



Development of Democracy in the Visegrád Countries after the Democratic transformation

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1. Introduction

The former authoritarian regimes strived to oppress individualism. All walks of life were dominated by the state. *“At all levels a dominating role was fulfilled by the Communist Party, which was organized in close congruence with the structure of state and society”* (Roe 1995:278). The doctrine of state socialism defined individuals’ lives, opportunities and way of thinking. This study examines what traces of state socialism are left in the Visegrád Countries after the democratic transformation. The question it poses is whether the freedom brought about after the democratic transformation has caused fundamental changes in the attitude to democracy. The research is focused on the Visegrád Countries; however, the analysis also includes Austria (and Western Germany in some instances). The latter is present in the analysis as a reference point so that the new democracies of the Visegrád Group can be compared to a country with longer democratic traditions.

The objective of the study is to examine how the democratic structures of the Visegrád Countries have changed in the last quarter of a century, and it analyses democracy in different dimensions. This study points out that in addition to institutionalization, democratization also includes the stabilization of democratic values.

The study uses two methods of democracy analyses: expert analyses on the one hand, and analyses based on interviews with citizens on the other hand. The expert analyses mentioned first consider the degree of corruption, the prevalence of human rights, the mutual constraints and political participation among other things. This method is efficient in the case of large international comparative studies which try to capture the institutionalization of democracy. However, experts’ opinions do not include the opinions of the people. This shortcoming is remedied by the second applied method – interviews with citizens – which draws conclusions about the state of democracy with the help of international researches. This latter method makes it possible to understand how citizens themselves think about the process of democratization. Studying it is important because democracy requires active civil

participation, thus a democracy can only be considered stable if its citizens identify with certain democratic values.

2. Paradigmatic Evaluation of the Democratization of the Visegrád Countries

During the last decades, several scientific works have discussed how the democratization process of the ex-communist countries developed following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Attila Ágh (2013) distinguishes three generation debates related to this. All of these paradigmatically showed the way for the researches and determined the topic of interest.

The First debate that appeared was about consolidation, this topic was typical of the whole of the '90s. This paradigm emphasised the different democratization processes of the different countries. Relying upon these findings, the new member states, the Visegrád Countries among them, were at the beginning of a dynamic process, which was going to end in full democratic consolidation. Researchers considered the then current state of these countries transitional, and they typically had a very optimistic attitude towards the future. On the other hand, they thought that the countries in the eastern part of the region (the Ukraine was among them) managed to create only semi-democratic systems.

During the first generation debate, researchers mostly dealt with the institutionalization of democracy. The second generation debates introduced new dimensions into the analyses. More complex researches were published, which already included social and political indicators as well. A central idea of the analyses made during this period was the term hybrid democracy, which described the state between the democratic and authoritarian systems. This paradigm was imbued with a high degree of disappointment, since the consolidation failed to be fully realized even in the Visegrád Countries. By then Dahrendorf's famous paradox, which distinguishes three separate and non-simultaneous processes seemed to have been

fulfilled. “It will take six months to reform the political systems, six years to change the economic systems, and sixty years to effect a revolution in the peoples' hearts and minds.” (Dahrendorf 1990) Following the relatively fast transformation of the political and economic systems, the transformation of the society continued to be delayed in the Visegrád Countries, and then seemed to fail totally in the 2000s. Widespread dissatisfaction with democracy could be seen from the 2000s on, which undermined the support for democracy as well. In the course of the second generation debate, they talked about the decline of the Visegrád Countries, although there remained a sharp line between the opinions about these countries and those of the eastern region. (Rupnik, 2007)

The third generation debate had developed by the end of the 2000s. This period was characterised by a dialogue about the quality of democracy. It became widespread that the depth of democracy was measured by complicated indicators created by an international system of institutions. The defencelessness of the Visegrád Countries also emerged in these years (e.g.: influence of the economic crisis and the peripheral role in international politics), which had a negative effect on the process of democratization as well. (Ágh 2013)

3. Expert Opinions (Democracy Evaluation of International Institutions)

Several expert indexes exist that measure the quality of democracy in different dimensions. The Freedom House Index and the Democracy Barometer will be used of them in my analysis. I can draw conclusions with the help of the former index about the last sixteen years; the latter index published data from 1989 to 2012 (however, no data are provided about Slovakia in certain dimensions).

In sum, it may be said on the basis of expert opinions that successful democratization took part in the Visegrád Countries compared to the other countries of the region; however, they are still far behind the western countries. Furthermore, sharp

differences can be seen between the Visegrád Countries. The Czech Republic and Poland perform better in most dimensions in the region, while Slovakia and Hungary have drifted towards the middle of the list.

The average of the Visegrád Countries followed an upturned U line, but the direction of the changes is not homogenous within the Visegrád Countries. For example, while opinions about democracy have rather improved in the Czech Republic in the last ten years, a decline can be witnessed in Hungary.

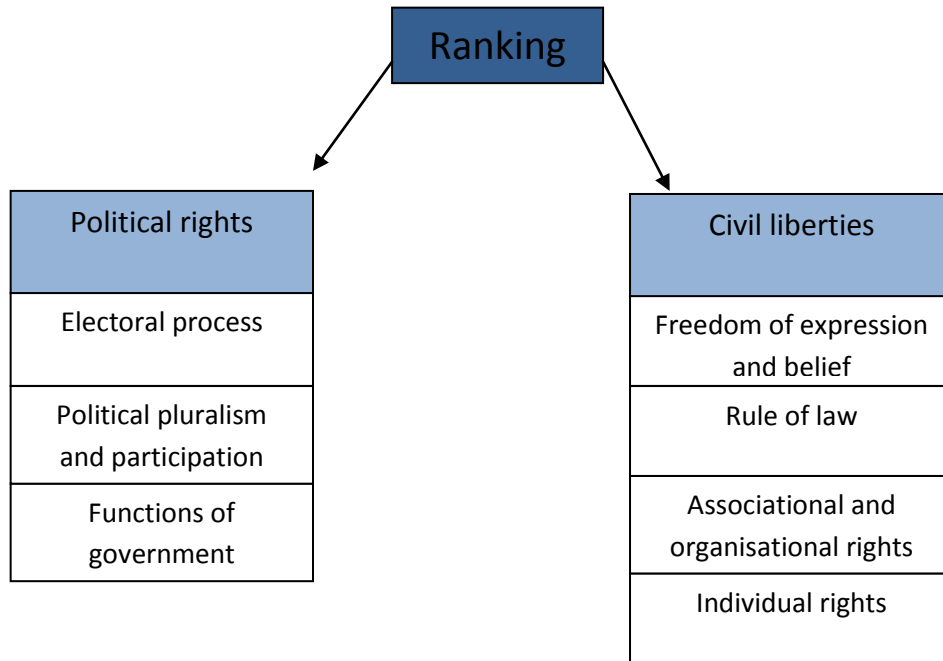
3.1. Freedom House Index

3.1.1. Description of the Index

The objective of the Freedom House Index is to provide a comparative instrument for the examination of the differences across time and space. It has published a report about the democratization process and its changes since 1972. Data have been provided about the Visegrád Countries since 1998.

Their latest 2013 report includes comprehensive analyses of 195 countries. These analyses also include detailed descriptions and rankings. Political rights and civil liberties are rated during the ranking process. Political rights include three large categories: electoral process, political pluralism and participation and functions of government. The civil liberties include four sub-categories: freedom of expression and belief, rule of law, associational and organisational rights and personal autonomy and individual rights.

Figure 1: Evaluation Criteria of Freedom House



The individual countries are rated on a scale of 1 to 7 as regards political rights and civil liberties, and the lower the value the country receives, the more democratic it is considered. The aggregate democracy rating is obtained as the average of political and civil liberties, which is an overall index of the state of a country. If this figure is between 1.0 and 2,99, we have a consolidated democracy, between 3 and 3,99 a semi-consolidated democracy, between 4 and 4.99 a hybrid regime, between 5 and 5.99 a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime and finally between 6 and 7 an authoritarian regime. The results are calculated through a multi-phase process, in which local experts and scientists also participate in addition to the internal staff of Freedom House.

3.1.2. Presentation of the Results

On the basis of the 2013 index, all of the Visegrád Countries are considered consolidated democracies. Table 1 presents the ratings of the Visegrád Countries and the Ukraine achieved in 2013. The latter was considered a hybrid regime in this period (Walker and Kořaczowska 2013: 12). On the basis of the Freedom House ratings, for the time being, Poland is considered the most democratic of the Visegrád Countries, closely followed by the Czech Republic, then Slovakia, and Hungary brings up the rear.

