



**CUB Sociology  
Doctoral School**

**THESIS**

by

**Borbála Göncz**

**Perception of the European Union in Hungary**

*“I would like to see that one is able to say  
I’m proud of being a citizen of the EU...”*

Ph.D. dissertation

**Supervisors:**

**Róbert Angelusz, DSc**

University Professor

**György Lengyel, DSc**

University Professor

Budapest, 2010

**Institute of Sociology and Social Policy**

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## 1. Background and Rationale

Hungary has joined the European Union (EU) the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 along with other 9 Central- and East European countries. Public opinion surveys on the matter have been carried out since the early '90s. The most important tendency during this period shows that Hungarians' support for the EU has reached a positive peak in 2002 and since then it is in constant decline. Hungarians expressed an above average support until the accession, however, their enthusiasm dropped below the average right after. It is interesting though that attachment to Europe on the other hand, remained above the European average in 2009 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Perception of the EU and Europe in Hungary and in the EU in 2009

	very / somewhat attached to Europe	EU membership is a good thing	Country has benefited from EU membership
EU-27	73,7%	56,5%	53,2%
Hungary	87,2%	36,4%	32,3%

Source: Eurobarometer 71 (Spring 2009)

Therefore it is worth taking into account the different dimensions of support for the EU, distinguished in the theoretical literature. In political science the hard and soft meaning of Euroscepticism are differentiated (Szczerbiak-Taggart 2008). *Hard Euroscepticism* stands for a principled opposition to the European integration process, while *soft Euroscepticism* is where opposition is concerning only certain policy areas of the EU. Besides the terms of hard and soft Euroscepticism there is another, similar conceptual distinction that was used in previous works (Lengyel-Göncz 2006a, 2009, 2010). According to the latter, a distinction needs to be made between those who reject the idea of the EU - based on symbolic, principled or emotional aversion to supranational attachment - and those who do not see the integration's benefits in a pragmatic way. Therefore a *symbolic* approach of the matter can be distinguished from a more *pragmatic, utilitarian* consideration. The pragmatic rejection could correspond to the concept of Euroscepticism in the soft sense, while the symbolic rejection could stand for hard Euroscepticism. As the attachment to Europe can be considered as a good measure for a symbolic connection, it can be concluded that the widespread Euroscepticism in Hungary didn't go together with the symbolic rejection of it, thus one can't talk about Euroscepticism in the hard sense of the concept. This way, in my dissertation, I distinguish between symbolic and utilitarian approach of the matter: this theoretical distinction can help

to understand the nature of Hungarian Euroscepticism and provides possible explanations for the phenomenon.

Several logics of the support for the EU have been elaborated and tested so far among the older member states, however, thorough analysis of these mechanisms haven't been conducted in the case of Hungary. My research is based on the three models distinguished by Hooghe and Marks (2005). In their article they mention (1) utilitarian approaches based on cost-benefit analysis of EU's advantages and disadvantages, both at individual and at the country-level introduced by Gabel (e.g. Gabel 1998). The (2) identity based approach was introduced by Hooghe and Marks themselves, enhancing the role of belonging to a group or community when one evaluates the European integration process. Those who have some kind of European identity express more positive opinions on the EU. And finally Hooghe and Marks mention those approaches, where (3) „political cueing” - the role of elites in shaping public opinion - are in focus. These approaches conceive the EU as an elite-driven process and assume a general lack of information and interest towards the matter. This is why those analysis that are comparing elites' and public opinion have special importance (e.g. Carubba 2001, Hooghe 2003, Hooghe-Marks 2008). Besides these three basic models other approaches are also worth to be mentioned like Inglehart's explanation through cognitive mobilization capacities or his approach based on political values (e.g. Inglehart 1970, 1990), those explanations that focus on the domestic political arena as a „proxy” to explain support for the integration (e.g. Anderson 1998) and studies that are dealing with the different policy areas to be delegated to the European level (e.g. Hooghe 2001, 2003, Gabel 1998, Kritzing 2003). These above mentioned approaches form the theoretical frame of my dissertation.

