



Perspectives of the European Union and Romania in 2024

Research Report

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The processing of the publication was concluded in 2024. The Summary was written in January 2025.

1. The Purpose and Methodology of the Analysis

Our goal with the current analysis is to present an overall view of the attitudes of Hungarians in Transylvania towards the EU and about its changes between 2014 and 2024. Romania joined the EU in 2007. The Hungarian community within Romania has a particular attitude towards the EU and has specific expectations from it – our analysis deals mainly with these attitudes and expectations. According to the latest census in 2021, there are about one million ethnic Hungarians in Romania representing 6 percent of the country's resident population. In the European Parliament elections, the Hungarian community in Transylvania has elected two or three deputies: in 2007 the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) sent two deputies (with 5.5 percent of the votes) and there was elected one more independent candidate, László Tőkés; in 2009 the RMDSZ sent three deputies (with 8.9 percent) and in 2014 and 2019 two deputies (with 6.3 percent and 5.3 percent). In the 2024 elections, the Hungarian community in Transylvania performed well, with the RMDSZ securing 6.5 percent of the votes, once again sending two representatives to the European Parliament.

Our report is based on three surveys carried out on a representative sample of Hungarian population in Transylvania. The researches were commissioned by the Kós Károly Academy Foundation and the Centre for European Studies of Brussels (Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies).

The surveys used a similar methodology (same sampling methodology, same questions) to elicit opinions expressed by ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania. We also made sure that our results are comparable with to Eurobarometer data, so that it is possible to compare with the opinions of Hungarians in Transylvania and with the population of the other member states as well. We focused on three main reference points for interpreting attitudes of Hungarians in Transylvania: EU averages, data for Romania and for Hungary, respectively. We consider all these important, because Hungarians in Transylvania are at least as familiar with the political arena in Hungary as with the political environment in Romania.

The main subject areas of our analysis are the following, among others: general social climate, problems the population faces, attitudes toward the state and public services, direction of the EU, trust in the EU, opinions about accession to the EU, attitudes toward EU Membership.

Geographically, our surveys have covered 16 counties in Romania (Alba, Arad, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Caraș-Severin, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Maramureș, Mureș, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Sibiu and Timiș). According to census results, 98 percent of ethnic Hungarians in Romania live in these counties. The data from surveys on ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania are compared to those of the Eurobarometer that were conducted the closest to them in time. It is important to point out the fact that while the Eurobarometer surveys refer to the population aged 15 years and older, the surveys on Hungarians in Transylvania refer to the population aged 18 and older. This difference is not negligible but the results are nevertheless comparable from the point of view of underlying trends.

The results of the research will also be compared with data from previous studies provided by the client, focusing on questions that have appeared in multiple surveys representative of the Hungarian population in Transylvania.

1. The description of surveys on Hungarians in Transylvania used in this paper and the names of Eurobarometer surveys used for comparison

Survey	Organization	Fieldwork	Sample	Margin of error	Comparison with EB
2014 Apr.	TransObjective Consulting SRL	2014.03.21–04.07	N=1626	±2,5%	EB81.2, (2014 spring)
2019 Jun.	SoDiSo Research SRL	2019.06.10–26.	N=1190	±2,9%	EB91.5, (2019 summer)
2023 March	SoDiSo Research SRL	2023.03.10–31.	N=1171	±2,9%	EB98.2, (2023 winter)
2023 Nov.	SoDiSo Research SRL	2023.11.03–22.	N=1196	±2,9%	EB99.4, (2023 spring) EB100, (2023 autumn)
2024 Sept.	Public Policy Research Center Association	2024.09.09–22.	N=1190	±2,9%	EB102, (2024 autumn)

We will present the results of the latest survey on ethnic Hungarians (September 2024) by several demographic and social background variable as well. One such variable is the region in Transylvania where respondents live: Seklerland (Harghita and Covasna counties), Partium (Bihar, Satu Mare and Salaj counties), Central Transylvania (Cluj and Mures counties) and the Diaspora (Arad, Bistrita-Nasaud, Brasov, Alba, Hunedoara, Maramures, Sibiu and Timis counties). This distinction is important because the share of Hungarians in the population in these regions varies. In Seklerland the Hungarians make up 80, in Partium 27, in Central Transylvania 25 and in the diaspora approximately 6 percent of the population. Besides the level of regions, we take into consideration: the size of settlement, sex, age, educational level, activity and the income (based on the respondent’s estimation) of the respondent. The number and proportion of respondents by these variables are presented in the table below.

2. Characteristics of the sample of the survey of Ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, September 2024

		Number of cases (N)	Percentage (%)
Region	Seklerland	386	32,4
	Central Transylvania	300	25,2
	Partium	295	24,8
	Diaspora	209	17,6
Size of settlement (number of inhabitants)	Under 1000	179	15,0
	Between 1000-2500	226	19,0
	Between 2500-15 thousand	292	24,5
	Between 15-100 thousand	202	16,9
	Over 100 thousand	292	24,5
Gender	Male	565	47,5
	Female	625	52,5
Age	18–34 years	308	25,9
	35–49 years	285	23,9
	50–64 years	245	20,6
	Above 64 years	352	29,6
Educational level	Primary	222	18,6
	Professional	395	33,2
	High school	447	37,6
	Higher education	126	10,6
Subjective assessment of their income	Lives in hardship	136	11,4
	Comes out with a schedule	392	32,9
	Lives decently	522	43,8
	Lives without financial problems	141	11,8
Total sample		1 190	100,0

2. Social climate, problems

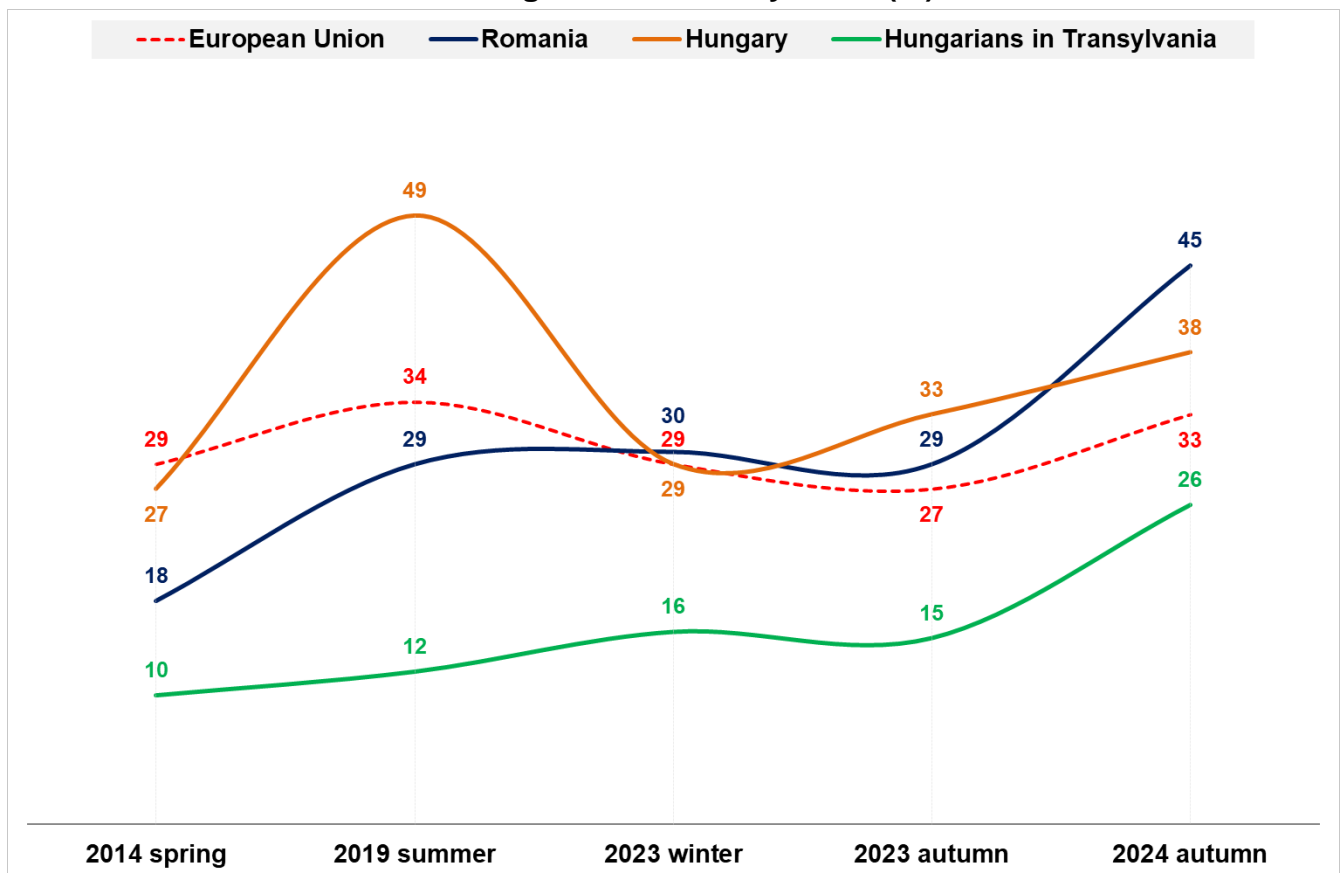
2.1. The Direction of the Country

At the time of the survey the general climate of Hungarians in Transylvania was basically negative and compared to the EU member states it was also pessimistic. In autumn 2024 about 26 percent of Hungarians in Transylvania believed that things were going well in the country (Romania). This value means that the general climate of Hungarians in Transylvania is comparable to Germany and Slovakia (26 percent) or Slovenia (25 percent).

It is important to note that Hungarians in Transylvania are significantly more pessimistic than the Romanian average. At all times when surveys were conducted, the overall population of Romania was significantly more optimistic, for example in 2024 the national average was 45 percent while within the Hungarian community it was just 26 percent who thought that Romania was heading in the right direction.

According to the results of our survey carried out in autumn 2024 pessimistic attitudes are more frequent among working-aged, professional education graduates, living in more modest material conditions.

3. Share of population considering that the country is going in the right direction: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



4. At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction in Romania? Hungarians in Transylvania, by several background variables, September 2024 (%)

		Right direction	Wrong direction	DK, NA
Region	Seklerland	31	65	4
	Central Transylvania	26	69	5
	Partium	25	70	5
	Diaspora	17	79	4
Size of settlement (number of inhabitants)	Under 1000	28	66	6
	Between 1000-2500	27	69	4
	Between 2500-15 thousand	27	69	4
	Between 15-100 thousand	23	72	5
	Over 100 thousand	24	72	4
Gender	Male	27	69	4
	Female	25	70	5
Age	18–34 years	33	63	4
	35–49 years	22	73	4
	50–64 years	23	73	4
	Above 64 years	24	70	6
Educational level	Primary	28	67	5
	Professional	23	73	4
	High school	26	70	4
	Higher education	29	63	7
Subjective assessment of their income	Lives in hardship	19	76	6
	Comes out with a schedule	20	75	5
	Lives decently	29	67	4
	Lives without financial problems	36	59	6
Total sample		26	70	4

5. Share of population perceiving the direction of the country as good (%)

Country	2014 spring	2019 summer	2023 winter	2023 autumn	2024 autumn ↓
Luxembourg	53	71	59	60	65
Poland	29	47	23	30	64
Ireland	45	66	51	54	58
Belgium	37	38	31	41	49
Lithuania	22	47	34	32	48
Denmark	54	58	43	41	46
Malta	54	59	59	28	46
Romania	18	29	30	29	45
Austria	35	49	31	35	39
Italy	13	28	38	32	39
Hungary	27	49	29	33	38
Croatia	15	23	21	31	37
Latvia	22	35	33	33	35
Portugal	21	44	25	27	35
Finland	38	54	37	29	33
EU average	28	34	29	27	33
Spain	18	32	25	25	32
Estonia	45	35	35	27	31
Czech Republic	30	45	36	29	31
Sweden	46	43	20	18	28
Bulgaria	18	25	14	21	27
Germany	46	39	36	28	26
Slovakia	20	30	15	25	26
Hungarians in Transylvania*	11	12	16	15	26
Slovenia	9	37	33	34	25
Netherlands	52	56	27	30	20
Greece	9	17	23	23	19
Cyprus	22	30	22	14	16
France	15	25	16	14	14
United Kingdom	39	20	-	-	-

<i>Imaginary rank for Hungarians in Transylvania</i>	26	28	25	26	21
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<i>Source</i>	<i>EB81.2</i>	<i>EB91.5</i>	<i>EB98.2</i>	<i>EB100.1</i>	<i>EB102</i>
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* For data source for Hungarians in Transylvania: see table 1.