Table 1: Democracy Ratings of Freedom House in 2012

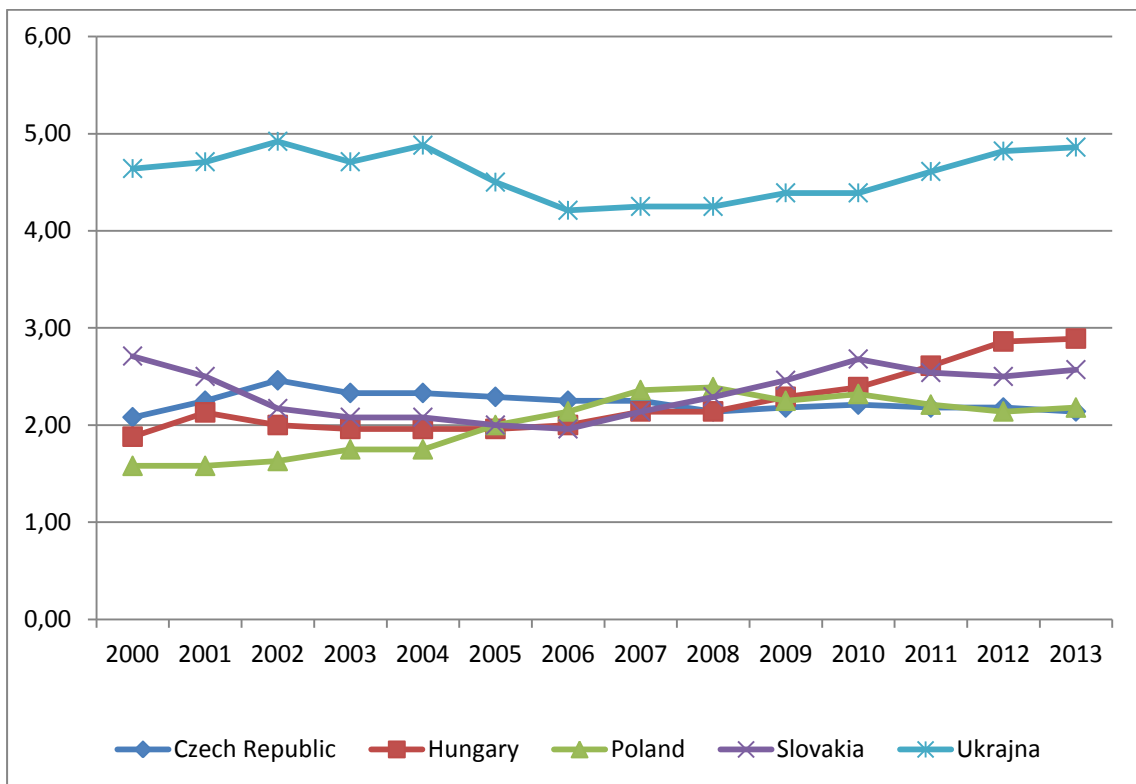
	Democracy Ratings
Poland	2.14
Czech Republic	2.18
Slovakia	2.50
Hungary	2.86
Ukraine	4.82

Large differences can be seen in the different dimensions on the basis of the Freedom House index: the Visegrád Countries perform best in the case of free elections. (The exception to it is Hungary.) At the same time, the Visegrád Countries still underperform in the field of rule of law. This dimension includes how legally the national institutions operate, to what extent the separation of powers is adhered to, and how much they are able to drive back corruption. (Gyarfasova 2013)

Large differences can be seen in the way the different countries reached their present state. (Gyarfasova 2013; Walker and Kořaczowska 2013: 12) Table 17 shows how the aggregate ratings of the Visegrád Countries and the Ukraine developed on the basis of the evaluation of Freedom House (see Appendix). With the exception of the Czech Republic, a decline in democracy can be seen everywhere when compared to the 2000s. The biggest deterioration has taken place in Hungary, where the index

grew by 1.01 points between 2000 and 2013. An especially intensive decline can be seen from 2006 on, which is considered very sharp from 2010 on. A decline could be seen in Poland as well at the beginning of the decade, where the aggregate democracy score increased by 0.8 point between 2000 and 2008. However, the index improved after 2008. An opposite trend can be seen in Slovakia, where a significant improvement took place at the beginning of the millennium, however, the aggregate score started to decline from 2006 on. The scores have not changed considerably in the long run in the Czech Republic during the 2000s. In the two years following the turn of the millennium, the country performed poorly, but thereafter a steady improvement of the democratic indexes could be observed in the country. Finally, it is worth mentioning the Ukraine, which could be considered a hybrid regime during the whole period.

Figure 2: Aggregate Scores of the Visegrád Countries and the Ukraine on the basis of the Freedom House Index¹



¹ Source: (Freedom House 2013; Freedom House 2009)

The detailed descriptions of the Freedom House analyses make it possible to connect specific events to these changes. In this way, it becomes clear a change in which dimension of democracy diverted the growth path of the given country. The following sections present the most important elements from the annual reports of the different countries (on the basis of the country reports found on the Freedom House website (Nations in Transition)).

Hungary had successful consolidation at the beginning of the millennium even among the Visegrád Countries. However, it has gone through an unprecedented decline in the last 13 years. The first serious deviation was experienced in 2006, when big demonstrations took place due to the Ószöd speech. The next decline occurred in 2010. Freedom House pointed out the resignation of Ferenc Gyurcsány, the success of Jobbik at the European parliamentary elections, the economic crisis and the crimes committed against the Roma population from this period. The state of the Hungarian democracy seriously declined in 2011 and 2012. According to Freedom House, this happened so because using its parliamentary majority, the new government gained a firm hold over different independent institutions. The following note can be found in the 2012 report: *“Hungary’s precipitous descent is the most glaring example among the newer European Union (EU) members. Its deterioration over the past five years has affected institutions that form the bedrock of democratically accountable systems, including independent courts and media.”* (Walker and Kořaczkowska 2013: 1)

Poland had the best scores of the Visegrád Countries at the turn of the millennium. It still had this advantage in 2013. However, its aggregate scores continuously declined between 2000 and 2008. There were two opposite processes behind this phenomenon: while Poland was performing well in the field of civil liberties, it had worse and worse scores for political rights. The worst opinions about the Polish democracy were brought about by the election of Lech Kaczyński in 2006 (who was the brother of President Jarosław Kaczyński). The policy of the two governing brothers was characterised by an inward turning tendency. They thought that those

who served the communist regime should be found and punished. According to the evaluation of Freedom House, they abused their governmental power to persecute their political opponents and strengthen the executive branch, which led to a significant fall in the rating of their governance. However, the prime minister was removed from office in democratic elections in 2007, and the new government operated in a less bureaucratic way. Poland endured the economic crisis better than its surrounding countries. Then from 2009 on intensive improvement took place as regards democracy. This was mostly due to the positive ratings of the elections and the functions of the government. For example, the biggest improvement in the region was seen in Poland in 2012.

Slovakia showed dynamic improvement of all the democracy indexes till the mid-2000s. Democratic forces got in power after 1998 and they carried out several important reforms. Slovakia showed continuous economic growth during this period, the democratic institutions remained stable all through the period, and the civil movements were considered the strongest in the region. However, 2006 saw a decline in the democratic scores. Early elections were held in June, which was won by a five-party coalition led by Fico. The policies of the new government were characterised by strong state intervention, state positions were granted on political basis, and ethnocentrism increased. Then the ratings of the judiciary organisations, corruption, free media and governance all declined compared to the previous years. The democratic indexes somewhat improved following the replacement of Fico after 2010. However, the government of Iveta Radičová was short-lived since the coalition collapsed. Thus the opposition got in power in 2012. According to the analysis of Freedom House, it was the corruption scandals and the decline in the independence of courts that weakened democracy most during the 2012-2013 period.

Two periods can be distinguished in the **Czech Republic**: from 2000 to 2002 and from 2003 to 2013. During the first short two-year period the aggregate democratic score somewhat increased (by 0.38 point), however, it has been constantly declining since 2003 (by 0.32 point). The decline in 2002 was to a great extent due to the decline in the corruption scores. For example, a scandal broke out related to motorway



constructions in 2002, and according to a survey by the Czech GfK, one in three respondents considered bribery an common occurrence. Similarly, according to the 2003 Freedom House report “‘stable’ might be too strong a word to describe the country's current system of governance.”

(<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2003/czech-republic#.Uyd67PI5OgA>, downloaded 16.03.2014). The Czech economy grew stronger from 2003 on, and the political system also became more stable. Then the majority of people thought their fundamental rights and democracy were ensured.

The Ukraine became independent in 1991. It has been a hybrid regime ever since according to the classification of Freedom House, which bears certain signs of both authoritarian and democratic regimes. Following the Orange revolution in 2004, Freedom House welcomed the Ukrainian changes with explosive positivism. “Ukraine overcame an extraordinary challenge to return to democratic political development and, ultimately, triumphed as an impressive success story for democracy in Eastern Europe.”

(<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2005/ukraine#.UyeNPPI5OgA>). However, analysts started to see the events in a negative light again from 2006 on. They considered the 2004 revolution successful in many respects (human rights, pluralist democracy etc.), however, they considered the process unfinished. The democratic indexes steeply fell following the 2010 takeover of Yanukovich, who had been ousted during the orange revolution.

3.2. Democracy Barometer

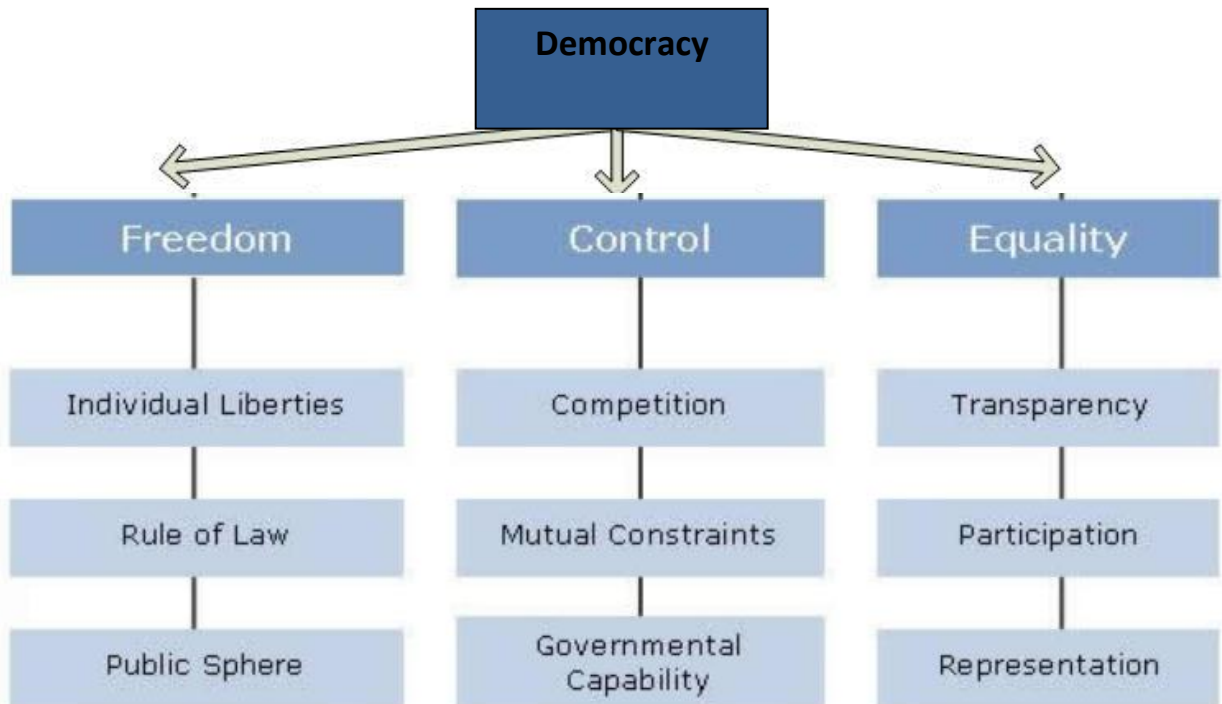
The Democracy Barometer publishes comparative data about 30 countries for the period between 1990 and 2012 (developed countries). This is a newer evaluation system than that of Freedom House, which shows in the concept of its evaluation as well. The conceptualization of democracy is a lot more complicated and varied in the Democracy Barometer than in the case of the previously existing indexes (Freedom House, Polity etc). The main criticism of the previous indexes the creators of this index expressed was that those were not capable of measuring the differences between the already developed democracies well. According to them, it would be



