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A ROSE BY ANOTHER NAME WOULD SMELL THE SAME: HIDDEN POTENTIAL OF ANTISYSTEM PARTIES IN SLOVAKIA?

To, čo ružou zveme, pod iným menom tiež by voňalo: skrytý
potenciál antisystémových strán na Slovensku?

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Annotation

This article aims to identify voter attitudes, based on the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections, towards European integration, religious attitudes in politics, universal left-right integration, the rights of ethnic minorities, the position between cosmopolitan and national sentiments, and political decentralization in favour of regions at the district level of Slovakia, while considering factors that affect voter's selection. In the first step, we calculated the position of the district through the results of individual political parties (district level) in the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020 and data from the 2019 Chapel Hill expert survey. In the second step, we used these results as dependent variables for regression analysis, examining their dependence on the variables average wage, unemployment rate, ethnic composition, and time availability of the district's seat from the regional centre and Bratislava (capital). A retrospective analysis of voter attitudes at individual districts has shown that concerns about possible covert support for anti-system parties are warranted. "Negative" results, especially on religious principles in politics, ethnic minority rights, inclination to national values, and centralized power, show that if expectations from standard (or liberal democratic) parties are not met, there is a risk of voters diverting to radical parties.

Key words

anti-system political parties, elections, political attitudes

Anotácia

Cieľom nášho príspevku je na základe výsledkov parlamentných volieb z roku 2020 identifikovať postoje voličov v otázkach európskej integrácie, náboženských postojov v politike, všeobecnej ľavo-pravej integrácie, práv etnických minorít, pozície medzi kozmopolitným a národným cítením a otázkou politickej decentralizácie v prospech regiónov na úrovni okresov Slovenska a faktory, ktoré ich ovplyvňujú. V prvom kroku sme prostredníctvom výsledkov jednotlivých politických strán (na okresnej úrovni) vo voľbách do Národnej rady SR v roku 2020 a údajov z 2019 Chapel Hill expert survey vypočítali pozíciu okresu. V druhom kroku sme tieto výsledky použili ako závislé premenné pre regresnú analýzu, kedy sme skúmali ich závislosť od premenných - priemerná mzda, miera nezamestnanosti, národnostné zloženie a časová dostupnosť sídla okresu od regionálneho (krajského) centra a Bratislavy (hlavné mesto). Spätná analýza postojov voličov v jednotlivých okresoch ukázala, že obavy o možnej skrytej podpore pre antisystémové strany sú na mieste. "Negatívne" výsledky predovšetkým pri náboženských princípoch v politike, právach etnických minorít, inklinovaniu k národným hodnotám a centralizovanej moci ukazujú, že v prípade nenaplnenia očakávaní od štandardných (pro- resp. liberálno demokratických) strán existuje riziko odklonu voličov k radikálnym stranám

Kľúčové slová

antisystémové politické strany, voľby, politické postoje

JEL Classification: Z18, R11, O17

1. Introduction

The rise of populist radical right parties (PRRPs), promoting populism, anti-migration rhetoric, xenophobic views, and Euroscepticism within their ideologies, has been a key political feature of European Union countries for some period (Colantone and Staning; 2019). Moreover, the electoral success of these parties in EU countries does not appear to be slowing down (Netherlands, France, Hungary, Sweden). On the contrary, the current trend suggests that success of these parties is steady and likely to increase. Thus, the question that seems to be relevant in this context - what drives voters in ongoing support for PRRPs?

The research on the success of PRRPs pinpoints on two sides - supply-side and demand-side factors (Mudde, 2007). Despite well-chosen political narratives, strategically designed communication, and other political party competencies, it is often assumed that sufficient demand for such a program is crucial to project success (Mudde, 2007; Pirro, 2014). Previous studies have examined the voting preferences of PRRPs as a dependent variable - proportion of votes for one populist radical right-wing party. We believe that this methodological approach can be largely obsolete. As there may be several political parties throughout the political spectrum whose ideologies change over time. Therefore, focusing on the static selection of one political party can lead to incorrect estimates. Given this, our research focuses on the ideological dynamism that characterizes political parties: a mainstream political party in the previous parliamentary term may become populist in the present parliamentary term because of internal and external changes (van Leeuwen and Halleck Vega, 2021). Simply put, our scientific approach reflects the unchanging beliefs of voters by capturing changes in the ideology of our selected political parties through time. It may thus be claimed that, while political parties change, fade, and reappear, people's dissatisfaction and attitudes (discontent) stay constant, owing to a variety of circumstances.