United Kingdom – EU state member until 2020

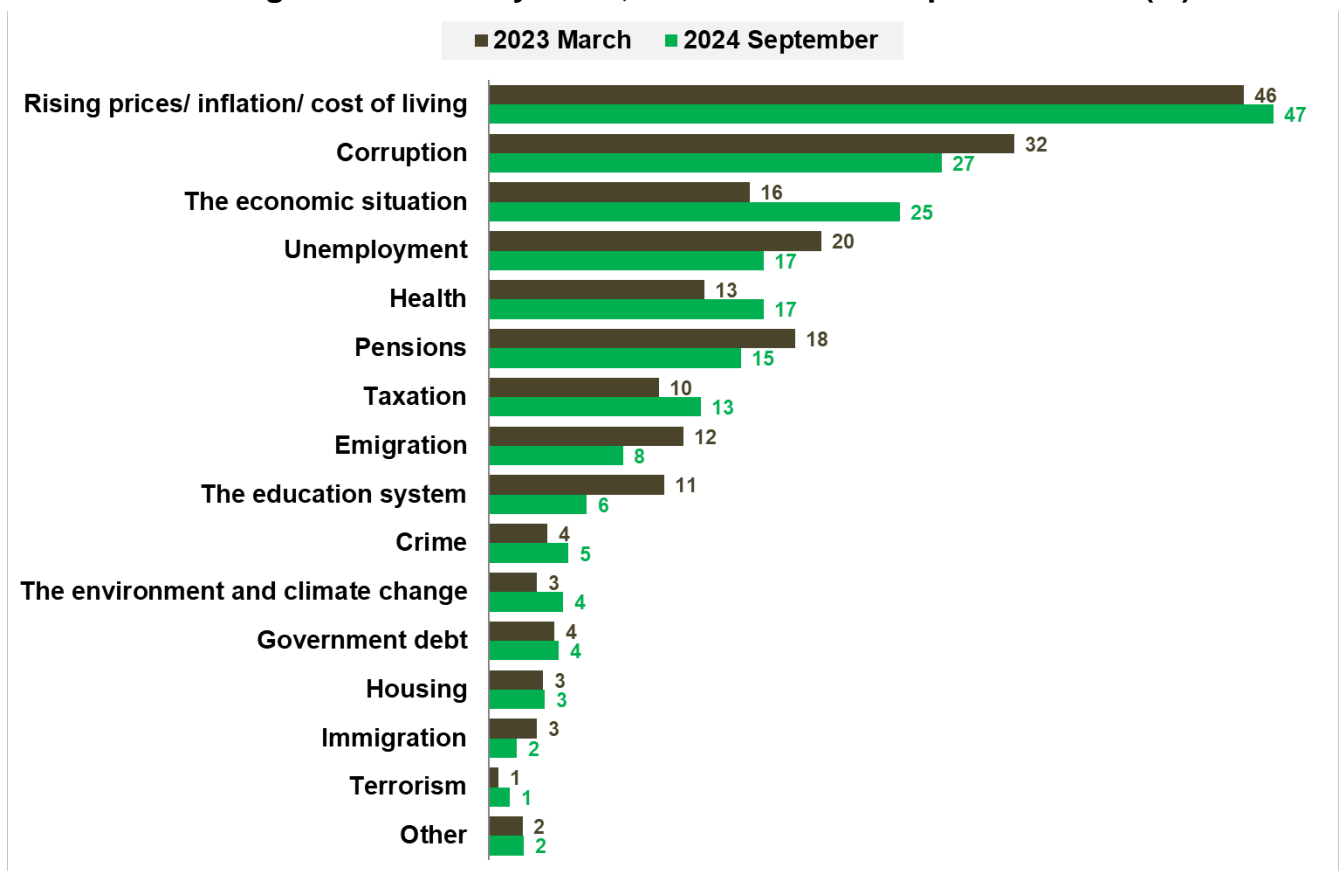
Croatia – EU state member from 2013

2.2. The Problems of the Population

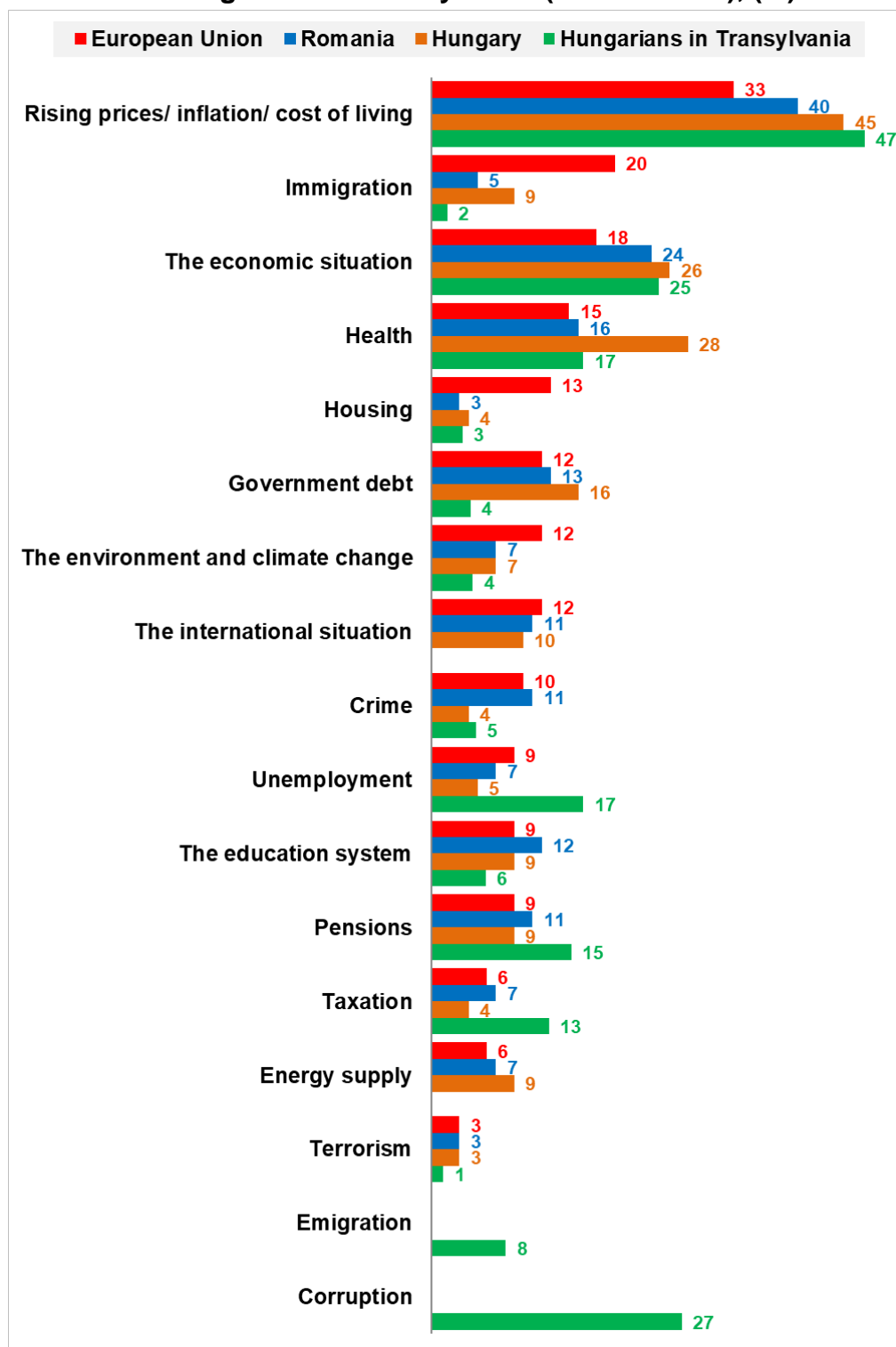
In our autumn survey we asked people about various problems of general interest and public policy and a possible list of priorities. In our questionnaire the question – *What do you think are the two main problems that Romania faces currently?* – has not exactly the same response options like in the Eurobarometer survey. We introduced two items that it did not have because it is an important issue and topic in the Eastern and Central European member states, and this is enough justification for a rethinking of the methodology. The two items are *corruption* and *migration*. However, also two new items of the Eurobarometer survey were not used: the international situation and energy supply. In case of Romania *corruption* (and the ways justice worked in the country) has been one of the most important social and political problems in the country in the last years. In the same way, *emigration* is a central problem in Romania given that it is the country most affected by this process.

Differences in methodology make considerable difference in results too, evidently. Hungarians in Transylvania (in a proportion of 27 percent) consider corruption to be the main problem the country faces and it is highly probable that this is the case in the total population too. However, the most urgent problems among Hungarians in Transylvania, as in the whole European Union as are economic by nature: inflation, the general economic situation, unemployment, the retirement benefits, taxation.

6. What do you think are the two most important issues Romania facing at the moment? Hungarians in Transylvania, March 2023 and September 2024 (%)



7. What do you think are the two most important issues facing [OUR COUNTRY] at the moment? European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer survey, EB102) and Hungarians in Transylvania (2024 autumn), (%)



* “Corruption” and “emigration” were mentioned only in the survey carried out among the Hungarian population in Transylvania, and two new items of the Eurobarometer survey were not used in our survey, such as “international situation” and “energy supply”.

**8. Population problems. Hungarians in Transylvania,
by several background variables, September 2024 (%)**

		Infla- tion	Corrup- tion	Econo- mic situation	Unem- ploy- ment	Health	Pen- sions	Taxa- tion	Emig- ration	Educa- tion
Region	Seklerland	49	23	25	23	14	16	14	9	6
	Central Transylvania	46	26	27	16	15	16	12	9	6
	Partium	51	28	26	13	18	13	15	8	6
	Diaspora	40	37	20	11	21	17	9	5	5
Size of settlement	Under 1000	55	18	26	22	9	19	20	5	4
	1000-2500	50	20	26	15	20	19	12	10	4
	2500-15 thousand	48	26	26	22	16	11	9	10	6
	15-100 thousand	40	35	20	16	15	17	16	8	10
	Over 100 thousand	46	35	25	10	21	13	11	6	6
Gender	Male	44	34	28	16	13	11	15	10	5
	Female	50	21	22	18	20	19	11	7	7
Age	18–34 years	50	20	26	15	12	4	19	11	11
	35–49 years	48	30	29	22	17	4	14	8	8
	50–64 years	46	29	26	18	16	18	15	8	2
	Above 64 years	46	30	19	13	20	32	5	6	3
Educational level	Primary	53	19	17	17	20	27	8	7	2
	Professional	50	27	27	17	16	20	10	6	3
	High school	46	29	26	18	17	8	16	9	9
	Higher education	34	39	29	10	14	3	18	11	13
Total sample		47	27	25	17	17	15	13	8	6

3. Attitudes towards the state and public services

In 2024, we included a set of questions about attitudes toward the state functioning of the state in general and several public services to measure citizens satisfaction with them. The results are particularly interesting because they significantly divide the opinion of the Transylvanian Hungarian public.

28 percent of them think that the state's functioning has improved over the past five years, while 72 percent think it has worsened. The perception of the tax system and railway transportation is even worse, with 78 and 80 percent of respondents dissatisfied, respectively.

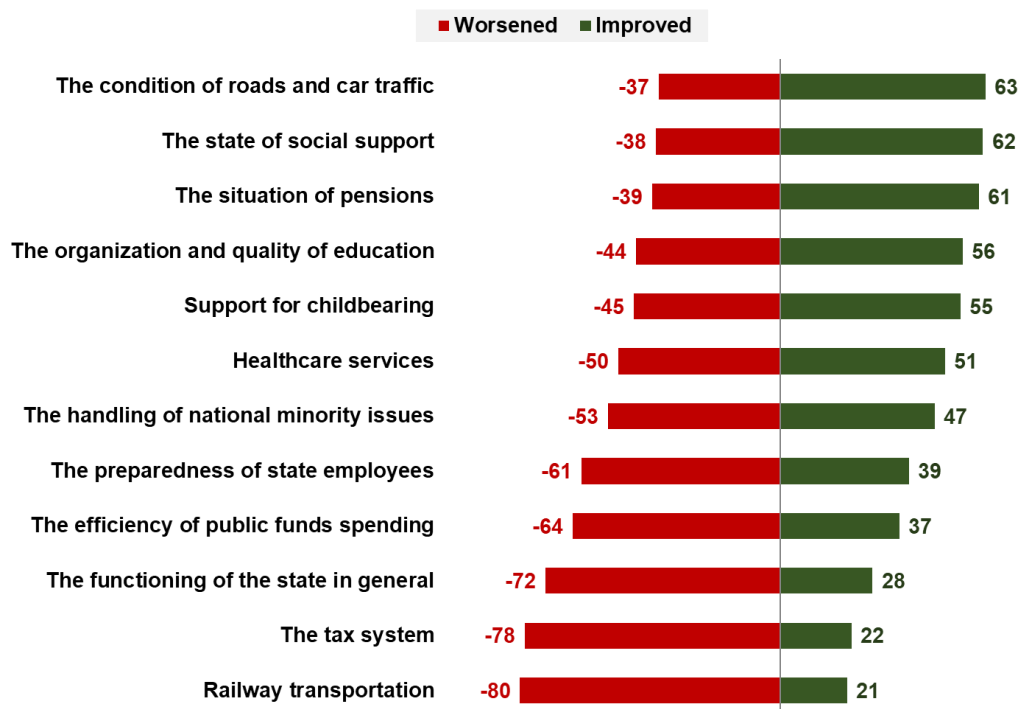
There are also areas where the majority of Transylvanian Hungarians perceive positive changes. These include road conditions and car traffic (63 percent of those with an opinion see positive change), the situation of pensions and social support (61-62 percent), and the organization of education and child-rearing support (55-56 percent).

The perception of healthcare is the most controversial, with half of those with an opinion saying it has improved, while the other half say it has worsened over the years.