important because the question is often not whether a country is a democracy or not, but to what extent it is one, and in which dimensions it is performing better. They prepared a tool which is able to provide a more sophisticated picture of developed democracies. (Bühlmann et al 2011) As a result, this index may be useful when comparing the Visegrád Countries since – as could be seen in the case of the Freedom House index – these countries can be considered free and democratic, however, they still do not perform well in several of the dimensions.

The Democracy Barometer consists of a middle range concept of democracy, embracing liberal as well as participatory ideas. Figure 3 shows the concept tree of democracy. On the basis of this, three main elements of democracy are distinguished: freedom, control and equality. Freedom has three fundamental elements: individual liberties, public sphere and rule of law. By equality they mostly mean that every individual is equal in the political processes. The three fundamental elements to ensure this: transparency, participation and representation. Finally, control is needed in order to establish the balance between freedom and equality. The foundations of it are competition, mutual constraints and governmental capability. The nine foundation stones of democracy are conceptualized in detail using arguments on the website of Democracy Barometer, which makes the individual concepts easily apprehensible. The aggregate democracy index is measured through 105 indicators. The results achieved in the case of the different indicators are given on a scale of 0 to 100, meaning that the more democratic a country is, the higher scores it achieves. (Merker W. and Bochsler D. et al. 2014)

Figure 3: Conceptualization of Democracy According to Democracy Barometer



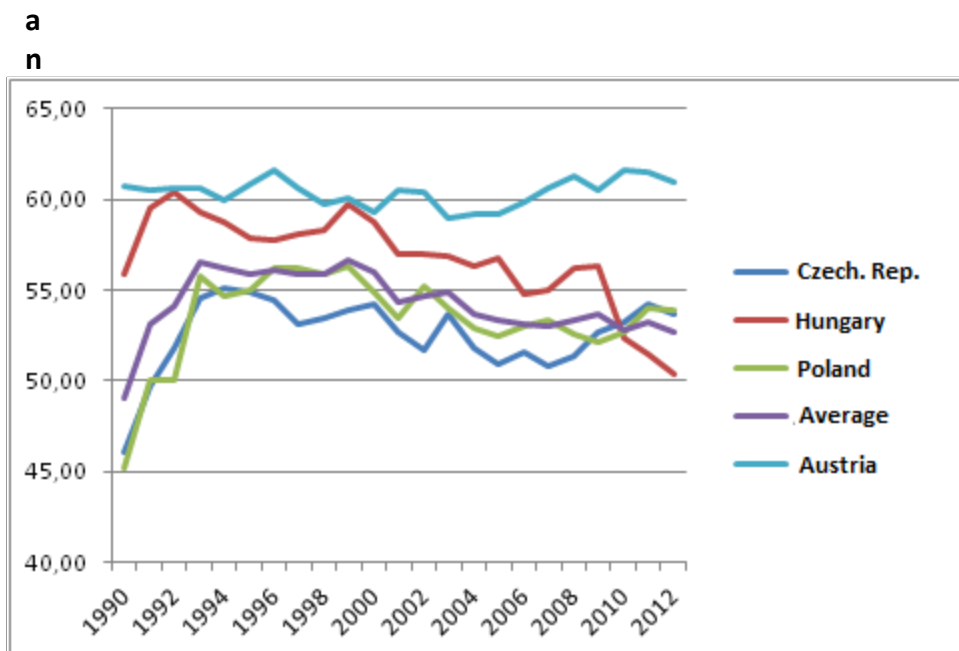
Scores to Slovakia were only awarded in the dimensions of freedom and equality, thus it did not receive aggregate scores.

3.2.1. Results

The first graph shows the changes that took place in the Visegrád Countries (Slovakia is not included in this part) and Austria. It can be seen on the basis of the aggregate scores that the opinions about democracy improved immensely in the Visegrád Countries during the 2-3 years following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and then remained relatively stable in the '90s, however, have been declining continuously since the 2000s. In the meantime, despite the larger or smaller fluctuations, the scores seen in Austria are constantly higher than in the Visegrád Countries. Furthermore, the difference between Austria and the Visegrád countries further increased from the 2000s since an improvement could be seen in the former one, a decline was seen in the ratings of democracy in the latter ones.

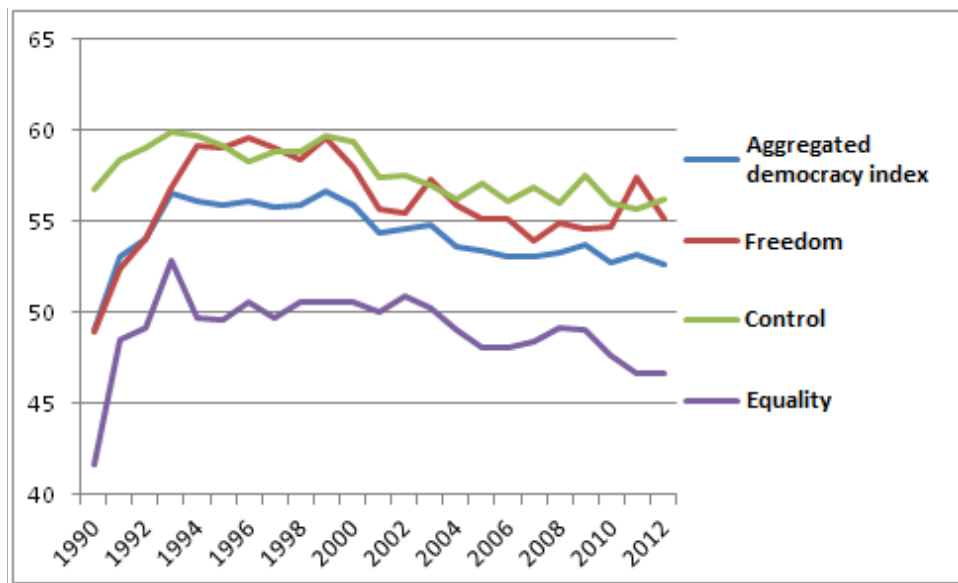
The indices are different from the results of Freedom House (this has shown Poland as more democratic than Hungary since the 2000s), according to the Democracy Barometer, Hungary was more democratic till 2011 than Poland and the Czech Republic. However, the decline that occurred in Hungary after 2010 was so sharp that its democracy index fell far behind the two Visegrád Countries after three years. Although the average index of the Visegrád Countries showed a continuous decline in the 2000s, this is not typical of all the countries. The aggregate Czech democracy index followed a U-shape in the 2000s. In this case it cannot be said that democracy was in crisis since the ratings of the country have been dynamically improving in the last five years. The start of the new millennium saw Poland to turn for the worse, however no significant fall has been seen since 2005. In sum, the 2000s started badly in all three surveyed countries, however, the decline in the average of the surveyed countries is only due to the bad performance of Hungary from 2005 on.

Figure 4: Aggregate democracy index in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic



Generally speaking, all three main dimensions (freedom, equality, control) changed to about the same extent in the Visegrád Countries during the surveyed period. Throughout the period, the surveyed Visegrád Countries performed worst in the political equality dimension, and the best in the control dimension almost throughout the whole period.

Figure 5: General Evaluation of the Countries by Dimension



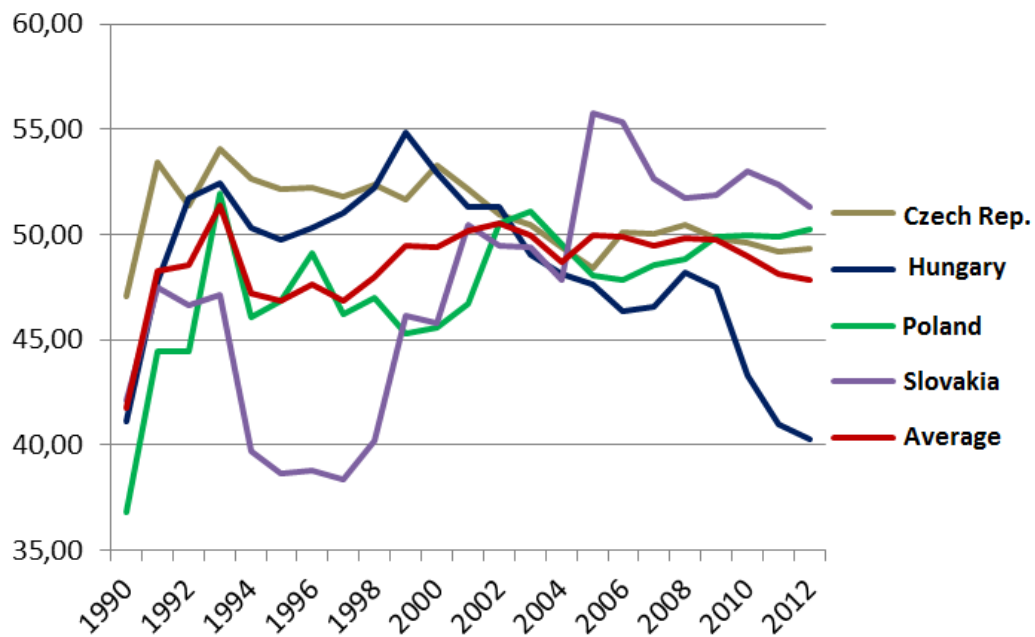
One of the main advantages of the Democracy Barometer over the other indexes is that it conceptualizes democracy very accurately. As a result, the Democracy Barometer is able to follow in which dimensions the changes have taken place over the years. The following section provides a detailed discussion of the changes that occurred in the three main sub-groups of democracy.

