterpart of Avaaz - CitizenGO (Political Capital, 2016: 37). She has taken part in the World Congress of Families’ annual gathering as well (see later).

The relationship between Budapest and Moscow has been very dubious since the fall of communism. Economically¹³, the Kremlin has via befriended oligarchs still a certain, but declining leverage in Hungary. Nevertheless, there is little evidence that the Hungarian government is taking action to free themselves from any involvement in domestic policy-making from Russia. Rather the contrary, certain acts and discourses show an increased interest in befriending the Kremlin. Throughout the year, several Hungarian politicians (both government and opposition) have built relationships with Russian officials. While the effective waging of power by Russia on Hungary in regard to LGBTI-rights remains unidentified, the links and admiration towards Russia’s policies about it are more and more clear. This admiration by Hungarian politicians of Russian policy-making is a direct result of a country’s soft power according to Nye’s definition. The next chapter will dig deeper into the details of the soft power relationships that are built via the international homophobic networks and how they relate to Hungary and Russia.

7. The International Network of Homophobic Organisations

Autocratic soft power being waged through already existing international non-governmental organisations is something that did not get enough attention. While the previous chapters mainly focused on the reason why Russia is so committed to the spread of traditional family values around the world, this chapter will show that the network of homophobic and conservative organisations is a world-wide phenomenon. One of the goals of the network is to serve the geopolitical interest of autocratic states their soft power strategy. Via outsourcing, these states depend on the transnational anti-LGBTI movement to sell their moral superiority towards the liberal West.

¹³ In recent years, several economic deals between the Orban-administration and the Russians have led to concerns about the international direction of Hungary. Especially within the energy sector, Budapest made some contested deals.

Russia seems to have a particular interest in selling their energy sources since a huge part of their economy is built upon it. This goes from gas and oil to nuclear power sources like uranium: “Russia being a huge country and still having a huge political influence in this region they have the power to ‘pressurise’ you” (Interview Orsalya Fülöp - Energieklub).

The most important one is the building of new nuclear power plant by Rosatom. The deal led to a debate within the European Union in 2015. Since the fuel for the nuclear power plant is solely going to be provided, this is against EU Diversification Requirements. Therefore, the EU rejected the deal (Politico, 2015). The Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto was putting pressure on other European Union member states to continue their work on a Black Sea gas pipeline in 2019. Otherwise he “will have to make another long-term agreement with the Russians”, he told Reuters (Reuters, 2019). This is just one example of Hungary’s willingly dependance on Russian energy sources.

Also in 2019, the Orban government gave permission to Putin to move the International Investment Bank’s headquarters to Budapest. IBB is a Moscow-based and ran investment bank. This again led to fears by the European Union that Budapest is moving closer to Moscow and further from Brussels (The Financial Times, 2019).

The following pages will map the most influential organisations in this network and what their relationship to the Hungarian government is and whether or not they have (in)direct links with well-known Russian government officials and oligarchs. This chapter will also analyse to what extent this relationship fits into the ‘soft power’-strategy of the Russian Federation.

7.1. World Congress of Families - International Organisation for Families

“The International Organisation for Families is the premier social conservative organisation in the world Today. It focusses on protecting and perpetuating the traditional family against the unrelenting attacks by the left-wing liberal forces of globalisation - particularly George Soros.”

- Dr. Steve Turley

“The World Congress of Families (WCF) is one of the most influential American organisations involved in the export of hate. [...] It is connected to some mainstream conservative organisations and to the very highest levels of government in the countries where it operates.”

- Human Rights Campaign

These two similar definitions summarise clearly what the World Congress of Families (WCF) or International Organisation for Families (IOF) stands for. However, Steve Turley and the Human Rights Campaign are each other’s opponents. Turley is an American scholar with a popular conservative YouTube channel. He took part in the WCF’s annual gathering in 2019 in Verona. The other definition is coming from the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) - America’s biggest LGBTI-organisation.

While anti-LGBTI stances are not the primary goal of the mission statement of the organisation, *“the group had an outsized influence on anti-LGBT sentiment and legislation in many places”* - according to an HRC-report on WCF (2015: 5). Also during the last conference of WCF in Verona, the increased focus on LGBTI-rights became clear¹⁴.

While the workforce of WCF is 100% American, WCF has a lot of international links. Throughout the years, the international attention for WCF has risen since their scope is also much more

¹⁴ When a journalist asked Brian Brown on the stairs in front of the conference centre in Verona about his stances towards homosexuals he answered: "The reality is that we stand for the positive vision of the family as the union of a man and a woman coming together in marriage. This was the definition in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. In article 16 it talks about the family as the fundamental social unit of society. The beauty of fatherhood - the beauty of motherhood - that's what we stand for."

Asking to how it is possible to put politicians from the EU, USA and Russia all together around the table he answered: "This is not just political or cultural. People share a common interest in the family despite any religion, creed or faith. And there's nothing negative or hateful in that. The more they say it's hateful, the more people say: 'What's wrong here? We are staying for something positive. Why are we being mislabeled in this way?'"

Brown continued by stating that his organisation is peaceful and wants to open the debate in a respectful way. A surprising statement since I was thrown out twice while being registered both as a researcher and journalist. Another researcher from Cambridge afterwards told me off the record that she and specialised journalists from international media faced similar issues.

international¹⁵. In the beginning, their target group was mostly academics who were working on the ‘demographic winter theory’¹⁶. Later on, their target group shifted to policy-makers. The following sections will dig deeper into the special relationship WCF has with the Russian Federation.

The annual budget of WCF is estimated to be 500.000 USD - coming from conservative donors all over the world. While this seems to be rather modest, the combined budget of all partner organisations (as listed on a 2014 brochure) is the opposite. The annual budget of WCF and its affiliated organisations is estimated to be 216 million USD (HRC, 2015: 9).

7.1.1. WCF in Russia

When I tried to enter the secured perimeter around the WCF conference venue in Verona on the second day, I was denied access for the third time. This time a police officer did not want to let me in. When I tried to explain to him that I was here to “monitor the conference and the protests against it”, he answered me in fluent Russian. Why he assumed I was Russian-speaking, is still unclear.

What is clear already for a few years is the connection the World Congress of Families has with oligarchs very close to the highest governmental ranks of the Russian Federation.

In an interview with Interfex-Religion, Larry Jacobs (WCF Managing Director) called Vladimir Putin “*the one defending laws and morality consistent with the freedom in the US constitution*” (Interfex-religion, 2012). The organisation seems to have had most of its influence on Russia (HRC, 2012).

The link between WCF and Russia can be traced back to the very origins of the organisation. In 1995 Allan Carlson - from the Howard Centre For Family, Religion & Society - was invited to Moscow by Prof. Dr. Anatoly Antonov and Prof. Dr. Viktor Medkov of the Lomonosov Moscow

¹⁵ The World Congress of Families had since its existence in 1997 many contacts with government officials, but was in essence a conference where conservative family policy experts gathered to discuss their ideas to fight against the so-called ‘demographic winter’. Since 2014, WCF became more politicised. Especially because their more public cooperation with the Russian Federation. Their focus changed to mainly countries with governments who are supportive. Since WCF-related events happened in Russia, Hungary, Moldova, Georgia and Italy.

Throughout the years the close cooperation with governments also became clear. During my field research in Verona for WCF’s annual gathering in 2019, I was able to ask some question and listen to some answers that attendees of the conference gave to journalists. While standing on the steps in front of the Grab Guardia (the conference venue of WCF in 2019) in Verona, Brian Brown (the president of the World Congress of Families) was bragging about the many international contacts WCF has to amongst myself journalists from across Italy. “All around the world we have friends who support the family - in all different governments.”, he told.

Indeed, for the first time in the more than 20 years history of the World Congress of Families, government officials from a Western European country were prominent participants of the conference. Amongst many of his cabinet members, Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini was a keynote speaker at the conference.

¹⁶ The Demographic Winter theory was founded by Allan Carlson - who also founded the World Congress of Families. The Nation’s Kathryn Joyce describes the theory as follows: “a more austere brand of apocalypse than doomsayers normally trade in, evoking not a nuclear inferno but a quiet and cold blanket of snow in which, they charge, “Western Civilization” is laying itself down to die” (*The Nation*, 2008). Homosexuality is one of the reasons for the “demographic winter”.

State University. They invited him for his theories on “*the demolition of population sizes*”. After this meeting, Carlson founded the World Congress of Families (HRC, 2012).

Notwithstanding the early links, the first WCF event in Russia only took place in 2011. After two years of organising the ‘Demographic Summit’, the WCF decided that it was time to organise its big annual gathering in Moscow in 2014 - which they had to cancel after the Ukraine-crisis.

7.1.1.1. WCF’s allies in Russia

The people supporting WCF in Russia are part of the highest ranks within the political elite. Vladimir Putin was about to deliver the keynote speech for the 2014 conference which was - remarkably - going to be hosted inside the Kremlin.

The following is a list of people with close connections to the WCF:

Name	Description
Alexey Komov	Before he became an Orthodox Monk, Komov was the owner of a big nightclub in Moscow. He is the creator of familypolicy.ru - a blog on traditional family values - and was the head organiser of the cancelled annual gathering of WCF in 2014 in Moscow. He is currently also the managing director for WCF in Russia.
Yelena Mizulina	As a member of the Russian Duma, she is responsible for the introduction of the anti-LGBT propaganda law in 2013. HRC describes her as “Putin’s morality crusader” (2015: 12). WCF claims responsibility for the introduction of the bill. According to a Mother Jones article in 2014, Mizulina has met at least three times with Larry Jacobs and discussed an anti-gay adoption bill with WCF foremen Brian Brown (National Organization for Marriage). Her assets in the USA were frozen by the Obama administration - after Russia’s annexation of Crimea.
Vladimir Yakunin (& his wife Natalya Yakunina)	As personal trustee of Putin and former head of the Russian Railway Company (one of the biggest employers in Russia), he has been leading a Berlin-based think-tank. Recently Yakunin’s invitation to a conference in Brussels supported by EU-funding led to protest (Buzzfeed, 2019). He has been banned entry to the USA and Australia - after Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Yakunin seems to be a good ally of WCF’ foremen Jacobs and Carlson. He has been financially supporting WCF-related events through the - by-his-wife-led - Sanctity of Motherhood Program. This organisation has proven to be an excellent partner of WCF (Mother Jones, 2014).
Konstantin Malofeev	Described as “Putin’s personal liaison with Europe’s far-right” (The Budapest Beacon, 2014), is a Russian oligarch with a lot of financial ties to Europe. Leaked e-mails proved close ties between Russia’s WCF division and Malofeev (see later).
Alexei Zhuralyov	Zhuralyov is a member of parliament in the Russian Duma. He wanted to introduce a piece of legislation that would ban parental rights for LGBT-people. This attempt failed (Sputnik News, 2013). He is the heard of the political party Rodina.

Name	Description
Dmitri Smirnov	Being one of the Russian Orthodox Church prominent members, archpriest Smirnov has been a good ally of WCF (Mother Jones, 2014). Also in 2019, he participated in WCF's annual gathering in Verona.
Tamara Pletneva	As a member of the Russian Duma, Pletneva is leading the Commission for Family, Women, and Children. In a recent interview with Russia's public broadcast, she called homosexuality a disease (Z Nak, 2019). Pletneva was one of the speakers during the closing ceremony of WCF's annual gathering in Moldova in 2018.
Igor Beloborodov	Igor Beloborodov is the head of the department on demography, migration and ethnoreligious groups of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISI). It is a government-owned research centre. In an interview on HIV/AIDS, he said that <i>"there's no better form of protection against sexually transmitted diseases, particularly AIDS, than the monogamous family - a heterosexual family"</i> (meduza.io, 2016). Reuters points out that RISI is a think-tank ran <i>"by retired senior Russian foreign intelligence officials appointed by Putin's office"</i> (Reuters, 2017). In leaked documents, Beloborodov appeared to be an active inviter of international participants to a WCF-linked conference in Moscow (see later).

7.1.1.2. WCF as a tool for Russia's Autocratic 'Soft Power' Strategy

The previous page proves the close ties between WCF and the Russian political elite. However, there is still little proof of international links. This changed drastically when Shaltai Boltai - a secretive hackers group - leaked dozens of e-mails between conservative Russian activists. Also, Alexander Dugin and Konstantin Malofeev were involved in the leak (Buzzfeed, 2014).

Buzzfeed journalists J. Lester Feder and Susie Armitage describe the content of the leak as follows: *"Russian nationalists and social conservatives appear to be working together to use links with "pro-family" organizations in the U.S. and around the world to promote Russia's geopolitical agenda, according to emails sent between right-wing activists."* (2014).

The e-mails proved the link between WCF and Malofeev and Yakunin. The e-mails also contained a participant list of the conference with the full names of the attendees on. On the list are MEPs and European ministers. (Buzzfeed, 2014) Most of the attendees their travel got paid by the Foundation of St. Andrew the First Called - which is chaired by Yakunin.

While the methods on how these e-mails were obtained remain unclear, those involved in it did not deny their existence (Buzzfeed, 2014). They should academically not be treated as more than an indicator of WCF Russia's International Perspective, nor does it prove any effective influence on European governments.

As most of the data presented above suggest, Russia uses WCF as an actor in its geopolitical soft power strategy. Whether or not Russia is indirectly waging soft power on other European states through the World Congress of Families will be found out in the coming chapters.

8.1.2. WCF in Hungary

Hungary has always been very active within the World Congress of Families. Deputy State Secretary Gergely Pröhle (cink.hu, 2014) and Katalin Novak took part in a traditional family value conferences in Moscow in September 2014.

However, even before, Hungarian government officials were already speaking at events organised by WCF. Miklós Soltész (former Hungarian Minister for Social, Family and Youth Affairs) participated in the Moscow Demographic Summit from June 29 till June 30 in Moscow. Afterward, he participated in several other events affiliated with WCF.

In 2017, WCF even organised in the Hungarian capital Budapest its annual summit. Because of that, WCF Managing Director praised the Hungarian government in a press release: *“Hungary has demonstrated its strategic leadership as an advocate for the natural family in Europe.”* (christiannewswire.com, 2017).

Hungary’s prime minister gave the opening speech of the conference wherein he - according to The Independent’s Niamh Mc Intyre - endorses ‘the theory of the demographic winter’: *“It’s important to say it’s a national interest to restore natural reproduction. Not one interest among the others - but the only one. It’s a European interest too. It’s - the - European interest.”* (The Independent, 2017).

7.1.2.1. WCF’s allies in Hungary

Since 2014, speakers’ lists of the annual WCF Summits suggest that Hungarians have been taking part every year. The following lists up the Hungarians who seem to have ties to the WCF.

Name	Description
Katalin Novak	Novak is the Hungarian State Secretary for Family and Youth Affairs and has often been accused of being homophobic. During a speech a week before the Budapest Pride in 2018, she said: “by fighting for the rights of minorities, some are forgetting about the rights of the majority” (24.hu , 2018). She has been involved with WCF since 2014 - according to the participant list of the Moscow conference hacked by Shaltai Boltai. In 2017 Novak was the host of the WCF Summit in Budapest. In 2019 she also spoke at the WCF Summit in Verona.
Attila Beneda	As Deputy State Secretary for Family and Youth Affairs, Beneda said that he “propagates a family policy aimed at the increase of birth rates and is based on the demographic winter theory” (csalad.hu , 2017). He is going to take part in the Verona-edition of WCF for the first time this year.
Edit Frivaldszky	As mentioned in the previous chapter, Frivaldszky is domestically and internationally behind several organisations aimed at the promotion of the traditional family - like Oikosz, CitizenGO, and Mannif Pour Tous. She took part in the 2018 summit of WCF in Moldova. Among Alexey Komov and Brian Brown, she took part in a session called ‘Uniting East & West - Finding Common Cause Worldwide in Protection of Life, Marriage, and Families’.

Name	Description
Eduard Habsburg-Lothringen	Habsburg-Lotharingen is the Hungarian ambassador to Italy and The Vatican. This year he has taken part in the Verona-summit of WCF for the first time.
Miklós Soltész	Soltész was Secretary of State for Social and Family Affairs at Ministry of Human Capacity in Hungary during the second Orban government (2010-2014). In this capacity, he participated in several WCF-related events. Between 2014-2019, Soltész served as the Secretary of State for Church, Nationality and Civil Society Relations.

7.1.3. WCF-links between Hungary and Russia

Both the EU's progressiveness and Russia's conservativeness is refuelling the already marginalised status of the LGBTI-movement in Eastern Europe - according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (2017).

As the Russian Federation has many ties with WFC's management, it is almost impossible to not find any links between participants of the conference and Russian figures. Most of the outspoken Russian homophobes were present during the WCF Summit in Budapest.

For Hungary's State Secretary Katalin Novak, I found out that she was invited for the first time to a WCF-related conference in September 2014. The conference was taking place in Moscow and - according to the leaked participant list- she was invited by Igor Beloborodov. As mentioned above, Beloborodov works for RISI - a governmental organisation with ties to Konstantin Malofeev. The Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called covered her travel costs - according to the participant list. This organisation is chaired by Natalya Yakunina - the wife of Vladimir Yakunin.

Beloborodov received a letter of gratitude of Novak in December 2015 for his participation in a conference called the Budapest Demographic Summit. The letter says that her ministry is working on a publication where they will include parts of the presentation of Beloborodov.

Where Beloborodov and Novak know each other from remains unclear. However, there is video footage of the Russian researcher speaking at a conference in the Hungarian Parliament from September 2012. The conference was called 'International Conference On The Protection Of The Embryo And Human Life' and was organised by the Hungarian Women's Alliance. At this conference also Edit Frivaldszky (see earlier) gave a presentation. There was no evidence found that Novak was present at this conference.

When Novak became minister for Social, Family, and Youth Affairs, Miklós Soltész seemed to have disappeared from the WCF-stage. During the Demographic Summit in Moscow, besides himself also Natalya Yakunina was present. As the wife of the very influential Vladimir Yakunin, this suggests close links between the Kremlin and the WCF-participants.

Soltész also met with Beloborodov. They were both keynote speakers at the Third Annual International Riga Family Forum in 2011 - where WCF was a co-sponsor (ChristianNewsWire,

2011). Soltész also gave the opening keynote at the 2012 Hungarian Women's Alliance conference in the Hungarian parliament where Beloborodov was present.

One may suggest that Beloborodov currently is the main link between Hungarian and Russian WCF-supporters.

While officially the content of the meeting was about autonomy in Transcarpathia for Hungarian minorities, three officials of Jobbik - including party leader Gábor Vona and MEP Béla Kovács - met with Alexei Zhuravlov in June 2014 in Moscow (Dailynews Hungary, 2014).

In the last two and a half decades, the World Congress of Families has grown from a rather conservative intellectual gathering to an influential geopolitical organisation. The organisation shaped a network of contacts between influential Russian oligarchs, conservative thinkers - supported by the American Alt-Right - that attract policy-makers from smaller countries involved in the WCF concerning traditional family values. Russia has been actively taken part in the activities of WCF. In particular Hungarian government officials seem to be prone to have several frequent contacts with Russian government officials and oligarchs.

The following two organisations will show that the anti-LGBT lobby is bigger than the World Congress of Families and that the Russians are not openly involved in every organisation the Hungarian government is involved in.

7.2. CitizenGO

While the World Congress of Families seems to be uniting conservative government officials from all around the world - it is also worth taking the time to dig deeper into the NGO CitizenGO.

Registered as an NGO in Spain, they operate as the conservative equivalent of websites like Avaaz and All Out. Everybody can register themselves on the website, sign petitions, or create a petition within the values of CitizenGO. They claim on their website to have over 10 million 'active citizens'.

CitizenGO and the World Congress of Families are obvious partners of each other. The organisation is mentioned as a 'co-convenor' on the website of the 2019 gathering of WCF in Verona (WCF Verona, 2019). Brian Brown, president of WCF, is a board member of the NGO (OpenDemocracy, 2019).

Undercover research of OpenDemocracy revealed in 2019 that the NGO sets up financial construction to get around election rules in Spain and therefore supports the far-right party Vox (OpenDemocracy, 2019). The financial sources, therefore, are coming from individuals close to the administration of USA president Donald Trump. The organisation also seems to have close 'business links' to Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev and Russian archpriest Alexey Komov (OpenDemocracy, 2019).

While not going further into detail, according to Open Democracy also has a good relationship with Fidesz (OpenDemocracy, 2019). It is indeed not immediately obvious what exact direct links between the Hungarian government and CitizenGO exist. However, as mentioned above, the Hungarian Edit Frivaldszky seems to be the leader of the liaison for the organisation.

Nevertheless, it is evident that Frivaldszky and Hungarian State Secretary Katalin Novak know each other. They participated together in several panels during several conferences. For instance, in October 2015 they both gave a presentation in Croatia for the organisation 'U ime obitelji' on the Hungarian family policy measures (Facebook 'U ime obitelji', 2015). They also both spoke at the 'One Of Us' conference in Budapest in September 2017 (One Of Us, 2017).

While her connections with Alexey Komov and Brian Brown have been mentioned before, she also seems to have connections with Igor Beloborodov. They both spoke on the conference organised in the Hungarian Parliament by the Hungarian Women's Alliance in 2012.

7.3. Political Network For Values

Another organisation set up to cooperate on and promote conservative family and gender values is the Political Network For Values. They describe themselves as:

"The Political Network for Values is a global platform and a resource for legislators and political representatives rooted in a Trans-Atlantic dialogue on shared values and aimed at collaborating as a network on a local and global level by actively defending and promoting a decalogue of shared values among which is the protection of human life, marriage, family or religious freedom and conscience."

- Political Network For Values on their website.

Already since their first conference in 2014, Hungary sent delegates. In 2014 the Hungarian Minister of Human Resources Zoltan Balogh was one of the keynote speakers. Afterwards, Katalin Novak represented Hungary several times. During the 2019 conference in Colombia, both Novak and Balogh were keynote speakers (politicalnetworkforvalues.org).

Important to note is also that Katalin Novak is listed on their website as vice-chair of the organisation (politicalnetworkforvalues.org).

Besides their connections with the Hungarian government, the organisation seems to have connections with politicians across the European Union. During the 2019 conference in Colombia, the Polish Deputy Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy Kazimierz Kuberski was one of the keynote speakers. In 2017 they also organised a conference inside the European Parliament. The website of the Political Network For Values states that besides WCF and CitizenGO, also the European Peoples Party (EPP) was a co-sponsor of the event (politicalnetworkforvalues.org). The EPP also advertised it on their website (eppgroup.eu, 2017). According to the euobserver, several

MEPs sent a letter to the president of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani¹⁷ to explain his involvement in the conference. The news medium also classified the event as an “*anti-gay summit*” (euobserver.eu, 2017).