9. How do you think the following public services have changed over the past five years? September 2024 (%)

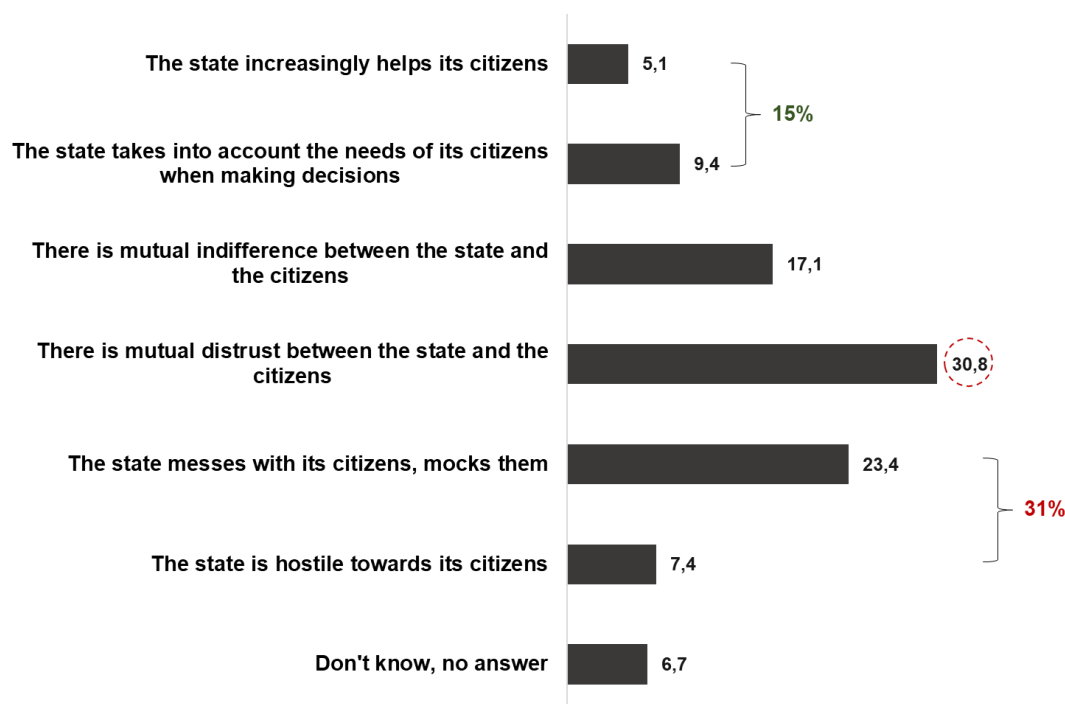


10. The assessment of public services among those who have an opinion September 2024 (%)



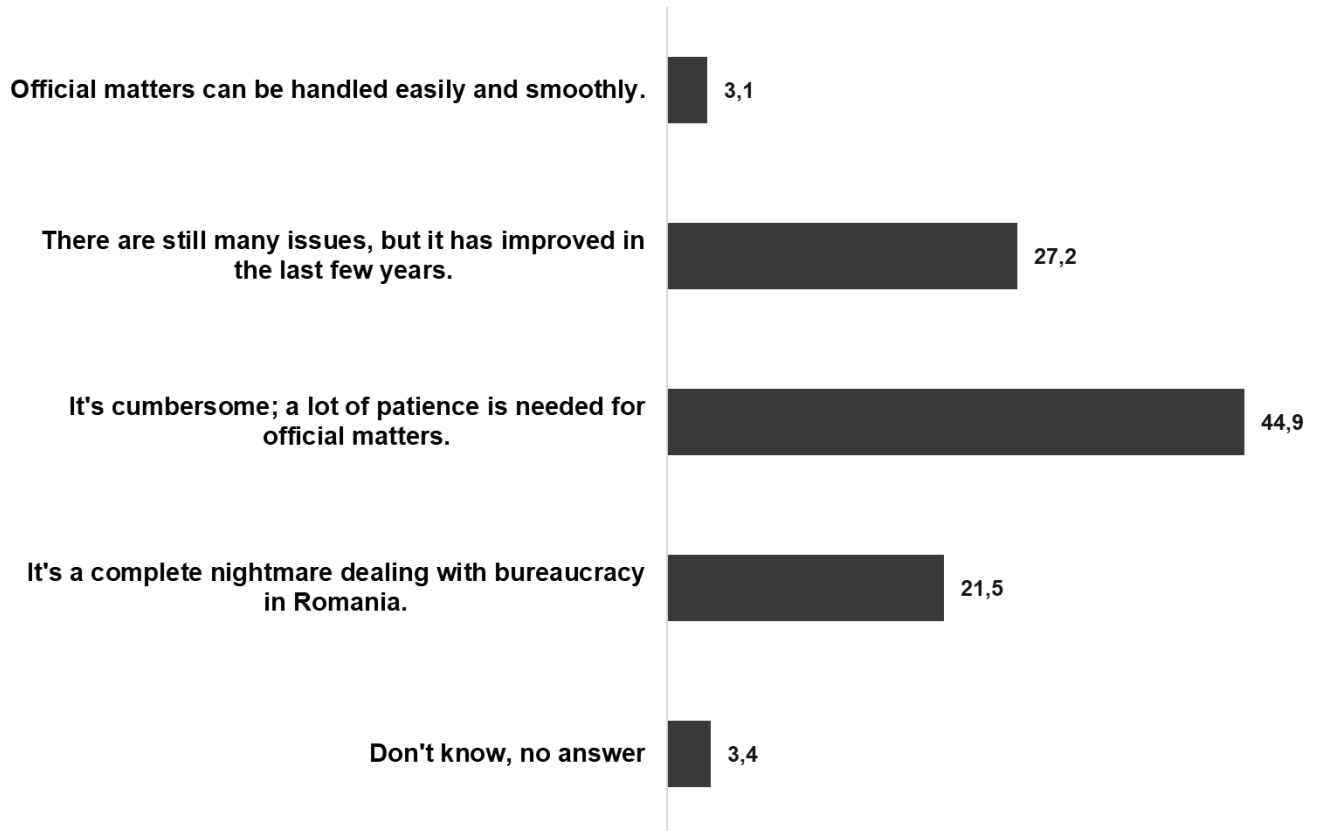
The assessment of the relationship between the state and the citizens is nuanced. About 15 percent of respondents have a positive attitude, and nearly a third (31 percent) have a very negative opinion (the state "harasses its citizens," "makes fun of them," or is "hostile"). Most opinions fall between these extremes; the relative majority holds an attitude of "mutual distrust" (31 percent), while 17 percent think there is "mutual indifference" between the state and its citizens.

11. If you had to describe the relationship between the state and the citizen in Romania with one term, which of the following would it be? September 2024 (%)



The dominant opinion regarding the difficulty of dealing with state administration is that it is problematic, with only 3 percent saying that handling official matters is easy for them. The relative majority believes that "the administration is cumbersome, requiring a lot of patience" (45 percent), and an additional 27% say that although the system is not perfect yet, "it has improved a lot in recent years." The negative extreme is formed by about one-fifth of respondents (22 percent), who say that "handling matters is a complete nightmare" in Romania.

12. What do you think about state bureaucracy? September 2024 (%)



If we combine the values of the three questions and create a synthetic scale, we can say that approximately 28 percent of Transylvanian Hungarians have a rather positive opinion, 19 percent hold mixed or neutral views, while the absolute majority, 54 percent, have a rather negative opinion about the state. This includes its functioning, its relationship with citizens, and the difficulty level of official administration. More positive attitudes are observed in predominantly Hungarian-inhabited areas, such as Seklerland and Partium, in smaller villages, and among younger people. In contrast, the most critical views are overrepresented among those living in minority positions in Diaspora region, in smaller towns, and among the active working-age population (35–64 years).

13. Attitudes toward the state by several background variables, September 2024 (%)

		Rather positive	Mixed or neutral	Rather negative
Region	Seklerland	32	18	51
	Central Transylvania	28	23	49
	Partium	31	17	52
	Diaspora	15	16	69
Size of settlement	Under 1000	32	23	45
	Between 1000-2500	29	18	52
	Between 2500-15 thousand	28	17	55
	Between 15-100 thousand	22	18	59
	Over 100 thousand	27	18	55
Gender	Male	29	19	52
	Female	26	19	56
Age	18–34 years	36	16	48
	35–49 years	22	18	60
	50–64 years	23	19	58
	Above 64 years	28	21	52
Educational level	Primary	33	20	47
	Professional	27	16	57
	High school	27	18	55
	Higher education	23	24	54
Subjective assessment of their income	Lives in hardship	27	15	58
	Comes out with a schedule	22	19	58
	Lives decently	29	19	52
	Lives without financial problems	38	19	43
Total sample		28	19	54

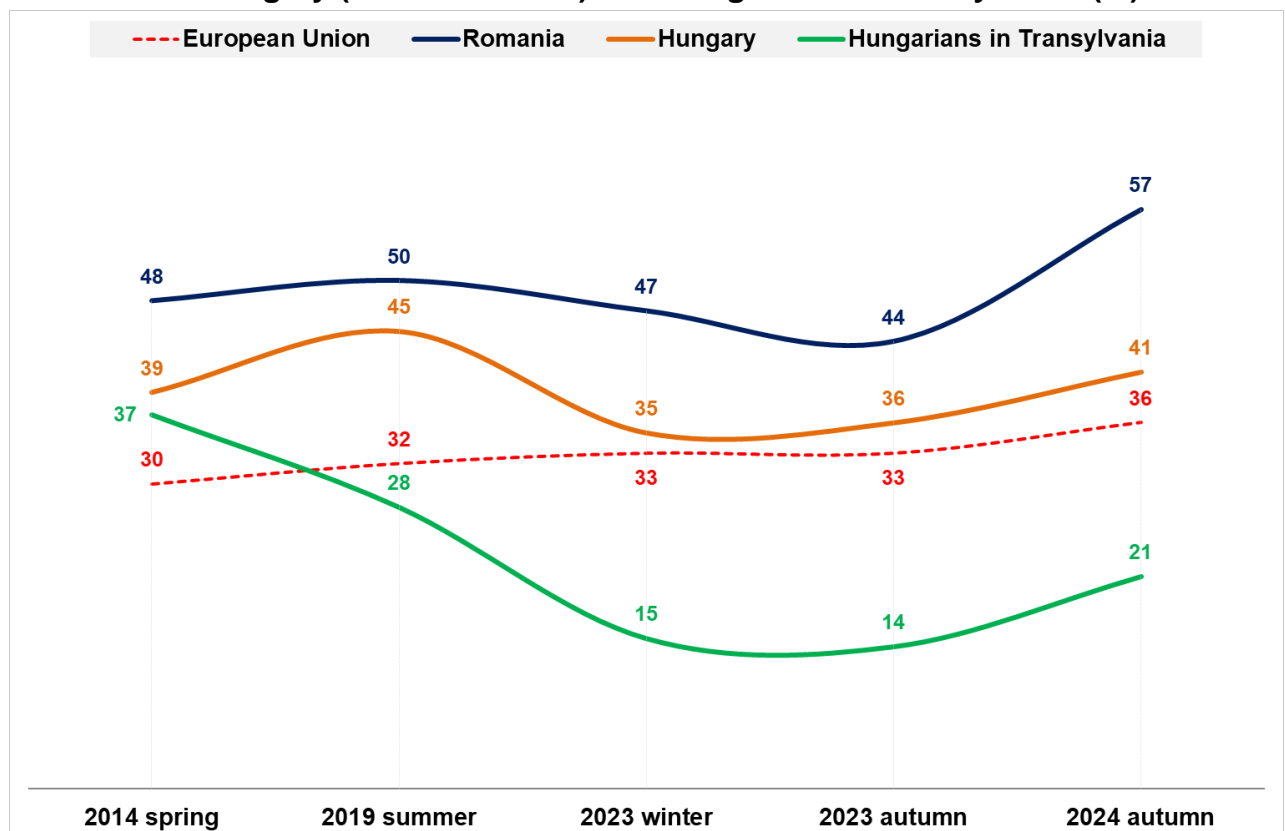
4. Opinions about the EU

4.1. The Direction of the EU

The attitude of Hungarians in Transylvania towards the EU has changed significantly over the years. While in 2014 37 percent thought that things were going in the right direction in the EU, this had fallen to 14 percent by 2023 autumn. In terms of public opinion towards the EU, Hungarians in Transylvania started from a position in the middle and reached one of most pessimistic position. In the past year, a slight improvement has been observed both in the European Union average and in the reference countries. Among Transylvanian Hungarians, the proportion of those with a positive view of the EU's direction has increased from 14 to 21 percent.

The differences are also interesting compared to the reference countries. On the one hand, for Romania's total population there was no significant change between 2014 and 2023, with around half of respondents having a positive view of the direction of the EU. Looking at Romania's total population, this indicator is notably high at present (57 percent). Romania remains in the upper category in the ranking, seems to be one of the most euro-optimistic member states. In the case of Hungary, the perception of the EU is more undulating, but the proportion of sceptics is below the EU average in all four measurement times.