3.2.1.1. Political Inequality

The worst performing dimension in the region was political inequality. Austria performed much better in this dimension throughout the surveyed quarter of a century than the Visegrád Countries. When the average of all the Visegrád Countries is examined, it can be seen that the scores of inequality followed a U-shaped line in the '90s, while they stagnated from the 2000s. However, the development of this dimension seen in the individual countries is very different. While the inequality

dimension continuously improved in Slovakia from the mid-90s, it improved in Hungary till the mid-90s, but started to plummet from that point on. There were no similarly rapid changes in the Czech Republic or Poland. The former has shown improving trends in the last years, while the index has somewhat declined in the latter.

Figure 6: Scores of the Inequality Dimension by Country



It is **Slovakia** of the Visegrád Countries where one of the biggest changes can be seen as regards inequality. The scores of this dimension fell to a very low level in 1994, and then remained that low till the end of the '90s. Slovakia was far behind the other Visegrád Countries in this period. However, its index improved so intensively from the 2000s on that Slovakia became the best performing country in this dimension from the second half of the decade. This significant improvement is mostly due to an improvement in transparency, specifically to the fact that the financing of political parties became transparent, and access to information and the independence of the media also improved rapidly during this period. In addition to transparency, representation also improved from the 2000s on, since the political presence of minorities increased. However, participation continuously declined in Slovakia over the years (this trend is typical of all the Visegrád Countries). Within this, it is mostly the efficiency of non-institutionalized political participation (demonstrations,

petitions) the decline of which can be seen. However, it is still Slovakia of the Visegrád Countries that has performed best as regards participation in the last 25 years.

Hungary has also seen enormous changes in the equality dimension in the last 25 years. However, its direction was just the opposite of those experienced in Slovakia. The decrease in the aggregate democracy index of Hungary is mostly due to the strong changes in this dimension. Within the index of equality, it was mostly the dimension of participation that showed a sharp decline. This index fell in the other Visegrád Countries as well, however, nowhere at such a great pace as in Hungary. The institutionalized participation has been continuously declining over the years (lower and lower intention to vote). Non-institutionalized participation has been plummeting since 2010. In addition to participation, transparency has also declined sharply in the country due to corruption seen as increasing more and more. (Democracy Barometer 2007a)² However, apart from minor fluctuations, representation has not changed significantly since the end of the '90s, and even some improvement could be seen before that. Within the representation index, Hungary continuously underperforms in the field of women's political representation when compared to the other Visegrád Countries.

Poland's inequality index significantly improved over the three years following the democratic transformation, and slightly after that. The huge changes occurring after the democratic transformations were due to the free media and transparent governmental communication. However, as the analysts of the Democracy Barometer emphasize, corruption (there was a large corruption scandal in 1997, for example) posed continuous problems in Poland, and this impaired the transparency scores. (Democracy Barometer 2007b) The scores of participation (as in the other Visegrád Countries) continuously showed a declining trend, and this index is considered low in Poland compared to the rest of the Visegrád Countries (only Hungary performs worse in this respect). Representation also improved suddenly

² Summary about Hungary on the website of Democracy Barometer till 2007 + own calculations about the period following 2007

during the three years following the democratic transformation, however, changed for the worse for a few years after that, and was continuously improving since the mid-90s.

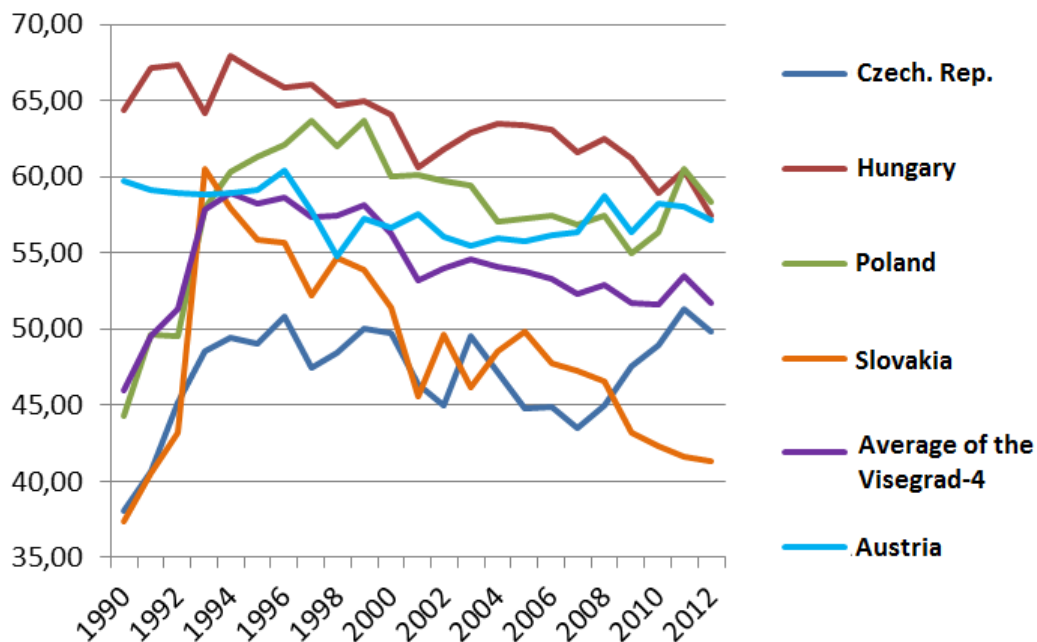
Equality also improved sharply in the **Czech Republic** after the democratic transformation, but then no significant changes were seen in the '90s. However, this index declined from the beginning of the 2000s to the end of the decade. Eventually, it stabilised from 2005 on. The Czech Republic performed well in the field of equality throughout the period when compared to the other Visegrád Countries. It is worth examining in which equality dimensions the changes occurred. It can be stated about transparency that it hardly changed over the years. Political participation, similarly to the other Visegrád Countries, has been continuously declining. A constant improvement could be seen as regards representation in the Czech Republic. The analysts of the Democracy Barometer indicated the new constitution (this contributed to the improvement of the index in 1993) and the increasing participation of women in politics (this determined the growth in 1998) as the reasons for it. (Democracy Barometer 2007c)

3.2.1.2. Freedom

What can be said about the development of freedom in the Visegrád Countries in general is that it sharply improved over the three years following the democratic transformation, then it started to decline continuously. The Visegrád Countries do not seem to fall behind Austria in this dimension. Hungary and Poland performed better than Austria almost all the way throughout the period. However, the gap widened between Austria and the Visegrád Countries as regards freedom from the 2000s, since it did not change significantly in the former country, but the Visegrád Countries saw decline of their average.

Hungary was the best performing member in this dimension up to 2012, however, Poland's scores exceeded it already in that year. In the meantime, Slovakia and the Czech Republic performed worse than the average of the Visegrád Countries throughout the period.

Figure 7: Scores of the Freedom Dimension by Country



Hungary received good scores as regards freedom compared to the other Visegrád Countries. The reason for it is that it complied with the regulations of the dimension a lot better than any other country in the region at the beginning of the '90s. However, the freedom index of the country declined more and more over the years afterwards. The reason for it is that Hungary was characterised by a continuously declining trend in the public sphere and the rule of law. The scores of rule of law decreased due to the violation of the independence of the religious and legal systems and people's decreasing trust in the legal system. The decline of public sphere can be attributed to the fall in trade union memberships. Hungary achieved outstanding results in the case of individual liberties throughout the period, however, three halts can be seen. Scores declined due to the religious communities in 1993 and 2001, then after 2009 – among other things – due to the violation of the independence of the courts. (Democracy Barometer 2007a)

On the whole, **Poland** comes second of the Visegrád Countries after Hungary as regards the freedom dimension. A continuous improvement could be seen here in

the '90s, and then the scores started to decline in the 2000s, but improved again from 2009 on. The decline seen in the 2000s is mostly due to the fall in rule of law. The independence and efficiency of the legal system decreased in this period. The analysts of the Democracy Barometer blame the traditions of socialism, because according to them the people who administer justice remained the same as in the communist era. However, the independence of the legal system significantly improved from 2011 on. At the end of the '90s, the freedom index of Poland also declined as regards the public sphere, since the new constitution introduced in 1997 was disadvantageous to the freedom of speech and assembly. From this time on, a slow and continuous decline can be seen in this dimension, since the rights of combination and assembly narrowed and the number of media surfaces decreased (number of cooperatives and daily papers significantly decreased). As opposed to the indexes of the rule of law and public sphere, an improvement can be seen as regards individual liberties in Poland. For example, improvement could be seen in the field of the protection of private property (Jews and religious groups could reclaim the property they lost during the war). (Democracy Barometer 2007b)

Following the sharp improvement after the democratic transformation, a continuous decline characterised democratic liberties in **Slovakia**. This worsening trend was mostly due to a setback in rule of law. The independence and efficiency of the legal system weakened continuously over the years. By 2012, Slovakia had been far behind the other Visegrád Countries in this dimension. The public sphere was also characterised by a continuous decline. A significant fall can be seen in the media selection from the 2000s, then the independence of the media also started to worsen from 2008 on. As regards individual liberties, Slovakia is not that far behind the other Visegrád Countries, however, a sharp decline could be seen in this dimension as well in 2001.