Considering this, our paper, which is based on the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections, aims to identify voter attitudes towards European integration, religious attitudes in politics, universal left-right integration, ethnic minority rights, the position between cosmopolitan and national sentiments, and political decentralization in favour of regions at the district level in Slovakia, as well as the factors that influence these attitudes.

2. Literature review

The literature in the field of PRRPs electoral success describes voting in terms of people's discontent, with researchers focusing on regional factors in this regard. The presented presumption is based on the empirical results of a study by Rodríguez-Pose (2017), which pointed to the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants of declining regions, where is presence of persistent poverty, economic decline, and lack of opportunities. The unfavourable prognosis for future growth, combined with the conviction that these regions have no future, has sparked a revolution against the status quo, with populist extreme right-wing groups gaining electoral support. Therefore, Rodríguez-Pose (2017) recognized these areas as places that don't matter, because voter support had a strong territorial rather than a social base in the background, as may be believed at first. The research was based on the results of the UK referendum on EU membership, and Becker et al. (2017) found that election results for the choice to "leave the EU" at the district level coincided with deprivation in education, income, and employment. On the other hand, it should be noted that a study that sought to map pan-European dissatisfaction by Djikstra et al. (2020) suggests that if the variables - education, industrial change, and jobs - are controlled, it is the richer cities that show a degree of anti-systemism, especially if they have experienced better economic times.

In our work, we define populist radical right parties in accordance with the definition by Mudde (2007), which defines the PRRPs as political parties with a key identity that is a combination of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. While nativism is an ideology that states should be inhabited exclusively by indigenous peoples, and any hint of immigration threatens the original homogeneous group. Authoritarianism refers to the belief in a strictly organized society, run by a charismatic leader who draws attention to the dissatisfaction and worries of ordinary people. Populism is understood as a thin-cantered ideology that considers society to be divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups - the pure people versus the corrupt elite, arguing that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people.

In our work, we define Euroscepticism in accordance with the Chapel Hill expert survey as a group of political attitudes expressing varying degrees of conditional or absolute opposition to European integration, with political parties strongly opposed to European integration, against European integration or with only moderate objections against European integration. Euroscepticism is often associated with voter support for populist radical right parties in the research. Authors Iverslaften (2005), Van der Brug et al. (2005) Lubbers and Scheepers (2007) and Arzheimer (2009) have partially or completely demonstrated that Euroscepticism is an important determinant of

the electoral vote of PRRPs. This is even more true for the region of Central and Eastern Europe, where results from Santana, Zagórski and Rama (2020) have shown that Eurosceptic attitudes are the most widespread characteristic at the individual level, which stimulates support for the PRRPs.

Anti-immigration attitudes are a key ideology of PRRPs and are expressed through nativism. This ideology portrays migrants, but also other groups of "outsiders" or actors, as a threat to the national identity, values and material wealth of the "people" (Rydgren, 2008; Mudde 2017). Mobilizing feelings of guilt by pointing to immigration increases the success of populist radical right-wing parties, and anti-immigration attitudes are one of the elements most often found in the electoral base of PRRPs (Rooduijn, 2018; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018). Relationships between the majority and the minority are discussed in several studies. In these studies, we may encounter the "halo effect" hypothesis, which explains that xenophobia and anti-immigration attitudes are most common in regions adjacent to regions with a high number of immigrants. This means that the breeding ground for the mobilization of PRRPs is not directly the regions with higher minority populations, but the neighbouring regions due to fears of losing the social and economic status of their populations (Rydgren and Ruth, 2013).

In our work we focus on the attitudes of voters on issues of European integration, religious attitudes in politics, universal left-right integration, the rights of ethnic minorities, the position between cosmopolitan and national sentiment and the issue of political decentralization in favour of regions at the district level. The reasons for selecting these issues are, on the one hand, the identification of hidden voting potential for PRRPs, which can turn into real support if the voting needs offered by the "consumer basket" of public goods and policies are not saturated by standard political parties. The current situation (the hot armed conflict in Ukraine and the hybrid war against the West) adds to the importance of this topic.