Within this organisation there is no direct connection to the Russian government¹⁸, but many of the leading figures are also highly involved in conservative organisations like CitizenGO and the World Congress of Families. Two of the members of the board of directors are Brian Brown (President of WCF) and Ignacio Arsuaga (President of CitizenGO). The board also only exists out of native Spanish and English speakers (politicalnetworkforvalues.org).

The previous paragraph suggests that the organisation is mainly set up by conservative organisations to advocate within the Americas. In recent years Hungary has shown political interest in the region. The Orban administration announced plans to financially support churches in Mexico, for instance (24.hu, 2018). These policies back the central ideology behind the Political Network For Values.

It is noteworthy that the language towards the LGBTI-movement from this organisation seems to be less violent. No direct comments towards the community are found on their website. Nevertheless, the conference schedules show that during several occasions the “Institution Of Marriage” has been discussed (politicalnetworkforvalues.org).

What the real purpose for the existence of this organisation is, is not entirely clear - and this research, unfortunately, does not allow further investigation into it. Nevertheless, since the people that are involved in this organisation are known for their homo- and transphobic comments, it is unlikely that any critical debate in LGBTI-issues will happen within this organisation. However, WCF and CitizenGO already gather most of the conservative family thinkers around the world, so, notably, that the government officials leading this organisation found it necessary to set up just another one. It seems that this organisation mainly gathers European and (Latin-)American officials and that Christianity - as one of the main religions in their country - is the common ground.

This chapter shows how an autocratic government - like the Russian Federation - organises itself within organisations that fit their ideals to support their ‘soft power’-strategy. By supporting these organisations, Russia outsources the execution of its soft power. The World Congress of Families, CitizenGO and the Political Network For Values are part of the interlinked framework of the Global Right specifically focussing on traditional family values. Hungarian government officials and NGO representatives are coveted members of these organisations and even take prominent leadership roles within some of them. Russia, from its side, has ties to WCF and CitizenGO already from its existence. It seems that Russia has ‘encapsulated’ these organisations into its framework to destabilise the EU - as noted by several scholars (Hanley, 2017; Federov, 2013; Klapsis, 2015). Government officials, religious thinkers, and oligarchs close to the Kremlin seem to be operating as

¹⁷ Antonio Tajani was also originally listed as a speaker at the World Congress of Families in Italy in 2019. But after protest from MEPs, his name disappeared from the speakers list without any explanation (*The Parliament Magazine*, 2019).

¹⁸ The inexistent presence of Russia in the Political Network For Values might be considered as a disinterest in Latin-America by the Kremlin regarding the spread of traditional family values. However, the role of Hungary in the Political Network For Values might suggest that Hungary itself starts to become a global autocratic soft power concerning traditional family values.

liaisons within these organisations for these organisations and government officials within these organisations. Hungary has proven to have good connections with these Russian liaisons in the last few years. The main focus of Russia's geopolitical strategy is undermining the EU and USA hegemony (Matthews, 2015; Hanley, 2017). It is important here to note that the Russian influence is an indirect influence. Soft power is, in essence, indirect influence on a country. Through Hungary's participation in these networks - which are considerably supported by Russia - the Hungarian political elite receives ideas, for instance, a new family policy plan¹⁹. This policy-outcomes can be categorised as potential 'soft power'-outcomes.

8. Indirectly Waging Autocratic Soft Power

"They are surely using their power because Russia wants to destabilise the whole EU. They want the EU to fall apart, and they are getting quite successful. So, unfortunately, I am quite sure that it is coming from their side as well, because of the political power game."

- Orsalya Fülöp (policy director at Energieklub) on the Russian involvement on European family values.

The previous chapter clearly showed that there are several close links between the Russian government and the Hungarian government regarding the spread of traditional family values. However, as many classical scholars might say, links do not prove influence. Particular recent policy-making might suggest that Hungary's embodiment in, for instance, the World Congress of Families reflect 'soft power'-influence from these organisations. Concerning Russia, one might claim that via supporting these networks, they can outsource their 'autocratic soft power'-strategy.

This chapter will examine via expert interviews whether we can speak of real and direct influence on policies from any international partner. This chapter will not only focus on the Russians influencing Hungary but also whether or not Hungary tries to influence other countries or political actors like the European Union on LGBTI-rights. It will also identify whether or not the opposition towards the Hungarian government can prevent these international networks from waging their influence.

Before focussing on the international forces negatively influencing the development of LGBT-rights, it is also worth noting that throughout the years the European Union was responsible for the

¹⁹ Hungary introduced a new family policy plan with as a goal to foster the traditional family so that they become the agents in the fight against the demographic decline. The Russian national television - Russia 1 - made a 10-minute documentary about this plan and also explains why it is important that this plan does not include LGBTI-citizens ([Russia 1](#), 2019)

introduction of policies that led to more LGBTI-equality in Hungary. This was especially the case during the pre-accession period²⁰.

8.1. “*We don’t need Russia’s influence.*”

Links between Hungarian politicians and Russia’s foremost conservative family thinkers exist - that has been proven extensively above. What is much more difficult to prove is whether Russia effectively wages influence directly or indirectly via these traditional family value networks on domestic politics in Hungary. Another interesting question that might be asked is whether these links create or are perceived as a threat to Hungary’s national security. Are the people involved in the opposition towards the Hungarian government aware of these links?

Through expert interviews, answers were given to these questions, and these will be discussed in the coming paragraphs.

8.1.1. Awareness

The awareness of the opposition or public of contact between state officials of two or more countries is essential to understand the effectiveness of the cooperation. Whether they need public

²⁰ According to Hátter Society’s advocacy director Tamas Dombas there was a “*clear empathy within the European Union to work on LGBT-issues*”. Especially during the accession period the EU had a lot of power over Hungary. They used the introduction of LGBTI-rights as leverage to let Hungary join the EU (Interview Tamas Dombas).

Professors Koen Sloomaeckers and Heleen Touquet correctly refer to Article 3(5) of the Treaty of the European Union: “In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to [...] the protection of human rights.”. These human rights also include LGBTI-rights (Sloomaeckers & Touquet, 2016: 19-20).

As mentioned above, the EU requested to equalise the age of consent for heterosexual and homosexual intercourse in 2002. But even before the negotiations about accession to the EU began, Budapest already knew a more liberalised LGBTI-scene. There is no evidence that this changed considerably after negotiations with the EU began (Buzogány, 2012, 152).

The commitment of the EU towards LGBTI-rights changed after Hungary became a member of the EU. Several pro-LGBTI rights policies, like the Horizontal Directive, are already stuck for many years in Brussels. In the meantime, Hungary became a vocal anti-LGBT rights advocate in Brussels (see later) (Interview Tamas Dombas).

While EU commissioner Frans Timmermans has been a vocal advocate for LGBTI-rights in recent years ([euobserver](#), 2015), when he visited Hungary for the 2019 election campaign he did not address the situation for LGBTI-people in the country: “I think Frans Timmermans is pretty good at focussing at the topics which are the most important in every member state. [...] This is not the issue you will change the government over.” - according to Balázs Bárány, international secretary of MSZP (Interview MSZP).

Academics have examined this so-called normative power of the EU during the accession period. The more pro-European a country is, the more it is willing to implement the EU’s regulations. But if it comes to human rights this ‘normative power’ is rather low (Schimmelfennig, 2015). Nevertheless, the power over countries involved in the EU’s Enlargement Policy is much higher - especially since the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria. Nevertheless, an issue like LGBTI-rights still remains dependent on the EU’s priorities in the region (Sloomaeckers & Touquet, 2016: 34-35).

The EU undertook several initiatives to improve the situation for its LGBTI-citizens in the last year, but it seems that member states like Hungary can easily prevent this (see later). The biggest improvement by the EU on LGBTI-rights were made during the accession period of Hungary to the European Union. Logically, this discrepancy between the legislation in member states and accession countries leads to a loss of credibility of the EU over LGBTI-rights (Sloomaeckers & Touquet, 2016:35). Thus, the overall impact of the EU on the situation for the LGBTI-community in Hungary remains rather low.

attention or not depends on the nature of the cooperation. In this case, secrecy seems to be one of the keys to have efficient cooperation about traditional family values. I analysed the interviews conducted for this research to find out if these experts are aware of what is going on. To make the overview more precise, the interviewees have been divided into three groups: (1) experts coming from NGOs, (2) experts coming from political parties and (3) academy.

8.1.1.1. NGOs

Háttér Society's Advocacy Director Tamás Dombos seems to have the most knowledge regarding the international homophobic network. After asking him about the links between Russia and Hungary, he automatically starts talking about CitizenGO. He believes that Russians and Hungarians are cooperating "*quite well*" and sees CitizenGO as an excellent example for that.

According to him, there is no direct Russian link "*on an EU-level*" within CitizenGO. That is also something that the Hungarian government tries to cover up, says Dombos. "*When the Hungarian World Congress of Families came out, the official argumentation of the government was that there are actually three events. There is the Hungarian Demographic Forum, the World Congress of Families and then some local event And they said that of course the government is welcoming the Demographic Forum [...] the Hungarian government somehow kind of distance themselves. But then also not really. And of course, they finance the whole thing.*" (Interview Tamas Dombos).

Dombos seems to have no clue who Igor Beloborodov, Konstantin Malofeev or Vladimir Yakunin is (Interview Tamás Dombos).

This comment proves to be an underestimation of reality. A press release by the Hungarian government proves that prime minister Viktor Orban welcomed WCF in Hungary and was a keynote speaker at the conference. They name Katalin Novak as one of the main reasons for bringing WCF to Hungary ([abouthungary](#), 2017).

For Orsalya Fülöp (Energieklub) it is not so evident that the Russians link their economic power on Hungary to issues like LGBTI-rights. "*If you speak about LGBT-rights, it might be much more difficult to convince the Western European countries about another ideology, and then the politicians don't really give the floor to this.*". However, she does underline that Hungary is following the same path politically as Russia did by targeting NGOs and so on. But for her, it is still not clear if "*Russia expects Orban to make the same moves or Orban likes the idea, and they say 'why not'?*" (Interview Orsalya Fülöp).

When I asked her about Vladimir Yakunin, she said she heard about the name but did not have any further details. Malofeev does not seem to ring a bell (Interview Orsalya Fülöp).

Overall - both the LGBTI-organisation and the organisation investigating Russian-Hungarian links on an energy level are aware to a certain extent about the links between Russia and Hungary regarding traditional family values.

8.1.1.2. Political parties

The two opposition parties interviewed for this section of the research are MSZP and Momentum.

Both Balász Bárány and Tüttő Kata of MSZP do not see any influence or cooperation on an international level to spread homophobia in Hungary. According to Kata is the increase of discourse for more traditional values necessary to “*maintain the Hungarian nation and society*”. It is “*not - publicly - an anti-LGBT thing*” (Interview MSZP).

From the other side, Kata means that Orban sees an international conspiracy to undermine Hungary by allowing migrants and homosexuals. “*This is really what he thinks about this, there is a big conspiracy theory on people like George Soros and the Open Society Foundation. [...] That they only promote homosexuality in Europe to decline the Europeans.*” - Kata concludes (Interview MSZP).

Both MSZP-representatives had never heard about the World Congress of Families. Only after explaining what WCF stands for and referring to the 2017 summit in Budapest, they remembered. However, both politicians play down the importance of WCF on Hungarian politics. “*There is only one issue what they have in common [with WCF] and that is opposing same-sex marriage*”, Kata says (Interview MSZP).

About Katalin Novak’s contacts with Russian conservatives they say: “*Katalin Novak doesn’t need Russian influence*”, says Kata. “*She’s aggressive enough on her own.*”, according to Bárány (Interview MSZP).

Katalin Cseh (Momentum) has a much more outspoken vision on Russia: “*I am very uncomfortable that we are the trojan horse of Vladimir Putin within the EU and NATO. [...] Orban likes to be this planted entity within the EU. So we can trade information out for Russians and the other way back.*” (Interview Momentum).

Dániel Turgonyi (Momentum) adds: “*As a gay person - it is not just uncomfortable. Sometimes it is even scary. You think about the laws in Russia, the consequences of holding a hand. And the violence in Russia [...]*” (Interview Momentum).

According to Turgonyi, the attempt of political party Mi Hazán Mozgalom to introduce an anti-gay propaganda bill in education can be considered as a copy-paste of Russian legislation (Interview Momentum).

Katalin Cseh also referred to a meeting Katalin Novak had in 2019 in Washington in the Hungarian Embassy: “*They had this family policy conference with this hard-core republicans, so they actively pick sides.*” (Interview Momentum).

While the party representatives were not able to prove or speak about exact links between Russia and Hungary concerning LGBTI-issues, Momentum clearly suspects the government of being

influenced by Russia. MSZP is less clear about that and does not see any links between the Hungarian government and the broader international anti-LGBTI movement.

8.1.1.3. Academic world

From the academic world, Professor András Rác was interviewed. Being an expert in Russian-Hungarian relations, he already heard about the World Congress of Families. He describes it as one of *“the projects to get influence in the Kremlin”*.

“It is a tool to get influence in the Kremlin. Because as the Russian ideology is generally more and more conservative, it is fashionable. It is something that makes you attractive in the Kremlin circles if you invest money into supporting conservative projects. [...] They are thinking in kind of projects. And if you have a good project, for example, setting up a World Congress of Families, this gives you influence. It gives you visibility. This gives you some power over the other oligarchs.” (Interview András Rác).

He refers to a book by Peter Pomerantsev²¹ as a source to prove this theory.

Professor Rác both knows Vladimir Yakunin and Konstantin Malofeev. About Malofeev he said the following: *“He is Christian. It is part of his political toolbox. He is very serious about supporting all this movements, but he is not doing it because of any kind of devotion. It is a tool. It’s a political tool which gives him influence in the Kremlin.”* (Interview András Rác).

Vladimir Yakunin is known by Professor Rác from his previous job as head of the Russian Railway Company, but he did not know that Yakunin was also involved in these traditional family value movement.

Igor Beloborodov was unknown to Professor Rác, but he showed a great interest in his activities.

As an expert in Russian-Hungarian relations, Professor Rác already came across the World Congress of Families and some of the high-level Russians involved in the network. Nevertheless, his research focus is rather on defence issues than on cultural and soft power issues.

While most of the experts interviewed for this part of the research do have some general notion of suspicion of cooperation between the Russian and Hungarian government, none knew any details about the network around Katalin Novak and her links with other international organisations and states on traditional family values. Especially political parties seem to have little knowledge or insights in how, for instance, anti-LGBTI Russian officials try to set up networks with Hungarian government officials.

²¹ ‘Nothing is true and everything is possible’ - Peter Pomerantsev (New York : PublicAffairs, 2014.)

8.1.2. Threat perception

As much as awareness is important about the issue, it is also noteworthy to analyse the perception of threat by the experts interviewed for this research from international organisations and states on LGBTI-politics in Hungary. This is important to get an insight into the determination of how much room certain powers like Russia have to influence the Hungarian government over anti-LGBTI-policies. Again to keep an overview, I divide the interviews into three groups: (1) NGOs, (2) political parties, and (3) academy.

8.1.2.1. NGOs

Since Dombos (Háttér Society) says that the Hungarians and Russians and other international organisations like CitizenGO are “*cooperating quite well*” he might be able to perceive this cooperation as a threat towards LGBTI-equality in Hungary. However, there is no clue from the interview transcript that he is doing this actively.

Fülöp (Energieklub) stated that Russia wants to destabilise the EU. Moreover, by referring to the attacks on the LGBTI-community, she uses the word “*unfortunately*” to describe her feeling about this “*political power game*”.

According to Fülöp, many of the older political elite were intelligence liaisons for Russian or Hungarian intelligence services during the communist rule. Also, “*most probably*” they still are, she says about those that are still in power.

Both representatives of NGOs feel a particular threat coming from international organisations. Especially Fülöp even suggests a fear for certain sovereign intelligence breaches towards Russia.

8.1.2.2. Political parties

The MSZP-officials interviewed for this research clearly do not see much threat from the World Congress of Families or Russia coming towards the demands of the LGBTI-community.

Both Kata and Bárány suggest that Katalin Novak does not need Russians or an international organisation to influence her decision-making. Also about prime minister Viktor Orbán Bárány is clear: “*Our fellow party members usually say this - that he is Putin’s puppet. But this is speech*” (Interview MSZP).

Also, for the issues that the Hungarian government is cooperating with Russia, Kata has a clear explanation: “*That’s also something which Viktor Orbán can use as a card on the European table. You know what he learned in politics is that if you always cooperate, that’s not the best strategy. What he learned in politics is that if you always, you know, push it, but never reach the wall, and he’s good in where the wall is.*” (Interview MSZP).

The representatives of Momentum interviewed for this research see a more significant threat in the cooperation with right-wing conservatives from all over the world.

As mentioned earlier, Cseh is aware of cooperation with the Russians and Americans on several issues. But her threat perception also has a personal side: *“My grandfather - personally - he was shot by Russian militants when the occupation happened. I can’t believe that we are going that direction once more and we need to stand up against that.”* (Interview Momentum).

Also, Turgonyi sees the threat personal because of his sexuality. He calls it “*scary*” and refers thereby to the anti-LGBTI legislation and policies in Russia (Interview Momentum).

The opinions on the possible threat to LGBTI-equality in Hungary because of international cooperation are remarkably differentiated between the two opposition parties interviewed for this research. MSZP sees basically only internal threats. Momentum even perceives the Russian threat personal.

8.1.2.3. Academic world

For Professor Rácz, the possible threat of Russian influence is - of course - more obvious. He knows the links - especially on economic and military level - quite well. Therefore he can assess the threat (Interview András Rácz).

Despite this, he says that Russia still perceives Hungary is a hostile nation - since Hungary is still a very active member of NATO. That is also why they have a developed intelligence unit in Hungary - according to him (Interview András Rácz).

The threat towards liberal policies in Hungary by conservative international organisations or states is still rather based on suspicion. Except for MSZP, all parties interviewed for this research see a threat towards Hungary’s LGBTI-community in the cooperation between Russian and Hungarian politicians.

8.2. Hungary as influencer

The new governments in Poland and Hungary are able to block to stop the EU’s policy direction of promoting LGBTI-rights all around the world - according to Stefano Gennarini (Vice President for Legal Studies at the Center for Family and Human Rights). He, therefore, refers to the veto of both countries at the proposal of Luxembourg at the Council of (Justice) Ministers of the European Union in 2015 to Union-wide recognise same-sex couples that entered into marriage outside their own country. He thereby formulates an aspiration that the EU will also stop pressuring UN Bodies on the introduction of LGBTI-rights ([Gennarini, 2015](#)).

Indeed, since the Third Orban government, Hungary is taking a more vocal position against LGBTI-rights, especially, on an EU level. In 2016, Hungary also blocked a proposal by the Dutch government to make a statement on improving LGBTI-equality in the European Union. According to PinkNews, the Hungarian government said that *“Hungary is not in the position to agree with the*

list of actions to advance LGBTI equality.” (PinkNews, 2016). In that same year, they also prevented to European Commission from sponsoring a boat to participate in Amsterdam’s Canal Pride Parade (Parlementaire Monitor ANP, 2016).

Malta proposed a joint informal document in the European Council to take action against discrimination of LGBTI-people in the European Union. This led - again - to a non-signing of the document by Hungary and Poland (maltatoday, 2018). Earlier that year Hungary and Poland also already blocked an Austrian proposal to sign a joint statement by the EU employment and social affairs ministers ‘to promote gender equity’ in digital spheres. They did not want to accept the reference to LGBTI in the text (Politico, 2018).

Hungary seems to take a very active role in preventing the European Union from further developments of LGBTI-equality, especially, since 2015. By blocking a lot of the EU proposals on LGBTI-equality Hungary is taking a serious position in influencing EU institutions concerning LGBTI-rights.

Assessing whether a country like Russia is able to use its leverage over the Hungarian government still remains hard to tell. However, the possibility for influence in the current political landscape in Hungary does exist. One of the traditional political parties - MSZP - is not aware and does not see any serious threats towards LGBTI-equality in Hungary. While most of the interviewees do generally suspect cooperation on several issues with the Russian government - and in some cases even with the broader Global Right movement - they have a hard job pinpointing the exact links. Since these important actors in creating awareness about these issues don’t have the exact knowledge, I do suggest that this increased the possibility of influence. Since there was not a lot of opposition to the demands of the EU for implementing pro-LGBTI policies before Hungary accessed the EU, one might currently see a similar pattern going on with a more organised anti-LGBTI lobby. Hungary is taking a very outspoken anti-LGBTI stance on an EU-level since 2015. Whether the former and the latter have anything to do with each other can not be concluded by this research.

9. Conclusion

Fifty years after the Stonewall Uprising in New York City - the start of the modern LGBTI-movement - the transnational anti-LGBTI lobby seems to be better organised than ever before.

The question about Russia’s state-sponsored homophobia is not up to debate anymore. The Kremlin established a society-wide threat towards the LGBTI-community, and since then it is to be perceived as one of the main reasons for the downfall of Russia’s demography. Key Russian officials link the causality of HIV to the LGBTI-community, and the decline of the Russian populations is partly explained by ‘a Western LGBTI-plot’. They embedded the fight against LGBTI-rights in the USA-invented ‘demographic winter theory’. This existential perception can be embodied within the ontological security theory. A wide range of policies - which also include foreign policies - need to stop the evolvement of the LGBTI-community in Russia and abroad.

Therefore Russia has jumped on the international movement against LGBTI-rights. They use organisations - like the World Congress of Families - to outsource their autocratic soft power strategy.

As written by the Budapest-based think-tank Political Capital: there are “*political/ideological networks that have the possibility to serve the Kremlin’s interest*” in Hungarian politics. If it comes to LGBTI-rights, the World Congress of Families is the main international actor in the worldwide spread of homophobia - with its narrow ties to governments all over the world. The Russian strategic involvement in the organisations seems to be out of the question. However, next to Russia - the Orban-led Hungarian government seems to be second in rank if it comes to close ties with WCF.

From the Hungarian side, Katalin Novak seems to be Hungary’s WCF liaison. WCF Russia - headed by Alexey Komov - their organisation is much bigger and more complex. For the Hungary-Russia relations within the organisation, Igor Beloborodov seems to be the liaison.

While the practical impact of Russia on Hungary regarding family policies remains unclear, Russia has set up a network where it might be able to do so. Moreover, Hungary does actively participate in this network. Links do not mean influence, but they do mean cooperation.