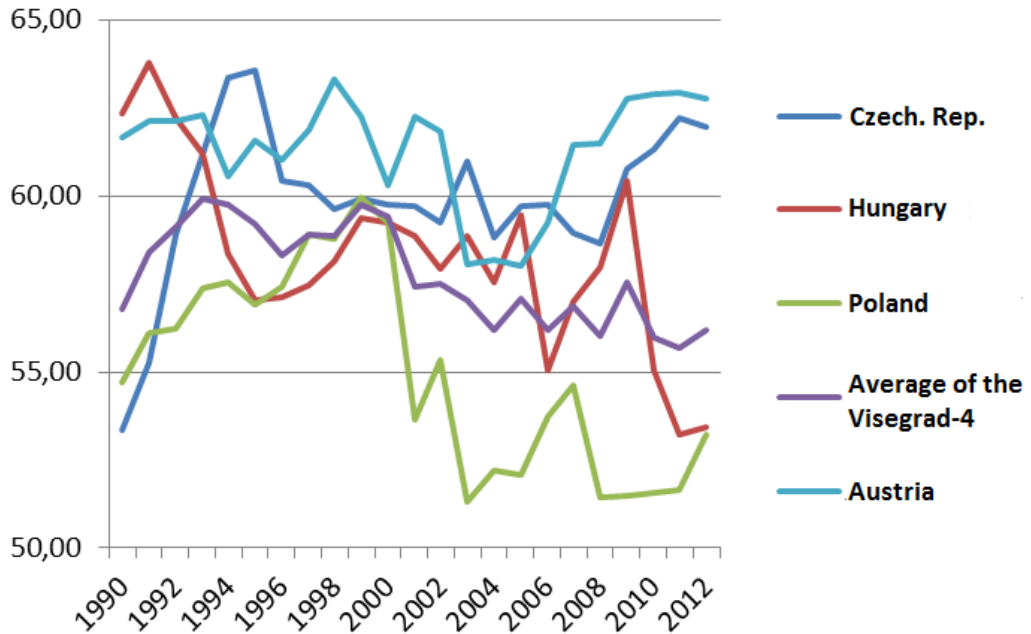
Finally, the **Czech** Republic also underperformed in the dimension of freedom as compared to the Visegrád Countries. The reason for it is that it fell far behind the other Visegrád Countries in the case of public sphere (and behind all the other developed countries surveyed by the Democracy Barometer as well). As regards the

public sphere, the Czech Republic hardly improved during the years immediately after the democratic transformation, and only slight improvement could be seen during the quarter of a century after that. As opposed to this, the Czech Republic was around the average of the Visegrád Countries in the case of rule of law and individual liberties. Rule of law improved rapidly since the constitution guaranteed the independence of the legal system. However, the development of the rule of law was quite varied after that since there were no sufficient funds available for training. Individual liberties also significantly improved after the democratic transformation, and despite smaller or larger fluctuations, this trend remained steady. The temporary fluctuations were declines caused by the index measuring the freedom of religion. (Democracy Barometer 2007c)

3.2.1.3. Control

There are no data about Slovakia from the control dimension, so only Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are included in the Visegrád Group in this dimension. The sharp increase in the control dimension at the beginning of the '90s was interrupted by a continued decline afterwards. Thus, by the end of the surveyed period, the average of the Visegrád Countries had fallen significantly below the figures of Austria.

Figure 8: Scores of the Control Dimension by Country



Hungary received very good scores at the beginning of the '90s, however, during the five years after that it fell significantly (fell below the average of the Visegrád Countries). The 2000s were characterised by huge fluctuations. It reached the bottom in 2006 and 2011. This dimension was greatly determined by the development of the political competition. The fall after the years 1994 and 2010 can be attributed to the fact that the government parties won overwhelming majority at the elections. The fall in the governmental capability dimension explains the low point the aggregate control index reached in 2006. In addition, Hungary continuously received low scores for mutual constraints, and it has not changed very much over the years.

After the sharp increase in the control index of the **Czech Republic**, it followed a U-shaped line. The improvements occurring both after the democratic transformation and in the last few years were significantly influenced by the increase in the intensity of the political competition between the parties. As regards mutual constraints, the Czech Republic performed the best among the Visegrád Countries during the surveyed period. Its index showed stability, except for the period between 1999 and 2003. A slight decline could be seen during this period, because a minority



government was formed after the 1998 elections (with only 37% of the parliamentary seats). Finally, stability can be observed as regards governmental capability, if the two declines surveyed at two different times are not considered. The fall in 1996 was caused by the low level of trust in the government and the changes in the cabinet. The fall surveyed between 2002 and 2005 were brought about by unstable governance and the changes in the cabinet.

As regards control, **Poland** performed worse than the rest of the Visegrád Countries throughout the period. After the democratic transformation, up to the end of the '90s, steady improvement could be seen throughout the period, however, the index fell from 1999 on. The declining trend was broken by a rising period between 2004 and 2006, however, the index started to fall again afterwards. The decline seen from the beginning of the 21st century is mostly due to the index measuring governmental capability. The primary reasons for the decrease in this dimension were the abolition of the independence of the Central Bank and the frequent changes in the government. The index of political competition has also showed a rather decreasing trend in the last quarter of a century. A huge decline occurred, for example, after 1993, when the 5% parliamentary threshold was introduced, as a result of which fewer parties managed to get in parliament. Finally, the index measuring mutual constraints significantly improved in the '90s, however, a fall could be seen in the case of this index as well from 2000 on. One of the reasons for this fall was that the judicial powers were not entirely independent of the executive branch.

4. Citizens' Contribution to Democracy

In addition to their numerous advantages, the large comparative researches prepared on the basis of expert opinions leave the opinions of the local population out of consideration entirely. This poses a problem because a successful democracy requires the active participation of its citizens, so their opinions cannot be neglected. (Bratton, Michael and Mattes, Robert 2009: 130). According to Hoffebert and Klingeman (1999), it is the feelings and thoughts of citizens that determine whether a democracy can successfully maintain itself. Several studies have been made that show how citizens' attitudes influence the development of the legitimacy and stability of a democracy. (Huntington 1991; Fuchs 1992). As a result, in order to analyse the success of the democratic transformation, it is essential to explore the opinions and behaviour of the population. The evaluation based on polls presupposes that people's opinions provide an authentic picture of reality. According to John Stuart Mill "if citizens say the shoe of democracy pinches, the shoe pinches regardless of what experts say." (Mill quoted by Logan and Mattes 2010: 4)

On the basis of researches carried out so far, expert opinions and citizen interviews show similar results. However, there are significant differences between the two methods. For example, Bratton, Michael and Mattes found in a research related to Africa that one of the main differences between the two methods is that in countries with a lower level of education, or with no press that is independent of those in power, the public is less critical than the experts (Bratton, Michael and Mattes, Robert 2009: 24).

I use two databases in my analysis since there is no one single comprehensive research about the last quarter of a century.³ The first research is *Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, which had two waves: 1990-1992 and 1997-2001. This research aimed to survey how the support for democracy developed in the former communist countries during the ten years after the fall of the Berlin

³ The World Values Survey also contains data about the support for democracy, but this mostly published the data of only two waves about the individual Visegrád countries, in addition the data available about the four surveyed countries come from different periods.

Wall. The second data source is the EVS (European Values Study), which published data about the Visegrád Countries in 1990-1993, 1999-2001 and 2008-2010 (the questions do not overlap entirely in the three waves of the study). The two surveys were carried out using different methodology, thus their data can only be compared cautiously. However, the time of the second wave of the first survey is almost identical to that of the second wave of the second survey, which helps to examine certain trends.

4.1. Support for Democracy and Satisfaction with Democracy

It is worth distinguishing the support for democracy and the satisfaction with democracy. The former refers to the fact which abstract political regime citizens prefer, while the latter gives the evaluation of the performance of the actual political system.

According to Easton's categorization (1965), political support has two basic pillars. The first pillar is *specific support*, the other is *diffuse support*. By the latter Easton means the general and lasting support for the political system, while the latter means the support for the more specific and short-term elements of the system, such as the support for the current government or a specific politician.

Norris (1999) and Dalton (2003) further modified Easton's categorization. They distinguished three pillars, which go from the most widespread pillar to the most specific one. According to them, the most widespread support is the acceptance of the basic democratic principles. The middle element is the evaluation of the democratic performance. The most specific one is the evaluation of the political establishment.

According to this approach, an important element of the support for democracy is the satisfaction with democracy. On the basis of their argumentation, satisfaction with democracy is a good indicator of the support for democracy at a specific time and at a specific place. (A criticism of this, for example, comes from Canache, Mondak and Seligson 2001). According to Easton, if dissatisfaction with democracy is

long-lasting, it will have a negative effect on the support for democracy as well. (Easton 1965). According to Mishler and Rose (2012: 304), citizens may be distrustful of the government, may oppose its different measures and express their dissatisfaction with the situation without questioning the foundations of the democratic system. This is why I consider it important to discuss satisfaction with democracy and support for democracy separately.