***The research question of the dissertation explores whether the perception of the EU is rather based on a utilitarian or a symbolic logic in Hungary and what the determinants of these connections are. Based on theories in the subject and results of previous empirical analyses, my main assumption is that support for the EU is primarily of a utilitarian characteristic and this way Hungarian Euroscepticism is more of a soft kind of the term and means less the symbolic rejection of the EU project.***

As the datasets available made it possible, the analysis of the Hungarian public opinion is carried out in comparison with Hungarian elites' opinion on the matter. My dissertation is structured as follows: first I present my hypotheses based on previous theoretical and empirical findings in the subject, while I also present the concept of European identity both from a social-psychological and a political, historical angle. Finally, I verify the hypotheses based on quantitative analysis of survey data.

## 2. Methodology Used

In the dissertation as a first step, I analyse utilitarian and symbolic elements of the support for the EU separately, then I deal with them together in a comparative perspective. Analyses are based on data of two public opinion surveys. One of them contained a subsample of political and economic elites, too<sup>1</sup>. The statistical methods used in the quantitative analysis are multi-variate techniques (e.g. principal component analysis, logistic regression), while the comparison of the two approaches are made through a single model using structural equation modeling, which combines measurement of causal relationship between latent and observed variables. In order to explore the different patterns of symbolic and utilitarian kind of support and their importance in terms of share of population concerned, I have carried out a cluster analysis, too. Quantitative analysis of survey data was also complemented with 20 in-depth interviews. As the subject of European Union is still a new topic in Hungarian public sphere and public discourses, it is rather characterized by the lack of information and interest – the qualitative approach thus placed the results of the quantitative analysis in their right context. The main objective of the in-depth interviews was to explore the meaning of the main concepts of the research (Europe, EU, Europeanness, etc.) and understand how symbolic and utilitarian logics appear in the discourses with regards to Europe and the European Union.

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<sup>1</sup> The two datasets are: (1) data of a representative survey collected in June 2005 (n=2000) by two survey institutes (Medián és a Szonda Ipsos ) within the Hungarian Election Studies program; and (2) data from the first wave of the IntUne (Integrated and United) international study. These representative data (n=1000) were collected in the Spring of 2007 by TNS Hungary and also consist of an elite subsample (n=122), involving members of the parliament and business leaders, i.e. representatives of the political and economic elites. The latter dataset allows to place Hungarian results in an international comparative context, too, however this was not the primary aim of the research.

### **3. Main Findings**

#### ***3.1. European Union vs. Europe***

When differentiating between soft and hard Euroscepticism it is also worth making a distinction between the connection to Europe and to the European Union. While the attitudes towards Europe are more of a symbolic kind, identity-like relationship, the attitudes towards the European Union are rather of a utilitarian, pragmatic character.

The research confirms what has been stated in the introduction through Eurobarometer data. Hungary's EU membership is perceived to be advantageous by 45,6% of Hungarian public opinion, 45% think that it is a "good thing", while a much higher share, 84% mentioned to be (very or somewhat) attached to Europe. Comparing these results with the elites it can be said, that the latter group expressed more positive opinions in case of the country's EU membership being beneficial (88%), while there is no significant difference in terms of European attachment (90%). If these results are placed within a European context, Hungarian public opinion is below European average in terms of the perceived benefits of EU membership (63%). Regarding European attachment on the other hand, Hungarian public opinion exceeds European average (64%). These findings confirm that Hungarian Euroscepticism is rather of a soft kind both in absolute and relative terms, while Hungarian elites are in line with European average in both aspects.

According to the results of the in-depth interviews it can be said that the concepts of Europe and European Union are often mixed up – the first is often used when referring to the latter. Nevertheless, a difference between the two notions is that the European Union rather stand for some kind of unity, Europe on the other hand means diversity in a cultural sense. Still, Europe is primarily identified as a geographical unit, this way this concept is also first of all defined by a pragmatic logic. The European Union is generally seen through its advantages and disadvantages and the concept has more meanings and richer content than the notion of Europe – which can be due to the fact that the European Union has wider media coverage nowadays.

The concepts of European Union and Europe appear in different narratives. The theme is often dealt with from an economic point of view through the process of the accession, but also through a hierarchical East-West approach, where the first two rather represent a utilitarian logic, and the latter has more of a symbolic meaning. In general, however, there is a utilitarian domination in the narratives related to the question.

