

Flash Report

Hungarian elections dominated by the right: Four more years for Fidesz, Jobbik gains strength

Summary

- **The Hungarian parliamentary election has left only one question open, whether the governing party can retain its two-thirds majority in Parliament or not. This question can remain open by 12 April, until the finalization of the election results. It has a real political significance: the two-thirds majority is the only thing that Fidesz can lose as the result of the election. But anyway, no serious change is expected in governmental policies: nationalist rhetorics, “unorthodox” economic policies, centralization, and Eastern Opening in foreign policy is expected to continue. Orbán, in his first post-election statement, said that he is committed to keep the country within the EU.**
- **Fidesz performed worse than in 2010, but the new election system helped them gaining a two-thirds majority (or near) again. The left-wing opposition lagged behind previous expectations. The huge imbalance between the left-wing and the right-wing remained: the two right-wing parties, Fidesz and Jobbik altogether received almost two-thirds of the votes on the party list (similarly, they gained 70 percent four years ago).**
- **Jobbik received more votes than in 2010, partially as a result of their professional campaign based on a more moderate image, and the lack of political challenges they faced from both left and right. If Jobbik remains unchallenged (with the left paralysed by its internal conflicts and the right is unwilling to go against Jobbik politically), they can use their momentum to perform well on the European Parliamentary elections in May and the municipality elections in autumn, and they even have the chance to become a governmental party by 2018.**

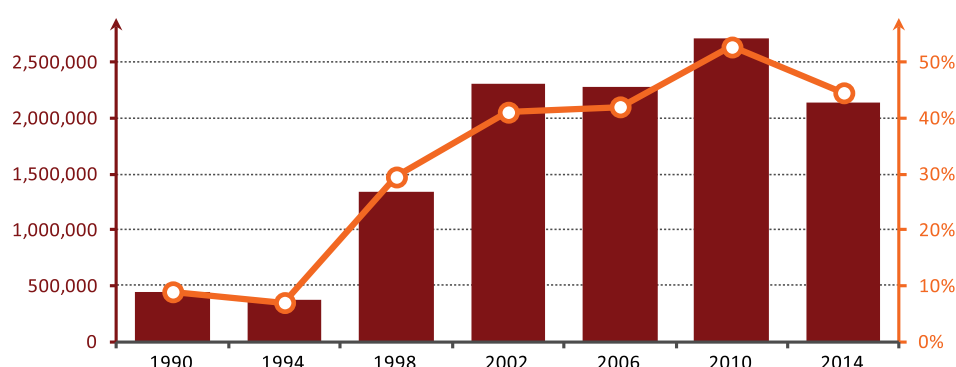
Left-right imbalance: alive and well

The 2014 elections kept the huge imbalance between the left and the right, with the two right-wing parties, Fidesz and Jobbik altogether received almost two-thirds of the votes on the party list (65%). There seems to be some parallelity with the Polish system at this point: since 2005 in Poland (and 2010 in Hungary), the left has been unable to become a political force that challenges the right that dominates politics. There is an important difference, though: while in Poland, a centre-right (Civic Platform) and a populist right (Law and Justice, PiS) is competing with each other, in Hungary the right-wing populist Fidesz and the far-right Jobbik is doing so.

The winner took it all: results by parties

Fidesz has lost 600,000 voters in the past four years in Hungary, but this disadvantage was made up through about 100,000 out-of-country votes. Although we do not have the final results yet, it is certain that Viktor Orbán's party has received less votes than in the previous three elections – and still, has come close to a two-thirds majority again, partially as a result of the new electoral system and the party structure (900,000 advantage in the number of voters over the runner-up leftist alliance). Note that in 2006, with 42% of the votes, Fidesz lost the elections, while in 2014, they might gain a two-thirds majority with 44%. Fidesz did not reveal its post-election plans, but due to the feedback they received from the voters, they will not feel the pressure to change their direction of policy at any fields.

Number and proportion of votes cast on Fidesz's party list



Left-wing alliance

The loser of the election, however, has managed to expand its voting base in the past four years. In 2010, MSZP just approached the 1 million votes. This year, the election coalition has got more than 1.2 million votes. Moreover, not only has it been able to keep its second place, its advantage over Jobbik has grown from 135,000 to about 250,000. But still, compared to the previous expectations of the left-wing alliance (a close result), we can see an obvious failure – especially if Fidesz succeeded to gain a two-thirds majority again.