4.1.1. Support for Democracy

As regards the support for democracy, the *Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* research also distinguishes to what extent respondents considered democracy the best form of government in general⁴ and in their own country⁵. The first question asks respondents to interpret it without any context, while the second one places the interpretation of democracy in a specific context. The joint examination of the two questions makes it possible for respondents to be pro-democracy without supporting the kind of democracy that exists in their own country. Fuchs established a three-category typology on the basis of the two questions. *Strong democrats* belong to the first group, who supported democracy in general and in their own country as well. The second group is that of the *critical democrats*, who supported democracy in general, but did not consider its form in their country good. Fuchs called these two groups together democrats. And finally, the third group consisted of *nondemocrats*, according to whom democracy is not the best form of government. However, they are not necessarily anti-democrats, since those who did not know whether democracy or another form is better, were also placed in this group. (Fuchs 2006: 90)

⁴ “Do you believe that democracy is the best form of government or is there another form of government which is better?” Question V40 of Consolidation Research

⁵ “Do you believe that the democracy that we have in Hungary is the best form of government or is there another form of government which is better?” Question V41 of Consolidation Research

Table 2: Support for Democracy in the Visegrád Countries and West Germany, 1998-2001 (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	West Germany
strong democrats	70	18.3	39.4	27.9	80.6
critical democrats	4.9	34.1	30.4	31.3	11.8
non-democrats	25.1	47.6	30.2	40.8	7.6
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

On the basis of Table 2, it can be stated that the Visegrád Countries were still behind Western Europe as regards the support for democracy at the turn of the millennium. At the same time, the proportion of democrats could be considered high in Hungary, and there were few of them who thought this form of government was not the most suitable for Hungary. The proportion of strong democrats was low in the rest of the Visegrád Countries, however, high that of the critical democrats. According to Fuchs, the latter are the people who could be mobilized to develop a new kind of democracy. Surprisingly, the proportion of non-democrats was very high in Poland. According to Fuchs' survey, this proportion was high even compared to the region. Non-democrats are the people who could be mobilized by the elite or any group that would like to abolish democracy. (Fuchs 2006: 90) According to Fuchs, these data show that democratic consolidation is still an unfinished process in the Visegrád Countries at the turn of the millennium. (Fuchs 2006)

In 1999-2001 and 2008-2010, the EVS also surveyed to what extent citizens consider democracy the best form of government, thus the changes can be tracked in the 21st

century.⁶ (See Table 3) Relying upon its findings, it can be stated that the proportion of those supporting democracy in the Visegrád Countries was below the support seen in Austria in both years. This proportion was the highest in the Czech Republic in 1999-2001, however the highest index was seen in Poland in 2008-2010. The proportion of those who considered democracy the best form of government fell in the Czech Republic between the two surveys, while it increased in Slovakia.

Table 3: The Proportion of Those Who Consider Democracy the Best Form of Government (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	83.0	89.3	92.6	84.5	96.9
2008-2010	81.0	90.3	84.1	89.9	96.3

EVS also measured the support for the different forms of government in the 1999-2001 and the 2008-2010 waves on a scale of 1 to 4.⁷ (See Table 4) In this way, the opinions about the different forms of government can be compared in the 21st century. As regards the support for democracy, we can see that there was a very big difference between the new democracies and Austria, which has a longer democratic tradition, as regards the support for democracy. Despite the fact that the support for democracy decreased in Austria as well between the two surveyed periods, the value was still a lot higher there in 2008-2010. The proportion of democrats decreased in Hungary and the Czech Republic and increased in Poland and Slovakia between the two surveyed periods. As a result, it cannot be stated that the crisis of democracy in the Visegrád Countries at the beginning of the 21st century was uniform. However, while it was Hungary and the Czech Republic that performed well at the end of the 20th century, it became Poland and Slovakia at the end of the 2000s. The changes

⁶ "Please tell me for the following statement whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly. Democracy may have shortcomings, however, it is the best form of government." Question e123 of EVS

⁷ "I'm going to list different forms of government. Please think of them as a possible form of governing a country. Please rate each of them whether it would be very good, rather good, rather bad or very bad way of governing the country." Questions e114 to e117 of EVS.

that can be seen in Hungary and Poland in citizens' opinions harmonize with experts' opinions.

Table 4: The proportion of those who consider democracy very good or rather good by country in 1999 and 2008 (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	87.4	83.6	92.9	84.1	96.3
2008-2010	82.2	86.4	81.5	87.2	91.9

According to the argumentation of Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer (1998) the support for democracy is not a sufficient precondition to define a democrat. In addition to supporting democracy, it is also important to what extent citizens reject non-democratic regimes. I also examined it on the basis of the 1999-2001 and 2008-2010 waves of the EVS.

Of the non-democratic regimes, governance by experts is the most popular, which was at places rated higher than the democratic system. There are huge differences between the opinions about an expert government in the Visegrád Countries and Austria, which has a longer democratic tradition. In the latter country, the popularity of an expert government is way behind that of democracy. It was only Poland of the Visegrád Countries where the support for this form of government significantly decreased between the two surveyed periods.

The image of a strong leader received considerably less support than expert government or democracy, yet this support was significant. It was the most popular in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in 1999-2001. It was only in Slovakia where this index had considerably decreased by 2008-2010, however, it had sharply increased in the Czech Republic. Austria had better indexes in this dimension at the turn of the millennium than the Visegrád Countries; however, this difference had disappeared by 2008-2010. At the same time, this is not due to the improvement of the Visegrád Countries, but to the decline seen in Austria.

The rejection of military dictatorship was lower in all the Visegrád Countries in 1999-2001 than in Austria (the Austrian index was barely higher than the Hungarian and Slovakian values). The support for military dictatorship is outstandingly high in Poland. By 2008-2010, the acceptance of this form of government in countries where support was lower previously (Hungary, Slovakia and Austria) had also increased. By then, military dictatorship had been more rejected in Slovakia and Hungary than in Austria. However, despite a slight decrease in, the support for military dictatorship is still very high in Poland.

Table 5: The proportion of those who consider the different forms of government good or rather good by country, in 1999 and 2008 (%)

		Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
democracy	1999-2001	87.4	83.6	92.9	84.1	96.3
	2008-2010	82.2	86.4	81.5	87.2	91.9
military dictatorship	1999-2001	3.0	17.8	2.1	7.4	1.8
	2008-2010	6.1	13.9	7.6	2.9	7.0
experts govern	1999-2001	85.3	86.6	61.9	85.7	61.0
	2008-2010	84.4	77.3	65.3	84.8	58.3
strong leader governs	1999-2001	20.4	22.2	16.8	19.8	16.3
	2008-2010	26.7	21.0	29.1	12.9	22.8

According to Mattes’ definition (2010), only those people can be called democrats who, in addition to supporting democracy, also reject non-democratic regimes. Relying upon these findings, a similar pattern takes shape as if the concept of a democrat was only defined by the support for democracy. However, the difference between the Czech Republic and the rest of the Visegrád Countries is even more visible here. At both times when this definition of a democrat was examined, the Czech Republic achieved outstandingly better results than the rest of the Visegrád Countries. Apart from the Czech, the difference between the residents of the Visegrád Countries and Austrians is bigger compared to the case when democracy is only conceptualized in one dimension. This shows that the support for democracy in the Visegrád Countries is still largely mixed with the acceptance of anti-democratic forms of government. This difference creates a huge gap between the countries with a longer democratic tradition and the new democracies.

Table 6: The proportion of those who support democracy and reject non-democratic regimes (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	11.7	9.6	33.1	11.8	36.9
2008-2010	8.1	15.1	22.9	13.0	31.9

4.1.2. Satisfaction with Democracy

As the special literature reports, one of the important dimensions of the support for democracy is how satisfied individual people are with the democratic regime they live in. Since satisfaction with democracy is a more specific question than the support for democracy, this index is usually behind those where a more abstract notion has to be evaluated.

On the basis of the *Consolidation* research, it can be seen that right after the democratic transformation, Hungary was the country with the lowest satisfaction with democracy, although it was low in the other Visegrád Countries as well. A

decade later it was only in Hungary where satisfaction with democracy had increased, while it had decreased in the other Visegrád Countries.

Table 7: Satisfaction with democracy in the different Visegrád Countries between the democratic transformation and the turn of the millennium (average on a scale of 1 to 10) ⁸,

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia
1990-1992	3.93	4.60	4.67	4.18
1997-2001	4.42	3.71	4.40	3.83

It can be traced using the EVS data what changes occurred related to satisfaction with democracy⁹ in the 21st century. (See Table 8) A lot lower level of satisfaction was surveyed in the Visegrád Countries in 1999-2001 than in Austria, which has a longer tradition of democracy. Of the Visegrád Countries, this index was outstandingly low in Slovakia. However, at the end of the 2000s (following the economic crisis), a sharp fall could be seen in Austria (a similar trend characterises the other western democratic countries as well). At the same time, apart from Hungary, satisfaction with the development of democracy increased in the Visegrád Countries. By the end of the decade, satisfaction with democracy had already got higher in Poland than in Austria. In the meantime, support for democracy fell very low in Hungary.

⁸ "Are you completely satisfied or completely dissatisfied with the way in which democracy is working in Hungary today?" 1 means totally dissatisfied, and 10 means totally satisfied. Consolidation research Question V173

⁹ "On the whole, are you very satisfied, rather satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in our country?" e110 question of EVS

Table 8: Proportion of those satisfied with the development of democracy in the different Visegrád Countries after the turn of the millennium (percentage)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	31.4	43.1	37.7	23.4	74.9
2008-2010	20.6	54.0	40.1	43.5	53.5

When the two researches are summarized, it may be stated that apart from Hungary, support for democracy decreased in the 1990s.¹⁰ However, this process was reversed in the 2000s. This time the index fell sharply in Hungary, while it increased in the other Visegrád Countries. Although no considerable improvement was seen, it was mostly the western democracies where the support for democracy suffered a decline.

However, some questioned the validity of the satisfaction with democracy question. According to these theories, it is not clear whether respondents mean the regime (democracy), the institutional background (state) or the decision makers in power (government) when considering the satisfaction with democracy. According to Mishler and Rose, the distinction used by political scientists between government and regime is not formulated in people’s minds. “Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe are not political scientists. They lack the experiences and knowledge to distinguish government and regime”. (Mishler and Rose 1996: 557). In their opinion, citizens’ evaluation is “holistic and experiential” (Mishler and Rose 1996: 558). Thus it can be stated that satisfaction with democracy is closely related to the evaluation of the government’s performance. On this basis, the evaluation of the regime is done by comparing the work of the present government with the governance of the previous communist state. This means that the evaluation should be interpreted as the comparison of “popular support for competing regimes” (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998:81).

¹⁰ However, it is difficult to compare the two researches, since they measure the support for democracy with different questions and using different scales.

The EVS research also makes it possible to measure satisfaction with the political regime.¹¹ In addition, it also makes it possible to evaluate the previous communist regime that existed in the country.¹² (See Table 9) On this basis, it can be stated that it is only Hungary among the Visegrád Countries where the opinions about the democratic regime within the country became worse after the turn of the millennium. However, these results improved in the other Visegrád Countries in ten years, and by 2010 they had caught up with Austria (where this index had also dropped during the surveyed period).