3. Data and methods

3.1 Data

Data on the results of the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020 at the district level and data on the average wage at the district level were collected from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Data on the unemployment rate for 2019 were collected from the database of Centre for Labour, Social Affairs, and the Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny).

Data on the time distance of the district "capital" from Capital city of Slovakia Bratislava and the regional centre (relevant regional city) were obtained from Google Maps 18.11.2021 (Thursday) early evening.

Data on the positions of individual political parties in selected topics come from the dataset Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019. In this dataset, 13 political entities were evaluated Ordinary people and independent personalities (OLaNO - Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti), Smer - Social Democracy (Smer-SD; Smer – sociálna demokracia), Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK-MKP; Strana maďarskej koalície), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH; Kresťansko demokratické hnutie), Slovak National Party (SNS; Slovenská národná strana), Most-Híd, Freedom and Solidarity (SaS; Sloboda a solidarita), Network (Siet'), People's Party our Slovakia (ĽSNS; Ľudová strana naše Slovensko), We are a family (Sme Rodina), Progressive Slovakia (PS), Together (Spolu) and For People (Za ľudí).

3.2 Methods

In the first step, we calculated the position of the district through the results of individual political parties (at the district level) obtained in the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2020 and data from the 2019 Chapel Hill expert survey. In the second step, we used these results as dependent variables for regression analysis, examining their dependence on the variables average wage, unemployment rate, ethnic composition, and time availability of the district's seat from the regional centre and Bratislava (capital).

District position calculation

The positions of individual districts were calculated from the positions of individual political parties (and their election result in a specific district as:

$$DP_{ij} = \sum PR_{im} \times PP_{mj}$$

Where

DP_{ij} is the position of the district in the topic j

PR_{im} is the election result of a political party in district i

PP_{mj} is the position of the political party m in the topic j

In the elections of the Progressive Slovakia (PS) and Together (Spolu) parties, they ran as a coalition of parties, therefore we used the average of the positions of the original parties as the value of their position. In the calculations, we assigned the election results of the group of the Magyar Közösségi Összefogás - Hungarian Community Partnership to the SMK-MKP party, based on which the SMK applied for the favour of voters.

Nationality concentration

For the calculation of nationality concentration, we have used the standard Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, which is calculated as:

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^N n_i^2$$

Where n_i^2 is in our case the share of a nationality in the district i .

Interpretation of H used to assess the degree of concentration of firms in the market is as follows

$H < 0.01$ - highly competitive industry

$H < 0.15$ - unconcentrated industry

$0.15 < H < 0.25$ - moderate concentration

$H > 0.25$ - high concentration

Regression model

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where y was represented by the district position., β_0 represented the constant value, x_1 represented the distance of the district centre to the regional centre, x_2 represented the distance to the Capital city of Slovakia Bratislava, x_3 represented the average district wage, x_4 represented the district unemployment level and x_5 the nationality concentration.

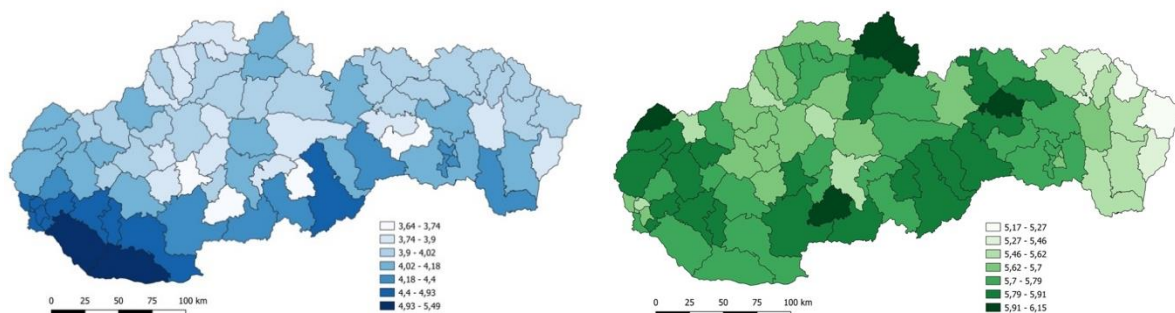
4. Results

We examined the position of the districts of Slovakia in the following topics: European integration, general left-right orientation, religious principles in politics, the rights of ethnic minorities, the position between cosmopolitan and national, and the issue of political decentralization in favour of regions. The results are as follows.