LMP

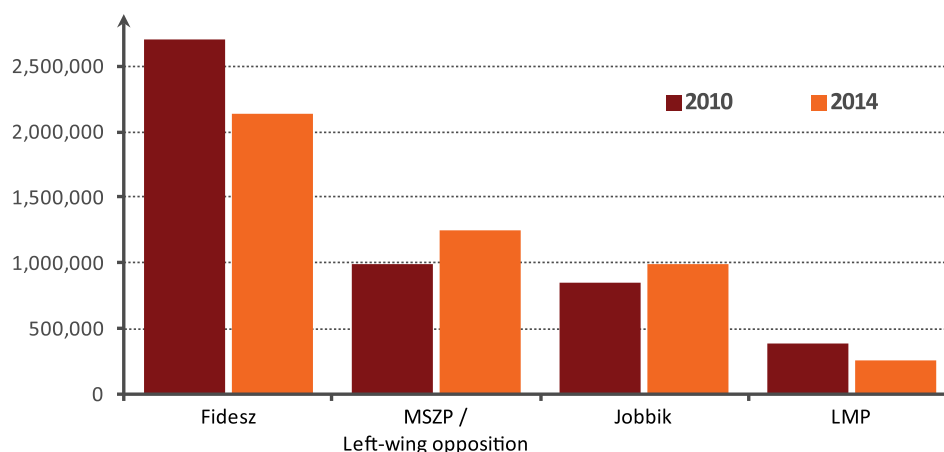
The other winner of the election is the green **LMP** as it has managed to cross the 5% threshold, although it has lost about a one-third of its 2010 voters, around 130,000 people. Since we can expect that the opposition alliance will be busy to find the responsible ones after the debacle, LMP might build upon its near success to widen its own voter base. That might help the party to get over the next hurdle, and to cross the 5% threshold in the European Parliament election as well.

Jobbik

While their expectations to gain individual constituencies seem to remained unfulfilled, Jobbik could broaden their voter base with almost 150,000 voters, gaining around 1 million votes, and 21% of the votes on party list (17% in 2010). This way, thanks to the new election system, Jobbik will not have a bigger representation in the parliament than before. The party will have less than 12% of the mandates with 23 MPs.

Jobbik could improve its results with a slight moderate shift. It even helped the party to level its regional coverage: while previously, Jobbik was much stronger in Eastern than in Western Hungary, these differences have decreased. But even though they calmed down their rhetorics, Jobbik is still a far-right party, both in terms of ideology and its relations to extreme right, possibly violent movements (e.g. Betyársereg – Army of Outlaws, New Hungarian Guard). The governmental, party political, civic and media strategies proved to be unsuccessful against Jobbik. Jobbik was neither weakened (as the governmental side promised) by some repressive legal steps, nor by the „good governance” that mainly partially implemented Jobbik’s promises. Fidesz, while doing a harsh and intense negative campaign against left-wing rivals, practically did nothing to challenge the results of Jobbik. But the left’s strategy, based on stigmatization, “cordon sanitaire” and avoiding the debates worked neither. The question of the next four years is that will be there enough new strategies from the government, the political players, the media and the NGOs to challenge the growing popularity of the far-right. If not, Jobbik can be the biggest winner of the next term, and in 2018 they can be the main challengers of the governing party.

Votes cast on the party lists (2010, 2014)



The effect of the election system

The election system has lived up to the hopes attributed to it even in case Fidesz does not get the two-thirds majority. With about 44% of the votes, 66% of the mandates will certainly go to Fidesz.

The biggest role in this is the bigger weight of the individual district, the abolition of the second round and the so called „compensation of the winner” which alone redirected 7 mandates to Fidesz (3 from the left-wing alliance, 3 from Jobbik and 1 from LMP).

Also, the stricter regulation of campaign advertisement favoured Fidesz, by hindering the opposition to reach the undecided voters

The pseudo parties which competed due to the easier nomination and the transformed campaign financing do not make any difference. However, it is possible that in some constituencies with a close result, the outcome could have been different.

The effect of the gerrymandering of the constituency map is also hard to measure, but as we have predicted many times before, it could have made its effect felt in case of close results.

The number of Hungarians living abroad is below any expectations, it possibly had no effect on any list mandates. Minimal it may seem now, it is not impossible that at the final tally, these tens of thousands of votes will help Fidesz get two-thirds majority.