The lack of awareness and perception of a threat of international cooperation concerning LGBTI-issues of the Hungarian government form an imminent threat towards LGBTI-equality in Hungary. The structural contacts between key Hungarian politicians with Russian officials also form a threat towards the national security and sovereignty of the Hungarian state.

As the prominent Hungarian LGBTI-activist Tamas Dombas once told me: “The LGBT-movement is transnationally organised. So why would the countermovement to us not be transnationally organised?”

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EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST

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ANNEX

OUTSOURCING AUTOCRATIC ANTI-LGBTI SOFT POWER

The Case of the Russian Federation in Hungary

Author: Rémy Bonny
Supervisor: Dr. Akos Kopper

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Interview Tamás Dombos

Board member of Háttér Society - Responsible for advocacy and research activities, supports the work of the Legal Aid Service and is responsible for the international relations of the Háttér Society
28/02/2019 - 2:00PM - Balzac u. 8-10/1, Budapest, Hungary

Rémy Bonny: Hello #00:00:03.80#

Tamás Dombos: Hello #00:00:04.66#

Rémy Bonny: I need to ask the question again. Is it ok if I record the interview? #00:00:07.48#

Tamás Dombos: Yes, it is fine. #00:00:07.48#

Rémy Bonny: So, maybe to start quickly. What is your organisation about basically? #00:00:15.27#

Tamás Dombos: So I work for two organisations. One is Hatter Society, which is the largest and oldest LGBTQI-organisation in the country. We have been in operation for 24 years now. Originally the main activity of the organisation was an information and counselling hotline and from then only expended to other service provisions: legal aid, HIV/AIDS prevention, and then I also worked for the Hungarian LGBT Alliance which is the national umbrella organisation, which brings together most of the registered organisations in the country and focussing on advocacy, capacity building and public education awareness raising. #00:00:58.13#

Rémy Bonny: So, specifically from the moment... the start of advocacy for LGBT was from the fall of communism here? #00:01:06.99#

Tamás Dombos: So, we, as you might know, Hungary was amongst the countries who decriminalised in the sixties, so the sixties and seventies was about no more criminal sanctions but a lot of harrasment of the community, there were no LGBT-organisations or venues and that changed in 1988 with the foundation of the first Hungarian homosexual organisation. It was called Humerus and it was actually one of the grassroots organisations at all in the country. So not just LGBT, but in general. So there were kind of so-called NGOs before, but they were all government-oriented top-down. And it was of the first ones that was allowed to operate in the country and the reason for that was HIV/AIDS prevention. So the then Health Ministry thought that it would be good to have an organisation that know what to do in the community. So we got to '89 and '90 with this, basically no criminal sanctions, but no discussion around LGBTQI-issues and no political recognition, but some organisations active. And then after the earl nineties, we see a lot of things happening in the community. Officialy I think gay and lesbian, but largely focussed gay magazine was founded, there were several informal groups popping up. Some focussing on specific identities, like Jewish gay people, sport-related activities. And then we get to 1993 when all these groups decide that they will have a national umbrella organisation. To foster advocacy and that would have been the Rainbow Alliance - for the rights of gays. They officially founded in 1994, but the courts declined to register this organisation for various arguements. First saying that the Hungarian term Malek - more or less 'gay' - is too informal to be the name of an organisation and then later on it went up to the constitutional court, that at the end said that the organisation can only register if they in their finding document claim that no one under the age of 18 can join. The organisation was not willing to do that, so that organisation never actually came into being, but this whole debate about the registration made it very highly visible political issue. At the time, it was a left-liberal government. So they some members of the government, especially the education and culture minister was quite supportive. There were... so it really became a hot topic political discussion in the country. That was followed by - soon after - in 95 by a decission of the constitutional court to open up cohabitation for same-sex couples, so Hungary would become the second or third country in the world to actually do that in 96. So there was this big upsurge. And the

nothing much happened after that. In 98 the Fidesz came into power, they way more conservative than the previous government. But then compared to what they do now, still have a moderate right-wing party. But not very LGBT-friendly, so there were several incidents. There were things got stuck on a political leven and then in 2002 change to the other. And then we saw quite a lot of progress. Not to say... I mean they had 8 years, I don't think that they did everything that could be done in 8 years. But there has been significant progress in terms of equal treatment legislation, recognition of registered partnerships, so there were a lot of things happening. But then in 2010, again Fidesz comes back and you know, it goes backwards... #00:05:16.32#

Rémy Bonny: And do you see a specific difference now between the Fidesz in the nineties and the Fidesz who is in power now?#00:05:23.19#

Tamás Dombos: Yes, but I'm not sure whether that's simply the result of the fact 2/3 majority now. So before they operated in the framework and they were by legislation forced to cooperate with opposition parties. They were forced to respect decisions of the constitutional court and forced to respect checks and balances in the system. And since 2010 we don't have. They have absolute power over really everything - which means that if they decide to do something. They can do it. In the worst case they will ammend the constitution. You know it they, not just LGBT-related, but several other similar issues where the constitutional court tries to stop some of the worst human rights violations in the country in legislation. They simply overwrite the constitutional decission by ammending the constitutions and the fundament laws as it is currently called. So I think what you see is, you know, a situation where there is no control whatsoever on Fidesz. Of course, political scientists argue that we still have some level of control over Fidesz, by its membership in the European Union. So there is some external limits or restrictions on what Orban can do, but that's also very often very technical, so they can have limit of what Fidesz can do in technical legislation, when we are talking about some directive or the other. But overall, they are not really equipped with responding on this attack on human rights.#00:07:00.39# #00:07:00.39#

Rémy Bonny: And do you have the feeling that somehow the EU is supporting LGBTI-rights here in Hungary? #00:07:05.12#

Tamás Dombos: I mean that's a long story. Before the accession of Hungary to the EU there was very clearly an empatence within the European Union to work on LGBT-issues. And we are just right after the Amsterdam Treaty and sexual orientation appears in the Treaty. The EU is you know putting things on the agenda, the Employment Directive which mentions sexual orientation. So there was a lot of things happening on the level of the EU. And of course the accession was a situation wherein the EU actually had a lot of power over Hungary. I mean, they could just simply say, if you don't close this and do that, then you will not join. So it was a very clear situation - which totally changed after Hungary acceded to the EU. After that, I think we also see for a few years some pressure put on the Hungarian government and then in recent years I see no such pressure on Hungary on LGBT-issues at all. And I think that's part related to EU being also a political actor involved in other issues. Sometimes also who's the Commissioner, how important, who's responsible for social affairs, justice issues. So we really see on the EU-level, the institutions being stuck. If you just look on the Horizontal Directive on discrimination, it's been stuck for 10 years. And I think I would say around 3 or 4 years ago, Fidesz was politically very active talking against LGBT-issues, but then when it came to international fora they always portrayed themselves to be like not pro-LGBT, but like moderate. And then that changed. And you've seen in the last years several incidents in which the Hungarian government was blocking EU-legislation or even blocking certain things in the UN and in the UN Special Bodies. So you do see, that even on the international level they kind of try to be this protector of traditional family values and no longer try to play the 'oh we are nice, don't hurt us on LGBT-issues', no they are really now... #00:09:32.37#

Rémy Bonny: And how do you explain that the discourse towards LGBTI-people became indeed more harsh in Hungary, because opinion polls actually show that there's more progress in the society. #00:09:43.89#

Tamás Dombos: I mean I think that is a complicated process. I think part of the reason is of course you can talk about what's happening on LGBT-issues on the level of society and social attitudes. And then who's leading the country and what kind image or values that person has. And I think it is not a very far-fetched statement to say that between 2000 and 2010 the government then was a bit more ahead of society, for example they went into the adoption of registered partnership. Before the adoption, there was no majority-support, but they went along because they thought this is part of a progressive agenda. They want to align with their Western European counterparts, the liberal party which was very pro-LGBT, was also a minor coalition partner. But still there votes were needed, so they had a say in this. And then you know, 2010 came, and I think now we have government which is kind of polary the opposite in terms of political attitudes. The society probably didn't change that much on LGBT or even kind of became slowly more accepting, but then the political dynamic is different. And this is very true in Hungary in general, the political dynamic is very pollarised. Always has been very polarised, even going back to the earliest democratic elections in the thirties or twenties, semi-authoritarian, but still electoral system, but then of course we didn't have anything like that under socialism, but then right after that in the early nineties, it became very very polarised. Always about this split between Western-oriented left-liberals and traditional values, Christianity. And that was very strong with not much very moderate voices in the middle. So it is really easy to understand this political dynamic. If you shift, then that shift. I think it is also partly related to the fact that currently in the Hungarian - of course yes it is a government which is very centralised, but you still have actors in the game and the actors are not always exactly the same. And the Christian Democratic Party - which is a junior coaliation partner, according to some people it is a fake party, but it does have important players. And very clearly the minister of human resources which is responsible for education, family policy, and health care is a Christian Democratic Minister. They are ones who can appoint the minister, they are the ones who bring in the various - even going to the heads of departments so kind of Orbán you can have your little game, you can do whatever you want as long as it doesn't interfere with the overall power game that they are trying to play. So I think that's part of the reason for it. I mean we do have some people who knew Orbán already in the ealy nineties and who kind of followed what he's thinking. And people say that he personally is not very homophobic, he's not very tolerant either, but he got stuck in this kinda nineties LGBT-people should have certain rights, but nothing around family etcetera, so that's the mentality that he has, but he is not the kind of you know, how would you say in Hungarian 'a homophobic mouth' - like those people who are 'whoo whoo'. He's not that kind of person. He's much more a power leader. It's either the fact that he just doesn't care about this topic enough to interfere with what the Christian Democrats are doing or that he sees some kind of power political game in it. That he thinks that certain actors or certain groups in society, maybe not the majority, but certain groups in society that he will need for election would favour that kind of attitude. And I think that payed off, the kind of European role on Hungary, people that didn't... weren't very politically active went to the polls in clearly high numbers in the last elections and that meant that he got 2/3 again. Maybe he would have wan anyways without that change in voter behaviour, but 2/3 he needed that kind of... with those kind of people, unfortunately it's very easy to say LGBT-activisits are trying to corrupt our children, more and more not so much in terms of pedophilia etcetera, but more in terms of gender identity and like robbing kids from their natural sex between boys and girls and overriding the rules of nature in gender terms. Not so much in sexual terms. That's the key of things happening now. And then of course you also see certain actors that see this politcal environment and then feel encouraged to like come up with really really homophobic and stupid things. A few years ago, it was two years ago, for example, this are usually not politicians but kind of like media figures or culture figures, that are close to the government, but the government can always say we are not, that's this individual. So they distance themselves from this statements, but they never... There was one person for example who was the chief adviser to Orbán on how to communicate about the new constitution. He was a theatre director and he said in a statement that "we have to stop the faggot lobby" and that was quite a strong statement coming from this guy and there was a reaction: "This not our policy. This is not the government. This is just this individual", but then his contract was never cancelled, so he was still an adviser for many years to come. So even if it was not officially endorsed it was...#00:16:19.03#

Rémy Bonny: And what if it was the other way around. The theatre director would be talking in favour of the LGBT-community. How would the government react in that case? #00:16:25.97#

Tamás Dombos: That's a good question. I mean I do see the national... the actual director of the theatre was a gay. At the time, he was not very out. Everyone knew about it, but he himself never made a statement about it. But he was always criticised by Jobbik. So the extreme right-wing party for him being gay. And then criticising Fidesz also: "Oh you're hypocrite, you are saying family values, but you don't fire this guy." And he was actually never fired, his term was over and he was not re-elected or his contract was not continued. But that was also not necessarily, or most likely not related to his sexuality. #00:17:09.60#

Rémy Bonny: A few months ago, you also had this debate going on on Billy Elliot playing in the opera #00:17:15.35#

Tamás Dombos: Exactly, Billy Elliot. That again is a very complicated story. I mean it was one journalist in one politically important, I would say, because this Orban's favourite newspaper. But you know... it's circulated in 5000 copies or something like that. In terms of its public impact, really a minor newspaper. And then of course it was picked up by all the other newspapers. With the argument that it is very homophobic etcetera and then the director of the Opera House cancelled not all the shows, but they cancelled half the shows. And with reference to the public debate around it after the article was published. But then we consulted with some people who actually work in the Opera House and some people say this whole thing was actually a PR-stunt. The show was going so bad in the ticket sales that they wanted to cancel anyways. And they just kind of found a cover story for this really bad planning. Whether that's true or not, I'm really not in the position to assess but I don't think and this is what matters... all this incidents, I don't think they are centrally controlled. No, there is a general environment of political climate in which people feel encourage to do this things. They are not ordered. I don't think that they think "oooh in this month. We are gonna do this or that". It's not like that. It is like that for migration issues, clearly. It is very well-planned, very strategic. Really people are told what to say on this. On the LGBT I think no. There's this climate wherein this homophobic and transphobic language is tolerated, in some aspects even encouraged, but not centrally controlled to the very tiny details of it. #00:19:06.16#

Rémy Bonny: Also, Fidesz is for sure not an ally of the LGBT-community. Jobbik, Jobbik was very homophobic, they were basically against everything in the beginning, but now they are evolving to a more... #00:19:20.93#

Tamás Dombos: Now they are splitted. So what happened is that they split now and one part of the party is going more to moderation - at least there is a trend of moderation. And that's why there is a split now, so several members of parliament withdrew from their group and they are going back to the original homophobic agenda. So they are just proposing basically this week, but it hasn't been submitted yet to parliament a ban on homosexual propaganda in schools. Not clear what they will actually propose. They tried that back in 2012 and it failed. So they, it was a general ban on homosexual propaganda. In the parliament first, it failed in the parliament and they tried in several local assemblies. They failed in local assemblies all over the country. They tried, I think, at 7 or 8 places. And then the only place where it actually got adopted is in Ásotthalom, in Ásotthalom was it, yes in Ásotthalom, in Southern Hungary, where the vice-president of Jobbik lives who adopted this legislation. But it was found unconstitutional by the Court. It was only law for a few months. #00:20:32.45#

Rémy Bonny: And do you think some proposal like this could in the current political climate that you have in Hungary... You know there are also elections coming in... #00:20:41.73#

Tamás Dombos: Yes, we really don't know. For us it is quite special, because we were just launching a school campaign this spring - which we never did before. So, let's say ok, this might play out very well. Because you know, if there is political interest, it can foster the campaign and there will be really talked about, but then you know... We are just strategising on this. And it is

really a question how Fidesz will react in this situation. If, I think it is really interesting to see, but that was 2012. It was still the time that they still want to at least externally kind of show this nice face. So I am not sure if it will play out exactly the same. But in 2012 when it was in parliament, there were not discussing it in plenary, it was only discussed in committees. And that is something that is not very visible. I mean committee meetings, people don't follow it, there are no journalists. But what happened there, it was Jobbik that proposed this propaganda ban and then of course left-wing, socialists and the green party was very much against it and all the Fidesz MPs were like "Ah this is a show" and they didn't say anything, they abstained from voting, which was enough to block the vote, but that's what they didn't, if they still follow the same logic, this is what I'm expecting now. That they will enjoy Jobbik doing it, you know it is called 'Our Homeland Movement', and then of course the left-liberal parties. And then Fidesz will say 'you see, we are the moderate middle'. This is what they say on LGBT-issues very often: "We are the moderate middle. We oppose all the extremities including extreme-Jobbik as well as extreme-liberal." There is an interesting speech by Orban. I think it was in 2015 or 2016 when he was caught. He was completely unprepared. He was asked in a press conference about International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. But the press conference was about something completely different but of course journalists can ask whatever they want. It was the day after, or the day before the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, so May 17, and then some journalist what does he think about this issue. And this was the first time that he actually talked at length about this issue and the statement started with saying that this question invites people to make jokes. But I'm a serious person, so I will not make jokes. Which is like what the fuck, how is it... But that's you know, that's his general... he views it like school kids, like 'ooooo gayssss'. So that's his.. And then he said, we are the moderate middle. There's currently a well-structured, like a delicate balance amongst the rights of the LGBT-community and the rights of the majority. And if we move into any other or any direction, either like pro or against that will also lead to social disruption. And he doesn't advice anyone to move to either direction. Which is this kind of balancing, we are the moderate. But some people could also read it, and I think it could be easily read as a threat. Saying like, "you LGBT-activist, don't try to push it, because you will push it too hard. We can also just take away all the rights you currently have.". It was this kind of speech. And then of course, the only other occasions where he talks about LGBT-issues is "Oh we have Christian values and we support traditional family values." And then then everyone understands that to be against the recognition of same-sex couples, but he never goes into details. He just says this "traditional family values" and it is enough to make people understand that this means "we don't recognise same-sex marriage or same-sex partners".

#00:24:33.55#

Rémy Bonny: So yeah, talking about anti-propaganda bills. Of course - the first thing comes into your mind is Russia of course. How is the relationship on traditional family values with Russia?

#00:24:43.75#

Tamás Dombos: I think they cooperate quite well. I think that people in the ministry who are currently responsible for family policy. You probably know this very well, this international movement. This are people, you know CitizenGo-people. This online platform. Do you know this platform?

#00:25:03.93#

Rémy Bonny: Citizen People?

#00:25:03.93#

CitizenGo. I think that's the name or something like that. It's very similar to, it's the same notion as Avaaz, and AllOut, but conservative. So basically they work either country specific or more broad petitions that you can sign and if you sign, then you will be asked next time to sign. So it is basically like making an online community of conservative people. And they focus on two issues. Of course LGBT and abortion. So this are the two issues that they focus on and then every week, sometimes, maybe every month, they come up with some petition to do something. This are also that did the 'Mom, Dad and Kids'- European Citizens' Initiative. So it is kind of a Spanish-Hungarian-Polish core group of NGOs. And they were also the ones who did in Hungary, who like hosted the World Congress of Families. So it is the same group of people. And you know officially there is no Russian organisation, participating in this network in EU-level. But the links are very

clear. I think there was on CitizenGo... Is it CitizenGo? I think it is CitizenGo. They officially welcomed the Russian, the adoption of the Russian anti-propaganda law and they kind of said that the EU and other countries should not go against this. #00:26:38.13#

Rémy Bonny: And was it this group where also Katolin Novak is in involved? #00:26:40.50#

Tamás Dombos: Yes, she is the State Secretary for Family and Youth Issues now. I'm not sure if she herself is was involved in this, but then she is surrounded by people who are very active in the... so the Hungarian background to it is basically two things. One is the National Alliance of Large Families, so this is a grassroots very large Hungarian organisations. Probably one of the oldest and really large membership-based organisations in the country. Why is that? That is a complicated story. You know on the local level they do a lot of interesting, kind-of social activities and they fight for people... But then their national coordination is very homophobic, very transphobic. And many of the people around Novak are from this association or alliance of large families. And then there are smaller organisations that come from anti-abortion NGOs. And the country is going back to the nineties. So this Fivasz for example who is this CitizenGo-person and already his father was a big anti-abortion fighter in the nineties. So those are the types of people that she is surrounded with. I don't know her biography that well. I don't know what she did before becoming. Previously, vice-state secretary, now state secretary. Before 2010. But I know she had some connection to feminist' NGOs as well. I'm not sure how, they were like you know, they were like on talking terms. She was never against families, but she was someone who was you know approachable on Womens' Issues. I don't really know details. I just know that that's, when we work with this organisations, this is what they say. Not surprised, but more like "Oh my god, this is someone we used to be able to communicate with and that's no longer". #00:28:52.29#

Rémy Bonny: What I find particularly interesting is that Hungary and then specifically Katalin Novak was the first one, first government representative ever to be represented at the World Congress of Families and that she was invited, because we found leaked documents by a Russian hacking group with a list of participants that she was invited by specifically, he was called Igor Beloborodov. That's the head of the Russian State Institute for Strategic Studies, so there was already a link with Russia and Hungary even before they participated. #00:29:30.82#

Tamás Dombos: I think that there was. I'm not sure whether it's Novak himself, herself, whether it is the people around Novak. Or whether it is something political. I'm not very sure that there is ongoing coordination with the Russian government. This is from energy policy to the Pecs Stadium, down to things to the metro reconstruction. I don't know. Do you know that? #00:29:55.49#

Rémy Bonny: No. Is it about M4? Or M3? #00:29:58.26#

Tamás Dombos: The M3-one. So the M3-one. They basically it was a big question, whether they would buy metro car or they will like renovation of the old ones. And they went for the renovation of the old ones, saying "this is gonna be cheaper". And of course, if they went for renovation of the old ones, they didn't have to do a public tender. Because it would be the producer of the cars. Now, there is people saying that the cars that we use, like they are 95% new. The used some pieces of the old ones so they can legally claim that this is a renovation. But this was basically a corruption issue, in which it was without an open public tender. They just went to the Russians. It really goes from that kind of basic level corruption to pacs, which is like billions of euros. You know energy security in the country. So, you do see a coordination, so it might be that Novak had someone more involved in this kind of foreign affairs state relations who advised Novak. I'm not sure. I don't have information on that. #00:31:07.34#

Rémy Bonny: Also, this time and I think it is the first time ever there is a second government representative going... #00:31:15.10#

Lovely. #00:31:15.10#

Rémy Bonny: Atilla Beneda. I don't know if you have ever heard about him? #00:31:18.02#

Tamás Dombos: Yeah. She's one under. I met him at a few government meetings. I don't know much about him. You know? When the Hungarian World Congress of Families came out, the official argumentation of the government is that there are actually three events. Three completely separate events from each other. There is the Hungarian Demographic Forum, the World Congress of Families, and then some local event... some family gathering happening. And they said that of course the government is welcoming the Demographic Forum, because that is an important issue. But that has only scientists, etcetera and then all the nasty people, like really anti-LGBT and anti-abortion, crazy people, are not a part of the official government meeting, but they are part of this kind of second-day, which is not the official programme, whatever. And then of course the organisers were claiming: "No, no, this is one event.". So this games are really going on, the Hungarian government trying to somehow kind of distance themselves. But then also not really. And of course they finance the whole thing. So they gave finance to an Hungarian NGO to organise the whole three days. So that's very clear thing. Even though. Katalin herself didn't speak on the second day, she only spoke at the first day but still it was very easy to kind of merge this in the public view and for the organisers to claim that she was there. #00:32:55.38#

Rémy Bonny: So, this organisations like the National Organisation for Large Families, do they also on a domestic level organise, conferences or events where they for instance invite Russians? Or? #00:33:14.55#