14. At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in the European Union? Share of people considering that things are heading in the right direction: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



15. Share of population perceiving the direction of the European Union as good (%)

	2014 spring	2019 summer	2023 winter	2023 autumn	2024 autumn ↓
Poland	46	47	41	46	61
Romania	48	50	47	44	57
Croatia	47	52	40	45	51
Lithuania	45	45	46	48	50
Bulgaria	49	45	36	38	47
Ireland	38	57	49	51	47
Italy	11	23	37	36	47
Latvia	35	45	49	46	44
Slovakia	35	30	26	37	44
Belgium	40	38	26	44	42
Hungary	39	45	35	36	41
Portugal	25	42	33	34	40
Estonia	49	35	34	33	38
Spain	26	35	28	33	38
Denmark	46	34	35	42	37
EU average	30	32	33	33	36
Czech Republic	35	31	33	31	34
Malta	43	31	50	41	34
Austria	25	39	32	36	33
Netherlands	45	38	38	37	30
Sweden	41	27	33	33	30
Luxembourg	39	33	33	41	28
Germany	33	29	36	28	27
Finland	33	34	28	29	27
Greece	16	22	27	29	26
Slovenia	32	36	32	44	25
Cyprus	19	23	22	24	21
Hungarians in Transylvania*	37	28	15	14	21
France	21	22	17	20	18
United Kingdom	20	21	-	-	-

<i>Imaginary rank for Hungarians in Transylvania</i>	14	22	28	28	27
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<i>Source</i>	<i>EB81.2</i>	<i>EB91.5</i>	<i>EB98.2</i>	<i>EB100.1</i>	<i>EB102</i>
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* For data source for Hungarians in Transylvania: see table 1.

United Kingdom – EU state member until 2020

Croatia – EU state member from 2013

4.2. Trust in institutions

We consider trust one of the most relevant topics regarding the attitudes toward the EU. In the last ten years there has been a very significant change on this issue. While in 2014 a two-thirds majority (65 percent) of Hungarians in Transylvania trusted the European Union, in September 2024 this proportion had decreased to one-third (33 percent). The lowest point was a year ago when only one-quarter of our respondents trusted the European Union.

Compared with European averages, in 2014, Hungarians in Transylvania trusted the EU more than residents of any other member state, but in 2024 they would be at the bottom of a fictional ranking. There were recorded similarly low values of trust in the EU in France or Slovenia (35-36 percent) in this year. Meanwhile, there was a noticeable increase over the past year, with the proportion of our respondents who trust rising from 28 to 33 percent.

The change is also significant compared to the total population of Romania. Although the Romanian average also shows fluctuations between 2014 and 2024, the absolute majority of Romanians (56 percent) still have confidence in the European Union. The situation is very similar in Hungary too, where around 50 percent trusts the EU.

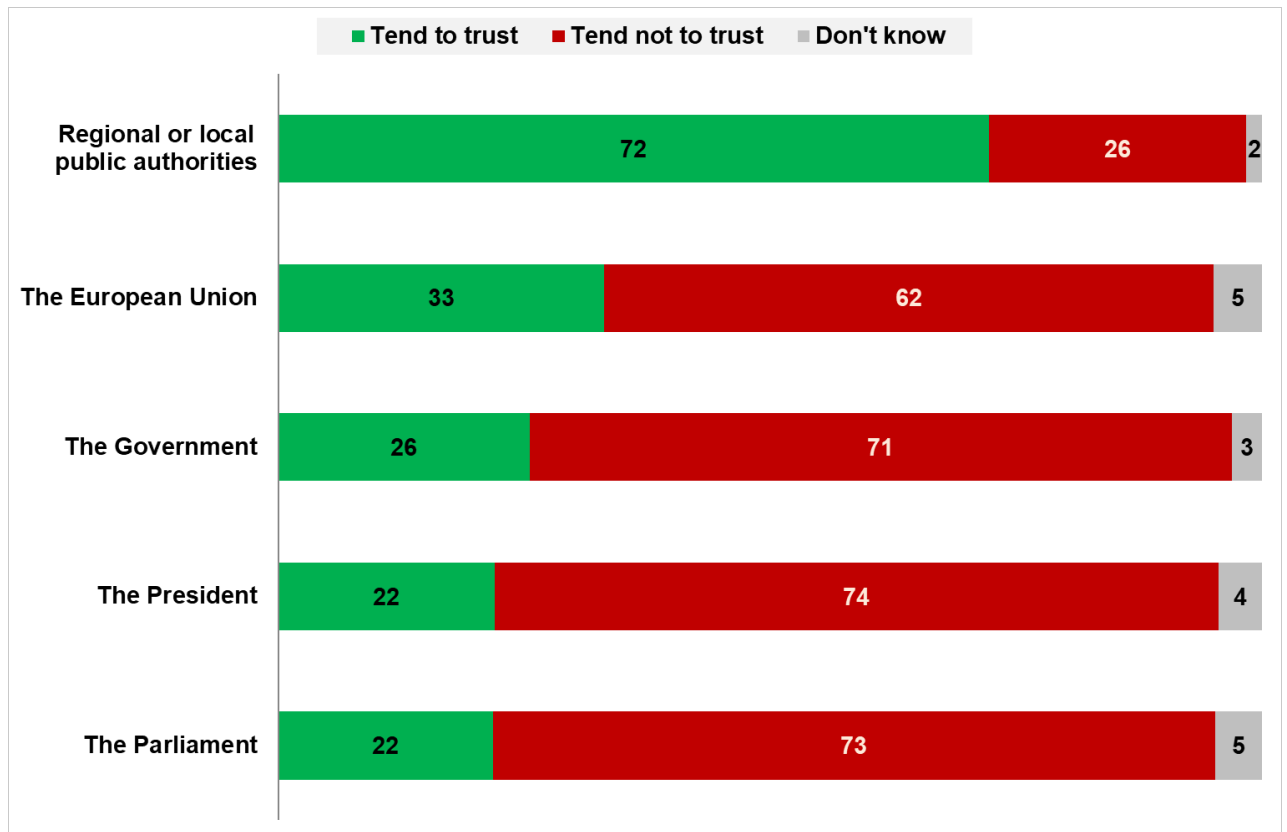
It is also an important observation that despite the significant decline, trust in the EU continues to exceed the trust index of political institutions at the nation-state level (parliament, government, president of the state) among Hungarians in Transylvania.

While the decline in trust of EU was generally high, it was most significant among the elderly among the elderly, those with lower levels of education, and people living in small towns and in minority positions in Diaspora region.

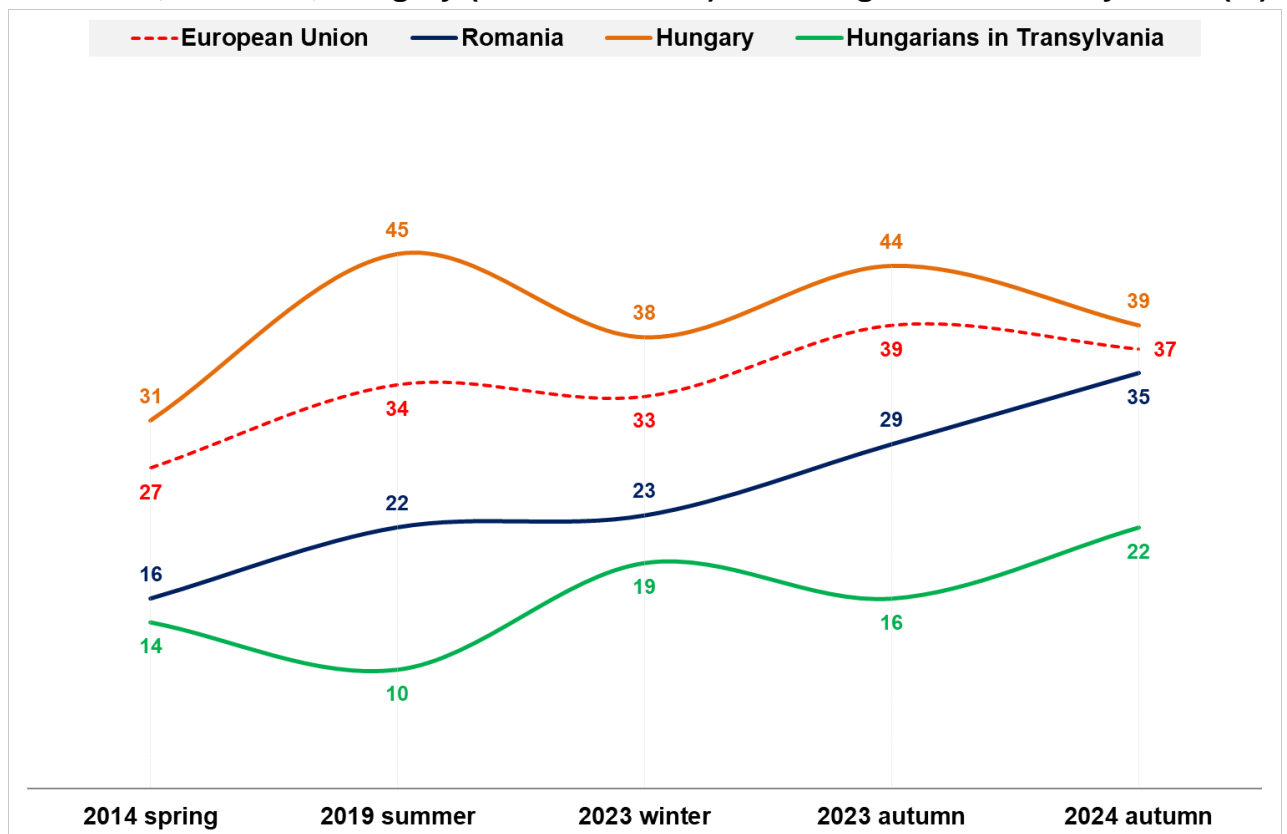
It is worth examining the situation of other institutions as well. A large majority of Hungarians in Transylvania have confidence in regional or local public authorities (72 percent), according to the poll of September 2024. Although the level of trust in local institutions was already high in 2014, it was preceded by trust in the European Union. The trust in local public authorities was increasing almost continuously, Hungarians in Transylvania are most committed to local and regional institutions in 2024. The trust in local governments is higher than in the Romanian majority, and it also exceeds the averages in Hungary and Europe. It is important to note that local elections were also held in Romania in June this year, coinciding with the European Parliamentary elections.

Hungarians in Transylvania have less trust than the EU in the Romanian government, president and parliament – the most important state institutions. Only 26 percent of them trust the government, and 22 percent trust the president and the parliament. Trust in political institutions at the nation-state level has not shown a clear trend over the past ten years, but rather a continuous fluctuation, most likely linked to the evolution of the country's domestic politics.

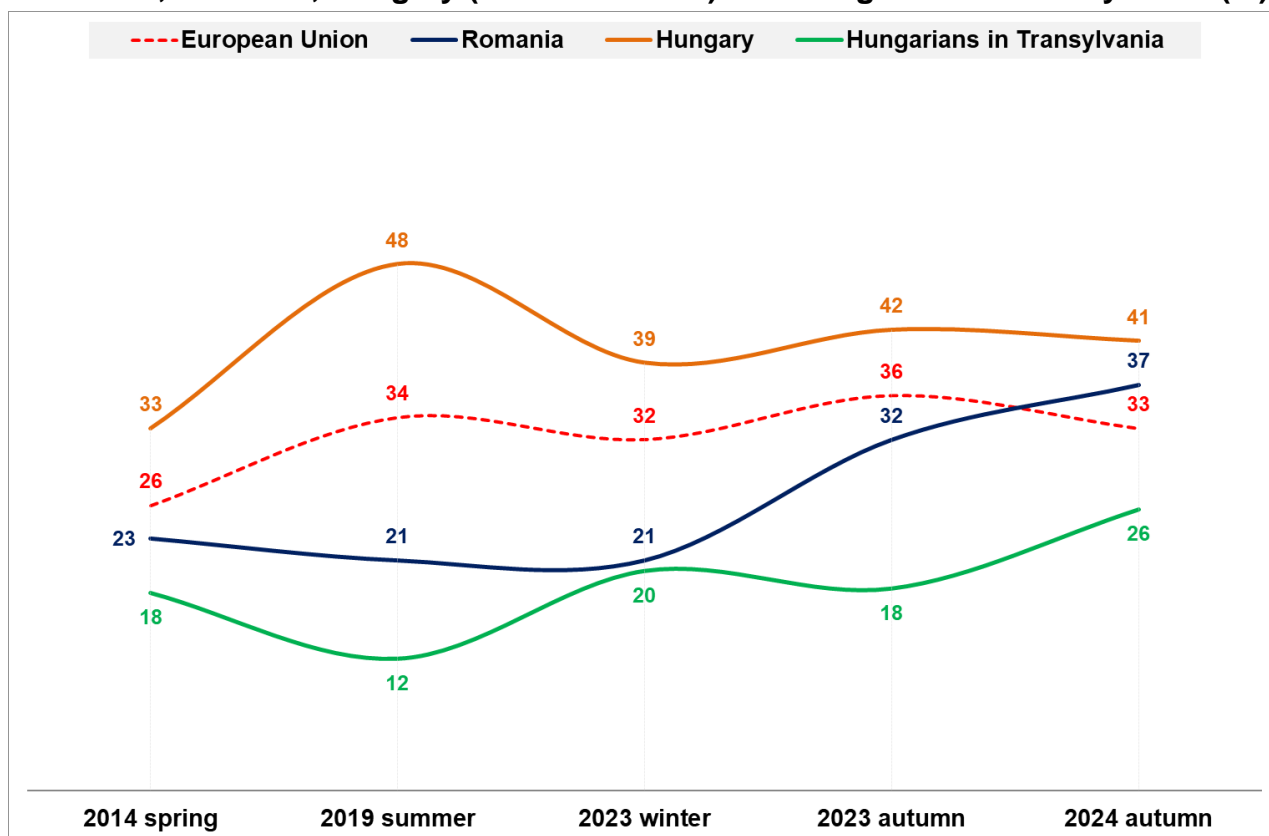
16. Trust in institutions. Hungarians in Transylvania, September 2024 (%)