### ***3.2. Utilitarian vs. Symbolic Perception of the European Union***

The main focus of the dissertation is on the perception of the European Union, this way European attachment or identity – as suggested by Hooghe and Marks (2005) – is dealt with as one determinant of the subject. My approach consists in explaining attitudes towards the EU and the symbolic vs. utilitarian distinction is applied to its determinants. The utilitarian logic of the support for the EU is defined by a cost-benefit analysis related both to the individual and to the country-level, assuming that people perceive the performance of the EU through possible advantages they can personally achieve or through the economic performance of their country (Gabel 1998, Eichenberg-Dalton 1993, Brinegar-Jolly 2005, Anderson 1998). My hypothesis on this aspect was the following:

*H1. According to the utilitarian logic I suppose that the perception of the advantages and disadvantages of the EU and the more advantageous social situation - at the individual level, together with the satisfaction with democracy and the economic performance – at the country level, have a positive impact on the attitudes towards the EU.*

One aspect of the utilitarian logic is the perception of how efficiently the EU and its institutions are working – supposing that an efficient institutional system can create positive identification (Duchesne-Frognier 1995, Kritzinger 2005, Opp 2005). The perception of how Hungary's interests are represented at the EU level is also related to the perception of the functioning of the European institutions and can thus have an effect on the attitudes towards the EU (Rohrschneider 2006). The analysis of the effect that the perception of institutions has on the support for the integration is especially interesting in former socialist countries where the level of formal trust is very low.

*H2. I suppose that the higher the trust in national/ European institutions and their effective functioning is, the more positive the attitudes towards the EU shall be.*

Within the frame of the utilitarian logic, in my analysis I have also included the preferred level of dealing with different policy areas. This aspect stands for the original sense of soft Euroscepticism proposed by Sczerbiak and Taggart, but the “content” of the EU was in the focus of many studies (Hooghe 2001, 2003, Gabel 1998, Kritzinger 2005). According to the proposition of Wessels and Kielhorn (1999) I suspected a functionalist logic behind the delegation of different policy areas – those policy areas are to be dealt with at the EU level



where the EU can play a more efficient role, i.e. policy areas dealing with cross-border or transnational issues can be handled more efficiently on the supranational level. From this point of view I focused on the “level” where these policy areas should be dealt with (regional, national, EU), the attitudes towards economic competitiveness - as an ideological background - (Börzel 2005, Vössing 2005), and on the attitudes towards further unification of certain policy areas on the long run (10 years). This way my analysis revolved around the following hypothesis:

*H3. According to the functionalist/ instrumentalist logic those policy areas would be delegated to the EU level that are dealing with cross-border, transnational issues.*

With regards to the utilitarian aspect of the support for the European integration process, my findings revealed that both individual level and country-level factors have a significant effect. In case of the general public, positive perception of the functioning of democracy at the EU level or Hungary’s economic performance, higher trust in Hungarian and EU institutions, perception of higher representation of interests, positive perception of individual level benefits of Hungary’s EU membership and higher education level are all positively affecting attitudes towards the EU. This way the hypotheses (H1&H2) concerning individual and country-level factors of the utilitarian logic seem to be proved in case of Hungarian public opinion. In case of Hungarian elites the results showed a different trend. On the one hand, less variables were available and on the other hand, the elite position itself has certain peculiar characteristics: in terms of cognitive mobilization capacities it can be considered as a more homogeneous group than the general public, thus education didn’t have significant meaning in their case, furthermore, part of the subsample was formed by members of parliament which means that all questions related to the functioning of democracy and institutions had a special meaning in their case as they are personally concerned. This way only the perception of representation of Hungarian interests had a significant positive effect on their attitudes towards the EU, but the institutional trust did not.

When looking deeper in the effect of the mentioned factors, it can be seen that utilitarian determinants of EU support are connected to each other within. Factors like perception of the democratical functioning, institutional trust and the feeling of being represented are positively connected to each other (Anderson 1998, Kritzinger 2005, Opp 2005, Rohrschneider 2006). Individual and country-level determinants are also correlating, e.g.

perceived benefits at the individual level is higher with a higher level of trust in institutions and with perception of better representation of Hungarian interests.