Tamás Dombos: I don't have any information on that. #00:33:14.55#

Rémy Bonny: Do you see any public links with... you have this. I call them the Conservative Threesome: Malofeev, Aleksandr Dugin, and Yakunin. Basically the liasons of Putin with the far-right. #00:33:29.94#

Tamás Dombos: I don't see. I don't really know to be honest. They might be organising conferences and stuff, but not in a very public way. I'm not saying that they are completely secretly, but at least they don't make a huge fuzz around it. Otherwise I would know about it. So they maybe do, maybe don't. I do know that... that's the other thing that is happening international level and that is reperateive therapy/conversion therapy etc. . But I think the link there is more American than Russian. But they might have some connections to each other. #00:34:10.48#

Rémy Bonny: Also for the World Congress of Families there's a lot of links with these things... #00:34:16.56#

Tamás Dombos: So there we see book after book of Nicolosi being published in Hungarian usually by religious publishing houses. We do know of organisations professional organisations who psychological, like trends within psychotherapy, host these conferences. They are very secretive. You can only go there with a special license or a special invitation. So even when psychologists thinking differently on these issues, wanted to go they were rejected. They were not allowed to go. And then you know, this also resulted in this news programme that happened in Hungary a few weeks ago. I don't know if you have heard about it? Again, it was M5, which is a one public TV-channel. But nobody watches, so probably the original was probably watched by a 3000 people. But then it became a huge scandal. Because then, so the all notion, it was a talk-show-ish at night, around 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock. With one moderator and then they had 2 invited guests. One of them was a Catholic priest and the other one a journalist who has been writing a lot about ex-gay people. I think, he himself is probably... personally also like that. But he never made a claim around that. And they supposedly invited Hatter and other organisations and we declined. This is the official argumentation. I don't know about the other organisations, but they invited us on the same day in the morning to go to a discussion at 9. While they were preparing the whole show for months. Because they started with the reportage about this October-meeting. About this secret October-meeting of psychologists and the whole thing was. Like the current mainstream is that

they are right like they are, but then there are a lot of LGBT-people who are not, who are not content about being gay or lesbian and we don't we turn to them with compassion and help them get out of this terrible sexual reality that they are in. And then they were talking about a lot of conversion therapy and repretative therapy. And for an hour so it was an hour discussion on TV. And of course a lot of people came out to criticise it and some people turned to the media authority. We organised a public discussion around it. So again, like the thing happening with the Billy Elliot thing that probably the original news programme didn't really go out to that many people. But then the high or the negative reactions made it very public. #00:37:13.16#

Rémy Bonny: It's so weird because I heard same from the same week probably happening in Poland. #00:37:19.79#

Tamás Dombos: Yeah. It is very possible. #00:37:22.42#

Rémy Bonny: A talkshow, in the same week, where only homophobes are talking...#00:37:28.16#

Tamás Dombos: I can really easily see that there is the same recipe. I mean I am not surprised. I mean there is international coordination LGBTQ-movement, so why do we think that the conservatives don't coordinate. #00:37:42.92#

Rémy Bonny: What did I want to ask again? So domestically again, what political allies do you have at the moment? #00:37:55.61#

Tamás Dombos: I think more or less. Currently Jobbik I have no idea - at worst I think they are neutral. They don't care that much about it. They wanna be silent, because they say either anything positive or anything negative they will be really put on the spot about this. So they just wanna not do anything. All the other parties, currently in parliament or up for a election are progressive. I would say LGBTQ-friendly. But very different political strategies. So you would have the Democratic Coalition and the Momentum who are like 'yes this is a crucial human rights issue and it has to be solved right now. Human rights is not up to debate'. That kind of approach, which means if they had the chance they would have a vote on same-sex marriage next week - in easy political terms. And then you would see the socialists who are very, a very difficult party, they were always very difficult. They became very difficult nowadays, because their electorate is super old. Only people above 60 basically vote for them now. And they are still quite good within that age group, but then that group is very homophobic. So they are really afraid if they come out in support that would mean loosing more people. So there is this politicians themselves are quite supportive, but then this political strategy is very difficult with them. And then you have the Green-LMP, the Greens or what is left of the Greens and they are like 'Oh we believe in kind of the organic development of society. First there should be public discussions and public support for marriage equality, but ultimately we would be able to grant full rights'. And usually if it comes to the level of political discussion, it is about marriage equality. That's the thing that they can grasp. Of course if you go with experts they understand the complexities of it, but most people would not...#00:40:15.73#

Rémy Bonny: Especially because you already have registered partnerships... #00:40:15.73#

Tamás Dombos: We already have registered partnerships. What would be next: of course adoption, parenting, etc. . There all the parties say that this issue has to be properly legislated. The kids who are already being raised by same-sex families, same-sex parrents. Some parties would say that assisted reproduction should not be open for lesbian women, but they are not so strong about adoption. They more say that we don't know and let's see. But then once the child is already been raised, it should be properly legislated. And then you know it might go into issues like employment, discrimination, hate-crimes etc. But those discussions are going on in some of the parties. This is I think a clear indication of the progress with this parties is for the last election campaign in 2018 - except for Jobbik, Christian Democrats and Fidesz - all the other parties had in there programme for the election mentioning LGBT-issues. Some in a very broad way. Like the

socialists are saying, we say no to all grounds of discrimination. That's not much. But then for example a small kind of left-liberal party they ceased to exist now, they had a very far-reaching programme and then all these issues around HIV, issues around workplace discrimination, sexual education. So really quite comprehensive LGBT-agenda. And just the fact that all the parties had something. This was very different from 2014. We only had one or two parties with manifestos like that. The Democratic Coalition - which is a part of the socialist party, which was more not so old so to say - they put for example marriage equality and recognition of transgender identity. So even that made into their programs. So if you need this kind of analysis, we have this kind of references.

#00:42:29.14#

Rémy Bonny: Going back to the national organisation of large families, and all these partner organisations who are sometimes even more homophobic. Where do their donations come from? Sometimes you hear these reports, showing that some of these donations come from Russian companies and those things. #00:42:39.59#

Tamás Dombos: The Association of Large Families has a budget line, so they are included in the state budget. They receive a quite large number of core support from the government. So they don't even have to apply for grants. They get government support and then they apply for grants. And they are an umbrella organisation, so they also have a lot of local organisations. So I think you can add it up they receive an immense amount of money from the government most important through kind of EU. It's called the Human Resources Development Programme, so it is basically the European Social Fund money - which is supposedly spent on social integration. And this is spend in kind of strengthening families and addressing the demographic problem. And then billions of Forints are spent on those cause. EU-money going directly to these kind of grassroots and less grassroots organisations. The EU knows about it and they say they cannot do anything about it. Because the operating programs, you know, it is the government that actually making funding decisions in the framework of the operative cooperation program or what they call it in English. But then when the operational programmes are ready and they know the priorities, they do nothing about it. #00:44:18.45#

Rémy Bonny: So, since this new NGO law it is also, NGOs need to report every foreign donations that they get - right? #00:44:27.28#

Yeah. #00:44:27.28#

Rémy Bonny: So, actually if the Russians would support this conservative NGOs it must be able to find it. #00:44:32.49#

Tamás Dombos: If they do it directly. If they do it via some Hungarian organisation etc. then it is officially yes. Because they need to show directly and indirectly support. But it is not very traceable. I can think in very many ways in which this can be circumvented. I'm not sure whether if the Association of Large Families is registered in the database. If it is, then they have to be able to report. So it is publicly available, you can check it. Also, any NGOs, if they have public benefit, they have to submit every year a quite detailed financial report about their situation that there should, in which you should be able to identify the source, the source of grant money. I do not know. The difficulty would be that you don't only have, it is not only the national umbrella organisation, but you have to look at all the dozens and dozens of member organisations on the local level. Because maybe... who knows who gets the money. But the information, I think, would be accessible. So if you have someone with a basic language of Hungarian, they would be able to go online on the court website and access this. So you don't have to go to the website of the NGOs, the reports have to be submitted to the court every May and then the court publishes it on the website.

#00:45:54.51#

Rémy Bonny: Maybe, to end the interview, I would like to give you a quote. And the quote is given by Larry Jacobs. Larry Jacobs is the managing director of the World Congress of Families. And he quote is about, it was given in a press release about the Hungarian organisation of WCF. The

quote reads: "Hungary has demonstrated its strategic leadership as an advocate for the natural family in Europe." What is your reaction to that? #00:46:24.91#

Tamás Dombos: I mean, yeah, it is basically what they refer to the definition of marriage and family in the Hungarian constitution, the adoption of this Family Protection Act with not much clear content, but with a lot of statements around it and then you see, that there really is support through this organisations. I, you know, #00:46:54.11#

Rémy Bonny: Do you feel Hungary also has influence on other European partners at the moment, because for instance in my country the conservative party start referring to Orban...#00:47:05.26#

Tamás Dombos: Ok. I think he does. I'm not sure if it is a direct influence, like I don't think it is coordinated influence. It is more like Orban need does things that was not possible before. Like there was some kind of decency left in European right-wing or moderate right-wing parties and Orban really clearly said that those boundaries do not exist and since people see that there is no sanctions whatsoever with anything that he does. And that it works in practise. He gets the majority. There is a national learning process in which other parties that are in similar position or wanna carve out certain political space for themselves would follow in his footsteps. #00:47:59.58#

Rémy Bonny: Ok, thank you. I don't know if you wanted to say anything else. #00:48:02.96#

Tamás Dombos: No, I don't know. I just wanted to give you another example. It's a very good one. It is about the National Organisation of Large Families. They had their anniversary - 30 years, maybe 40 years. They are around for a very long time - probably 40 years anniversary. And they invited this kind of European actors, including the secretaries, I'm not sure, some positions from the COFASEM - which is the European umbrella organisation for families. But they are quite neutral. They have all kinds of members, but they as a European level organisation, they are LGBT-friendly. So then this person comes in to the congressional anniversary celebrations whatever. And then gives a speech, in which he says that Hungary is doing a lot of things for families. And then how important it is to be inclusive, such same-sex families. And people are like: "Whaaat the fuck is happening... booooh booooh" And the person was like: "What's happening here?" So really there is a. What I wanted to say: it is possible to have a family discourse which is not exclusionary. Not like the World Congress of Families does or the Hungarian government does. But then when this, when there is a collision, because there are family, real family organisations, so we should be able to speak the same language. But they do not come into the same room and it is two completely different worlds. #00:49:32.45#

Rémy Bonny: Ok, crazy. I'm going to stop this first. #00:49:36.40#

Interview MSZP

Balázs Bárány - Board member of National Presidency of MSZP - International Secretary MSZP

Tüttő Kata - Vice-President MSZP Budapest Regional Association - Member of National Board MSZP

11/03/2019 - 3:00PM - 4 Street Coffee, Móricz Zsigmond Körtér, Budapest

Balázs Bárány: Let's fastly do this interview, because it may be my last interview. #00:00:36.06#

Rémy Bonny: We are not going to poison you or something. #00:00:39.28#

Tüttő Kata: He is too ill. #00:00:44.00#

Rémy Bonny: I'm just going to ask you some questions on LGBT-issues and on family values and so on. And then I'm going to dig a bit deeper in the international pressure around it as well. So maybe as a starter, can you both briefly describe your functions in MSZP? #00:01:05.44#

Balázs Bárány: I am the international secretary of the party. Also member of the presidency and if it is important, I am a local councillor in one of the settlements pretty close to Budapest. The name of the settlement is (something in Hungarian). #00:01:28.92#

Tüttő Kata: I am also in the national board of the party with Balasz. And I'm a local councillor in one of the districts of Budapest. I'm a councillor in Budapest for 12 years in the City Assembly. And I'm running for mayor now for this turn. #00:01:45.27#

Balázs Bárány: Is it final? #00:01:46.81#

Tüttő Kata: Yes. #00:01:46.81#

Balázs Bárány: Congratulations. #00:01:49.18#

Rémy Bonny: Congratulations. #00:01:49.18#

Balázs Bárány: I'm running for mayor too. #00:01:55.70#

Rémy Bonny: You are running for mayor for a district in Budapest? #00:01:55.70#

Tüttő Kata: Within a district of Budapest. But if you want to be member of the City Assembly you need to be run as a mayor. #00:02:02.51#

Rémy Bonny: Ah ok. That's super complicated. Then going a bit more to the legal question. In 2008, MSZP as a government party, as the main party in government, introduced registered partnerships for same-sex couples in Hungary. And then 3 years later, Fidesz was in power and Fidesz constitutionally limited marriage to couples of opposite-sex. How do you look as the party who was actually the one who was introducing progressive legislation to this evolution? #00:02:41.71#

Balázs Bárány: We are very much proud of that kind of legislation during our governing. And we think that equality is for all. But it is not a coincidence that we did not touch the institution of marriage. So I, if I wanna be honest with you and there is no point not to be honest. I would say that we are a bit a party of swings on this. We are not as progressive as some of our Western social-democratic sister parties are. So for example, when Fidesz touched the issue of marriage defining it as an institution between men and women we didn't really say no to this. We didn't agree with them. We just didn't think it was important to say something like this. But when we were governing we did not introduce same-sex marriage as well, because our party and our voters are simply not ready for that. #00:03:42.86#

Tüttő Kata: Can I shape that a little bit? Because I think that the key sentence of what Balasz said, is that we realised is that the society is not ready yet. But the last socialist-liberal government started to campaign, we started the open campaigns on create openness. What the government realised is that the society hasn't arrived there yet. But we started to talk about it openly and if talk with the society they will arrive there. This is in fact, the original plan was to introduce the cohabitation and then to go with the campaign and we will see where we will arrive. We waited for the whole society, so this would be natural. This was the concept, because I remember those arguments within our coalition. At that moment, everything was quite rational. Don't rush for it, because what we expected is that there would be no turning back on that issue. So what we saw back in 2006, that everything was going on the progressive way and that there is no turning back. Nobody thought there was a turning back. Because what we see in every other countries, it is everybody is going on the same direction - 2006. It was before the big economic crisis. We thought that there is no other way than that. And nobody, everybody was just thinking about just the time. So this was the concept of what it was and then things surprised us with the Fidesz government, but it wasn't a unique thing that happened in other places. That there was going to be a U-turn in many progressive societies. And the Hungarian society is much less open. So, because there is a lot of propaganda on this issue. And this is a typical populist propaganda. It is similar with other security issues. What we see is that too many things are changing in the society: this fuels insecurity in the future, the traditional way of learning something in the school and university and things that people learned all of their life, these are collapsing that part of the security and future part. And we see that there is a change in the gender identity - which is also scary for a lot of people, especially for the older generation. And there is a change in the traditional family settlement. And there are two changes in the society. What Fidesz realises and other parties, right parties, that promoting people a world where they feel secure, which they know, is what a lot of people vote for. So Fidesz promise their voters to stop time and that they will bring back those, nobody remembers those times, when everything was secure. We had a future we could rely on. We had model of the society which works - for one man and one woman and children and work-based society. Which is a lie. We know it is a lie. There is no such thing that everybody will have a good place and that everybody will feel secure and that everybody will follow the model of the state that you will have no problem. But this is the problem, so in this way the traditional family values of one man and one woman and children, this is not on its own, it is just one leg. #00:08:13.41#

Rémy Bonny: How do you feel that this illiberalism of Orban interacts with this? Especially in the last five years the political discourse of the Fidesz government and their coalition partners are becoming more and more homophobic. So does this interacts: illiberalism on the one hand, but at the other hand as you were saying people are voting for something that they know about, but at the other hand opinion polls show that on LGBT-issues Hungarians are becoming more progressive in the society. And still the Fidesz government does not really react to that. There was an opinion poll for instance published in 2017, which said that 67% of the Hungarians want equal rights for LGBT-people. You discuss about what "equal rights" mean, but I mean it's not that this 67% of the society has a huge anger towards the LGBT-community. So how do you explain then that Fidesz is somehow targeting in their discourse, maybe not in their legal changes, but more and more in their discourse on television and on speeches on homophobia. #00:09:37.67#

Balázs Bárány: Well, it is working a 100% well on their own voters base. This is the people they are shooting at. They don't really care what I or she thinks about the LGBT-rights. The society becomes more and more split on this and on everything else also I guess. Yes, that can be true on one hand that more and more people support equal LGBTI-rights, I think more and more people... #00:10:05.23#

Tüttő Kata: Under 30, under 30. But they don't go to vote. #00:10:05.23#

Balázs Bárány: But more and more people attend the Budapest Pride, but those who are not in favour of such progress as say, are more and more actively disagreeing with this. And indeed, yes, there is also a generation gap. In our age actually nobody is opposing. Everybody in Budapest,

other parts is a bit different. But you know our parents' generation are like: "Ok, it is not trendy anymore to bad language against homosexuals, but deep inside we don't really like this thing". My grandmothers generations, well... (laughing) #00:10:52.82#

Tüttő Kata: It is still the discourse about homosexuality. And only between two man. Because if you would ask in the polls what they understand about LMB or the letters, the only discourse is about homosexuality, is between men. Because lesbian women is something different, that's what you will hear about. All the others I mostly don't even hear about. But still if you talk about this rights, people think about gay men. #00:11:34.14#

Rémy Bonny: And does MSZP for instance participate in the Budapest Pride? #00:11:39.64#

Balázs Bárány: Yes, we do. Traditionally it does. #00:11:42.78#

Rémy Bonny: Already since the beginning? #00:11:44.43#

Balázs Bárány: I don't know since the very beginning, but at least for the last ten years. #00:11:50.99#

Tüttő Kata: Since the beginning. #00:11:50.99#

Balázs Bárány: Since the beginning. Always with flags. With key politicians. We are not leading the march, but we are publicly there. And we are proud of it. We post it on Facebook. We give volunteers to the organisers group - whatever. There's an LGBT-branch of MSZP, it's an official party branch. I don't know how to describe that. #00:11:50.99#

Tüttő Kata: Yeah, you know like the Rainbow Roses. #00:12:19.26#

Balázs Bárány: Of the party of the European Socialists. We have our own Rainbow Roses #00:12:21.57#

Rémy Bonny: A few weeks ago, Frans Timmermans, the EU-commissioner was here in Budapest. Frans Timmermans is well known especially the last year, for participating in Prides all over Europe. Do you feel, because Frans Timmermans as far as I am right is also member of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, that's right. #00:12:47.48#

Balázs Bárány: Well, he is a commissioner, but... #00:12:47.48#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, he is a commissioner, be he is originally a socialist. Did he provide help to MSZP at the moment for the election campaign in regard to LGBT-issues and so on? #00:13:04.86#

Balázs Bárány: Other issues were discussed during his visit in Budapest. We went more to the Social Europe dimension and there was a very limited time he could spend in Budapest. So we didn't really touch the issue of LGBTI-people and LGBTI-rights. #00:13:20.63#

Rémy Bonny: Ok. I'm just asking, because in the last year he was really focussing on LGBT-issues and visited a lot of Prides and those things. #00:13:25.89#

Balázs Bárány: I think Frans Timmermans is pretty good at focussing at the topics which are the most important in every member state. And sadly or not sadly, depending on the person who says this. I think sadly LGBTI-rights are not very important in Hungary nowadays. This is not issue the issue you would change this government. I think we need to build upon this, but when Frans Timmermans for half a day and does two campaign meetings and goes home. #00:13:55.33#

Rémy Bonny: So then coming back to the more international idea about it. Do you feel any international pressure at all from every corner - even progressive parts and conservative parts - on LGBT-rights at the moment? #00:14:14.45#

Balázs Bárány: I don't. Do you? #00:14:16.52#

Rémy Bonny: And that's because you have the feeling that this current government does not need any pressure? #00:14:23.82#

Tüttő Kata: No. It doesn't need any foreign influence on that. They use not the whole issue, but we are going in a direction that the traditional values are key to maintain the Hungarian nation and society. And it is not an anti-LGBT thing. #00:14:57.05#

Balázs Bárány: Not publicly at least. #00:14:57.05#

Tüttő Kata: Not publicly. They attack publicly anybody from those groups. I don't see it. It is like nothing happened in the past 10 years. That is how they are acting. So when they are talking among each others on talkshows, when they are among each other, they use the really really bad words on homosexual people. And they are still only talking about gay men in this regards. And nothing happened, and this is some bad signal. What I usually hear from the mayor of Budapest, he is from Fidesz. #00:15:40.44#

Balázs Bárány: An old guy. #00:15:40.44#

Tüttő Kata: He still believe and this is what they really think about this, there is a big conspiracy theory on people like George Soros and the Open Society Foundation. The same concept with the migrants. That they only promote homosexuality in Europe to decline the Europeans. And this is there concept. This is promoted and it is promoted by us and a lot of people hate homosexuals, because this is about promotion - they believe that. #00:16:16.63#

Tüttő Kata: Absolutely. Absolutely. So and they really feel that all the Hollywood movies are advertising homosexuality, everything and all the posters... #00:16:28.98#

Balázs Bárány: And the Eurovision Song Contest. #00:16:31.75#

Tüttő Kata: Conchita Wurst is always somebody they are referring to. #00:16:32.67#

Balázs Bárány: "They wanna take away your national pride. They wanna take away your gender, your sexuality. So that they can dissolve you in this kind of faceless European mass." This was basically the point of Fidesz-view of the world of the 21st Century. #00:16:52.20#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, but although they don't directly LGBT-people. They don't put it on the agenda. What they say is that they are making more or less the 'gender theory'. That this is a really bad concept for our traditional values, so what they attack is the gender discourse. #00:17:12.72#

Balázs Bárány: Yes, but I think that gender discourse for majority of Fidesz voters is equal to hating gay people. #00:17:18.90#

Tüttő Kata: I think so too. #00:17:18.90#

Balázs Bárány: I think... The government is smarter than this, but the ordinary Fidesz voters are not. #00:17:26.55#

Tüttő Kata: We agree totally. But I just wanted to explain that what they do, they don't bring it up directly the issue. #00:17:31.55#

Balázs Bárány: You cannot blame them of using anti-LGBT words, because they don't. However try to flag a rainbow flag at a Fidesz meeting and see what the normal supporters would do to that flag. #00:17:47.20#

Tüttő Kata: I don't know if they understand. #00:17:47.20#

Balázs Bárány: They do. #00:17:47.20#

Tüttő Kata: Most of them will not. #00:17:50.70#

Rémy Bonny: I can try that once. #00:17:55.11#

Tüttő Kata: The older generation don't understand this flag. They think it is for some unicorn statue: for their grantchildrens cartoons. #00:18:04.54#