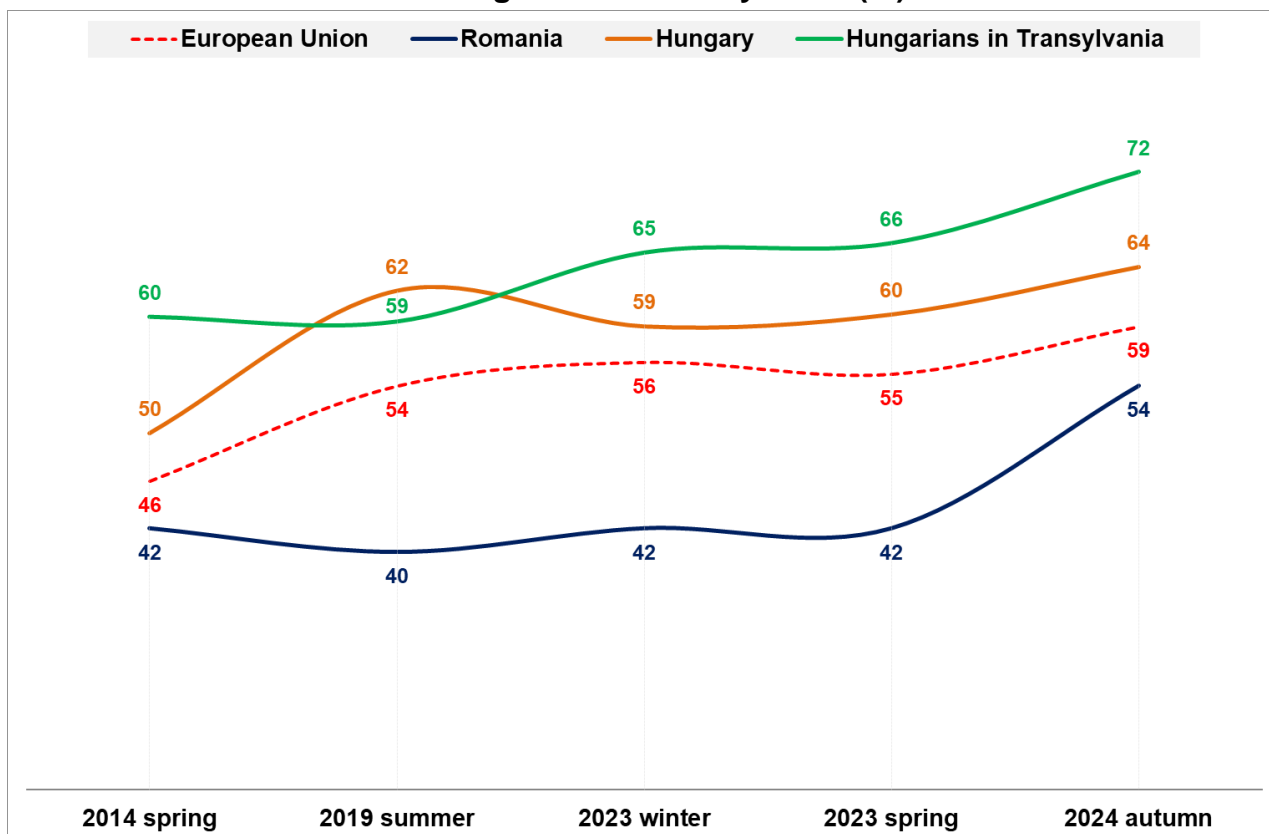
17. How much trust you have in the parliament? Share of trusting population: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



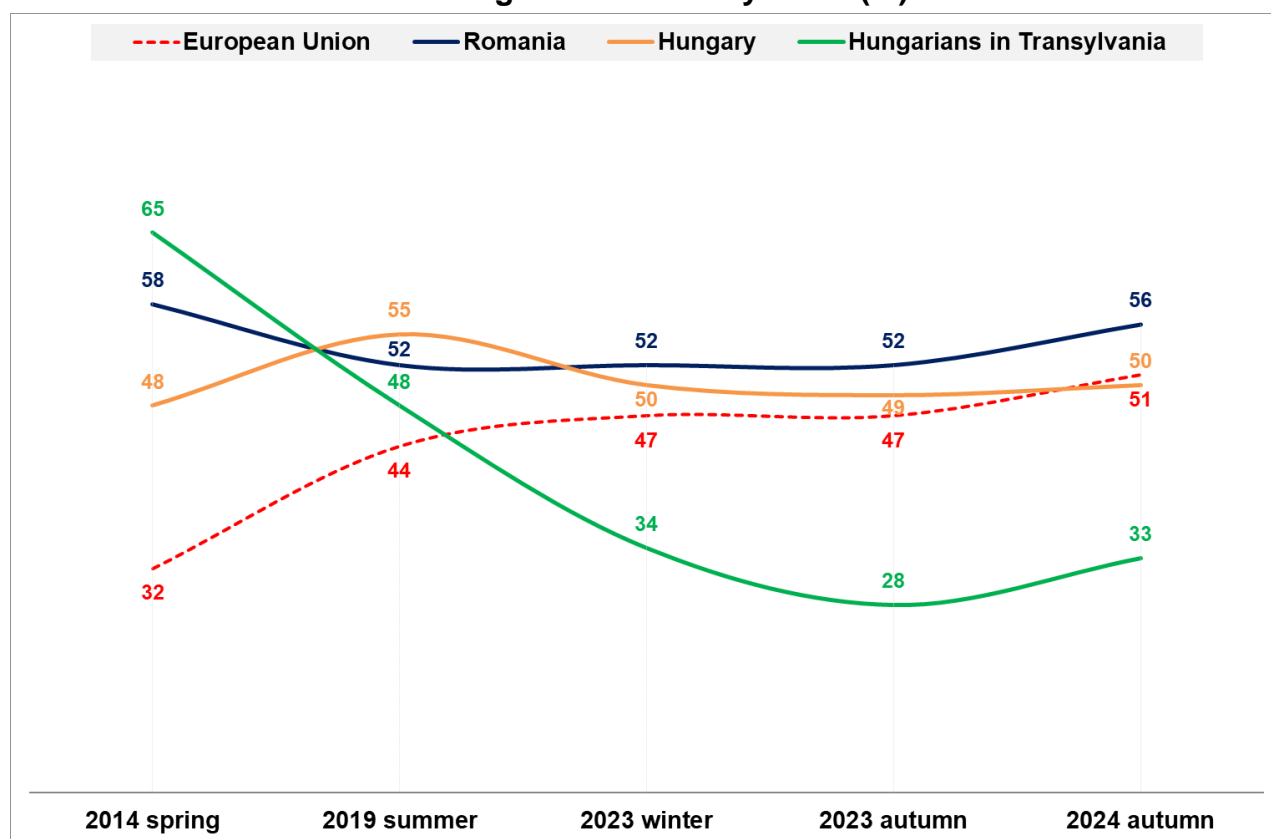
18. How much trust you have in the government? Share of trusting population: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



19. How much trust you have in the regional or local public authorities? Share of trusting population: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



20. How much trust you have in the European Union? Share of trusting population:
European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and
Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



21. Share of population trusting the European Union (%)

Country	2014 spring	2019 summer	2023 winter	2023 autumn	2024 autumn ↓
Denmark	46	68	71	68	68
Lithuania	52	72	64	63	67
Portugal	26	57	65	54	67
Netherlands	41	59	57	57	65
Sweden	44	56	63	68	64
Poland	44	54	58	53	63
Latvia	37	51	58	54	60
Finland	50	58	57	60	59
Luxembourg	45	59	57	58	57
Belgium	49	51	49	50	56
Ireland	34	54	61	57	56
Romania	58	52	52	52	56
Malta	49	56	64	61	54
Bulgaria	55	55	45	51	53
Croatia	38	46	52	51	53
Slovakia	45	44	37	48	53
Estonia	58	60	46	46	52
Austria	37	52	44	46	51
Spain	24	47	45	42	51
EU average	32	44	47	47	51
Italy	19	37	44	43	51
Hungary	48	55	50	49	50
Germany	31	48	45	48	49
Czech Republic	37	36	44	38	43
Greece	18	32	37	39	40
Cyprus	22	54	43	35	37
Slovenia	37	45	40	38	36
France	28	33	33	35	35
Hungarians in Transylvania*	65	48	34	28	33
United Kingdom	22	29	-	-	-

<i>Imaginary rank for Hungarians in Transylvania</i>	1	19	27	28	28
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<i>Source</i>	<i>EB81.2</i>	<i>EB91.5</i>	<i>EB98.2</i>	<i>EB100</i>	<i>EB102</i>
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* For data source for Hungarians in Transylvania: see table 1.

United Kingdom – EU state member until 2020

Croatia – EU state member from 2013

22. Proportion of those who trust the EU among Hungarians in Transylvania, and the rate of change, by background variables (%)

		April 2014	September 2024	Rate of change
Region	Seklerland	66	36	-45
	Central Transylvania	65	37	-44
	Partium	64	29	-54
	Diaspora	65	28	-58
Size of settlement (number of inhabitants)	Under 1000	63	30	-52
	Between 1000-2500	66	38	-42
	Between 2500-15 thousand	62	35	-44
	Between 15-100 thousand	71	30	-58
	Over 100 thousand	65	32	-50
Gender	Male	63	31	-51
	Female	66	35	-48
Age	18–34 years	68	53	-22
	35–49 years	67	30	-55
	50–64 years	61	26	-58
	Above 64 years	63	23	-63
Educational level	Primary	57	38	-33
	Professional	64	28	-57
	High school	67	34	-49
	Higher education	71	38	-46
Total sample		65	33	-49

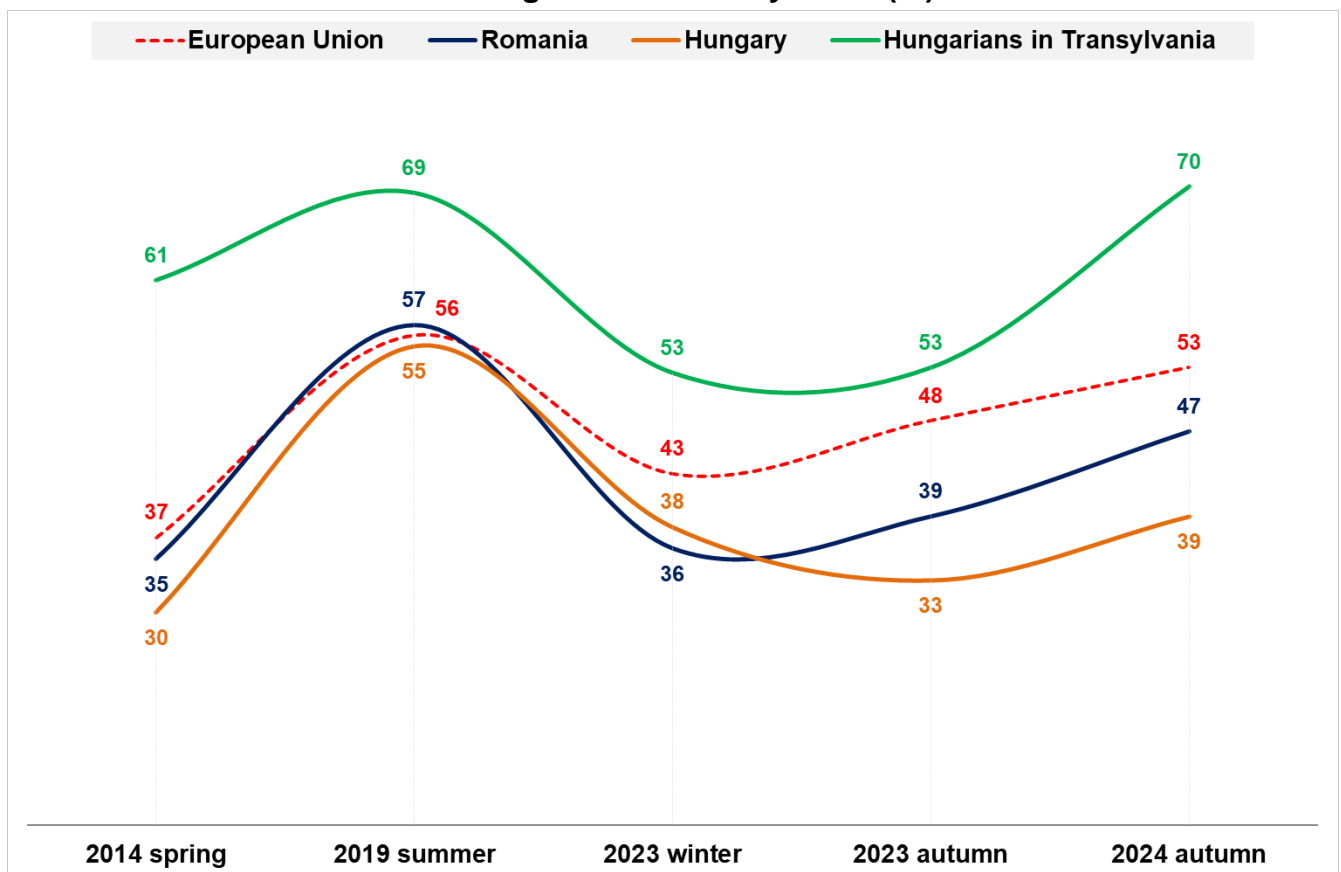
** Source: Surveys on Ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania: April 2014 and September 2024*

4.3. Self-Efficacy

In our analysis of attitudes toward the EU, we considered two other variables of the indicator named self-efficacy, the share of respondents who gave affirmative answers to the following questions: „*My voice counts in the EU*”. The analysis of political self-efficacy is important and relevant because, according to the scientific literature rooted in rational choice theory, it is one of the primary factors contributing to voter activism. People are more likely to vote if they think that their voice counts and they are able to influence the politics and public affairs.