According to Gabel's approach (1998), education is also a significant determinant, however, it is not directly affecting the support for the EU, but it determines first of all the attitudes towards economic competitiveness, which measure has a positive impact on the support itself. The joint model for both utilitarian and symbolic determinants (structural equation model – see Figure 1) shows that individual level determinants have a more dominant effect on the attitudes towards the EU than the country-level evaluations (Gabel 1998). This way, McLaren's (2006) findings about the very individual instrumentalist character of support for the EU in new member states seem to be proven in case of Hungarian public opinion, too.

The third hypothesis about the preferred level of handling different policy areas allowed a deeper analysis of soft Euroscepticism. In case of dealing with unemployment, environmental issues and crime, Hungarian public opinion expressed higher wish for Europeanization than the European average itself, which fact is an additional evidence for the multi-dimensional character of the phenomenon of Euroscepticism. Results on the other hand show that Hungarian public opinion didn't differentiate between policy areas in terms of their cross-border or transnational nature – only one dimension could be discerned the one of lower through higher preferences for Europeanization. In the case of elites, however, the mentioned distinction turned to be a meaningful one: Hungarian elites indeed, distinguished between policy areas dealing with cross-border issues (environment, immigration, crime) and the ones that are not of transnational characters (health, unemployment, taxation) – preferences for Europeanization - are also more salient for the previous ones. This way, I could find evidences for the third hypothesis only in the case of Hungarian elites, but not in the case of the general public. The fact that elites' preferences are more differentiated in case of policy preferences can be due to the differences between the level of cognitive mobilization capacities of the two groups. The main differences between elites' and the general public's policy preferences lie in Europeanization of the handling of two rather social issues: unemployment and crime, where public opinion would favour more the EU level than elites. These results provide some empirical evidences for what Hooghe has found earlier (2003) – that public opinion would prefer a protective, social Europe - while the elites have a rather functional preference based on economic competitiveness.

Despite policy preferences show very interesting results they do not play a significant role when it comes to the support for the EU that being true for both groups. Results suggest

that the general measures of utilitarianism and the more specific measures as policy preferences have different meanings. It is thus interesting that policy preferences, that are representing soft Euroscepticism in the strict sense of the term, are in fact independent from the way one relates to the European integration process.

If the different policy areas are addressed in the long run (10 years) unification the causal mechanisms behind reveal differences once again: those who are less satisfied with representation of Hungarian interests at the EU level would be more in favour of further unification. This opinion seems to show the long term commitment for the integration process of those who are not satisfied with current situation. While this phenomenon provides further insight on the soft character of Euroscepticism in Hungary, these attitudes have no significant effect on the overall evaluation of Hungary's EU membership. The positive connection between utilitarian dissatisfaction and a long term commitment seems to grasp the essence of Euroscepticism in the soft sense, but it also raises the question whether long term unification of certain policy areas contains some symbolic elements and does rather belong to the symbolic determinants of EU support.