Balázs Bárány: Their bad language is still stimulated by the unspoken propaganda of the government. Which is not straight enough to blame them for using anti-LGBTI rhetoric. #00:18:16.61#

Tüttő Kata: They always use "christianity", as the big cover story that it is all god who decides about men and women. And everything in-between is a failure. "We should protect this original concept of creation - one woman and one man." #00:18:35.74#

Balázs Bárány: They are using the demography as one of their key arguments, saying: "Come on, look at the numbers. The number of Hungarians is going down and within a century it is going to be two times less as what we have now. The only weapon to counterattack this direction is to have more and more children." As opposed to some other political forces who want "migration". #00:18:59.65#

Rémy Bonny: So we basically found out by researching all these documents. I don't know if you know this organisation. It is called the World Congress of Families. It was organised in 2017 here in Budapest as well. Basically it is an organisation which is based in the in the United States and they have a lot of partners. And all this partners are conservative homophobic...#00:19:26.73#

Balázs Bárány: Say the name again. #00:19:26.73#

Rémy Bonny: World Congress of Families. #00:19:28.10#

Balázs Bárány: Of Families. #00:19:28.10#

Tüttő Kata: I never came across. #00:19:31.91#

Balázs Bárány: It doesn't sound familiar to me. #00:19:33.93#

Rémy Bonny: It was a few years ago also organised in Budapest. Viktor Orban was one of the keynote speakers. #00:19:39.17#

Tüttő Kata: I remember. #00:19:39.63#

Rémy Bonny: And Katalin Novak is going there basically every year. So what we see specifically in the relationship with Katalin Novak, that is going there every year, and she has very narrow ties with a Russian official, which is one of the leaders of the local organisatoin, his name name is Igor Beloborodov. Igor Beloborodov is also a good friend of Malofeev. And Malofeev is the, they call him 'the far-right liason of Putin with the far-right in Europe'. He's the one who was in contact with Bela Govacz from Jobbik. It was the contact-person of the Russians for Govacz and she is meeting on a regular basis at least once a year with this persons. #00:20:40.66#

Tüttő Kata: I don't think that is really important. I mean among each other. I don't think that's a real thing, because the concept is here. I just read (using her smartphone) what they are really fighting for. It's like same-sex marriage, yeah that's ok, ... #00:21:00.50#

Balázs Bárány: Abortion, I guess. #00:21:00.50#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, you won't find abortion in the Fidesz-communication. You won't. It's not there. Because they know that most of the society don't think so. And even Katalin Novak never mentions abortion. The third one is: "opposes to pornography". They never said that - in there communication. Although I would support that. But they don't do that. #00:21:28.50#

Balázs Bárány: I agree with her... #00:21:30.14#

Tüttő Kata: I don't think that has any importance. So Katalin Novak doesn't need Russian influence. #00:21:37.05#

Balázs Bárány: She's aggressive enough on her own. She doesn't need any Russian influence on her agenda. #00:21:45.11#

Rémy Bonny: We also assume that there is indeed no influence, but that there is an organisation on international level which is organising homophobia, anti-gender issues on an international. That they are just organising it with each other. They are just internationally organising it. Just like the LGBT-community also organises themselves internationally. Of course. So that's why we also assume that the countermovement to us is also... #00:22:10.62#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, there is only one issue what they have in common. And that is opposing same-sex marriage. #00:22:16.19#

Rémy Bonny: But believe me, but LGBT-issues are the main focus of the World Congress of Families at the moment. Because indeed, it is one that everybody agrees on. #00:22:28.29#

Tüttő Kata: Who could be agreeing on opposing to pornography? That's nowhere. #00:22:32.67#

Rémy Bonny: Politically... #00:22:41.07#

Rémy Bonny: So that's a bit assuring at least to say. But with this kind of organisations, we assume that somehow - officially it is American - but the Russians put so much money in that. So we say it is a geopolitical instrument of Russia - which is not very effective. #00:23:06.78#

Tüttő Kata: I would say that it's the foundations of Viktor Orban on its own. He is veteran politicians. He is here since 1980-something. He learned about strategy, about how to lose power and how to never lose it again. I don't think he is a sort of puppet of any international coalitions. I think this is also what he is showing at the moment. He is a player on his own. I would never say that Viktor Orban is a puppet of Russia. Because he is a politician on his own. He had... #00:23:58.02#

Balázs Bárány: Our fellow party members usually say this, that he is Putin's puppet. But this is speech. #00:24:06.41#

Tüttő Kata: But I don't think that this is the reality. They have financial transactions. For sure they have meetings together. But he's a politician on his own creating his own strategy. #00:24:20.37#

Balázs Bárány: I slightly disagree with you. I think there are certain issues where he is a follower. For example, let's speak about Ukraine. The situation of Ukraine. I don't see the Hungarian national interest in opposing Ukraine's accession to the EU and to NATO. And I don't find any other reason except for Vladimir Putin's geopolitical interest. Otherwise... #00:24:48.74#

Tüttő Kata: But you know, that's also something which Viktor Orban can use as a card on the European table. You know what he learned in politics is that if you always cooperate, that's not the best strategy. What he learned in politics is that if you always, you know, push it, but never reach the wall, and he's good in where the wall is. I hope that this time he's wrong. I really hope that this time he didn't really see where was the wall. #00:25:23.02#

Balázs Bárány: You mean with EPP? #00:25:23.02#

Tüttő Kata: Now with EPP and this European issues. #00:25:29.92#

Rémy Bonny: Is it not rather gonna help him if they throw him out? #00:25:30.64#

Balázs Bárány: There is one thing I'm very sure. He's not gonna get thrown out. Whether they keep him or he leaves on his own. Orban Viktor been thrown out from anywhere, that's not gonna happen. It's not his thing. I have suspicion. Ah, we know that the prime minister of Poland is invited to March 15 National Day Rally and he and Viktor Orban will speak one after the other. This guy being one of the leaders of Polish PiS, which is being one of the core members of the Europe of Conservatives and Reformists, which is now being abandoned by the Torries from the Great Britain. I mean, in my head it pretty much heads up to Orban's announcement on Friday that he is leaving voluntarily the EPP, because "the christian democratic track became liberal". Soros is the liberal. #00:26:31.91#

Tüttő Kata: I think the same. He will form his own party or he will use existing infrastructure or creating a new movement. #00:26:40.20#

Balázs Bárány: By merging two... #00:26:43.23#

Tüttő Kata: Which he can lead. Because I think that is important, because he wants to... #00:26:47.15#

Balázs Bárány: There is also one... and I just had a very interesting discussion László Andor an hour ago. He said... I asked him: "Untill now European conservatives and reformists and the Europe of Nations and - Le Pen, Salvini - this group. And the Polish PiS group. The both of them being radical and some kind of anti-European. They were not merging. They were not together. Why? Because the latter had the Torries. And the Torries when leaving EPP had to say that they were sitting around the table and that they not need Salvini and Le Pen. But now the Torries are gone and Orban joining in this group. I don't see why this five ESCO's can start to work together. But this is what I hear. You don't know about it exactly. #00:27:40.46#

Rémy Bonny: I also you are right that he wants to be the leader of Europe on this side. That's also why he is sending these messages now and the posters against Juncker. And the posters against Timmermans and so on. #00:27:53.63#

Tüttő Kata: This is for the Hungarians. This is not a message or something. #00:27:57.22#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, but this is something everybody sees in Europe as well at the moment. #00:28:00.73#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, they did that for long time - you know. Juncker he cared about this posters for this year. But it didn't started now. It started four years ago. #00:28:09.51#

Balázs Bárány: We had used them on a presentation on this shit and nobody cared about. #00:28:11.83#

Tüttő Kata: The campaign, the real European campaign was 'Respect Hungarians'. And there was no 'EU' in it. It was about Viktor Orban with a lot of Hungarian flags - sending a message to Brussels: "Respect Hungarians". That was their European campaign. #00:28:33.83#

Rémy Bonny: But then it evolved and became more fierce, no? With the migrant posters... #00:28:36.68#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, because they realised that - they have really good American advisers - and they told him, having a general enemy is not good. You need to impersonate your enemy and this is one. Because first it was against the institutions. You have to understand it. In 2010, it was the International Monetary Fund - which was a big freedom fight against. And then came Brussels. And what else? #00:29:05.65#

Balázs Bárány: Private pension funds. #00:29:08.04#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, but institutions. #00:29:08.04#

Balázs Bárány: Yes, seriously #00:29:08.04#

Tüttő Kata: Yes. #00:29:10.03#

Balázs Bárány: Seven years ago, all Fidesz-voters hated private pension funds. It was insane. They were told to - obviously. #00:29:17.50#

Tüttő Kata: And IMF was the big enemy. But they realised, or they were told, that you need to impersonate. Because this is how our brain works as humans. That you need to see your enemy. And it cannot be something like 'Brussels'. So this is when George Soros came. #00:29:36.98#

Balázs Bárány: As a very good character to be an enemy - you know. #00:29:39.90#

Tüttő Kata: And he is used in a lot of places selling books. He was already used in other countries. So it seems that it was working. And he doesn't care. Now that several countries were using Soros as the big enemy. And George Soros never counterattack. And this is why I think, Juncker came in, impersonated, because you don't hate just 'Brussels'. Show the person who represent Brussels. And you know the two guys laughing at you with this old - like back in the 40s - posters. #00:30:22.21#

Rémy Bonny: Maybe as a last question: don't you feel frightened by all these things? See enemy-making, seeing specific groups in society being targeted and so on. It more and more looks like a country like Russia, no? Don't you feel frightened about that? #00:30:37.46#

Balázs Bárány: It motivates me. It is a personal question. But for me, it motivates me. As the same Hungarian person, who loves his country and I am personal like this. I have two possibilities: to realise what this country became and to leave it as soon as possible. This is what most of my friends do. Or to stay here, but then to fight against this with all my power. And I have chosen the second. #00:31:06.17#

Tüttő Kata: I'm afraid. I'm afraid for my children for myself. So I have this two feelings inside of me, like Balasz says. But sometimes it really feels irrational to fight. You know, it is too big and too powerful the other side. It is an irrational thing. We are trying everything. There are a lot of people who risk everything to change. And I think is the part which motivates me that still a lot of people who risk everything. And they are there and they know that they have a lot to lose. You know, but nobody was in jail. One of the politicians was in jail. #00:31:56.21#

Balázs Bárány: Except Zuschlag... #00:31:57.48#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, but... #00:32:00.47#

Balázs Bárány: It is already grey zone. I think. #00:32:02.34#

Tüttő Kata: It is on the edge. First time, you will go and protest against Viktor Orban and you will be taken by cops. I think that would be a turning point for many of us. This will become dangerous. I think this is on purpose. #00:32:23.12#

Balázs Bárány: I think that this is the difference between being EU-member and not being EU-member. #00:32:28.90#

Tüttő Kata: None of the journalists are in jail. #00:32:32.57#

Balázs Bárány: I don't think you can do this in the European Union. #00:32:32.57#

Tüttő Kata: Yes, but... ok. The strategy of Viktor Orban is, you don't put journalists into jail. You buy all of them. #00:32:42.28#

Balázs Bárány: It works better. #00:32:42.28#

Rémy Bonny: And even the journalists who are not bought by Orban are... I had like an interview with somebody from HVG for instance. And I was talking about Russia, about homophobia in Russia and then I started to talk about Hungary. And then he was like "yeah, you know, it's a good story about Russia, but I don't want my editors to say and to be too fierce on Hungary, because then also the company is going too..." - I mean and HVG is one of the last magazines which is not bought by the government. And they don't even have - sorry for my language - the balls to write something against the government. #00:33:22.37#

Balázs Bárány: This kind of behaviour of the remaining free press is causing much more harm than straight government propaganda. Because the readers of this newspapers believe that they read the truth and this not the case anymore. And they have their responsibility in this. #00:33:38.44#

Rémy Bonny: It is somehow self-censorship. #00:33:41.42#

Balázs Bárány: That's correct. #00:33:43.50#

Tüttő Kata: What I see - I agree with you totally. What I see is a really strong frustration among journalists who are still part of the independent media. They are frustrated about the whole situation, but they are not attacking the source of the frustration. They are attacking the opposition. Because they don't dare to attack the government. #00:34:09.88#

Balázs Bárány: The opposition is close enough, you can reach them. #00:34:12.29#

Tüttő Kata: Because we are weaker than the government. They always feel like they are the ones who you can beat anytime, criticize anything. And tell you are not doing anything to the problem. But their problem is our problem too. It is to change the government. So most of their frustration goes towards any, not just MSZP, any opposition party. #00:34:41.60#

Rémy Bonny: Ok, I am just going to stop the recording here. #00:34:41.60#

Interview Orsalya Fülöp

Policy Director at Energieklub

13/03/2019 - 1:00PM - Szerb utca 17, Budapest

Rémy Bonny: So I need to ask the question again for the record. Can I record the interview?
#00:00:07.48#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, you can. #00:00:10.37#

Rémy Bonny: So as a first question. Can you briefly describe the link between energy corruption from Orban and his administration and Russian government? #00:00:24.57#

Orsalya Fülöp: So, first of all I would like to highlight is that it didn't, the Russian influence on Hungary and the energy sector, but the whole country did not start with the Orban government. You know as... Do you think you will be able to hear the recording? #00:00:51.11#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, I've been in worse situations. It is possible. #00:00:59.87#

Orsalya Fülöp: They are going anyway. So anyway. As being country belonging to the Soviet Union for fifty years, basically the Russians have never really left the country and all this region. So all relations and the ties between politics and also economy they remain very very strong. Maybe not that strong as in Bulgaria for instance, but very strong in Hungary as well. So the previous government was very much tied to Russian... #00:01:48.46#

Rémy Bonny: The MSZP-government? #00:01:48.46#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, (Hungarian name) and others as well. Because in the energy sector, it is especially prone to corruption and you know other Russian interest. Because it is a great amount of money. There is nothing in the world compared in the world to the energy sector. Maybe the space research or something and the army - where you have that much amount of money in question. So that's why energy is very very important in itself already, but for Russia it is even more important because they rely on their gas and oil export and their nuclear industry. Because it is very strong in Russia, so they want to - you know - export their products, their knowledge. And also they want to build nuclear facilities, because that is their nuclear industry. They are exporting their nuclear power plants and they are selling the technology. It is a huge amount of money already and then you are basically, most probably if you build a nuclear power plant you with the Russian technology, you will probably get the Uranium and fuel from Russia as well. So it a whole big industry and it is very very strong. And the dependence is like two way. Like Hungary we don't have natural resources, very poor. I mean we have renewables like the sun and the wind and bla bla bla, but these conventional sources like gas and coal, nothing on coal, nothing. We don't have anything, not even water, because you know the country is very flat. We need the energy. We depend on the import. But at the same time as I explained, the Russians also depend on their export. Because they have nothing else to sell. I mean they don't have money and their economy is just energy basically. So the dependence is two-way. But I mean Russia being a huge country and still having a huge political influence in this region they have the power to 'pressurize' you two-way. I mean, to satisfy their interest, their economic interest. If the Russian government wants to sell you gas or wants to sell you a nuclear power plant. They probably will, because they will convince you in effecting me to buy their... I mean... yes, to comply with their deal that they propose. So, basically... yes, basically that's it. #00:05:48.17#

Rémy Bonny: And do you have the feeling that the Russians are using their energy power in Hungary to also influence on other policies of the Hungarian government? #00:05:59.60#

Orsalya Fülöp: Oh yes. In the whole Europe basically. It's a huge power game between this big regions in the world. Like the US and Russia and Israel and then the EU - somehow. So it's bigger

than the countries. So they are thinking big and to gain more power in the whole world, Russia as well needs to conquer all the countries slowly. And yes if the countries depend to some extent on Russian energy as well, then they have a very good leverage. #00:06:59.93#

Rémy Bonny: So, indeed you said "Russia is pressurising" Hungary and so on. Did you have the feeling that the Russians are using their influence on Hungary or is Hungary just willing to accept it? #00:07:13.67#

Orsalya Fülöp: It is both. It is both. But... and... I don't have the real. You don't always have the real evidence, whether it is the Hungarian government's will or was it... you know - pressure - . It is much more likely that there is like a pressure from the side of Russia to reach their goals. And we don't have a very great position for bargaining. #00:08:08.62#

Rémy Bonny: And who were the people? #00:08:08.62#

Orsalya Fülöp: But is on very high level politics. You don't really have the insight, because it is very secretive. Especially this. And this is the new achievement of the Orban government compared to the previous governments, that... I mean. They master in secrecy and they don't share any information even to journalists and they bought the media, almost the whole media for themselves. You don't really have insight in those deals and issues between the government. #00:08:52.94#

Rémy Bonny: What happened to you and all those researchers who brought the story about this Russian influence? What was the reaction of the Hungarian government? #00:08:57.53#

Orsalya Fülöp: Nothing really. Not really. This is... This was not a very new thing to anyone. Everyone knows that, you try to discover new issues and you know... just to have one more case. But it's more. We do it more like, you know, we are trying to get data and information. And we don't get it from the government. And then you have to go to the court again and again and again, so it's very difficult to discover any case. #00:10:01.18#

Rémy Bonny: So maybe you don't know that out of your head. But I want to give you two names of Russians who are very much involved on a financial level in my research. And we know that they not only work on LGBT-rights, but basically financing every single populist party in Europe. And they are basically the liaison between the European populists and the Kremlin. The first name is Konstantin Malofeev. Never heard about him? #00:10:33.56#

Orsalya Fülöp: Never. No. #00:10:33.56#

Rémy Bonny: The second one is Vladimir Yakunin. #00:10:37.07#

Orsalya Fülöp: Who is him? #00:10:42.54#

Rémy Bonny: He is... He was the former boss of the railway company in Russia and is leading a think-tank in Berlin for the Russians at the moment. #00:10:53.88#

Orsalya Fülöp: I heard that name already. But I don't... . #00:10:53.88#

Rémy Bonny: He is also on a blacklist of the Americans and the Australians. He can't enter the country anymore there. So, you've heard that name? #00:11:06.29#

Orsalya Fülöp: I've heard that name. But probably, I mean... the big players in energy in Russia are Gazprom and Rosatom. And the oil... (phone ringing) So I think that the players are different. I assume that the big players are different in each sector and in each field. I mean at the politician level, maybe there are some the same guys. #00:11:55.60#

Rémy Bonny: Indeed, there are Malofeev and Yakunin, they are basically the two guys who are working for Putin secretly to wage the influence. So then the question is if they only focus on populist movements in Europe or are they just the liaison between Putin and every influence factor in Europe. It is interesting that you know Yakunin. It would be interesting to also check if he has some connection with Gazprom or with Rosatom. #00:12:28.51#

Orsalya Fülöp: You can check that. #00:12:37.35#

Rémy Bonny: And he might have, because he was the boss for decades of the Russian Railway Company, the biggest company in the country and those things. So it would not be that weird if he had some connections. #00:12:54.04#

Orsalya Fülöp: I mean. It's very difficult to make the connection. Because it's slightly different issue with the energy, because it is in their economic interest. They want to sell their products and it is not only about ideology and political power. But is also their need for money. So it is probably made in a very different way or you know. I'm not a very big expert on corruption, but I have the impression that the method and the model of this power game is different. Because in energy there is so much economic interest involved. #00:14:02.70#

Rémy Bonny: While in my issues it is more culturally and politically power. #00:14:10.59#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, and they also need to sell some energy to Western European countries. So it's not only. And you know the whole Europe needs the energy. And so therefore, their dependence on Russia in this way makes it... because you know ideologically, if you speak in LGBT-rights, it might be much more difficult to convince the Western European countries about another ideology and then the politicians don't really give the floor to this. But you also depend on energy and you buy energy from Russia as well and they do it as well in Western Europe to some extend. You know... it is a different issue. But what can be more similar, it is the attacks on the civil society sector - like the NGOs. Which was also invented in Russia and it was really like imported here to same way basically. And you know this, like this restructuring the Science Academy. You can see that it was developed there and then they take it here. And there I don't know who wants that. Russia wants... they expect like Orban to make the same moves or Orban likes this idea and then 'why not?'. #00:16:01.66#

Rémy Bonny: Well, most people tell me that it is probably Orban liking the idea. While at the other hand, I am also convinced that Orban doesn't need the Russians to tell him what to do, he pretty much know himself what to do unfortunately. But at the other hand, this whole infrastructure, for instance the World Congress of Families, but also there is finance going to populist parties like Jobbik, and so on. You see that even when Orban doesn't need it, Russia is setting something up and there is some infrastructure to actually influence on these issues. Maybe they are not using it, but they have the infrastructure. #00:16:38.12#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, but you know. They are surely using it, because Russia wants destabilise the whole EU. They want the EU to fall apart and they are getting quite successful. So, unfortunately. I am quite sure that it is coming from their side as well, because of this political power game. #00:17:08.54#

Rémy Bonny: Can you maybe briefly describe the way that Energiaklub and the people who are working with MTA and so on uncovered the whole corruption and the Russian influence on it? How did you found out about it? #00:17:26.20#

Orsalya Fülöp: I need to think about what exactly we discovered with Russia, because we had several researches on corruption but not all involved Russia. Because we have enough in Hungary as well. And as I said it is made on a very very high level. #00:17:58.88#

Rémy Bonny: How is it possible that it can stay so secret while it is on such a high level? I mean there is always going to be somebody who is going to talk, no? #00:18:03.26#

Orsalya Fülöp: Probably the reason why it is not really leaking out is the fact that both sides or all parties are in it. So all parties. #00:18:21.12#

Rémy Bonny: So basically everybody is blackmailing each other. #00:18:21.87#

Orsalya Fülöp: So, any... I mean there is no one who had... #00:18:31.49#

Rémy Bonny: Who is free to talk... #00:18:31.49#

Orsalya Fülöp: Free to tell. Or who wants to tell, because he himself, or her herself, but mostly himself, was involved to some extent and needs or even we have this issue coming from the Soviet times, you know, they were agents of the party. And many countries uncovered it: who were the spies? And didn't happen here. So there are many politicians who were there, who were in the communist party, who were the spies, who were agents. And you kind of know, but you don't know because the files are not disclosed. #00:19:26.19#

Rémy Bonny: Would you say that these former KGB agents are still working for the Russians? #00:19:35.34#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, but it was not only KGB. Because it was KGB in Russia, but it wasn't called like that in Hungary. We had our own secret service or something. And they have agents. They have their... I mean. A whole lot's of people, thousands and thousands, I don't know how many. Like normal everyday people had to report for the party. Not only politicians, it was also people in companies and also the house monitoring. The ones who were cleaning. They were the ones usually who were reporting. So we still have this issues, back in fifties and sixties which is still having an impact on politics. Because they were, they know about each other probably who were spies and agents. And that is also a reason why... you know... they are keeping each other together and no one can speak. Because then the other one would say 'you were a Russian agent in 56'. #00:20:55.25#