The research reflects that Hungarians in Transylvania have a high level of confidence that their voice matters in the EU. Their 70 percent average is higher than the EU average of 53 percent, and higher than the result of Romania (47 percent) and Hungary (39 percent). It is important to point out that this indicator has increased across all reference points over the past year, most likely due to the elections held on June 2024.

23. My voice counts in the EU: European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



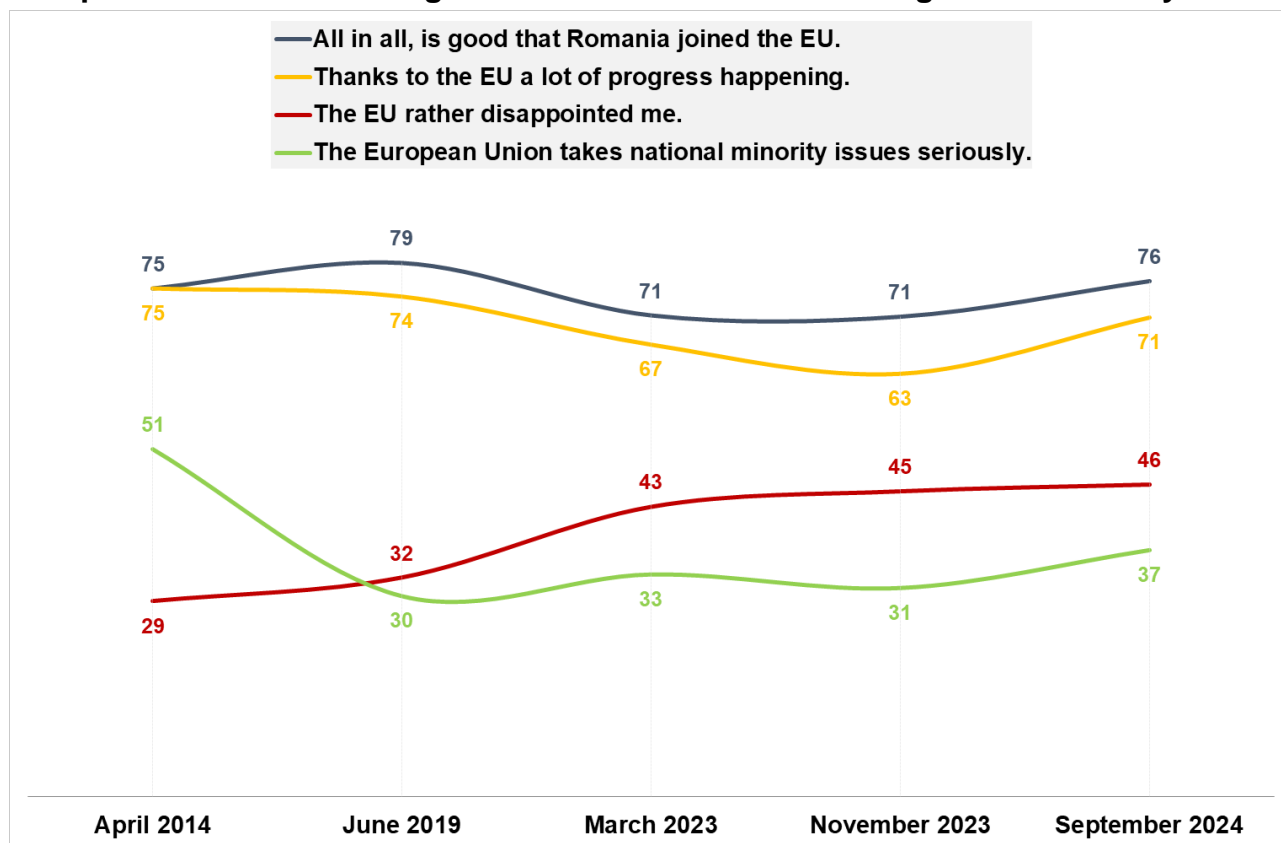
5. Attitudes toward EU Membership

Despite fluctuating confidence, Hungarians in Transylvania continue to have a positive attitude towards Romania's EU membership. The proportion of those who think that *"all in all is good that Romania joined the EU"* is above 76 percent, and there is above two-thirds majority of those who think that *"thanks to the EU a lot of progress happening"* (71 percent). For both statements the proportion of those who agree has slightly increased in the last year. Euroscepticism has remained at the same level in parallel: the proportion of those who are disappointed with the EU has insignificantly raised from 45 percent to 46 percent.

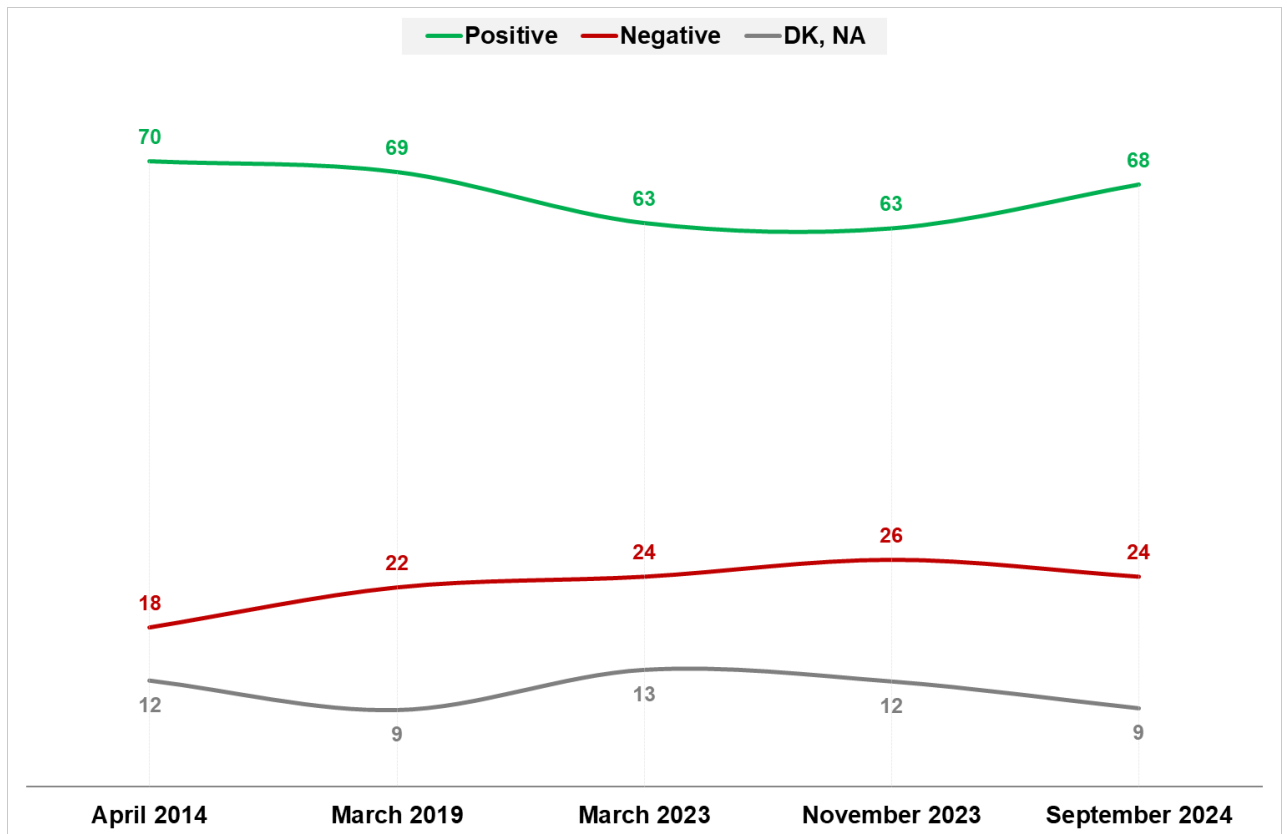
From the perspective of Hungarians in Transylvania, we also considered it important to ask how they perceive the European Union's attitude towards the management of minority rights. In September 2024, 37 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that *"the European Union takes national minority issues seriously"*. This is a worse ratio than in 2014 (51 percent), but we can observe a slight positive shift over the past year (from 31 to 37 percent). At the same time, two-thirds majority of Hungarians in Transylvania (68 percent) have a positive and only a quarter (24 percent) a negative view of the impact of accession on their own community.

An important question in the membership is the proportion of the population that would support a possible exit from the supranational organization. The standard Eurobarometer question asks whether a member state *"could better face the future outside the EU"*. In European comparison Hungarians in Transylvania do not appear to be particularly Euro-rejective, only a quarter of them (25 percent) are agreeing with the above statement. This group is also larger in the EU average (30 percent), in Hungary (31 percent), and at the national level in Romania, it is much higher (39 percent).

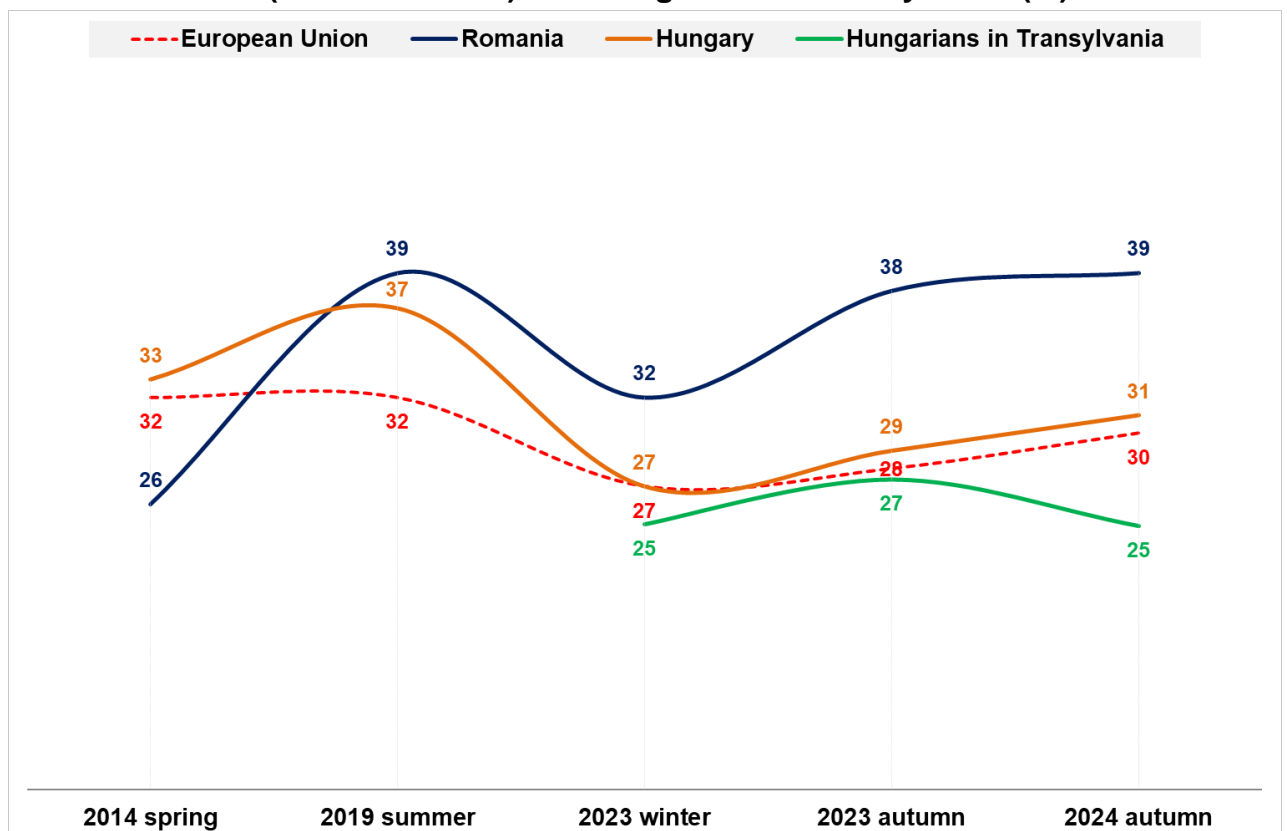
24. Proportion of those who agree with some statements. Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



25. What do you think, how Romania's accession to the European Union affects Hungarians in Transylvania? Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



26. Proportion of those who agree with the statement „Romania / [OUR COUNTRY] could better face the future outside the EU.” European Union, Romania, Hungary (Eurobarometer) and Hungarians in Transylvania (%)



27.[OUR COUNTRY] could better face the future outside the EU.
Proportion of those who agree with this statement (%)

Country	2014 spring	2019 summer	2023 winter	2023 autumn	2024 autumn ↑
Denmark	24	15	12	10	11
Lithuania	22	19	18	15	14
Finland	29	18	16	13	15
Netherlands	21	9	14	13	15
Ireland	26	30	17	16	18
Luxembourg	22	25	31	21	18
Portugal	37	21	16	18	18
Estonia	21	18	18	23	20
Germany	26	16	20	21	21
Sweden	35	21	23	20	21
Latvia	32	24	30	24	23
Spain	25	27	21	18	24
Hungarians in Transylvania*	-	-	25	27	25
Malta	24	16	15	20	25
Cyprus	51	30	38	42	27
Greece	40	34	27	29	27
Slovakia	28	35	31	22	29
EU average	32	32	27	28	30
Hungary	33	37	27	29	31
Bulgaria	22	29	32	30	32
France	30	32	28	29	32
Belgium	28	37	33	31	33
Czech Republic	42	37	27	33	37
Croatia	39	40	41	40	37
Austria	40	38	38	34	39
Romania	26	39	32	38	39
Slovenia	42	48	42	41	39
Italy	38	44	36	40	44
Poland	35	47	40	47	52
United Kingdom	47	42	-	-	

<i>Imaginary rank for Hungarians in Transylvania</i>	-	-	12	15	13
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<i>Source</i>	<i>EB81.2</i>	<i>EB91.5</i>	<i>EB98.2</i>	<i>EB100</i>	<i>EB102</i>
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* For data source for Hungarians in Transylvania: see table 1., asked just in 2023 and 2024

United Kingdom – EU state member until 2020

Croatia – EU state member from 2013

6. Summary

6.1. The Context of the Research

To interpret the research results in context, it is essential to review the key political, economic, and international events of the past year that have influenced Romania.