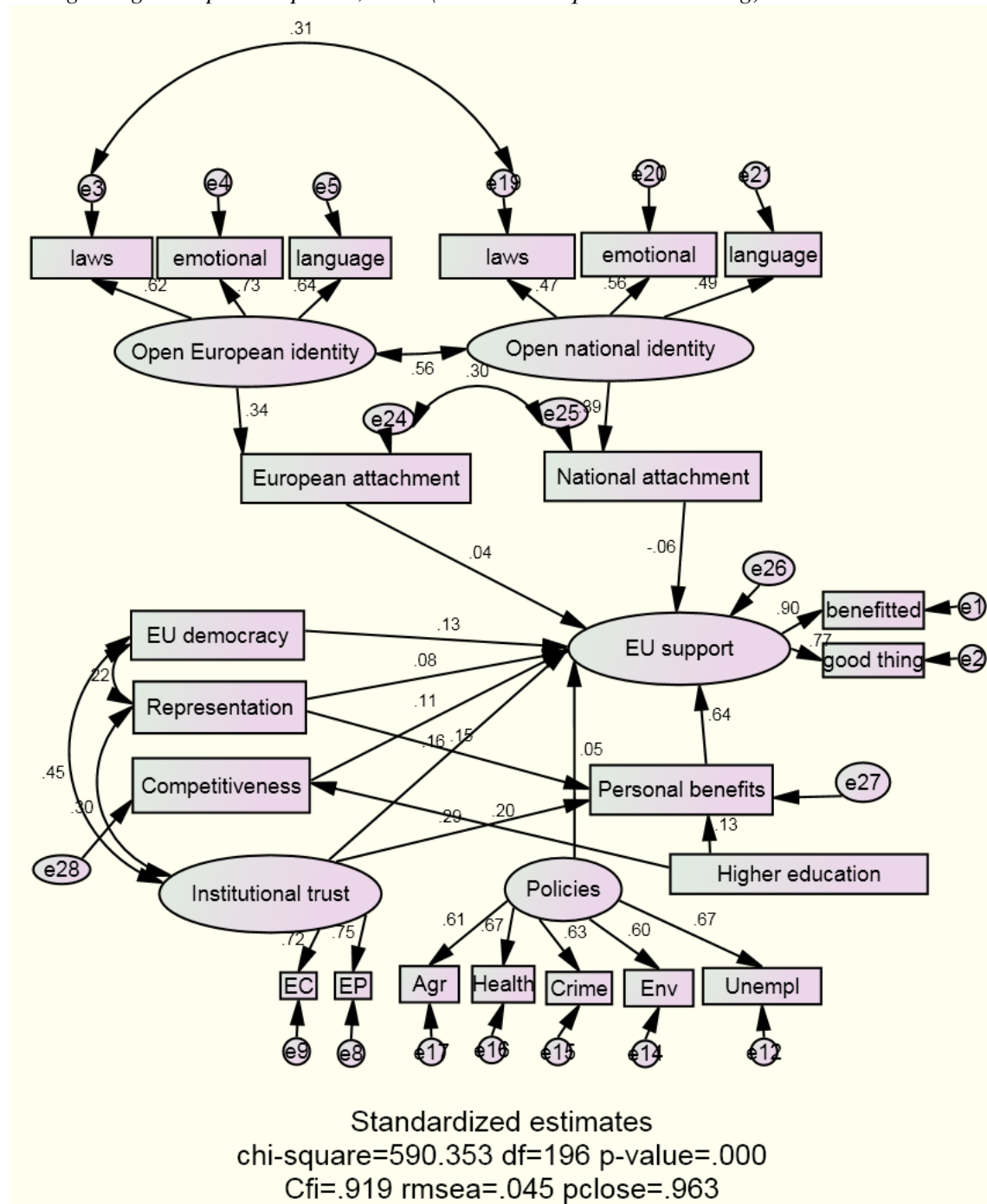
In the case of the symbolic kind of relation to the EU, I based my assumptions on Hooghe and Marks approach (2005), i.e. to analyse whether and how multiple identities are affecting the perception of the European integration process. Among the symbolic elements I focused on the attachment to different territorial levels (Carey 2002, Bruter 2005, Hooghe-Marks 2004, 2005), and on the different content and dimensions of identification (Bruter 2004, 2005, Habermas 1998, Smith 1991, Delanty 1996, Ruiz Jimenez et al. 2004, McLaren 2006). Previous works differentiate between civic vs. cultural or inherited vs. voluntary or even achieved vs. ascribed components of identity that might have different effect on how much one think that supranationalism is a threat for his/her own national identity – supranationalism is typically seen as a symbolic threat in case of national identification based on cultural elements, while civic kind of belonging favour Europeanism. In my dissertation I defined these symbolic elements as measures of Euroscepticism in the hard sense of the term. My hypothesis on the subject was based on theories dealing with the effect of different dimensions of the multiple identities:

*H4. A national identity based on cultural elements has a negative-, while a civic kind of national identity has a positive effect on European identity and on the perception of the EU.*