Rémy Bonny: And are they still Russian agents? #00:20:57.06#

Orsalya Fülöp: Most probably. #00:20:59.25#

Rémy Bonny: Because we know Bela Govacz... #00:21:02.31#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, from Jobbik. #00:21:04.24#

Rémy Bonny: Was there some link with him and the energy sector? #00:21:06.61#

Orsalya Fülöp: Let me think. I don't know that by hard, I can. #00:21:20.85#

Rémy Bonny: Because Bela Govacz, he knew Malofeev. #00:21:24.98#

Orsalya Fülöp: I think we had some issue. I can make a search for you. I will. #00:21:35.73#

Rémy Bonny: I will send you an e-mail. Because Govacz his contact person with the Russians was Malofeev. So... #00:21:45.79#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, he is a great. He is surely... But you know... The biggest Russian agent was our prime minister Ferenc Gyursány probably. I mean for example. #00:21:59.64#

Rémy Bonny: The prime minister under MSZP? #00:22:00.50#

Orsalya Fülöp: Yes, something until 2009 or 2010. I mean what else do you need? You have one on the top. #00:22:14.36#

Rémy Bonny: And what about Orban? Orban was involved in the communist party...#00:22:16.28#

Orsalya Fülöp: No, I mean he was very young. That time, he was involved for a short while, but... #00:22:28.52#

Rémy Bonny: But somehow everybody was involved. #00:22:32.00#

Orsalya Fülöp: Everybody was involved. It was obligatory to enter the party back then was to some extend involved, but he didn't study in Moscow according to my memories. #00:22:48.29#

Rémy Bonny: Well, he used to study in Oxford. #00:22:48.54#

Orsalya Fülöp: While Ferenc Gyursány and so on are really strongly connected to the Russians. So therefore I said the Russian influence didn't start with Orban. Much before. And actually the deal about the new nuclear power plant Paks 2 - which was made by Orban in 2014. It was already, I mean Gyursány was already starting to prepare it for years. We know that and we saw that. And then Orban just took advantage of his previous work. But you see it very high-level. Because it is the energy... #00:23:44.66#

Rémy Bonny: What is the fear that the EU says with Orban, we throw you out? What is the fear that Orban is totally going to Russia then? Or the threat? #00:23:55.75#

Orsalya Fülöp: You know there is now this attempt to throw out Fidesz from the EPP. I'm really curious how that will go and what they will decide. I'm not sure what will happen either way. Whether it is good or bad. I don't think they will throw out Hungary from the European Union. #00:24:44.72#

Rémy Bonny: Well yeah, it would be a huge geopolitical mistake. You never know what happens after next elections. #00:24:50.40#

Orsalya Fülöp: But you know, my feeling is... I mean it is personal. I cannot prove it with anything, is that they are actually using Orban and they are quite happy about it. With many things that Orban is doing, for example the refugee scandal. I'm very much convinced that the French or the German government is thinking the same way. They just... you know. It is just not easy to tell it in their countries that you don't want any refugees. We don't want them. They cannot say that. And I think that they are very happy that there is someone who is saying that. And who is the clown? So I think it is not black or white. I wouldn't say that Orban is, that the European leaders don't like him. Because I think sometimes they really don't like him, but sometimes they like him. #00:25:53.01#

Rémy Bonny: The biggest problem of course, in my opinion, is not his refugee stance. We have in every single country parties saying similar things, sometimes they are in power, sometimes they are not. But the biggest problems are the attacks on the judiciary, press freedom, civil society. And that is something - in my opinion - that the European Union cannot ignore. #00:26:17.39#

Orsalya Fülöp: They shouldn't ignore it, but they are doing that. Because they did not do any real measures when these things are happening. Not even when the Central European University was removed. And yes and the academy, and the NGOs. They publish some statements and then we are left here. We don't have any help. #00:26:48.61#

Rémy Bonny: Ok. I'm going to stop the interview here. #00:26:50.10#

Interview András Rácz

Associate Professor of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University - Expert on Russia & EU Foreign Policy
23/03/2019 - 8:30AM - Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest, Hungary

Rémy Bonny: So is it ok that I record the interview? #00:00:10.76#

András Rácz: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely. Sure. #00:00:12.42#

Rémy Bonny: So, yeah. You work probably on the causality of finding influence of other countries on Hungary and so on. #00:00:26.24#

András Rácz: I would like to start from explaining Russian-Hungarian relations in a wider context. I mean...#00:00:37.25#

Rémy Bonny: That was indeed my first question. #00:00:37.25#

András Rácz: My spies are working you see. Russia's soft power potential here - in the Joseph Nye sense - is very limited in Hungary. This is highly different from Poland, from Slovakia, from Czech Republic and partly Ukraine. I mean this is not a Slavic country. This is not a Slavic nation, not a Slavic language. Hungary has never been part either of Russia or of the Soviet Union. Even in the Soviet times, Hungary had a limited type of influence. Like all members of the Eastern bloc. Plus there is no considerable Russian minority here. There are a few tens of thousands of Russians, but that's a highly diverse group. They are unable to organise themselves. They don't constitute any kind of significant political weight. Most Russian here are either wife's who came during the Soviet time - when a Hungarian engineer went studying in Moscow and married to a Russian girl. It's all normal. So that's one group. A significant group is already those ones second-generation Russians who were born into mixed families. And the third group are Russian professionals. Engineers, IT-people, architects, designers, experts. If you know the expression, there is a Russian political-economist Vladislav Inosemtsev. And Inosemtsev once put it that there is a difference you have professional Russians, so that is Russian immigration which is not learning the local language, which is Russian media, so that is a professional Russian. And there are the Russian professionals. In Hungary both groups are present. But again, they do not constitute any kind of political push factor. And there are no Hungarians living in Russia. When it comes to Hungary and foreign policy with Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, all the neighbouring countries basically, that always comes to the question, minority factor/minority questions is something that shapes Hungarian foreign policy. This thing is not present with Russia. So, soft power ties are pretty limited and particularly because since the end of communism learning Russian which was abandoned, taken out of the school curricula. The knowledge on Russia is decreasing rapidly. Which hurts my heart, that people don't speak Russian anymore. There is a Hungarian NGO Political Capital and Political Capital just produced a report - meaning like two weeks ago - titled mystification and demystification of Putin's Russia. Measuring what actually Hungarians know about Russia. And it comes out that: not much. And at this point all this factors limit the potential Russia can exercise in this country - in the soft power term. As a result, Russia doesn't even try to win hearts and minds, to use the expression. Instead of trying to win hearts and minds, they do two things. Either they try such strategic investment or shares in such strategic projects which guaranteed long-term influence regardless from who's in power - like with a nuclear power plant. Or like earlier, one Russian company Surgutneftegas, had a share in Mol Hungarian gas company - 20 something percent. Finally Russians were pushed out, but that was an effort to have strategic influence. Option number 1 - strategic investment - and second: instead of trying to win hearts and minds of the population, they concentrate explicitly on the elites. You know the classic 'sticks and carrots'-approach - offering lucrative contracts, business opportunities and rent seeking - all this. With sometimes some pressure factors as well. But they don't care much about the Hungarian people as such. Particularly because doing information influence it has to be done in the local language. And Hungarian is damn hard. So even Russians have a shortage of capacity

when it comes to Hungarian speakers. This is not the case with Ukraine, this is not the case with Poland, even Czech and Slovak are easier for them to learn than those Slavic languages. This one is not. So many of the Russian diplomats learn Hungarian very well, particularly intelligence operatives, but otherwise... And here another factor that comes into the picture is Hungary's media environment right now. Since the end of last year, such a concentrated media environment came to existence which is unprecedented - even my Russian friends congratulated when this conglomerate was created. And Rémy, at present, there is not a single countryside newspaper that would not be under government control. There is not a single nation-wide radio station that is not be under government control. And there is only one TV-channel having nation-wide coverage which is not under government control. That's German ARTL, but ARTL also made its compromise, they do not discuss a lot of political news. And at this point, again it is Political Capital's argument, Peter Kreko's argument, Hungary's a unique place in the sense that information warfare, propaganda is done by the government. And Russia is happy about that. Happy to such an extend, there was one Russian propaganda website - hidfo.ru - original it was .hu - like a Hungarian sign, but then it was moved to a Russian domain. hidfo means bridge-head. This was a Hungarian website operated by Russia's military intelligence and this is confirmed. Operated by the GRU. And hidfo stopped operating. They just don't need it. Because their messages or the messages that fit their purposes go through the official propaganda machinery. And I'm not judging here whether it is right or wrong, I'm not a moralist. That's the philosophy department. Here from Russia's pragmatic point of view - I mean - messages are so much overlapping from the Hungarian government side, from the Russia side - no problem. So here, I will it selected disinformation. Because not all the information is fake, not all the information is manipulated. I would put it like 'informazion' - а ты говоришь по русски? #00:07:49.60#

Rémy Bonny: Not really, no. #00:07:49.60#

András Rácz: Information influence. So here information influence. It is not that Russia that Russia has to conduct an information influence which is opposite to the one of the government. The information influence that the government is conducting pretty much fits Russia's purposes. And at this time they don't waste much efforts. #00:08:12.55#

Rémy Bonny: The Kremlin's interest is the Hungarian government's interest? #00:08:12.55#

András Rácz: No, there are overlappings. But it is not that the Kremlin makes a phone call and Hungary broadcasts. That is not the case. There are overlappings, there are occasional matches. This is true to such convenient position of the Kremlin. I mean it is apparent to such an extend there was a plan to open a Hungarian edition of RT. Russia scrapped the plan - it is needed. Of course... I mean RT was also facing financial difficulties, but I mean if they really wanted to do it, they could have done it. But they just decided it is not needed. Their messages just go through. #00:09:03.66#

Rémy Bonny: So, I mean, what also Peter Kreko was saying in a earlier report of Political Capital, there was a real change in the policies towards the Kremlin since 2009. #00:09:16.64#

András Rácz: Yes, yes. 2009. #00:09:16.94#

Rémy Bonny: When Orban met with - had an informal meeting with Putin. #00:09:24.89#

András Rácz: The one of 2009, yes. #00:09:27.12#

Rémy Bonny: And then everything changed. So can you make a briefly make a comparison with the MSZP-led government and the current one? #00:09:36.01#

András Rácz: Si, Rémy. Not everything changed. This is important to understand. What changed was Viktor Orban personally, but Hungary state policies... Since 2002, ok let's start from the transition. Hungary became, I mean had his democratisation in 1989. New constitution was

adopted and elections were held. All this was done by Soviet troops who were still on Hungarian soil. Then they went out and the 1990s was characterised by, you could describe the period mutual ignorance. Russia was deeply busy with its own internal problems, transformation, corruption, economic hardship, Chechen wars, all that. The massive corruption and desolution of the Soviet Union, Hungary was busy with its own transition and Hungary was exclusively oriented towards the West. And even business-wise and economy-wise, it made no sense striving for strong relations with Russia. Of course historical grievances were present. However then Russian president Boris Yeltsin came to Budapest in 1993 and he apologised for the crimes committed by the Soviets - it was a nice gesture. So let's go back to mutual ignorance. Viktor Orban was already once in power in 1998-2002. That time he had been conducting strongly anti-Russian politics. I mean relations between Hungary and Russia in that period were so tense that Russia even summoned back the Russian ambassador to Moscow for a while. The first Orban government was really strong anti-Russian and pro-Western. Hungary joined NATO under the first Orban government. And it was the first Orban government did basically most of the administrative and legal transformations that permitted Hungary to join the EU in 2004. It was a nice gesture when the treaty on joining the European Union was signed in 2003. And that time there was a socialist-liberal government. Viktor Orban lost power in 2002. And in 2003 when the treaty was signed, ok Hungary is going to join from May 2004, that time in the parliament the socialist-liberal prime minister just stood up and said: "Well, Viktor Orban and his Fidesz also deserve a big thank you" Because de facto they were the ones who did really a lot for getting Hungary to the EU. And then when the socialist-liberal coalition returned to power in 2002, they started to pursue a certain pragmatic policies towards Russia. Part of it originated from Hungary's back then really strong dependance on Russian gas and energy supplies. Most of the money is in the oil supplies. However oil is in the global market. If something happens to the oil pipeline, you can buy oil from wherever in the world. With gas - it was not the case. That time LNG technology did not exist. So gas could be transported only by pipelines. And Hungary was really strongly dependant. So part of the pragmatic with Russia, can be explained by energy policy considerations. And the second part, elite interest. Russians were really successful in cultivating ties with some segments of the then socialist-liberal elites. Businessman got lucrative contracts - cheaper than the market price. Various shady deals like this. And this pragmatic policy line it actually did not change in 2010. In the beginning when Viktor Orban got to power back then in 2010, it is important to understand that that election was absolutely democratic. Hungarian people freely democratically elected Viktor Orban. The 2018 elections, I mean the last ones, those were. I mean OSCE labeled them: 'Free, but not fair' - which never happened in a EU country before. Never fucking never. But in 2010 it was a democratic change. And of course - while in opposition - so between 2002 and 2010, Viktor Orban was highly and strongly and very vocally anti-Russian. There was a... Russia had at that time a real Hungary expert ambassador: Ambassador Igor (Russian last name). (Russian last name) spoke impeccable Hungarian. I mean he could mock accents. Which probably also tells about his background, but he really mastered the language. And there were a few occasions where Viktor Orban and the Russian ambassador were publicly yelling at each other in conferences. Like (Russian last name) was a very impulsive person. And when Orban made comments as the opposition leader either accusing the socialist-liberal government of being traitors and the ambassador had a question and they started yelling at each other in Hungarian. But the government itself conducted a pragmatic policy line and the same pragmatic policy line continued from 2010 on. Part of the story was the energy dependance was still present. To less and less extend, but still present. So what changed is the personal attitude of Viktor Orban - not the government policy. And particularly when it comes to gas and also oil - you know this contracts are long term ones. For 10 years, 15 years, 25 years, so long. You cannot just jump out of it. #00:15:50.46#

Rémy Bonny: Then we are not even talking about nuclear power. #00:15:53.33#

András Rácz: Yes, yes, yes. So interestingly enough - while in terms of foreign policy and energy policy Hungary has conducted pragmatic and very sober, very technical policy line with Russia. So no ideological considerations like the Polish case or Lithuanian case. Meanwhile the defence sector - it has been and it still is a fully NATO mandate policy line. With modernisation, with NATO participation exercises. From the Russian perspective, they openly tell you: "Hungary is not a

friendly country". Hungary is a NATO country. Hungary is member of the military alliance which is the key adversary of Russia. So anybody who at the Hungarian side thinks that it is possible to have some kind of friendship or alliance is just utterly blatantly wrong. Hungary's NATO and EU membership defines the frameworks in which Russia addresses its counteracts. And I mean right now Hungary has started a major military re-organisation project in ten years time 35.000 billion forinths will be spend from defense modernisation. This is more...#00:17:24.26#

Rémy Bonny: Mostly bought in America? #00:17:24.26#

András Rácz: No, German. Hungary so far - what was announced. Exclusively European weaponry. Tanks, armed personal carriers, artillery, all from the same manufacturer. It's good in terms of inter-European ability. It makes things easier. Military helicopter, multi-purpose helicopter, attack helicopter from Airbus. Middle transport aircrafts that one is not yet decided. An air-defence coordination system from Airbus. Mobile hangars for Hungary's airforce from SAAB. Exclusively European made weaponry. There are plans of an advanced air defence system that could be an American one, but that one is not yet decided. So this is a pro-NATO military modernisation which is going on. And Hungary is very close to sign the new defence cooperation agreement with the Americans. This process has been in delay already for 1,5 years, but it is now close to be signed. #00:18:29.36#

Rémy Bonny: That was also why Pompeo was in Hungary? #00:18:34.19#

András Rácz: Yep. And if signed, the Defence Cooperation Agreement will permit American troops to move basically freely across Hungarian soul. Store here defence equipment including even ammunition and actual weapons. Which gives quite wide legal exception for American military personnel from Hungarian legislation. From Russia's perspective this comes to look like a close military alliance with the United States - and buying NATO weaponry and all that. What kind of friendship are we talking about? Russians are very pragmatic in this sense. From their perspective Hungary is not a partner. From their perspective Hungary is a tool through which they could try to influence the EU and Russia from within - sorry the EU and NATO from within. #00:19:28.97#

Rémy Bonny: But rather on an economical and cultural point of view? #00:19:33.76#

András Rácz: Also foreign policy. I mean Hungary has been increasingly critical to the EU sanctions against Russia. Hungary has already started to soften up the sanctions against Belarus. That's a very interesting thing. And by trying to soften the sanctions, not sanctions. There's an arms embargo against Belarus and Hungary has been lobbying to make some minor exceptions. Like Belarusian arms are forbidden in the European Union - in Hungary except sporting riffles. No offence to Belarusian sporting riffles, but probably this thing two dozens of guns sold. But about testing on how the EU reacts to such softening moves. So influence is exercised partially via economy and also inside NATO what is happening to Ukraine. What's happening vice-à-vie Macedonia. So Hungary has been supporting that political force which has been the opponent of Macedonia joining NATO. It is a multi-facetted thing. #00:20:47.25#

Rémy Bonny: But where does this come from then? Is this because of Russian influence or because... #00:20:53.44#

András Rácz: Until Macedonia you could have always argued that there is a Hungarian interest which is actually overlapping with the interests of Russia. Macedonia has been the first case, the former Macedonian president Nikola Gruevski, was evacuated by Hungarian special operation from Skopje to Albania-Montenegro-Serbia-Hungary. In which, in what happened, Hungary helping that political force in Macedonia, which is opposed to the country's EU and NATO accession. This has been contradicting the two decades long strategy foreign policy of Hungary with the Balkans. With the Western Balkans Hungary has always been supported the europeanisation of the region and accession of the region's countries to the EU and NATO. But regardless who is actually in power in Bosnia-Herzegovina or Croatia or whatever, Budapest's core objective was to get this

countries in the EU and NATO. Croatia could join the EU under Hungarian presidency - the last big success for Hungarian foreign policy. So what happened in Macedonia that we helped and actually saved the anti-NATO and highly corrupted former president, this is very hard to explain. #00:22:19.12#

Rémy Bonny: But also about Ukraine, the whole thing that is going on in Transcarpathia, Hungary is there influencing... #00:22:29.62#

András Rácz: Si, in the case of Ukraine, Hungarian diplomacy is convinced that by putting this type of pressure on Kiev it is possible to achieve the modification of the education law. In the Ukraine case - what we said in the beginning - minority policies place a key role in shaping Hungarian foreign policy. So there is a minority interest, which Budapest has always perceived of crucial importance. Every Hungarian government since the transition. Minority policy has been one of the three legs in Hungarian foreign policy. Not always as strong and important, but it has always been in the top 3. #00:23:11.18#

Rémy Bonny: It has similarities with Russian foreign policies then? #00:23:12.59#

András Rácz: No, in Russian foreign policy, supporting Russian minorities abroad is just a tool. In Russia's case it is not inherent. In anyways, the number of Russians living abroad has been decreasing rapidly. I mean when the Soviet Union collapse, there were almost exactly 25 million Russian living in the successor states. Now their number is just 15 million. And in many cases Russia just doesn't give a fuck. I mean where Russians have been heavily discriminated - in Uzbekistan, particularly in Turkmenistan - Russia did nothing. Russia has... When the Chechen wars happened there was a considerable Russian population in the Chechen capital Grozny. Russian army happily killed those ones as well. So it's... In the Hungarian case this is a deep conviction originating from historical, it has historical roots. And also very close people-to-people connections. I mean this is really part of the mental, psychological and emotional connection to the Hungarian populated territories to the other side of the border. This is really strong. And the story is not about territory. Nobody would like to attack Slovakia and take their land. The fuck not. It's a really emotional thing. And also useful labour force reserve recently. #00:24:53.09#

Rémy Bonny: So, #00:24:54.58#

András Rácz: But, sorry just to finish. In Ukraine's case there is a minority dimension - which is the German (word), like the core reason behind this vetoing policy. Russia likes it. But the reason is the minority. With Macedonia there is nothing on this. #00:25:16.88#

Rémy Bonny: What is I mean, the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, ok, but what is the end goal by doing that? I mean... #00:25:27.39#

András Rácz: To make Ukraine change its education law and also to prevent the adoption of the language law in its current form. #00:25:36.64#

Rémy Bonny: Which would only allow Ukrainian and Russian? #00:25:36.64#

András Rácz: I mean, if the new language law of Ukraine which lies in front of the parliament, if it gets adopted. It would put a serious constraint on the use of the minority languages. And of course, Ukraine tells "guys, it is against Russia. It is not against you". It is just a collateral thing. But whether collateral intentional it doesn't matter that it is the same. Budapest really intends to change that. And particular since 2014, Hungary has been confronting with viz-a-viz anybody, everybody than before. This is connected to the change of the minister. Mister Szijjártó is a highly different person and background like the previous foreign minister Janos Martonyi. The previous foreign minister Janos Martonyi - who was the foreign minister also during Hungary's EU presidency - was professional career diplomat with four decades long experience impeccable knowledge of French and English. Of course with a heavy Hungarian accent in English - probably also in French, I don't

speak French. But the whole socialisation, the way he spoke, he spoke in highly elevated English - really diplomatic, really professional English - decades long career behind. He was a professional even in the Communist times, so probably the best foreign minister we ever had. Peter Szijjártó, two years older than me, no diplomatic experience at all. Very funny English. The problem is not about the accent. The problem is about the style. And you rarely hear a foreign minister saying things like "dude". You got this. It is possible to learn English. Like Donald Tusk! He spoke no English at the beginning - practically at all. #00:27:50.53#

Rémy Bonny: The current foreign minister in Poland now is also very similar to the one you are describing now. #00:27:51.52#

András Rácz: Yes, but I mean Donald Tusk, well above the age of 50, he made the commitment. I still remember his first speech at the Council: "I will polish my English". And now he managed. #00:28:06.89#

Rémy Bonny: And his accent is even good now. #00:28:06.89#

András Rácz: Accent is nothing. But even style-wise he even speaks good now. Our foreign minister doesn't bother much. He is a very confrontative person and emotional. Impulsive is the good word. #00:28:24.03#

Rémy Bonny: That's also part of Hungary probably. Because when Viktor Orban is coming to the European Parliament, of course he officially can talk in Hungarian, but I mean it would be a nice gesture if he would talk in English. And he speaks English. He studied in Oxford and so on. So he can speak in English. It would be a nice gesture to just talk in English. #00:28:42.82#

András Rácz: Yes, he speaks good English. Sometimes he misses words, sometimes the style is not proper. But it is a good English. No problem with understanding. The reason why he speaks in the European Parliament in Hungarian is because, it is the best understood for the domestic audience. But going back to the change of foreign policy. Foreign policies subordinated to domestic policies - everywhere. No difference here. When Szijjarto was selected to be minister of foreign affairs, style it's a collateral thing. So the change in the style of foreign policy, it is really connected to the minister himself. And Orban doesn't care a lot about the technical tools. How you achieve a goal. The strategy is that we always fight back, but you cannot fight back in an elegant diplomatic way. You cannot express this agreements. You cannot just call your adversary to be a traitor and he jumped on George Soros. #00:29:51.12#

Rémy Bonny: To move on a bit, what kind of Russian intelligence and what fields are they working in at the moment? #00:29:57.29#

András Rácz: When it comes to intelligence, I'm sure you don't expect me detailed answers. Russian intelligence operations in Hungary according to the public available information are not different from Russian intelligence operations like elsewhere. This is an EU and NATO country and this is of primary importance for Russia. They do a lot of information gathering on NATO troop movement, NATO bases here. Because there are NATO-units on Hungarian soil. It's very important - there is the NATO AirLift Wing in the countryside airport of Pépa. Three super heavy transport aircraft - this constitutes a key part of NATO airlift capability. There is a NATO force integration unit and there is also a NATO Centre of Excellence for Combat Medicine. So there are three NATO-units stationed on Hungarian soil. Of course, those ones are of primary interest for Russia. Same is true for the on-going defence modernisation. Plus of course, information related to EU affairs and information related to internal NATO debates, plus domestic political stuff and domestic economics. They don't waste too much energy into soft power. There are only 3 Ruskiy Mir Centres - one in Budapest, one in Szeged and one in Debrecen. Where the universities are. But even those ones are not even overfinanced. So it is nothing like Marine Le Penne receiving 9 million euros. Again, they don't bother much with winning hearts and minds. And the Russian Cultural Institute - if there is a Russian Cultural Institute, those guys are critically underfinanced.