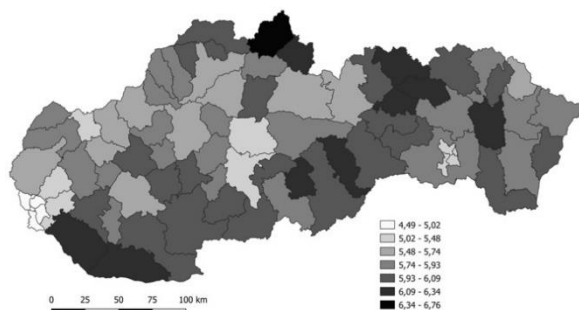
Fig. 1 Attitudes of districts to selected topics – cartograms

a) European integration

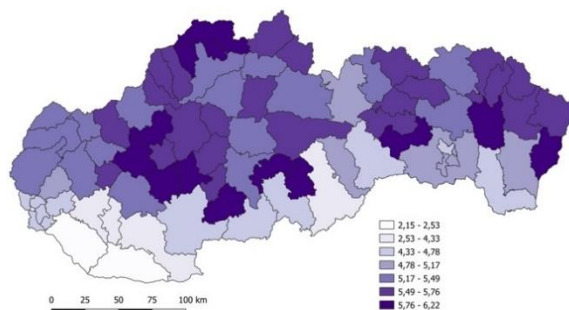
b) Left-right orientation (general)



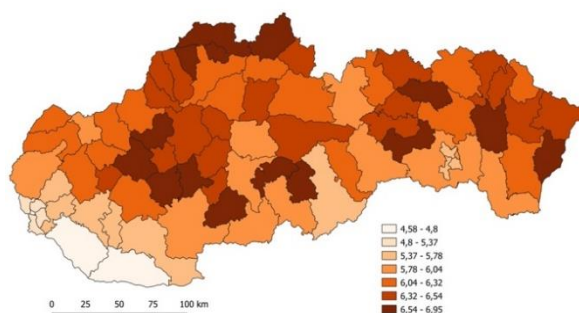
c) Religious principles in politics



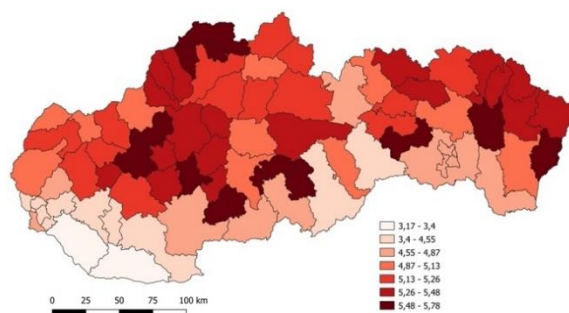
d) Rights of ethnic minorities



e) Cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism



f) Political decentralization (regions)



Source: authors

Tab. 1: Regression results

	EU_position b/se	LR_gen b/se	rel_princ b/se	ethnic_min b/se	dec_regions b/se	nationalism b/se
dist_RC	0.000 (0.00)	0.001 (0.00)	0.003 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.001 (0.00)
dist_BA	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	0.001 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)
wage	0.001*** (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	-0.001*** (0.00)	-0.001* (0.00)	-0.001** (0.00)	-0.001*** (0.00)
unemploy	-0.035** (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)	0.006 (0.01)	0.077*** (0.02)	0.050** (0.02)	0.047** (0.02)
nat_HHI	-1.666*** (0.16)	0.150 (0.12)	0.236 (0.20)	3.823*** (0.36)	2.409*** (0.25)	2.267*** (0.26)
constant	5.055*** (0.29)	5.620*** (0.22)	6.965*** (0.36)	2.616*** (0.65)	3.631*** (0.44)	5.486*** (0.46)
R-sqr	0.637	0.095	0.585	0.628	0.601	0.640
dfres	73	73	73	73	73	73
BIC	-9.9	-59.2	24.2	115.3	55.3	60.1

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: authors

European integration

In this case, the position of the district is expressed by values from 1 to 7, where 1 = Strongly opposed 2 = Opposed 3 = Somewhat opposed 4 = Neutral 5 = Somewhat in favour 6 = In favour 7 = Strongly in favour.