When dealing with the latter hypothesis, two main dimensions could be discerned both in terms of European and national identification that were, however, not in line with the proposed civic vs. cultural dimensions. Elites' and the general public's identification structure was very similar in the case of their identification with Europe, but they slightly differed in the case of their national identity. The two main dimensions discerned in both cases were an *exclusive/ defensive* kind of identification based on inherited or primordial elements such as parents and place of birth on the one hand, and an *open/ inclusive* kind of identification based on elements that one can choose and are thus decisional like emotional attachment, language and respecting laws and institutions. Although based on similar elements, the meaning of the *exclusive/ defensive* way of identification was different in case of the elites and the general public. Among the general public this way of identification went together with other attitudes showing defence. People with this kind of identity typically perceived globalization as a great threat on national security and welfare. On the contrary, identification based on primordial elements meant merely the lack of international embeddedness (no foreign connections, no experiences abroad and no usage of foreign media) in case of Hungarian elites and was not connected with other attitudes showing defence or exclusiveness. This way the hypothesis was just partly confirmed, the discerned dimensions were not in line with what was expected and they didn't have the same meaning in case of the elites and the general public.

Finally, if symbolic and utilitarian determinants of EU support are dealt with within a single model (see Figure 1), one can see that their effects appear very much separated from one another, symbolic and utilitarian determinants are not connected to each other. At the same time, the model shows the clear dominance of utilitarian elements in terms of their effect on EU support. When controlling for the effect of other variables only the *open/ inclusive* forms of identification remain in the model based on the language, emotional attachment and the respect of laws and institutions. Only these elements of identity have a significant impact on EU support, although their effect is only indirect through national and European attachment. However, these elements are not independent either. *Open/ inclusive* identification with the nation and with Europe are correlated to each other, while attachment to the nation and to Europe are rather strengthening each other – this latter result is in line with previous theoretical suggestions and empirical findings (e.g. Inglehart 1970, Bruter 2004). Furthermore, those arguments that consider the EU as a symbolic threat to national identities if this latter is based on cultural elements (e.g. McLaren 2006) haven't been proved as *exclusive/ defensive* ways of identification do not have a significant impact on the attitudes towards the EU.

Figure 1: Model of symbolic and utilitarian elements explaining the support for the EU among Hungarian public opinion, 2007 (Structural Equation Modeling)



Note: Maximum Likelihood estimation, n=976. The analysis was carried out with the program AMOS. The dependent variable of the model is the support for the EU, a latent construct based on the perception of the EU membership being a “good thing” and beneficial to Hungary. Latent variables are presented in a rounded shape while observed variables in a squared shape. Arrows show the direction of causal relationships, double arrows stand for correlation between two variables. Numbers are regression or correlation coefficients or factor loadings in case of latent constructs – in case of the presented model the effect of all coefficients are statistically significant. Variables labelled with “e” stand for errors.

Regarding the question whether a possibly existing European identity can provide further legitimacy to the European integration process, findings show that even if such an identity exists in Hungary it does not play a very important role in the support for the EU.

As for the main hypothesis of the dissertation, results seem to prove indeed that perception of the EU is first of all determined by a utilitarian logic rather than a symbolic one. Both separately run models and the joint structural equation model confirm that.

Although the level of European attachment is indeed higher in Hungary compared to other European countries, the symbolic elements overall do not play a decisive role in shaping attitudes towards the EU. This way there is no hard Euroscepticism in case of Hungarian public opinion, but the symbolic logic itself is also less relevant and defines the frame of reference to a lesser extent when it comes to the evaluation of the European Union. This finding is proven not only by the quantitative part of the research, but the qualitative part, too.

Another important aspect of the theme both confirmed by survey results and the in-depth interviews is the important embeddedness of the question in domestic political arena. Throughout the analysis of survey data the effect of political ideology measured on a left-right scale disappeared when controlling for satisfaction with Hungary's political and economical performance. A possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the left-right self-placement is strongly connected to the satisfaction with the institutionalized politics like the performance of parties and the government, and how one sees the current economic and political situation in Hungary. It seems thus that the suggestions of Inglehart (1990) about political values shaping attitudes towards European integration do not hold for Hungary – according to his argument post-materialist values would have a positive impact on the support for the EU through leftist and cosmopolitan ideology, while in case of Hungary, political ideology is rather connected to institutionalized politics than to general values and principles. On the other hand, the important embeddedness of the perception of the EU in domestic political arena are in line with what Anderson (1998) has suggested about the necessity of using “proxies” when one deals with such a distant topic as the EU. Because people lack information and interest in this subject they need to rely on something they know in order to form an opinion – an obvious proxy would be the domestic politics. Results are also in-line with previous studies dealing with Central and East-European countries through their different social and economic development patterns where usually perception of the relatively new democratic system and the attitudes towards market economy are shaping the attitudes towards the EU (e.g. Cichowski 2000). Several studies have confirmed the effect of these elements and suggested that these are all effects of the regime change (e.g. Cichowski 2000,