András Rácz: They don't have enough money to properly renovating their building. They offer the best Russian language courses actually. Classical, not intelligence, but inteligentia, like language teachers. I, myself, studied there for a while. We had such a language instructor.. imagine the situation when you are doing your homework, not because you get killed if you don't, but because you don't want to disappoint your teacher. And that was the type of language courses we had. Really amazing. Really motivated combining Soviet systematical approach with Western methodology. Perfect it was. But those guys just don't receive enough money. Russia also has financial constraints. Russian diplomacy has financial constraints. Cultural as well. They just don't give a fuck. I mean... when it comes to Russia's cultural influence. Russia's high culture is very attractive here. Alexandre Ensemble Choir , it is always full house. You know what the Alexandere Orchestra is? #00:33:04.16#

Rémy Bonny: No..#00:33:07.06#

András Rácz: Alexandre Red Army Orchestra. And Russian artists they like coming here. Because they have a full house. They have very loving audience. Alexandre Orchestra suffered an air crash in the end of 2017. #00:33:24.58#

Rémy Bonny: And all of them died, right? #00:33:24.58#

András Rácz: 90 something of them died. The whole first line of the show died. #00:33:29.65#

Rémy Bonny: It was in Syria right? #00:33:30.50#

András Rácz: No, on the way to Syria. Somewhere in the Caucasus. When Alexandre got reassembled, their very first trip abroad was here. I was there on their concert. And you could see on the show that this is still the second line, there were some imperfections. But it was full house in Budapest Arena. And just 97 of them died. And one part of the concert just started to project the pictures of the death ones and you had to see 20.000 Hungarians just standing up. This was something that was reported in the press frontpage. This is something they appreciate. So their high culture here is very welcome. When there is Russian Movie Week, Russian Film Weeks. It is pretty fucking hard to get a ticket. Because people really go there. In this society there is no Russophobia. If you go on the street and talk in Russian, nobody gives a fuck. #00:34:45.05#

Rémy Bonny: Not the same like in Poland? #00:34:46.27#

András Rácz: Exactly. There is a countryside city, the west of lake Balaton. There the spa resort. The largest active thermal lake of the world - used for medical purposes. The majority of the population are Russians. They love to come here. They buy real estate. It is very cheap for them. It's a nice place, good wine, it's a nice climate. Still cheap. No Russophobia. I mean, there are direct flights from Moscow to there. There is a little airport exactly because of that purpose. An old military airport was converted. It is called Fly Balaton. Even the name Balaton is already slavic. Balota means swan. There are direct flights. Russians love to come here. Budapest is I think the fourth most popular destination for Russian tourists. You very often see signs in Russian. Everybody is alright with that. Hungarian population is very pragmatic if it comes to dealing with everyday Russians. We relate on that. Do you have anybody in your team or around you who can read Hungarian? #00:36:02.59#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, there are people. #00:36:05.68#

András Rácz: Then I can just. Write me an e-mail to remind me I will send you detailed surveys about the Hungarian population attitudes, not towards Russia, but towards Russians. When you ask the Hungarians: "Shall we have closer political cooperation?". These are made since 2006. So the support for closer political cooperation is strongly going down. But when you ask Hungarians: "Would you like to have closer economic cooperation?". "Sure, why not." History is what it was. #00:36:41.45#

Rémy Bonny: So not just the politics but also the people are pragmatic? #00:36:43.00#

András Rácz: The people are pragmatic, yes. Because of that we had not everyday contacts with the Russians, with the Soviets. Particularly because after 1956, Soviet Army was stationed on Hungarian soil, but they were not allowed to leave their barracks. Except for the officers. So in Poland and in Czechoslovakia they were marching all around. You could see them every day. Officers were walking on the streets in uniforms. Not here. So average Hungarian had a very limited contacts with them on a daily basis. I mean, in my childhood I remember the very first and last time when I saw Soviet soldiers was when I got - it is compulsory to join the Communist Party and there was kind of a Communist Youth Organisation, it was compulsory - and then we had all joining ceremony and had this red ties for us. But that was the only time when I saw them. So and they are far of age. And it helps. And the ones who make it here, are already middle class. So it is not like drunk sailors crossing the border from Kaliningrad drinking, going to drink to Lithuania and things like this. The Russians who come here belong to the middle-class. At least by definition. So it's... #00:38:03.33#

Rémy Bonny: I want to give you three names. #00:38:06.64#

Rémy Bonny: Which are very much involved also in my research. And I already know that they are also involved in the energy debate and so on. Also on influencing Jobbik and so on. And I would like to know what you know about them? #00:38:20.94#

András Rácz: Sure. #00:38:21.94#

Rémy Bonny: So the first one is Konstantin Malofeev. #00:38:23.76#

András Rácz: Ah. Malofeev is a funny guy. Most of the Russian oligarchs are not christians. Most of them are of jewish origin and some of them are muslims. Malofeev is the only one who is christian and he is the most traditional christian. Malofeev is the one who always has a big cross in his neck and dresses black and very religious. And he is christian. It is part of his political toolbox. He is very serious about supporting all this movements, but he is not doing it because of any kind of devotion. It is a tool. It's a political tool which gives him influence in the Kremlin. Nothing more. If something else gives more influence then he will do something else. Malofeev and network he's running, is a good source for financing for various regional movements. But all together the money is small. And it was Malofeev who critically fucked up Eastern Ukraine. I mean when the operation in Eastern Ukraine was started, it was Malofeev who convinced Putin that, "yes, we could repeat the Crimean scenario". And everything went wrong. #00:39:47.08#

Rémy Bonny: So what's his relations at the moment with the Kremlin then? #00:39:47.08#

András Rácz: This is not something that gets easily forgiven. It is a critical mistake and everybody knows it was Malofeev. So in 2014, he was a lot more influential than he is now. #00:40:02.89#

Rémy Bonny: So next one, Vladimir Yakunin? #00:40:04.91#

András Rácz: Former head of State Railways Company. Really rich. Really really rich. Why do you have Yakunin? That's interesting. #00:40:25.69#

Rémy Bonny: Because Yakunin paid basically the transport tickets for Katalin Novak to the World Congress of Families in 2014. #00:40:32.88#

András Rácz: But that's peanuts. #00:40:36.63#

Rémy Bonny: But I mean it is the organisation behind that. So this organisation which is called the Foundation of Saint Andrews The First Blablabla. This is an organisation who is specifically working on family values and it is chaired by him. #00:40:54.68#

András Rácz: Again, it is a tool to get influence in the Kremlin. Because as the Russian ideology general more and more conservative it's fashionable. It's something that makes you attractive in Kremlin circles. If you invest money into supporting conservative projects. Have you read the book of Peter Pomerantsev? 'Nothing is true, but everything is possible'. That's the best book on Russian information warfare. Pomerantsev describes that inside the Russian elite, the top-elite. They are thinking in kind of projects. And if you have a good project for example set up a World Congress of Families, this gives you influence. It gives you visibility. This gives you some power over the other oligarchs. But this projects last until they last and then they are over. (shows some books) #00:44:10.23#

Rémy Bonny: So the next name I was also going to give you. It is more... He's more only involved in family policies and so on in Russia, but has a lot of contacts with Hungary. His name is Igor Beloborodov. #00:44:19.64#

András Rácz: Never heard of him. #00:44:20.42#

Rémy Bonny: He's working as head of the demography unit of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, so RISI. #00:44:28.96#

András Rácz: Beloborodov? #00:44:28.96#

Rémy Bonny: Igor Beloborodov. The first time he was in Hungary was in 2012, then he was speaking in the Hungarian Parliament on a conference organised by the Hungarian Women's Alliance. Then he was the one who was in 2014 inviting Katalin Novak to the - I mean the World Congress of Families in the end didn't went through, because of the Ukrainian conflict and the Americans, some more American organisations didn't want to go to Russia at that moment. But then the Russians organised something similar which was also frequented by people who are also very much involved in the World Congress of Families and there was a participant list leaked. #00:45:35.72#

András Rácz: Do you have the list? #00:45:35.72#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, I have the list. I can e-mail it to you. It was leaked by Shaltai Boltai - Shaltai Boltai hacked the e-mails around the World Congress of Families and then they found a participant list where Katalin Novak was on. And there is written is that she is invited by Igor Beloborodov and that her ticket got paid by this organisation which is chaired by Vladimir Yakunin. #00:46:02.90#

András Rácz: Usually such events it is the organisers who pay everything. So Katalin Novak gets invited, it is normal that the organisation pays. #00:46:18.69#

Rémy Bonny: Well, it is interesting because there are several organisations written on this list who are paying for several people. Some are also just written down as paying for themselves. #00:46:32.34#

András Rácz: So the list also contains who pays for the ticket. #00:46:34.43#

Rémy Bonny: Yes. #00:46:36.50#

András Rácz: That's good. #00:46:36.50#

Rémy Bonny: And of course, as you say, it is not that abnormal, that the organisation pays for it. But then still... It is not the fact that the organisation pays for it. It is the fact that Vladimir Yakunin is

behind the organisation. And that's the interesting part. Especially because nowadays, Yakunin is living in Berlin. He is chairing this think-tank there. And so on. #00:47:05.72#

András Rácz: This thing about Novak. Where was this congress which Novak attended? #00:47:17.67#

Rémy Bonny: The first one in 2014 was in Moscow. But then she hosted the World Congress of Families in Budapest. This year she is going to Verona, the World Congress of Families. So she already attended several WCF conferences or conference who are aligned to it. Because also Viktor Orban spoke at a conference which is aligned to the World Congress of Families. When the World Congress of Families was organised in Budapest. It was officially two days, but the day before in the same venue, there was also a congress organised which was officially not part of the World Congress of Families, it was in the same venue and then that was where Viktor Orban was speaking. Officially they probably organised this conference, because Viktor Orban himself didn't want to be aligned or seen as a partner of the World Congress of Families. But I mean it is in the same venue and the day after they were organising the World Congress of Families. It is quite obvious. But nowadays, Katalin Novak is openly participating in the World Congress of Families. And the thing also is that she together with, what is his name again. Gregor Prohle? They were the first to ever participate in something that has something to do with the World Congress of Families as a government official within the EU. #00:48:52.47#

András Rácz: In case of both... could you turn it off? #00:48:53.28#

Interview Momentum

Katalin Cseh - Leading candidate for the 2019 European Parliament Elections for Momentum

Dániel Turgonyi - Leader of the LGBTQ-group of Momentum

23/03/2019 - 4:00PM - Momentum HQ, Múzeum körút 13, Budapest, Hungary

Rémy Bonny: So, is it ok that I record the interview? #00:00:04.51#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes. #00:00:05.28#

Katalin Cseh: Yes. #00:00:06.14#

Rémy Bonny: So, maybe to start. Can you both briefly describe what your position is within Momentum? #00:00:14.36#

Katalin Cseh: Ok. So I am an founding member of the Momentum party and currently I am the list leader for the European elections. And I'm also part of the Spitzenteam of the ALDE-party. #00:00:31.74#

Rémy Bonny: Ah ok cool. I didn't know that. #00:00:34.78#

Katalin Cseh: This is just from Yesterday, so... I just got elected there. #00:00:40.51#

Dániel Turgonyi: So, I joined Momentum in April after the election. So I'm quite new to the team, but I am leading the LGBTQ group within the party, so it is like we are helping the whole organisation with the politics. We are reacting to the news, because obviously it happens quite often in the last time that something happens. Right now we are preparing the Pride as well and helping with the elections as well. It more operative what we are doing. #00:01:14.39#

Katalin Cseh: He is organising our LGBTQ-community. #00:01:16.66#

Rémy Bonny: Ok, great. So Momentum describes itself as a very liberal, a very progressive party. What distinguishes Momentum from other parties if it comes to LGBT-rights in Hungary? #00:01:32.29#

Dániel Turgonyi: I think mainly that we are loud about it. Other parties are like: "yeah we are attending Pride event". There are other parties who do not even attend Pride. LMP for example. They do not attend Pride. They do not have that on the agenda at all. We put it in forefront basically that we are attending Pride, that we are doing the whole year around. So it is not like we are only caring about the LGBTQ-community for that week where Pride is in and we are talking about it only that week. But for example in January, I think that it was in January, that the state TV had an ugly show about conversion therapy. I think we were the only ones who acted in a loud. That we went out in the streets. We actually did a performance. Other parties were a bit more reserved about it. They just send a... How do you say that? #00:02:40.16#

Katalin Cseh: A statement. #00:02:40.16#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, a statement and that's it. So I would think that we are more radical about it. That's the difference. #00:02:46.15#

Katalin Cseh: I feel that unfortunate tendency that a lot of Hungarian parties tend to use part of the LGBTQ-community as a political risk and we completely oppose that. For us that is a part of our identity and it is part of those causes we are fighting for. So we are proud to stand with the community and stand up for their interests. And also advocate for policies that directly help them. And we believe that our voters has to be informed about these tendencies in the word and that we

stand for it. And we believe that parties have to play a role in like educating the public. So even though we have a society that is quite conservative in many aspects, we believe that a way for a progressive society has to be paved by actions, bold and strong actions by the parties that can educate the community for a better cause. #00:03:49.83#

Rémy Bonny: Great. So what do you think about for instance MSZP or LMP? They are always saying. They basically say about same-sex marriage: "Yes, we are in favour of same-sex marriage, but you know... there needs to be some time. It needs to be organic process". What is the reaction of Momentum to such a statement? #00:04:09.05#

Katalin Cseh: Don't believe that they are really determined for these changes to happen in society. I suppose that they are also aware that a part of their voters are progressive, so they need these very stubble statements every now and then. But I believe that the part that is dedicated to fight for the LGBTQ-community. This fight is not done with warfare that this parties use. So I welcome their openness, but I would also encourage them to join the fight more boldly with us. #00:04:56.17#

Dániel Turgonyi: It is hard to say anything about them really. Because they are basically the ones who attend Pride once a year and that's it. #00:05:08.62#

Rémy Bonny: Would you say that they are avoiding the topic? #00:05:09.97#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yeah. And I would... I think it is a dangerous thing to do now. Because obviously in the last ten years basically, well 9... whatever. The perception of the public has not really been changing. It hasn't been evolving as they are wishing. It hasn't been going like... We have a few amounts of polls about the number of people who support same-sex marriage. And it is quite constant in the last five years. So it hasn't been changing it all. I doesn't fit the European, the international trends at all. It is stagnating. #00:05:58.68#

Rémy Bonny: Isn't that a regional trend? #00:06:00.88#

Dániel Turgonyi: I wouldn't necessarily say the same for instance about the Czech Republic. #00:06:07.89#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, but the Czech Republic has always been... #00:06:09.82#

Dániel Turgonyi: I know. I know. #00:06:13.27#

Katalin Cseh: But actually we shouldn't compare ourselves with those countries who are not doing progress. Why do we not compare ourselves to countries who for instance Ireland introduced same-sex marriage. They used to be a very conservative country. We shouldn't we aim higher? This is the goal for changing something. #00:06:28.72#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, exactly. #00:06:28.72#

Rémy Bonny: There is some research showing... especially if you do research on the first countries who implemented same-sex marriage - Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium - at that moment... more or less there was a 50% majority, but I mean in comparison with nowadays the people who are in favour of same-sex marriage, there's a huge bigger amount of people. And some research has indeed been showing that when you implement these laws, you also make your people more progressive. #00:06:59.98#

Katalin Cseh: Because, people see that those things happen. And it does not affect their lives. It's just that some people are allowed to live life as they want to. You give rights to a group of people and you are not taking away anything from the others. It is like the share-benefit of the society. And when these laws are implemented people realise: "Well yeah, it is not a big thing". Why shouldn't they? #00:07:19.37#

Dániel Turgonyi: It doesn't affect people. I think that's the mentality. Once it is passed: "it doesn't bother me". Before that, it is a loud mass everywhere. #00:07:30.42#

Rémy Bonny: So, there has been a lot of fuzz in the last month more or less about the new family policy plan here in Hungary. Would you describe it as homophobic? #00:07:40.49#

Dániel Turgonyi: You mean the governments, right? The government's policy? #00:07:48.88#

Rémy Bonny: Yeah. #00:07:49.82#

Dániel Turgonyi: It is hard to say because it's not like that staunchly openly homophobic thing that they usually do. It's not inclusive. If we are counting something that is not inclusive as homophobic, then 100% yes. I would say that it doesn't help the community at all. Actually, not it doesn't even help. It actually hinders the economic progress for people like myself. Because obviously the real estate are going to go even higher. I'm not necessarily going to be able to afford to buy my own home and these are not targetting my group. And it is not helping me. It's like a bit. It is discrimination. But in a nice packaged way. #00:08:50.02#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I agree. #00:08:56.57#

Dániel Turgonyi: I could actually add that the best way to show that this is homophobic plan is by watching the Russian television. I can send it afterwards to you. It is amazing. The Russian television, the main news channel in Russia, they were talking for ten minutes about the new family policy plan in Hungary. I mean why the fuck would the Russian television ever be interested in talking for ten minutes on like prime time about the Hungarian policy, well nobody know. But they... the first five minutes is just describing what the policy plan is, they go to a certain family here in Hungary, a large family. They show what the problems are. It looks all fine. But then the reporter takes a plane to Sweden. And in Sweden is a bad example of family policy planning and Hungary is the good one apparently. And one of the first things they are showing is that the whole demography is going backwards, it is declining. Just because of: and then they show a lesbian couple. So... #00:09:56.45#

Katalin Cseh: Well, yes. This policy certainly supports a certain family model - that is in line with their ideology. So it is also excluding people for instance who are single mothers or like people who aren't married - also heterosexual couples who are not married. So it is very ideological filled. This is not an aggressive policy - as Daniel mentioned - compared to like previous ones. For a group that is gonna, yes it helps certain number of people. But there are those groups who they never care about. It is not about that they didn't even try to compensate these groups in other ways. So they just exclude them from society as if they wouldn't exist. (W)#00:10:48.18#

Katalin Cseh: And that's what I feel about it mostly. It's not that it is an active act of discrimination. Not discrimination, it is not an active act of homophobia. But it is more like the subtle way that "you are not one of us". #00:11:08.73#

Rémy Bonny: So you are participating as a leading candidate of Momentum in the European elections. What are your main plans to represent Hungary if you are going to be elected in the European Parliament after 26th of May?#00:11:21.93#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I believe that the biggest problem that we have to face now is that Hungary is using European tax payers money to fund their own consolidation of power, to fund corruption, to misuse those funds that are supposed to be used for I don't know building up a normal country. And a lot of these funds they advocate against the European Union. So we have to be more strict on the rule of law guarantees if it comes to accepting European money. And also that European oversight is needed for the planning of these funds that's why our party advocates for Hungary to join the European Prosecutor's Office. We feel that there is nothing of oversight if it comes to government spending from European money. And I think that the European Union overlooks the

fact that there is a member country that is constantly trembling on human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of media. That works against equality within the community. They actively try to undermine the European project and yet they still receive money from them that helps to keep Viktor Orban in power. So I will work providing more European guarantees for Hungarian citizens. #00:13:04.06#

Rémy Bonny: Of course, you are going to be member of ALDE. But what do you think about the sanctions of the EPP against Fidesz? #00:13:09.02#

Katalin Cseh: I feel that the European Peoples Party made a great mistake. So I feel it ridiculous that regardless of what happens in the past nine years, the European Peoples Party still wasn't able to finally make a stand on the side of European values and exclude Fidesz. I have no idea how those voters feel who vote for like a moderate christian-democratic party in let's say Sweden, who aren't able to implement their own political values in their own political family. So for Viktor Orban that was definitely a loss at the European level. It was a blow for him. But they could have knocked him out and they missed this opportunity. It is very visible that Orban only understand from force. And all the European Union is able to exercise force over him and this was this like golden moment. And the European Peoples Party chose they own political interest compared to European values. I think that's a great mistake. #00:14:16.96#

Rémy Bonny: One of the previous people I interviewed - it was somebody from Energiaklub - her statement was basically that the EPP enjoys having Orban in their rangs. Because he is selling a message that they would also like to sell - I'm not necessarily agreeing with that myself - that they would like to sell but they can't sell domestically. So the message of racism... #00:14:50.66#