In addition, the 1999-2001 EVS research includes data about how good citizens considered the political regime during the state socialist period. This clearly shows that, with the exception of the Czech Republic, all the Visegrád Countries rated the communist regime higher than the current democratic regime. This means that there was still strong nostalgia for the past political regime at the end of the century.

Table 9: Evaluation of the present and the communist regime (average on a scale of 1 to 10)

		Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	present regime	3.95	3.98	4.33	3.81	5.78
	past communist regime	5.48	4.59	3.57	5.26	
2008-2010	present regime	3.20	4.45	4.65	5.47	4.63

¹¹“People have different views about the system for governing this country. Here is a scale for rating how well things are going: 1 means very bad; 10 means very good.” Question e111 of EVS

¹² “Where on the scale would you place the political regime that existed during the communist era?” Question e112 of EVS



The Consolidation research makes it possible to examine how satisfied these people were with the democratic transformation.¹³ (See Table 10) Right after the democratic transformation, it was Hungary where the fewest people thought things were going better than they had expected compared to the end of communism. Then it was the Polish who had the most positive opinions about the consequences of the democratic transformation. They were the only ones where those who considered the consequences of the democratic transformation better had a majority over those who considered it rather worse. By the end of the 20th century, apart from Hungary, the ratings of democratic transformation had fallen rapidly everywhere. It slightly increased in Hungary; however, nearly three times more people thought that things were going worse than expected since the democratic transformation than those who thought they were going better than expected. Thus one of the reasons for the strong nostalgia for state socialism was that the population had higher expectations of the democratic transformation than it could finally deliver.

¹³ "Taking everything into account, since the end of the state socialist regime, things have been getting on ..." Question V346 of the Consolidation research

Table 10: How things have been getting on since the democratic transformation (percentage)

		Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia
1990-1992	better than expected	6.6	22.5	11.1	10.8
	worse than expected	43.4	15.3	32.8	41.9
	as expected	8.3	10.6	21.4	15.6
	some better, some worse	41.8	51.7	34.6	31.7
	total	100	100	100	100
1997-2001	better than expected	11.6	6.3	5.5	1.5
	worse than expected	35.2	4.5	51.3	58.1
	as expected	8.0	4.6	8.3	7.7
	some better, some worse	45.2	45.6	34.9	32.7
	total	100	100	100	100

The TÁRKI- CEORG conducted a research on opinions about the democratic transformation in 2014. According to this it was Hungary of the Visegrád Countries where people considered the democratic transformation far worse. It was Poland where the highest number of people thought the democratic transformation was worth it (almost three in four respondents thought so). The Polish were followed by the Czech, then the Slovaks and far behind them the Hungarians as regards this index. (Tárki 2014)

4.2. Theories Explaining Democratic Attitudes

The next part discusses the three major theories explaining the democratic attitudes as well as the fact what effects their elements explain in the new democracies developing in the Visegrád Countries. First of all, the literature distinguishes the short and long-term elements of democracy evaluation. The long-term factors (1) mean elements that individuals acquire during their socialisation. On the other hand, short-term effects (2) include temporary forces such as governments' ability to generate wealth. A third trend calls our attention to the fact that in addition to socialization and evaluation, support for democracy may be based on the information found in the media.

Several researches have shown that short-term effects have bigger explanatory power than long-term effects in the case of the new democracies (Inglehart 1977, Inglehart and Welzel 2005, Mishler and Rose 2001: 304, Peral 2010). On the basis of research by Peral (2010), age and ideology have significant role as regards the support for democracy, while level of education and gender do not have significant effects. Voicu (2010) examined eight former state socialist countries (none of them a Visegrád country, but the Ukraine was included), what could explain the changes in the support for democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall. He also found that the current performance of the country has the biggest explanatory power. However, he also established that a new cohort grew up in these countries that had more democratic values than those older than them.

4.2.1. Long-term Explanatory Theories of Democracy

According to the long-term explanatory theories of democracy, support for democracy is a phenomenon learnt during primary socialization, which is influenced by micro-level and macro-level factors. Gender, class, age and level of educations have outstanding importance to the micro-level factors. Religious traditions (Huntington 1996), the length of the communist regime (Fuchs 1999), and the traditions of pre-communist democracy (Pop-Eleches 2007) were pointed out of the macro-level factors. These theories call our attention to the contextual factor of the

evaluation of democracies. According to it, citizens were socialized in similar cultural environments, which determines their values and thus it is probable that their attitudes will be similar. (Mishler and Rose 2002) This means that people in developed democracies have learnt that democracy is the best regime, while the citizens of the new Central Eastern European democracies were socialized in totalitarian regimes, thus they acquired non-democratic values during their socialisation. According to this theory, in order for the support for democracy to increase, a cohort has to die out.

I tested this theory by checking in the database of the EVS 2008-2010 how age influences the support for democracy. I distinguished three age groups: under 20s (those who were born after the democratic transformation), those between 21 and 62 years of age (those who were born during the state socialist era), and those over 63 (who were born before the state socialist era). The results show that age is not significant in any of the countries, and Slovakia is the only country where the proportion of democrats is higher among those who were born after the democratic transformation. (See Table 11) A similar observation may be made when level of education and income are examined. In sum, it cannot be stated that there are generational differences in the Visegrád Countries. These results question the validity of the statement about political socialisation.

Table 11: The proportion of those who consider democracy the best in the different age groups (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
under 21s	81.3	87.1	84.3	93.5	93.8
21-62	82.2	90.6	85.5	89.9	95.8
over 62 years	75.8	90.5	80.4	89.7	98.1
P-value	0.071	0.568	0.051	0.792	0.102

In the literature, many argued that the spread of post-materialistic values in a society helps the development of democracy and stability. This is because these values attribute great importance to the freedom of speech and participation in the political decision making process. (Inglehart 2003, Nickens 2004) According to Inglehart (2008) an intergenerational value change took place in developed countries, which resulted in the breakthrough of post-materialistic values in younger generations. On the basis of EVS data, the spread of post-materialistic values can also be seen in the Visegrád Countries to a certain degree. But this was lower than in Austria throughout the surveyed period. (See Table 12) Following the democratic transformation, the spread of these values was continuous in the Czech Republic, and it started to increase in Hungary and Slovakia from the 2000s on. As opposed to this, this value was continuously decreasing in Poland during the surveyed 20 years. Relying upon these findings, there were sharp differences between the Visegrád Countries after the democratic transformation and Austria in this respect as well, which had somewhat eased by the end of the 2000s. However, the primary reason for the decrease in the difference was not an improvement on the side of the Visegrád Countries, but the fact that this index significantly dropped in Austria.

Table 12: The proportion of those with post-materialistic values (percentage)¹⁴

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1990-1993	4.2	9.7	5.8	6.2	25.7
1999- 2001	2.3	7.1	10.1	4.1	28.8
2008-2010	8.0	6.9	10.3	7.1	13.5

¹⁴ On the basis of the post-materialistic index prepared by the EVS, y002 variable

4.2.1. Short-term Explanatory Theories of Democracy

The second big group includes the theories that connect the support for democracy to the evaluation of its performance. According to this theory, support for democracy increases or decreases in accordance with the opinions about the performance of the current players in politics. This means that the democratic values and attitudes keep changing, even within a cohort, if the successfulness of the regime changes.

These theories evaluate successfulness on the basis of different criteria. Some studies point out the role of economic wealth. Relying upon these findings, economic efficiency is necessary both in the developed democracies and the new democracies of Central Eastern Europe to maintain support for democracy. (Dalton 1994). Others point out that the efficiency of the democratic regime is also important. For example, how citizens perceive corruption and civil liberties. (Mischler and Rose 2002). According to research by Voicu (2005), the evaluation of economic performance is the most relevant in Central Eastern Europe, as opposed to Western Europe, where the evaluation of the performance of the democracy has a bigger explanatory power.

A serious economic decline was seen in the Visegrád Countries following the democratic transformation, thus a lot of citizens blamed democracy for the failure. Even ten years after the democratic transformation, people had very negative opinions about the relationship between democracy and the economy. There were sharp differences seen on the two sides of the former Iron Curtain in this respect. According to both waves of the EVS research¹⁵ a lot higher proportion of people thought in the Visegrád Countries than in Austria that democracy had bad influence on the economy. On the basis of the 1999-2001 research, the Poles and the Slovaks had the worst opinions about democracy's influence on the economy, however, this index significantly improved in these two countries in the following ten years. Opposite trends were seen in the other two Visegrád Countries in the 2000s, since the opinions about the relationship between democracy and welfare slightly

¹⁵ "I'm going to read some things that people sometimes say about a democratic political system. Could you please tell me if you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly? In democracy, the economic system runs badly." Question e120 of EVS

worsened in Hungary and the Czech Republic. On the basis of the 2008-2010 research, Hungarians' opinions were far the most negative about this question.

Table 13: The proportion of those who think democracy does ill to the economy (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999-2001	39.4	47.4	35.6	48.3	13.9
2008-2010	42.6	35.3	38.7	35.9	19.3

The EVS examined in three waves following the democratic transformation whose task citizens thought it was to ensure welfare. On the basis of the question, respondents gave 0 point if they thought ensuring welfare should be entirely the job of the individual; and 10 if it should entirely be the job of the government. It is typical throughout the surveyed period that the demand for a strong state survived in the Visegrád Countries. This may suggest that one of the reasons for the dissatisfaction with the regime is the weak state.

Table 14: Desired degree of state taking responsibility (average)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1990-1993	6.22	5.6	4.37	5.79	3.46
1999- 2001	6.09	5.73	4.89	6.37	4.00
2008-2010	5.44	5.27	4.78	4.81	4.2

4.2.2. Learning Theories

Long-term and short-term theories do not succeed in a mutually exclusive way, but complement each other. Mischler and Rose (2002) try to harmonize the two theories by introducing the theory of lifelong learning of democratic values. According to that, in addition to early socialization, it is worth considering the later socialisation

medium as well. Bratton Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2004) both point out that public opinion may also be shaped in different institutional settings. For example, the Church, trade unions, parties or non-governmental organisations can greatly influence people's opinions. The researches carried out so far show a strong connection between the support for democracy and the participation in different non-governmental or political organisations.