Tucker-Pacek-Berinsky 2002). However, after about 20 years passed it seems that these effects are still important determinants of the attitudes; therefore they should be understood in a broader context as the effect of the relation towards a whole political system.

### **3.3. *Elites' vs. Public Opinion***

The third model for supporting the EU mentioned by Hooghe and Marks beside the utilitarian and identity-based approaches is explaining attitudes towards the EU through “political cueing” where the accent is put on the role of elites in shaping public opinion. As previously stated, evaluation of the domestic political arena has an important effect on the subject; this way, the latter approach seems to be crucial in order to understand Hungarians’ Euroscepticism. When comparing elites’ and public opinion, some important differences to be taken into account are the higher cognitive mobilization capacities, higher level of information and the personal concern in case of the elites that characterize their position. As higher level of cognitive mobilization capacity induce higher level of ability to compare advantages and disadvantages of the EU, utilitarian logic should be more salient among the elites. My hypothesis was the following:

*H5. Elites’ attitudes towards European integration are more of a utilitarian character than in case of the public opinion. However, not only the higher level of cognitive mobilization capacities or higher level of other social and cultural resources account for this difference. Being member of the elites has an effect beyond these factors probably rooted in the elite position itself and the fact that they are personally concerned by the question.*

Overall, regarding the general measures of the support for the EU, Hungarian elites are more in favour of the integration project than the general public. This can be partly explained by the higher level of cognitive mobilization capacities, but can also be due to the higher level of information and personal concern. Results show that the utilitarian logic is equally dominant among the two groups; however, the effect of symbolic elements on the support for the EU is more salient among the elites than among the general public. This way, the analysis of the fifth hypothesis proved the contrary to what was expected: utilitarian logic plays a similarly important role in case of the elites and the general public while the symbolic logic is more salient among the first group. According to joint regression models, elite-membership

has an additional effect on the perception of the EU even after controlling for different cultural and social resources – this part of the hypothesis thus turned to be true.

The results of a cluster analysis also provide further evidences for this tendency. When taking into account that the public opinion itself is not homogeneous but consists of different groups, even the most positive group of the general public, the *Euro-optimists*, is not as positive as the elites. Furthermore, the group that is the most similar to the elites in terms of cognitive mobilization capacities, the *pragmatic supporters*, is not even close to them when it comes to the evaluation of the perceived benefits of EU membership for the country. However, if European attachment is addressed instead of the perception of EU membership, the gap between the elites and the public opinion is significantly reduced (see Table2).

Table 2: Perception of the EU and European attachment among the different clusters

	General public						Elites
	Total	With no opinion	Symbolically committed dissatisfied	Euro-optimists	Non-committed social security valueers	Pragmatic supporters	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.002</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>122</b>
	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>
<b>Taking everything into consideration, would you say that Hungary has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union? (Cramer's V: 0.266***)</b>							
Has benefited	45,7%	35,7%	26,4%	72,0%	35,8%	54,3%	87,7%
Has not benefited	42,0%	39,1%	61,5%	23,3%	47,6%	34,1%	9,8%
Don't know	11,8%	24,5%	11,5%	4,7%	16,2%	10,6%	0,0%
Refuse	0,6%	0,7%	0,7%	0,0%	0,4%	1,0%	2,5%
<b>People feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country and to Europe. Are you very attached, somewhat attached, not very attached or not at all attached to Europe? (Cramer's V: 0.152***)</b>							
Very attached	45,5%	43,3%	52,0%	50,8%	23,0%	46,3%	50,4%
Somewhat attached	39,1%	28,9%	34,7%	41,0%	47,1%	42,8%	40,5%
Not very attached	13,0%	20,8%	12,0%	7,5%	24,3%	9,4%	6,6%
Not at all attached	2,4%	7,0%	1,2%	0,7%	5,6%	1,5%	2,5%