These events can be examined primarily in the context of the 2024 "super election year" through the lens of voter behavior. Even the organization of the elections itself took place amid uncertainty, constant changes, and political maneuvering. In 2024, Romania had to hold four elections: the European Parliament, local, national parliamentary, and presidential elections. At the end of February, just three months before the EP elections, the PSD-PNL governmental coalition (Social Democratic Party and National Liberal Party) decided to merge these with the local elections (originally scheduled for autumn, as the terms of the incumbent mayors and local council members were set to expire only at the end of September). Driven by political calculations, the two ruling parties ran a joint list for the European Parliament elections. Although they won with 48.6%, this result was below the combined score of the two parties in the 2019 elections (49.5%) and significantly less than their 2020 national parliamentary result of 54%.

The likely aim of merging the elections was to place the nationalist and Eurosceptic AUR party (Alliance for the Union of Romanians), polling around 20%, at a disadvantage. This objective was mostly achieved, as the party secured only 14.9% of votes. The other far-right nationalist party, S.O.S. Romania, with 5%, also succeeded to send representatives to the European Parliament. Among the elected parties were the moderate right-wing electoral alliance ADU (8.7%) formed by the USR (Save Romania Union), PMP (People's Movement Party), and FD (Force of the Right), the Hungarian ethnic community's representative RMDSZ (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania – 6.5%), and an independent candidate, Ștefănuță Bogdănel, who received 3.1% of the votes.

The political maneuvering continued. Contrary to the earlier decision to hold the presidential election in September, it was postponed to November 24. As a result of the ongoing strategizing and the political elite crisis reflected in the mediocrity of the governing parties' presidential candidates, neither PSD's candidate, Marcel Ciolacu, nor PNL's candidate, Nicolae Ciucă, advanced to the second round. Ciolacu finished third with 19.1%, while Ciucă came fifth with 8.8%. The best-performing candidate in the presidential election was the ultranationalist and isolationist Călin Georgescu, who sympathizes with the fascist Legionary movement of 1930-1941, winning the first round with 22.9%. The runner-up was USR's candidate, Elena Lasconi, with 19.2%.

The parliamentary elections were held on December 1. Although the Euro-Atlantic-oriented parties managed to secure a majority, far-right, nationalist, and Eurosceptic parties significantly strengthened their position. The PSD received 22.0% (down from 28.9% in 2020), while the PNL garnered 13.2% (compared to 25.2%). Combined, their share fell from 54% in the 2020 parliamentary elections to 35%, a nearly 20 percentage-point drop after four years of joint governance. The second-largest party was AUR, with 18.0%. S.O.S. Romania gained 7.4%, while a new party supporting Călin Georgescu, POT (Party of Young People), entered the parliament with 6.5%. Altogether, the ultranationalist isolationist bloc achieved 31.8% of popular support, translating to 35% of parliamentary seats (due to the threshold effect). Also elected were the USR, led by Elena Lasconi, with 12.4% (down from 15.4% in 2020), and the RMDSZ with 6.3% (an improvement over their 2020 result of 5.7%).

Before the second round of the presidential election, scheduled for December 8, the Constitutional Court decided the annulment of the first round of the presidential elections. The government coalition formed on December 23 (comprising the Social Democratic Party, the National Liberal Party, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, and representatives of national minorities, led by Marcel Ciolacu) scheduled the new presidential election for May 2025.

Romania's economy contracted by 3.7% during the Covid crisis year of 2020. In subsequent years, an economic recovery occurred; however, the growth rate has steadily slowed, mirroring trends across the European Union. Growth stood at 5.4% in 2021, 4.0% in 2022, and 2.4% in 2023. In 2024 growth is expected to be even lower, likely around 1%.

Inflation reached 13.8% in 2022, dropped to 10.4% in 2023, and is projected to settle around 5.6% in 2024, the highest among EU member states.

In 2022, real wages decreased by 2.2%, followed by a 2.8% increase in 2023. For 2024, a smaller real-term growth of 1-2% is anticipated.

Pensions were increased twice in 2024. On January 1, the pension point value rose by 13.8%, resulting in a real-term increase of 10.6% during the first quarter. In September, a pension recalculation reform was implemented, which brought income growth for the majority of beneficiaries. Real pension income increased by 5.1% in the third quarter compared to the previous quarter.

However, the budget deficit has significantly widened, doubling compared to 2023, and is expected to surpass 8.6% in 2024—a record high at the European level. Only Bulgaria is facing a similar fiscal crisis. Public debt also rose significantly over the past year, increasing by 3.6%, from 49.5% to 53.1% (Q3 2023 vs. Q3 2024).

The third key aspect is the perception of the international situation, particularly Romania's relationship with the European Union and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. According to the October 2024 Eurobarometer survey (EB102)¹, the Romanian public maintains a generally positive attitude toward the EU: 56% trust the institution, and 57% believe the EU is moving in the right direction. However, there are signs of division, as 39% of respondents think “could better face the future outside the EU”. Notably, these figures have remained relatively stable over the past five years.

Among ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania, last year's analysis highlighted that negative attitudes toward the EU are more indicative of Euroscepticism than hard Euro-rejectivism. This pattern likely applies to Romania as a whole. The GLOBSEC survey from March 2024² found that 83% of Romanians would vote to remain in the EU in a hypothetical referendum. Support for NATO membership is even stronger, at 88%. However, 31% of Romanians express concerns that Western societies and their way of life could negatively impact them.

Attitudes toward the Russia-Ukraine war have been more volatile. Across Europe, public support for aiding Ukraine has declined slightly, but in Romania, the drop has been significant. In the summer of 2022 (Eurobarometer 97), 75% of Romanians supported humanitarian aid for Ukraine, but by autumn 2024 (EB102), this number had fallen to 69%. This is considerably lower than the EU27 average of 87%, making Romania the least committed EU nation in providing humanitarian support to those affected by the war. Support for economic sanctions against Russia stands at 66% (a 3-percentage-point decrease), financial aid

¹ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3215> (2025.01.29)

² <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/globsec-trends-2024-CEE-brave-new-region> (2025.01.29)

to Ukraine at 55% (a 15-point drop), and military aid at just 49% (a 12-point decline over the past two years).

GLOBSEC research also indicates that fewer Romanians blame Russia for the war (a drop from 65% to 55% in one year), while the proportion attributing responsibility to Ukraine has more than doubled (from 10% to 22%). Additionally, 53% of respondents fear that Romania's military support for Ukraine (“providing military equipment and weapons to Ukraine”) provokes Russia and increases the risk of Romania being drawn into the war. Around 30% of Romanian respondents in the GLOBSEC Trends survey also believe that Ukrainian refugees threaten their identity and values. This is most likely not so much about the fear of cultural values being threatened, but rather an expression of welfare chauvinism.

A third significant international factor is the U.S. presidential election of 2024. Donald Trump secured a comfortable victory on November 5. According to europeelects.eu³, 62% of Romanians who had an opinion would have voted for Democratic candidate Kamala Harris, while 38% would have supported Trump. An INSCOP survey from February 2024 found that 28% of Romanians trusted Joe Biden, 22% trusted Trump, and 11% trusted Vladimir Putin.⁴ By January 2025, Trump’s trust rating had risen to 42%, while Putin's stood at 23%.⁵

In summary, it appears that a majority of Romanians – roughly 50-60% – hold pro-Western attitudes, while around 30-40% show varying degrees of skepticism. A closer breakdown suggests that approximately 40% strongly support the West (e.g., those who fully back military aid to Ukraine), another 20% are moderately pro-Western (trusting Western institutions but with some reservations), around 10% are undecided or neutral, and the remaining 30% – roughly one-third of society – display anti-Western sentiments (favoring an alternative path outside the EU or perceiving Western lifestyles as a threat to their cultural identity). However, rejecting Western values does not automatically mean pro-Russian sentiments. As noted, trust in Putin remains between 10% and 20%, and only 8% of Romanians see Russia as a potential strategic partner.

6.2. Possible Causes of Social Frustrations in Romania

A fundamental question in examining the political, economic, and international context is how the attitude structure of the Hungarian society in Transylvania has evolved over the past year. This can only be understood if we attempt to comprehend the changes within Romanian society as a whole, particularly in light of the presidential election results. In Romania – previously regarded as one of the most pro West countries in the East-Central European region – the relative majority voted for a far-right, nationalist, and isolationist presidential candidate, risking the country's deviation from its European path.

As observed, although there are significant gaps in the economic sector, yet from the population's perspective, these are not seen as extraordinary. Real incomes have remained relatively stable despite the energy crisis and inflationary pressures. In our own research conducted in early November 2024 on a representative sample of the adult Romanian population, 32% of respondents stated that they are living better than three years ago, 39% reported no change, and only 29% felt that their living conditions had

³ <https://europeelects.eu/2024/11/04/u-s-election-europeans-would-vote-for-harris-if-they-could/> (2025.01.29)

⁴ <https://www.inscop.ro/martie-2024-sondaj-de-opinie-inscop-research-realizat-la-comanda-news-ro-partea-a-vi-a-notorietate-si-incredere-in-personalitati-internationale/> (2025.01.29)

⁵ <https://evz.ro/surprizele-inceputului-de-an-cata-incredere-au-romanii-in-calin-georgescu-donald-trump-si-vladimir-putin-sondaj-cira-comandat-de-evz.html> (2025.01.29)

worsened recently. In the October Eurobarometer survey, 45% of the Romanian population expressed optimism that the country is heading in the right direction. However, this contrasts with domestic research findings, where only 30% perceived a positive direction in INSCOP's early October survey,⁶ and just 24% in our November study. These discrepancies may indicate a deteriorating trend over time, suggesting that the pessimistic evaluation of the country's direction is more closely tied to political processes than economic ones.

Summarizing the factors behind the presidential election irregular results, we can identify the following key reasons:

1. Political incompetence and mediocrity, crisis of the political leadership. This is primarily reflected in the lack of qualified human resources within mainstream political parties, self-serving political maneuvering that ignores public welfare, and the generally unappealing style and attitude of governance.
2. Dysfunctionality of the State and administrative deficits. This represents another dimension of anti-establishment stance, closely linked to the first point. Research consistently indicates that the Romanian population is deeply distrustful of state institutions. They expect politicians to address systemic issues that have seen little progress in recent years: reducing corruption, improving the efficiency of public spending, ensuring the predictability of the economic environment, mitigating inequalities and social injustices (in education, employment, healthcare), addressing nepotism, depoliticizing public services, and resolving issues related to special pensions. Here, ultimately, we are talking about the deficiencies in guiding values and principles of good governance, such as democratic norms, the rule of law, transparency, corruption-free administration, predictability, consistency, efficiency, meritocracy, accountability, justice, and fairness.
3. Economic and budgetary instability, deficiencies in public services. Living conditions are naturally important to the population, and the economic challenges of recent years have heightened social frustration in certain segments of society. The real growth of incomes is a fundamental expectation. Additionally, public service areas requiring greater attention include healthcare, the education system, and social support mechanisms.
4. Weakening Western orientation and strengthening Euroscepticism. It is time to acknowledge that Romanian society is divided in its attitudes toward the West and the European Union. It appears clear that EU-accession has not met all public's expectations. Certain groups feel vulnerable, perceiving themselves as second-class EU citizens – only consumers in the market for Western companies or as cheap labor. Recent crises have exacerbated negative attitudes: both COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war had adverse economic effects, particularly on the most vulnerable groups. The Russia-Ukraine conflict not only caused economic problems but, due to geographical proximity, also instilled fear of war among the population from the outset. Ukraine's perception may have been further damaged by views on the treatment of the Romanian ethnic minority there, fears associated with cheap grain imports, or perceptions of disproportionate state support provided to Ukrainian refugees in Romania.⁷ These opinions reflect a belief that the European Union mishandled recent crises and is not genuinely aiding Romania's development. The issue of Schengen membership, delayed for over a decade, has not strengthened Western integration but has raised resentments.