As we can see in Fig. 1a (below), most districts scored around the “neutral” value of 4. The lowest value (3.63) and thus the position between “Somewhat opposed” and “Neutral” was reached by the Krupina district, followed

by the Poltár (3.69) and Gelnica districts (3.7). The district of Bratislava 1 (4.93) placed just close to the value of 5. Only the districts of Komárno (5.26) and Dunajská Streda (5.48) achieved "somewhat in favour". In general, we can say that Slovakia's attitudes towards the EU is (on average) neutral.

The results of the regression (Tab. 1, below) showed that attitudes towards European integration are largely influenced by the level of national concentration, unemployment, and income. The distance from the regional or national centre did not prove to be statistically significant in this case.

General left-right orientation

The value characterizes the attitude of the region in terms of its overall ideological stance. 0 = Extreme left: 5 = Centre: 10 = Extreme right. The results are shown in Fig. 1b.

The centre-right position of all districts of Slovakia has a surprising effect. Even the most left-wing districts in eastern Slovakia reached a value higher than 5 - Medzilaborce (5.17), Snina (5.27) and Svidník (5.41). On the contrary, the "most right-wing" district became Námestovo (6.14) before Skalica (6.03) and Tvrdošín (6.01).

Regression analysis in this case does not offer much explanation. If we reduce the reliability rate to 90%, it will prove to be a statistically significant distance of the district centre from the capital Bratislava.

Religious principles in politics

The relationship of the inhabitants of the individual districts to the role of religious principles in politics is evaluated on a scale of 0 = Strongly supports religious principles in politics: 10 = Strongly supports religious principles in politics.

As we can see in Fig. 1c, the districts of Námestovo (6.76), Tvrdošín (6.34) and Levoča (6.33) "seek" the most significant influence of religion in politics. The location of the districts of Dunajská Streda (6.22) and Komárno (6.24), which follow in 4th and 5th place, is unexpected. On the other side are the "secular" districts of Bratislava (4.49-5.02).

From the point of view of regression analysis, wages, which have a negative effect on the need for religiosity, proved to be a statistically significant factor in this case - and thus the higher the wage in a observed district, the lower the need for religious principles in politics. The second factor that becomes statistically significant when the confidence rate is reduced to 90% is the distance of the district centre from the regional centre.

Ethnic minority rights

Attitudes towards rights for political minorities are assessed similarly to the previous case on a scale of 0 = Strongly favours more rights for ethnic minorities: 10 = Strongly opposes more rights for ethnic minorities. The results are shown in Fig. 1d. In this case, the position of the districts of Dunajská streda (2.15) and Komárno (2.53) with a significant representation of the Hungarian minority, which lead in front of the district of Bratislava 1 (4.13), is unsurpassed. On the other side are the districts of Poltár (6.22), Čadca (6.07) and Kysucké Nové Mesto (6.03). Apart from the significantly bounced values of the Dunajská Streda and Komárno districts, the attitude of the other districts ranges between 4 and 6.

The statistically significant factor for explaining the attitudes of districts to the rights of ethnic minorities was the wage, the growth of which works in favour of the promotion of minority rights, as well as the unemployment rate and ethnic concentration. Both variables, with their increasing value, have a negative effect on the perception of the rights of ethnic minorities.