The researches presented so far suppose that socialisation or personal experience may be the source of the evaluation of democracy. Thus these theories disregard the fact that information may also be the basis of the evaluation of democracy. At the same time, nothing proves the role of mass communication better than the fact that it was the reason why information from western democracies could leak in to state socialism, which eventually led to the fall of the communist regimes. (Fuchs 2006) This is also pointed out by Roller (1994), who distinguished between "system external learning," and "system internal learning."

This is why finding one's way in politics plays an important role in the development of a democracy. With the help of the EVS data it can be examined, by their own admission, how often citizens look for information about political issues in the media.¹⁶ Relying upon these findings it may be stated that there were no significant differences between the Visegrád Countries and Austria at the turn of the millennium. However, during the following ten years, a serious decline could be seen in the Visegrád Countries (for example, the proportion of those regularly seeking information about politics fell by 30 percentage points in the Czech Republic). As a result, a difference had occurred in this dimension as well on the two sides of the former Iron Curtain by 2010.

¹⁶ "How often do you follow politics in the news on television or on the radio or in the daily papers?
Question e150 of EVS

Table 15: The proportion of those who seek information about politics at least once a week (%)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1999- 2001	80.8	85.4	90.4	85.1	85.8
2008-2010	71.2	78.6	70.0	82.8	86.0

The decline in the interest in politics may also be discussed from an activist point of view. Expert opinions have shown that a lot lower level of political participation is typical of the Visegrád Countries than of the western democracies. For example, the proportion of those who participate in elections is significantly lower on the eastern side of the former Iron Curtain, among them in the Visegrád Countries; this index is showing a decreasing trend recently (IDEA 2014). The EVS makes it possible to track how actively people participate in announced protests after the democratic transformation¹⁷ or how many of them sign petitions. These two activities – in addition to election – are alternative methods of expressing their political opinion.

Participation in protests is by far at the lowest at any surveyed point of time following the democratic transformation in Hungary. However, more people claimed in the other Visegrád Countries than in Austria at the beginning of the '90s they had participated in some protests. However, serious decline could be seen in the participation in protests in the Visegrád Countries in the last 20 years, while this index has even improved somewhat in Austria. Thus, by 2010 Austria had left the Visegrád Countries behind as regards the frequency of this form of expressing their opinion.

It requires less effort than demonstrations, but an important way of expressing a democratic opinion is signing a petition. This shows a very similar pattern to the participation in protests. The Czech Republic, Slovakia have almost the same figures

¹⁷ "I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it. Attending lawful demonstrations / Signing a petition" Questions e025, e027 of the EVS research

as Austria after the democratic transformation, however, by 2010, all of the Visegrád Countries had fallen significantly behind Austria, which has a longer democratic tradition.

Table 16: Proportion of those who express their political opinions (percentage)

		Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
Attending demonstrations	1990-1993	4.4	19.3	35.5	22.9	10.4
	1999-2001	4.9	8.8	27.6	14.4	16.0
	2008-2010	4.0	8.5	12.0	5.4	16.6
Signing petition ^a	1990-1993	18.0	21.4	48.1	41.0	47.7
	2008-2010	15.8	21.1	58.4	59.6	56.1
	1999-2001	15.2	21.2	33.0	37.5	49.6

5. Summary

In sum, it can be stated that compared to the other state socialist countries, democratization has been successful in the Visegrád Countries. However, 25 years after the democratic transformation, the Visegrád Countries are still behind the countries with longer democratic traditions. This difference can be proven by both expert opinions and citizens' values. As a result, the expected democratic flourishing failed to take place in these countries.

The study presented the major explanatory theories of support for democracy. On the basis of the literature it can be stated that, when compared to western



democracies, the short-term explanatory factors (current economic prosperity) are a lot more stressed in the Visegrád Countries than the long-term explanations (differences in generations). Furthermore, the low support for democracy in the Visegrád Countries is accompanied with a lower interest in political news and activities, which also undermines the development of democratic attitudes.

Despite the similar democratic conditions, differences can be seen between the Visegrád Countries. The individual countries have taken slightly different paths as regards democratization in the last 25 years both according to expert opinions and citizens' evaluation. Both methods show that during the ten years following the democratic transformation, Hungary showed improving trends, however, the state of democracy has declined in the last ten years. Slovakia has also had decreasing scores in the 2000s on the basis of expert opinions, however, this was accompanied by an increase in citizens' support for democracy. On the basis of expert opinions, contrary to the Hungarian and Slovakian trends, the Czechs and Poles performed worse in the '90s, while improvement could be seen from the beginning of the 2000s. However, it was citizens' values that showed a different development path in these two countries. The improving and more positive expert opinions were not accompanied by an improvement in citizens' evaluation of democracy in the Czech Republic. On the other hand, Polish citizens showed more and more democratic values over the years.

Appendix

Table 17: Development of the aggregate democracy index of Freedom House between 2000 and 2013 in the Visegrád Countries and the Ukraine

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Czech Republic	2.08	2.25	2.46	2.33	2.33	2.29	2.25	2.25	2.14	2.18	2.21	2.18	2.18	2.14
Hungary	1.88	2.13	2.00	1.96	1.96	1.96	2.00	2.14	2.14	2.29	2.39	2.61	2.86	2.89
Poland	1.58	1.58	1.63	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.14	2.36	2.39	2.25	2.32	2.21	2.14	2.18
Slovakia	2.71	2.50	2.17	2.08	2.08	2.00	1.96	2.14	2.29	2.46	2.68	2.54	2.50	2.57
Ukraine	4.64	4.71	4.92	4.71	4.88	4.50	4.21	4.25	4.25	4.39	4.39	4.61	4.82	4.86

Table 18: Development of the aggregate democracy index of Democracy Barometer between 1990-2012

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Czech Republic	46.1	51.8	55.1	54.5	53.5	54.2	51.7	51.8	51.6	51.3	53.2	53.7
Hungary	55.8	60.4	58.8	57.7	58.3	58.7	57.0	56.3	54.8	56.2	52.4	50.3
Poland	45.2	50.0	54.6	56.2	55.9	54.9	55.2	52.9	53.0	52.6	52.6	53.9
Average of the Visegrád Countries	49.1	54.1	56.2	56.1	55.9	56.0	54.6	53.7	53.1	53.4	52.8	52.6
Austria	60.7	60.6	60.0	61.6	59.7	59.3	60.4	59.2	59.8	61.3	61.6	60.9

Table 19: Development of the freedom index of Democracy Barometer between 1990-2012

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Czech Republic	38.0	45.2	49.5	50.8	48.5	49.7	45.0	47.2	44.9	45.0	48.9	49.9
Hungary	64.4	67.4	67.9	65.9	64.7	64.1	61.8	63.5	63.1	62.5	58.9	57.4
Poland	44.3	49.5	60.3	62.1	62.0	60.0	59.7	57.1	57.4	57.5	56.4	58.3
Slovakia	37.4	43.2	58.0	55.6	54.7	51.4	49.6	48.5	47.8	46.6	42.3	41.3
Average of the Visegrád Countries	46.0	51.3	58.9	58.6	57.5	56.3	54.0	54.1	53.3	52.9	51.6	51.7
Austria	59.7	59.0	58.9	60.4	54.8	56.6	56.0	55.9	56.2	58.7	58.2	57.2

Table 20: Development of the control index of Democracy Barometer between 1990-2012

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Czech Republic	53.3	58.9	63.4	60.4	59.6	59.7	59.2	58.8	59.8	58.7	61.3	61.9
Hungary	62.3	62.2	58.3	57.1	58.2	59.2	57.9	57.5	55.1	58.0	55.1	53.5
Poland	54.7	56.2	57.6	57.4	58.8	59.2	55.4	52.2	53.7	51.4	51.6	53.2
Average of the Visegrád Countries	56.8	59.1	59.8	58.3	58.8	59.4	57.5	56.2	56.2	56.0	56.0	56.2
Austria	61.6	62.1	60.5	61.0	63.3	60.3	61.8	58.2	59.2	61.5	62.9	62.7

Table 21: Development of the equality index of Democracy Barometer between 1990-2012

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012
Czech Republic	47.1	51.4	52.7	52.2	52.4	53.3	50.9	49.4	50.1	50.5	49.6	49.4
Hungary	41.1	51.7	50.3	50.3	52.2	52.9	51.3	48.1	46.4	48.2	43.3	40.3
Poland	36.8	44.5	46.1	49.1	47.0	45.6	50.6	49.6	47.8	48.8	50.0	50.3
Slovakia	42.2	46.6	39.7	38.8	40.2	45.8	49.5	47.9	55.3	51.8	53.0	51.3
Average of the Visegrád Countries	41.8	48.6	47.2	47.6	48.0	49.4	50.6	48.7	49.9	49.8	49.0	47.8
Austria	60.7	60.7	60.5	63.3	61.0	61.0	63.3	63.5	64.0	63.7	63.6	62.9

Participation in parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2013 in the Visegrád Countries and Austria (percentage)

	Hungary	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Austria
1989	-	62.1	-	-	-
1990	44.1	-	96.3	96.3	86.1
1991	-	43.2	-	-	-
1992	-	-	84.7	84.7	-
1993	-	52.1	-	-	-
1994	55.1	-	-	75.4	82.5
1995	-	-	-	-	86.0
1996	-	-	76.3	-	-
1997	-	47.9	-	-	-
1998	57.0	-	74.0	84.2	-
1999	-	-	-	-	80.4
2001	-	46.1	-	-	-
2002	70.5	-	58.0	70.1	84.3
2005	-	40.6	-	-	-
2006	67.6	-	64.5	54.7	78.5
2007	-	53.9	-	-	-
2008	-	-	-	-	78.8
2010	64.4	-	62.6	58.4	-
2011	-	48.9	-	-	-
2012	-	-	-	59.1	-
2013	-	-	59.5	-	74.9

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