⁶ <https://www.inscop.ro/octombrie-2024-sondaj-de-opinie-inscop-research-partea-a-ii-a/> (2025.01.29)

⁷ In one of Călin Georgescu's most-watched TikTok campaign videos, he claimed that while Romanian children receive a monthly allowance of 248 lei (≈50 EUR), the Romanian state provides 3,700 lei (≈750 EUR) in aid for children who have fled from Ukraine. <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/calin-georgescu-tik-tok/33215127.html> (2025.01.29)

5. Vulnerability to Disinformation. While our analysis does not aim to examine susceptibility to various forms of propaganda, nor have we addressed media consumption habits or trust levels in different media types, it is plausible that critical thinking is underdeveloped across broad segments of Romanian society, and/or there is a low level of trust in mainstream media. Georgescu's campaign – primarily conducted on TikTok – suggests that many people credited his mystical, elite- and West-opposing, isolationist, protectionist, and ultra-nationalist narrative. This narrative largely exploited the political, administrative, and societal issues summarized in the previous four points. The success of his campaign indicates that Romanian society is also easily polarizable along various lines of social frustration.
6. Anti-system sentiments within the Romanian Diaspora. The voting behavior and presumed attitudes of the Romanian community that emigrated primarily for employment purposes merit separate consideration. The Romanian Diaspora participated in large numbers in the presidential election, with 822,000 votes cast abroad, accounting for approximately 9% of total voters. Significantly, anti-system candidates achieved outstanding results within this group: Călin Georgescu secured 43%, Elena Lasconi 27%, and George Simion 12% of the diaspora vote. Of particular interest is that in the ten Western European countries with the highest number of Romanian voters (e.g., the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, France), Georgescu enjoyed 50% support. Including Simion's approximately 13%, it can be said that nearly two-thirds of the Romanian diaspora in Western Europe supported anti-system, far-right, and strongly Eurosceptic and anti-Western candidates in the 2024 presidential elections. While the anti-establishment stance of workers forced to emigrate – rooted in frustration with the Romanian state's failure to provide adequate living conditions – is understandable, their anti-Western sentiment is less intuitive. This may stem from social frustrations linked to their lower societal status, but it is also possible that they are highly critical of Western values, the functioning of their host countries, and the social structures they encounter. These criticisms are likely fueled both by everyday experiences and disinformation campaigns. Another hypothesis is that the West-critical perspectives of the millions of Romanian citizens working abroad are being transmitted back to their families and acquaintances at home, significantly influencing the overall attitude structure of Romanian society.

6.3. Romania and Hungary's Perception of the West

To interpret the attitudes of Hungarians from Romania, it is worth considering the situation in Hungary as well. Most Transylvanian Hungarians follow political events in their kin-state and are strongly connected to Hungarian media, including traditional, online, and social media.

For better clarity, we compiled a summary table from international research's (Eurobarometer 102 and GLOBSEC trends 2024), synthesizing the key findings discussed here. The most significant finding is that there are no substantial differences in the attitudes of the two countries' populations. Romanian and Hungarian public share similar views on most of the examined issues. The majority in both countries would vote to remain in the EU in a potential referendum (RO: 83%, HU: 86%), believe that EU membership is beneficial for their country (RO: 74%, HU: 81%), and trust the European Union (RO: 56%, HU: 50%). There are, however, slight differences: a higher percentage of Romanians think things are going in the right direction in the EU (RO: 57%, HU: 41%), but also a higher proportion believe their country “could better face the future outside the EU” (RO: 39%, HU: 31%).

Regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, it is important to consider that both countries have significant national communities living in Ukraine, whose treatment (especially in terms of language and education rights) is politically and publicly debated. In both Romania and Hungary, 55% believe Russia is primarily responsible for the outbreak of the conflict, and an identical 69% think Russia aims to weaken the EU and NATO. The majority in both countries agree that the EU should build its own army (RO: 71%, HU: 60%). Ukraine's EU and/or NATO membership has greater support in Romania (48-50%), while most Hungarians (57%) would prefer to see Ukraine as a neutral country in the future.

There are significant differences in strategic partnerships, mainly due to historical and economic factors. For Romania, the United States is the most important international partner, while for Hungary, it is Germany. In Hungary, a notable percentage of population also considers China (34%) and Russia (22%) as strategic partners.

In terms of migration, there are considerable differences as well. Romanians are more concerned about refugees from Ukraine (RO: 30%, HU: 23%), whereas in Hungary, there are stronger negative sentiments toward non-European immigrants (RO: 35%, HU: 59%). Political narratives likely play a crucial role here. As seen, in Romania, support for Ukrainian refugee children was instrumentalized in political campaigns, while in Hungary, anti-migrant rhetoric against non-European immigrants has been a core part of Fidesz's government communication since the early 2010s.

Regarding the perception of “how democracy works in your country”, satisfied citizens are in the minority in both countries (RO: 41%, HU: 36%). However, in Romania, it is concerning that more than a third of respondents find a totalitarian political system without elections acceptable (RO: 36%, HU: 10%). The perception of media freedom is better in Romania, with the majority believing that the media operates relatively freely (RO: 63%, HU: 42%) and that they trust the media (RO: 67%, HU: 34%). There is a stark contrast in attitudes toward civil organizations, as the majority of Romanians view them as foreign agents (RO: 62%, HU: 21%).

Overall, it can be concluded that public perception of the West and the European Union is largely aligned in both countries. However, it is essential to acknowledge that in Hungary, the Fidesz government has propagated a strongly Eurosceptic and a sovereignist-protectionist narrative for the past 15 years, while in Romania, there has been a cross-government consensus on Western orientation. Political criticism of this consensus only became more pronounced with the rise of AUR in the past 3-4 years. This raises the question of how deeply Western values are embedded in Romanian society and what impact a strong, potentially ruling, anti-Western political narrative might have. Attitudinal structures indicate that significant segments of Romanian society are open to such a shift.

28. Agreement on key issues: Public opinion in Romania and Hungary. Data sources: EB (Eurobarometer), Autumn 2024, and GT (GLOBSEC Trends), Spring 2024 (%).

Questions, statements	Romania	Hungary
EB: Things are going in the right direction in our country.	45%	38%
EB: Things are going in the right direction in the EU.	57%	41%
EB: Trust in European Union.	56%	50%
EB: [Our country] could better face the future outside the EU (%)	39%	31%
EB: My voice counts in the EU.	47%	39%
EB: [Our country] has benefited from being a member of the EU.	74%	81%
GT: Referendum – remain in the EU.	83%	86%
GT: EU should start building its own army.	71%	60%
GT: United States – among the top two most important strategic partners.	53%	23%
GT: Germany – among the top two most important strategic partners.	49%	56%
GT: France – among the top two most important strategic partners.	35%	19%
GT: United Kingdom– among the top two most important strategic partners.	24%	10%
GT: Russia – among the top two most important strategic partners.	8%	22%
GT: China – among the top two most important strategic partners.	12%	34%
GT: Russia is trying to weaken the EU and NATO.	69%	69%
GT: Russia that invaded Ukraine is primarily responsible for the conflict.	55%	55%
GT: Ukraine to be a member of EU and/or NATO.	58%	36%
GT: Threaten by migrants coming from Ukraine.	30%	23%
GT: Threaten by migrants coming from outside of Europe.	35%	59%
GT: Satisfied with how democracy works in your country.	41%	36%
GT: Totalitarian system without regular elections is good for our country.	36%	10%
GT: Those who consider their media rather or completely free.	63%	42%
GT: Those who trust the media.	57%	34%
GT: The work of non-profit organisations (NGOs) is important for the functioning of a democratic society.	66%	83%
GT: Non-profit organisations are foreign agents.	62%	21%

Highlighted in colors are the significant differences between the two countries: red indicates values that contradict those of Western European democracies, while green represents conforming values.

6.4. The Evolution of Attitudes Among Transylvanian Hungarians

Our survey highlights that the opinions of the Transylvanian Hungarian community differ in many aspects from the average mindset in Romania.

Regarding voting behavior, it can be estimated that on European Parliament and local elections in June, they participated at a slightly higher rate than the national average, while in the December parliamentary elections, their turnout was significantly above the national average. However, in the November presidential elections, their participation was somewhat lower compared to the majority population. It is also certain that over 90% of them voted for the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), indicating an ethnically driven voting pattern, as seen in previous elections as well. The RMDSZ achieved 6.5% in the EP elections and 6.3% in the parliamentary elections in 2024, while the proportion of ethnic Hungarians in Romania is likely below 6%. Kelemen Hunor, presidential candidate of the RMDSZ, received 4.5% of the votes.

However, the RMDSZ's strong electoral performance does not mean that the Hungarian population is not system-critical when it comes to Romanian state institutions. As shown in our polls results, the majority is dissatisfied with the functioning of the state, the efficiency of public spending, and the competence of state employees. They believe that the state is either indifferent or even hostile towards its citizens. Trust in institutions is even lower among them; compared to the national average, fewer trust the Romanian government and parliament, with local administration being the only institutions where satisfaction is relatively higher. Their increased system criticism is likely connected to their ethnic minority status, as a large segments of them feel that there has been no progress in handling minority issues in recent years. Regarding their relationship with the central administration in Bucharest, the same critical attitudes identified in Romanian society as a whole can be applied: dissatisfaction with the political elite, state dysfunctionality, deficiencies in guiding values and principles of good governance, and the inadequate operation of public services. In addition, a significant portion of the Hungarian minority believes that Romania is particularly ignorant of their community's specific issues (such as language use, education, and culture).

In economic and social matters, as well as regarding the country's direction, they are more pessimistic than the Romanian average. Above average identified inflation, unemployment, and pension conditions as pressing problems. These frustrations have deepened compared to 2023, likely because the majority of Transylvanian Hungarians live in economically less developed, peripheral regions of Romania, and those with lower social status are more vulnerable to economic crises.

However, when comparing the current results with those from 2023, we can state that public sentiment and institutional perceptions have slightly improved. Similarly, skepticism towards the European Union has somewhat decreased. Although the majority of Transylvanian Hungarians still distrust the EU, the proportion of those who have confidence in it has increased slightly (from 28% to 33%) after the EP elections. It is also worth observing that they trust the EU more than Romanian state institutions. Compared to last year, the proportion of those who believe that EU membership has had a positive impact on Romania has grown, as has the share of those who think the EU pays significant attention to national minority issues. A crucial difference compared to the general Romanian attitude is that Transylvanian Hungarians are much less Eurosceptical regarding the statement that "Romania could better face the future outside the EU " (25% vs. 39%).

In our 2023 study, we detailed how the Euroscepticism of Transylvanian Hungarians is determined by cultural, economic, and political factors. We defined this as a sovereignty-loyalty dilemma, in which Transylvanian Hungarians perceive that they receive inadequate support from both Romania and the European Union in improving their living conditions and addressing minority-related issues. Their political allegiance follows a hierarchy of loyalty: it is strongest towards their own political representative, the RMDSZ (on an ethnic basis), followed by the Hungarian Fidesz government (on both ethnic and ideological grounds), while only narrow segments trust the integration intentions and capabilities of the European Union and the Romanian state. The source of this dilemma lies in the problem of liminal integration. This can be interpreted as follows: after Romania's transition to democracy, particularly between 1996 and 2008, the conditions of Transylvanian Hungarians for integration within Romanian society seemed favorable. The RMDSZ became a governmental factor, there were significant advancements in minority rights, the economy experienced substantial growth (especially from 2000 onwards), and the EU accession process was met with great hope within the Hungarian community in Romania (in 2007 and 2009, Romanian Hungarian candidates achieved results around 9% in EP elections, significantly exceeding their demographic weight). Meanwhile, in Hungarian politics, the issue of Hungarian communities beyond the borders remained relatively marginal; in 2004, the Gyurcsány government campaigned against the facilitated naturalization of ethnic Hungarians in the December 5 referendum. De-integration began in 2007, when the RMDSZ faced significant challenges (from independent EP candidate László Tőkés and smaller Hungarian parties), followed by the 2008 financial crisis, the repeated marginalization of minority issues, and the rise to power of Fidesz in Hungary, which introduced facilitated citizenship, significantly altering previous processes. Transylvanian Hungarians shifted from Romanian integration towards a virtual national unification promoted by the Fidesz government trans-sovereign national strategy.

The question is how the changes of 2024 may influence the liminal integration process of Transylvanian Hungarians. In this regard, the year's most important events present contradictions. On one hand, the RMDSZ has significantly strengthened its political and governmental positions within Romania after the elections. However, Romania's ongoing political crisis and declining economic stability do not favor a renewed Romanian integration. On the other hand, in Hungary, Fidesz sees Donald Trump's victory as a major success, and the shared right-wing, conservative, and nationalist worldview aligns closely with the values of Hungarians from Romania. However, Fidesz has also encountered a strong challenger in Péter Magyar and the Tisza Party, raising questions about its ability to maintain power after the 2026 elections. Lastly, the future influence of the European Union appears highly uncertain, as core EU countries are focused on handling their own political and economic crises. The likelihood of significant progress in the EU economic competitiveness, ideological renewal, or minority rights issues in the near future seems low.