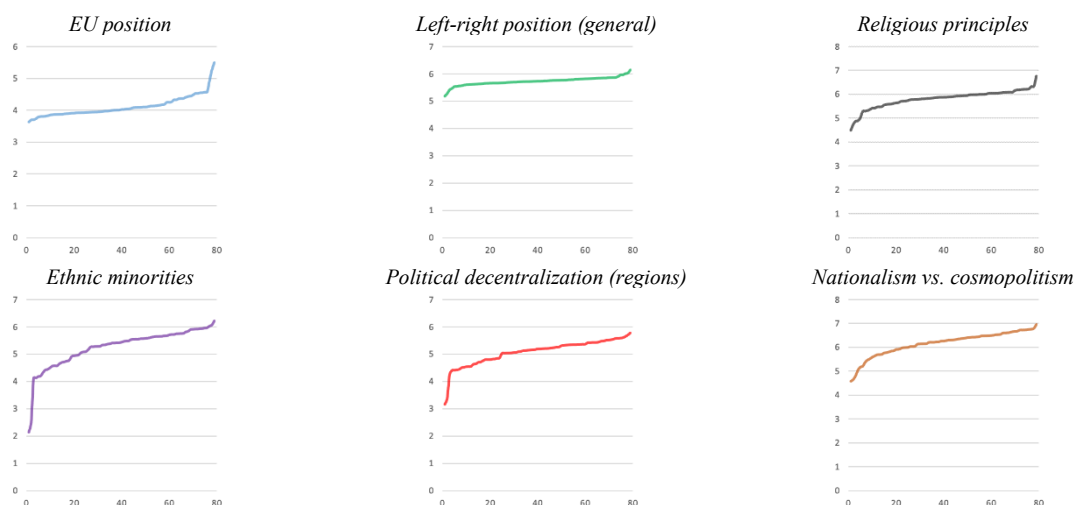
Position between cosmopolitanism and nationalism

The value we have calculated for each district expresses the position towards cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism. Where 0 = Strongly promotes cosmopolitan conceptions of society: 10 = Strongly promotes nationalist conceptions of society.

The positions at both ends are very similar to those of the previous section - attitudes towards the rights of ethnic minorities. The results are shown in Fig. 1e. The largest support for the cosmopolitan arrangement is in the district of Dunajská Streda (4.58), followed by Bratislava 1 (4.65) and the district of Komárno (4.80). Immediately behind them are the other 4 districts of Bratislava (with values of 5.04 to 5.37). On the other hand, the districts of Poltár (6.95), Čadca (6.79) and Kysucké Nové Mesto (6.76) are the most "closed" and nationally focused.

As in the previous case, the statistically significant factors of wage, unemployment and nationality are concentration. However, the value of the coefficients has changed - the effect of wages has increased in this case and the effect of unemployment and ethnic concentration has weakened.

Fig. 2 Attitudes of districts to selected topics - the course of values



Source: authors

Political decentralization in favour of the regions

The last topic that we focused on while monitoring attitudes across the districts of Slovakia is the issue of political decentralization in favour of the regions. The attitude of the district expresses the position between 0 = Strongly favours political decentralization: 10 = Strongly opposes political decentralization.

In Fig. 1f we can see that the districts of Dunajská Streda (3.17), Komárno (3.40) and Bratislava 1 (4.25) have the greatest confidence in the ability of individuals / regions. On the other side are again the districts of Poltár (5.78), Čadca (5.70) and Kysucké Nové Mesto (5.65).

The regression analysis again showed the impact of the same factors as in the previous two cases - wage, unemployment, and nationality concentration. Compared with the previous case, the impact of wages has weakened again, but the impact of unemployment has slightly increased.

Conclusion

A retrospective analysis of voter attitudes in individual districts has shown that concerns about possible covert support for anti-system parties are warranted. "Negative" results, especially on religious principles in politics, ethnic minority rights, inclination to national values and centralized power, show that if expectations from standard (or liberal democratic) parties are not met, there is a risk of voters shift towards radical parties (these may appear on any part of the political spectrum).

Wage levels and unemployment were frequent factors influencing household attitudes. To capture the "current" economic situation, in our analysis we used data from the end of 2019, which was only a few months before the parliamentary elections (and the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic). Interestingly, the significance of both factors was reflected despite long-term economic growth, which led to both a reduction in the unemployment rate and wage growth. This confirms our conviction that the fundamental change needed to strengthen pro-democratic principles will not be primarily linked to the economic situation per se but to other spatial aspects. In the context of examining the attitudes of the population in relation to cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism forces the focus of further research on the "openness" and tolerance of individual regions and the way to the extent that these values are present within cultural and value stereotypes within individual districts (regions).

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