Katalin Cseh: Well, if that is true, I would be very uncomfortable if I was mister Weber. I believe when it comes to voting for him after the elections I think that a lot political groups will be in doubts whether to support or give them votes who actively this kind of misconducts in their own result. If that is true what this person at the Energiaklub mentions, that's even worse. It is clear that the European Peoples Party does not care about European values. And I couldn't support a spitzenkandidat who shares this views. #00:15:37.39#

Rémy Bonny: So, coming back to LGBT-issues. If you are in the European Parliament - which kind of things would you like to vote on if it comes to LGBT-issues? #00:15:48.91#

Katalin Cseh: Well I think discrimination. #00:15:52.75#

Rémy Bonny: Currently you still don't have an anti-discrimination legislation in Hungary? #00:15:56.29#

Katalin Cseh: I'm not aware of. #00:16:00.33#

Dániel Turgonyi: I think there is, but it is the usual thing that it is not enforces. So the anti-discrimination laws are quite highly enshrined in the base law. In the constitution, yeah. And there has been court decision that even gender identity and sexual orientation has to be included in those protections. But it is all theoretical I wouldn't say that it is actually happening. So the execution of the law is not as it is written. #00:16:41.67#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I believe that you want to make the European Union like really a community of values - strong entity that people can relate to and people feel that European Union is important in their lives then the EU has to change. We shouldn't only be this economic community, where we trade and we travel. But you have to enforce those values that are not being enforced Today. So if I would be elected, I would stand up against every legislation that would show that European people are actually second-right citizens in their country. I couldn't support any legislation and I would actively advocate against those for comparison measure to guarantee the freedom of expression, the freedom of personal life for every single European citizen - regardless of their background,

regardless of their orientation. So we should be equals in terms of marriage. In terms of speech, public conduct. In any way. So, we have to actively stand up for it as a community. #00:17:46.51#

Rémy Bonny: What do you find about I would call it a more Russophilic discourse of Viktor Orban more and more? I mean, I remember his first speech about it. It was given somewhere in Transcarpathia, in Romania, where he literally referred to Vladimir Putin as a good example of a democracy, as an illiberal democracy. What do you find about this more and more russophilian discourse? #00:18:12.04#

Katalin Cseh: So, I am very uncomfortable that we are the trojan horse of Vladimir Putin within the EU and NATO. Some people want to quit the EU. I personally I don't agree with that notion. Orban likes to be this planted entity within the EU. So we can trade information out for Russians and the way back. He enjoys this role. But this makes us extremely marginalised within the community. We have to choose which side we stand on. We stand on the side of the West, of the EU, of the NATO-alliance, or if we stand on the side of Russia and China and all this problematic countries. And I think if somebody... that we Hungarians now how it feels to be closely tied to Russia. And my grandfather personally... He was shot by Russian militants when the occupation happened. I can't believe that we are going that direction once more and we need to stand up against that. Because that's something we were fighting against for decades and he is bringing it back. What do you think? #00:19:31.70#

Dániel Turgonyi: It's really hard to add anything there. It is not just some - as a gay person - it is not just uncomfortable. Sometimes it is even scary. You think about the laws in Russia, the consequences of holding a hand. You don't see people holding hands here either. And the violence in Russia, about how he basically doesn't care about what's happening in Chechnya, it's... I think it is even worse. #00:20:02.41#

Rémy Bonny: Which is part of Russia also. #00:20:02.41#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, exactly. So, the thing that he thinks of Putin as a great example is on a personal level it is sometimes even scary. #00:20:22.56#

Rémy Bonny: Do you have the feeling that Orban or the Orban government, Katalin Novak, and so on is copying legislation from Russia in regard to LGBT-rights? #00:20:34.97#

Dániel Turgonyi: Well, there has been a proposal by Mi Hazán Mozgalom in the parliament that in the education it cannot be... #00:20:46.56#

Rémy Bonny: The one that is going on at the moment? #00:20:46.56#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, exactly it is going on at the moment. I'm not... it's a hope as well. I think it is not going to be passed. Because Fidesz has always been so cautious about not being that openly homophobic. It was always left for Jobbik. Now, it feels that that task is done by Mi Hazán Mozgalom instead. And they are like trying to do this passive discriminatory things that they do. For example with the family package that they just enacted. And not been that open about their homophobia. They have their comments. They have their homophobic comments. But they haven't really done anything on legislative level yet. #00:21:43.60#

Rémy Bonny: Except for changing the constitution. #00:21:44.85#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, exactly. But even when they try... not repeal the... #00:21:54.78#

Rémy Bonny: Registered partnerships? #00:21:54.78#

Dániel Turgonyi: But they try to modify it, there was an outcry about it. And they immediately surrendered about it. I don't know. I don't think it is going to pass. I don't think they are going to

take an active stance against it. Because when this whole thing that trembles with MTVA happened with the spot about conversion therapy. Even they were not supporting it vocally. I'm pretty sure that was a good thing to do. But openly they were not supporting it. If they were supporting it my opinion would be quite different about this proposition in the parliament. But I'm not sure that it is going to pass. Not right now - for sure. #00:22:38.59#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I think that the difference is. I agree with you that they probably would advocate very open and blatant measures, but we already have certain let's say changes in place that affect some in some groups. But it affect them very heavily - for instance - I suppose you know more about that than I do. But transgender people aren't legally allowed anymore to change their names. #00:23:07.42#

Dániel Turgonyi: They are, but the ministry doesn't process those requests. Because they say it's against GDPR. So they found a loophole - sorry for my French - bullshit loophole and they are not issuing any name or sex change at the moment. By law they are required to do so, but they are saying it's not GDPR compatible the whole process, so we are not doing it at the moment. So right now, you cannot legally change your sex in Hungary. You can still change your name for example. I changed my name a few years ago. But that's a completely thing ago. #00:23:45.19#

Katalin Cseh: But could you change it to... If you would want to change sex? #00:23:48.68#

Dániel Turgonyi: As well? #00:23:48.68#

Katalin Cseh: Yes. #00:23:48.68#

Dániel Turgonyi: No. Then ... #00:23:51.16#

Katalin Cseh: Well, that doesn't really help trans people I think. #00:23:51.16#

Rémy Bonny: How is it not compatible with... I mean if you can change your name, how is changing your sex not compatible with GDPR? #00:24:00.77#

Dániel Turgonyi: I know, it is a false reasoning. They just did it so they can block it. And because trans people are always more marginalised than gay people. Even more so in Hungary. There hasn't been really a discussion about it. It just happened. Nobody even cared about it even within the community people didn't really care. I know - as a member of community - many gay people doesn't even care about trans rights. #00:24:33.52#

Rémy Bonny: It is also in Western Europe like this. So, then... What was my question again. Yeah, for instance transgender people. Let's continue a bit on this. One of the leaders of the feminist movements here for instance said that they want to talk about transgender movements. Do you think that this anti-transgenderism is also part of the anti-gender movement somehow? Because there is a whole anti-gender movement, they don't specifically use the word transgender, but I mean, basically the movement is about "everybody needs to be the same. There are no men and women anymore". #00:25:16.48#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, it amplifies the whole thing. We have... I don't know. I can count on my hands how many trans members we have. They are not very vocal about. Even within the party, because they feel, not that they don't feel home or comfortable with us. Because this is a safe community - for sure - but the bigger picture: like running in an election. That pretty... that's nothing that you can imagine. It's nothing like running in an election as a gay person. It is not something you can imagine right now and a trans person there is like there is whole new level of being an outcast. And I think that the whole... well, policy of this gender hatred that the government is doing right now, is just amplifying on a whole new level. I don't think necessarily that this is the focus of it. But the focus is just we are rejecting this liberal ideas that there is. Because that's more 'sellable' to their voter-base. More so than "we are hating transgender people". Because those voters doesn't

really... I'm pretty sure that they probably don't even know what transgender people mean to begin with. But to begin this liberal ideas at the same time signal that transgender people are totally rejected by us is like a double thing for them - I think. #00:26:41.79#

Katalin Cseh: This comes back to the discussion we had earlier, is that they all equally recognise this traditional family model they champion. So, they typically anybody that is outside this heterosexual married couple with children kind of image. They are left out of the map. And it's not only that they do not support this groupings, but they amplify that they are the only normal people. And of course this abnormality and level of acceptance within the society even lessons when you see, they got further from this model. Even if you are like single at like the age of 45. But if you are a transgender for instance, you are so far away from that community that they want to support. That you have basically no rights based upon that. Nobody cares about this people, because this is... I think the blueprint of the Fidesz governance is that they only care about those who might vote for them. If somebody is poor, if somebody is rural, not very educated, or if they let's say belong to a community which is not very numerous and quite far away from Budapest, nobody cares about them. Even when they are citizens, they pay taxes, they should have the same rights as other people. Nobody care. Because their votes doesn't count for Fidesz. #00:28:12.82#

Rémy Bonny: Then next week, Katalin Novak - maybe you also heard it in the news -. Katalin Novak is going to this conference in Verona, Italy. It is called the World Congress of Families, it is basically a homophobic organisation. I mean, it is a homophobic organisation, they even say it themselves - so it is. Yeah, the government is not explicitly referring all the time to homosexuals, they are not changing their laws, but then Katalin Novak is representing the Hungarian government at the most homophobic organisation in the world. #00:28:43.00#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I mean they actively share big sides on that. For instance, she was also in the United States a few days ago I think. #00:28:53.19#

Rémy Bonny: Yes, in Washington. #00:28:53.19#

Katalin Cseh: Yeah, in Washington. And they had this family policy conference with this like hardcore republicans, so they actively pick sides. They are on the side extremely conservative groupings. That already show their true orientation. (phone rings) I'm sorry about it. #00:29:17.77#

Rémy Bonny: In the meantime, I'm going to ask a question about the LGBT-group. How would you describe the activities of the LGBT-group in Momentum? #00:29:25.30#

Dániel Turgonyi: Well, there are several things that we do and we need to do. For example, on a need basis we are helping with the specific politics. We are helping designing them. That's one part of the job. The other thing is that we are responsible for reacting to those comments, those events. That's always done by us. So that's the group responsibility basically. That we react to every homophobic thing that happens in the country. Because it is like quite highly enshrined that Momentum stands for LGBTQ+ rights. #00:30:06.02#

Katalin Cseh: Yes, you did this survey right? #00:30:06.02#

Dániel Turgonyi: We did the survey as well. At the same time obviously there is a thing that we are having elections. So we are trying to convey that message as well to the people. Not just to LGBT-people, but to all people that we have a different vision and we have a different vision of Hungary. We have a different vision of Europe. And we are trying to convey that message as well for LGBT-people as well so it reaches them. So it is not like that we are doing everything in the world obviously, but we are trying to normalise stuff as well. So for example the Budapest Programme just came out - the local programme for Budapest. And the graphics, it's nothing big, it is just subtle, on the graphics there is lesbian couples with children. There are gay couple with children. You probably didn't know that. It is the working from one of the members of the group. #00:31:05.23#

Katalin Cseh: Ok. Great. #00:31:05.23#

Dániel Turgonyi: So it is those little things that, you know, that normalise this stuff. This is normal and this how we envisioning the future. So basically that's what we are doing. #00:31:23.46#

Rémy Bonny: Yeah, there is already this debate with Frans Timmermans coming here, you feel that there is becoming more and more a security... I mean there are certain threats towards the opposition organised by the government. Do you feel threatened yourself? Do you feel that the government is monitoring your office? #00:31:47.57#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I would for sure feel more unsafe if I would be in an NGO. So I think that Orban is really trying hard to maintain the facade of a functioning democracy. They say they wouldn't openly go after politicians for instance, I don't know, I can't really imagine somebody getting beaten up. Or openly harass. We are under an extreme pressure from the government side, so for instance they withheld our state money. We are like eligible for state funding, because of our election results. And they withheld this money that was essential to our day-to-day operations for more than a half year. Just like bureaucratic barriers. And now it's... it happened in the past few weeks. They didn't want to register us for the European elections. Because... whatever. We changed our headquarters like a year ago. And they still didn't like refresh the data in every database they have. So the official jurus paper say that our office is here, but some sub-register that they use for approving parties for European elections is saying our old HQ. So that's something that our lawyers were busy with for two weeks to get us properly registered. So this kind of barriers we have to comply with. But to illustrate the system currently is in Hungary, is that there was an NGO who were very active with helping minorities and they fell under this new NGO law barrier. So they registered themselves as a political party. They don't want to run at the elections - at all. But they can only continue their operations in the form of a political party and not as an NGO anymore. This is absurd. #00:33:43.78#

Dániel Turgonyi: I agree with Katalin. If I was working for an NGO, I would definitely be more scared about it, because I've been working for an NGO. I've been working for Pride. And that wasn't as safe... I mean it was safe from a physical perspective, but from my existential standpoint if I was working back then. Especially, that was a fun story, I was batted by the police during that time. Because my step-father was working with the police. He was handling pretty high classification documents, so the whole family had to be batted. And I was working for Pride at the very moment. My mother was asking: "Do you think that is gonna be a problem for yourself?". And I answered: "I don't know. But honestly, I don't care". This is a problem from them. I was not going to care about it. I'm not sure if it was, it would be the same outcome like right now. It wasn't a problem back then. I'm not sure if it wouldn't be a problem right now. Because the whole rhetoric against NGOs has been stepped up in the last three years by a lot. So right now, it is even more, how to say that, more dangerous, more risky, more threatening. That's the word. #00:35:08.53#

Katalin Cseh: Yes, more threatening. #00:35:08.53#

Dániel Turgonyi: So yeah. #00:35:13.48#

Rémy Bonny: And what are the practises? I mean, for instance I heard from a journalist here, that he found bugs in his appartement and so on. Is this the same thing that is going on with NGOs? Are they hacking their computers? #00:35:29.77#

Katalin Cseh: Yes, there was a hack. Which NGO? Transparency or somebody was hacked. Yes there were instances. They didn't take cyber security so seriously previously. Because obviously it was a medium-sized Hungarian NGO... #00:35:49.03#

Dániel Turgonyi: Who would have thought. #00:35:49.03#

Katalin Cseh: Yeah, who would have thought. I mean there were instances. I pretty sure that there is a monitoring going on. But I couldn't... #00:36:00.44#

Rémy Bonny: Also for LGBT-people? #00:36:00.44#

Katalin Cseh: What? #00:36:02.13#

Rémy Bonny: Is there also a monitoring on LGBT-people? #00:36:04.59#

Katalin Cseh: You mean like personally? #00:36:07.07#

Rémy Bonny: Personally. #00:36:07.07#

Katalin Cseh: I don't really think so. I don't want to speak in your name. #00:36:14.80#

Dániel Turgonyi: I don't think so either. #00:36:14.80#

Katalin Cseh: It's more against those NGOs who have an organisation who is active on a field that the government... that goes against the government values or interest. #00:36:28.30#

Dániel Turgonyi: So for example, monitoring Pride. For sure. They are for sure monitoring Pride. Monitoring me as an LGBT individual? Not so sure. Monitoring me as a Momentum member and leading the LGBTQ group? Maybe, but I'm not convinced. I'm not sure about that. Because they don't really have reason for it. I mean apart from paranoia they don't really have a reason for that. I mean at this stage and hopefully it stays like this. #00:36:59.47#

Katalin Cseh: Yes, let's hope it stays like this. #00:36:59.47#

Rémy Bonny: If you have an intelligence service which is monitoring, you also have to have this knowledge within your intelligence service. So my next question is: Where do they get the knowledge from? Because I mean, ok it is Hungary. It is not like they have the equipment like the CIA has. They need to get some support from somewhere? #00:37:08.98#

Katalin Cseh: I'm honestly not an expert on this. I can't really say. You mean like. It's quite obvious what organisation does what and where their offices are. They are in the public register. So it can be Google, but apart from that. But apart from that I don't really know how security services work. I know there's been an increased risk stage, well that allows the government to monitor people more strictly. It's been upheld since the 2015 migration crisis. So they had like increased mandates to practise surveillance. But I really don't know any more details. #00:38:21.08#

Dániel Turgonyi: Neither do I about these details. But quite sure it is very easy to monitor people. It is not very hard to hack a computer. Especially like, in Hungary, where the mindfulness about it is like non-existent. There aren't any previous cases that would say, ok we really secure about your online data. I think there are opportunities. I'm not an expert. I just happen to know that it would be very very easy to monitor anybody really. #00:38:57.40#

Rémy Bonny: Coming back to family policy planning. Do you have the feeling that the Hungarian government is basing their policies on another country or is just that they don't need any influences on that? #00:39:10.77#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I think they try to create their own let's say their own position within the European Union. I'm quite sure they are falling back on like conservative ideas from the past century in a way. So they are actively try to boost the birthrate, so this is their main focus with all this policies. So there is this thing we need to have more children, so we need less migrants. The reality behind that is that in this Hungary has a declining population. And this was chosen to be one of the main topics. I am sure that they are picking up ideas from here or there, but I think they want

to create their own way. Which is very dangerous in the EU, because a lot of countries could follow it. If it would be a model which was existing before. But if they take Orban as a role model, that is something that we should stop at the European level. #00:40:18.69#

Dániel Turgonyi: I'm not sure that they are taking over existing models. Probably they have taken this from here and this from there. This is working. It works in a liberal scheme as well. So for example we see something that is going right in Sweden, like the father-leave during the pregnancy. #00:40:37.93#

Katalin Cseh: The paternity. #00:40:37.93#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, the paternity, exactly. I had it in Swedish, but not in English. So those things, we are always by those ideas as well. So I guess it works both ways. I'm not sure if the whole package was imported from somewhere. Because probably we would have heard about it. It was going to be like: "it has been done by the Russians, Chinese, ...". #00:41:07.06#

Katalin Cseh: Well, I think in very few countries that the country has so much power on their own to be able to spend this massive amount of money only on family planning. I generally think that supporting families is a good thing. You know, in generalist it is ok to help people financially to start their life's - of course it should be more inclusive whatever. But I think that's an extreme amount of money that they are pouring in this cause. And they are neglecting all sort of other areas that would not a lot of support - health care for instance, education -. There should be incentives for that. That clearly shows that there is an imbalance in the state. So they can do whatever they want and they can experiment with like billions of euros, because there is no counterpower. And I think that's why it unique. In other countries there would be an negotiation. "So does it make sense to subsidise people by a new car? Or it doesn't" And they don't have to debate with anybody, so that's why it is like so big. #00:42:09.89#

Rémy Bonny: Ok maybe to end the interview. What do you expect from the European election campaign? #00:42:16.80#

Katalin Cseh: Well, personally I am positive that we can send an elected representative to the European Parliament. And on the European level I expect big changes. I expect the reduction of power from the EPP and the social-democrats. And I hope that ALDE together with our friends from France and from other countries, we can grow in numbers. We even have like realistic chances to be close to be the second biggest group in the EP. And well, we think about a European renewal, we should like shake things up and if everything stays the same Europe will continue with decline and the populist will rise again. So this is the stake for the European elections: to have new power, to elect new people. #00:43:00.46#

Rémy Bonny: And don't you fear that the biggest group is going to be the conservatives? #00:43:04.23#

Katalin Cseh: I'm quite sure that they are going to be the biggest group. But you know the EP is not Hungary, so they have to bargain with other group and if the progressives, and the liberals increase in numbers then they can be a counter-power. Then we can be improve the message or policies for the better - compared to what we can do now. We can stop legislation that we don't want and that is how it should go I think. #00:43:34.03#

Dániel Turgonyi: Katalin focussed on the European expectations, for me it's about more local, because we have yet another election coming up in October. It is going to be the local elections. I expect and hope, but mainly hope, but that hope is transferred into wishful thinking and expectations, that it is going to shake up things as well and that it is going to set the stage for the local elections. Because obviously I cannot talk on behalf of the whole country, I know most things about the district I'm a member of. About the district that I live in and the district here, because that is two different things. Budapest itself, so I cannot talk on behalf of the whole country. I expect

things to be shaken up - especially in Budapest. That there is going to be an obvious path for everyone to see for October: "Ok we can shake things up and change the whole system". And that's going to be a huge partner in three years time when the next election... #00:44:42.82#

Rémy Bonny: Is there a chance that in Budapest the current mayor will be withdrawn? #00:44:46.83#

Katalin Cseh: I think there is a fair chance for it. We have like an opposition primary going on right now and we will have the opposition candidate selection by June. Right? #00:44:55.42#

Dániel Turgonyi: Yes, after the election. #00:44:55.42#

Katalin Cseh: So, the current polls show that if there is like one opposition candidate standing against Fidesz, then Fidesz can be beaten. And this is our plan for the entire country. To select one candidate we are also as Momentum, we are part of that effort. I'm very hopeful that Budapest can be taken back. #00:45:19.23#

Dániel Turgonyi: And the major cities as well. #00:45:19.23#

Katalin Cseh: And the major cities as well. #00:45:20.93#

Dániel Turgonyi: And that's where the whole thing goes first. Because obviously we cannot go to the smallest village and change things. #00:45:29.13#

Katalin Cseh: Not yet. #00:45:29.13#

Dániel Turgonyi: Not yet. But it has to be an example. And if the example is given to the people. Then I'm pretty sure, if that's the good example that's the example that they expect, the chances will grow significantly. #00:45:49.80#

Rémy Bonny: Let's stop the interview. And stop the recording. #00:45:54.20#

Letter of Gratitude Katalin Novak to Igor Beloborodov



MINISTRY OF HUMAN CAPACITIES

Iktatószám: 56983/2015/CSALADHAT

Mr. Igor Beloborodov
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Russian Institut for Strategic Studies

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December 2015

Subject: Budapest Demographic Forum 5-6 November 2015

Dear Mr. Beloborodov,

On behalf of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary I would like to express our gratitude for your kind attendance at the Budapest Demographic Forum. Your valuable thoughts, your presentation, your comments have made our event more substantive and rich.

With Your presence you as well have proclaimed that we need to support and strengthen families in order to achieve the lasting demographic change Europe needs.

I hope the Forum provided a good opportunity for you to share experiences and to learn about Hungary's and the other participating Member States', international experts' position on demographic questions.

Let me inform you that we are preparing a publication on the Budapest Demographic Forum. We would like to display your presentation in it as well and will contact you for the details soon.

I thank you in advance for your participation and kind cooperation.

Best Regards,



Katalin Novák
Mrs. Katalin Novák

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Extract Excel File Participant List 2014 International Forum For Large Family and Future of Humanity in Moscow, Sept 10-11, 2014

Name	Country	Position	Recommended by	Status	Topic	Plane Ticket
Katalin Veresné Novák	Hungary	Minister of State for Family Affairs of Hungary	I. Beloborodov	Confirmed		Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called

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