Source: IntUne 2007

In case of the public opinion, several groups with different patterns of utilitarian and symbolic kind of attachment to the EU can be discerned. Hard Euroscepticism, the lack of symbolic attachment characterizes 14% of Hungarian adult population, while 29% can be identified as Eurosceptics in the soft sense of the term. The first group, the *non-committed social security valueers* are differentiated from the others by their lack of symbolic commitment both to Europe and the nation, and by the fact that they would prefer solidarity as the main goal for the EU. The latter group, the *symbolically committed dissatisfied* group represent the biggest group, are characterized by the most negative opinions along the utilitarian logic, while they are the most attached both to Europe and Hungary. Besides these



two groups, the *Euro-optimists* (24%) seem to be the most positive towards the EU both in terms of utilitarian and symbolic logics. The *pragmatic supporters* are the group that disposes of the highest cognitive mobilization capacities (22%), but their attitudes towards the EU are rather mixed containing both positive and negative elements. Taking into account their interest in politics and their media usage, this group can be considered as an “attentive public” in the sense of Devine (1970) for the discourses and dialogues taking place among the elites. As opposed to this group, 12% of Hungarian adult population does not really have an opinion on the subject. The fact that one couldn’t express an opinion seems to show that the utilitarian logic is not available for everyone due to the lack of information or interest on the matter. On the other hand, the lack of opinion reinforced the symbolic way of relating to the subject – this finding is both confirmed by the analysis of survey results and the in-depth interviews. At the same time there are signs showing that in case of the general public it is more adequate to talk about attitudes rather than well-grounded and differentiated opinions when it comes to the matter of European Union – an exception may be the group of *pragmatic supporters*.

The symbolic logic of connection to the European Union is thus more salient among the elites and those who couldn’t express a real opinion. The majority of the general public is, however, characterized by the dominance of the utilitarian logic. Furthermore, the in-depth interviews confirmed that people often tend to avoid holding a symbolic discourse on the topic – sometimes they even express this avoidance in an explicit way. These efforts to keep away from symbolic reasoning can be explained by the general disillusionment and lack of trust in politics and politicians; those who dispose of a certain level of knowledge about the topic tend to prefer to place it within a utilitarian narrative.

Besides the mentioned heterogeneity of the public opinion, elites are not homogeneous themselves. Economic elites, top business leaders of the main companies would be more in favour of a competitive European Union than the members of parliament. They also tend to trust institutions less than the political elite, but their perception of how Hungarian interests are represented at the EU level is better, and they would also be more in favour of a European Union army than their political counterparts. All this can be result of the fact that the small subsample (n=22) of the business leaders are mostly from international companies where their international embeddedness is higher. Compared to them, the political elite is indeed more attached to their locality and the nation, and they also trust more political institutions probably because they are personally affected by the establishment of these matters.

#### **4. Summary of the Main Findings**

The main findings of the dissertation are the followings:

- The main logic of the support for the European Union is indeed rather utilitarian and less symbolic. Furthermore, the utilitarian logic represents the relevant frame of reference of the question. In this way, Hungarian public opinion is characterized by Euroscepticism in the soft sense of the term, while a principled rejection of the integration process is not really present.
- The way one perceives the different policy areas to be dealt with at the EU level – preferences on the “content” of the EU -, do not have a significant effect on the support for the EU. This brings further differentiation to the term of soft Euroscepticism and its Hungarian manifestation.
- Attachment to Hungary and attachment to Europe do not exclude each other but are rather strengthening each other. This way, supranationality does not pose a symbolic threat on national identity. European attachment, on the other hand, is not a significant determinant of the support for the EU, therefore, it is questionable whether and to what extent a European identity can provide legitimacy to the European Union.
- The embeddedness of the subject in domestic political arena is very important, just as the effect of how one perceives the country’s economic and political performance.
- The perception of the EU is much more positive among the elites than among the general public. Although public opinion can’t be considered homogeneous and different patterns of support coexist, opinions, in general, can be considered less differentiated. While among the general public it is rather relevant to talk about attitudes, one can accept opinions as being well-grounded ones with regards to the EU among the elites.

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