
REPORT

*"So that if it ever makes it into the history books,
I'll be able to say I was there"*

Report on the "End-of-system" Concert

(Rendszerbontó Nagykoncert) on 10 April, 2026

*The motivations, views of political participation and assessments of chanting
among 18–29-year-old participants — results of a qualitative and quantitative study*

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.21862/report.end-of-system.concert.2026.BUD.ELTE>

Budapest · 17 June 2026



ELTE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
AND PSYCHOLOGY

1. Introductory remarks

The present publication serves as a report summarising the primary findings of the data collection carried out in the framework of a comprehensive research project. The aim of our research, ongoing since 2025, is to understand how young people's attitudes towards political participation are taking shape, and what role the agents and arenas of popular culture, together with various cultural products, are playing in this process. We argue that the political expressions of (a segment of) bands and artists popular among Hungarian youth not only function as alternative mobilisation channels but fundamentally redefine and restructure the classic, institution-centred conceptions of political participation. The symbolic and highly practical culmination of these tendencies was the „*End-of-System*” Concert held two days before the 2026 parliamentary elections in Hungary. At the event venue, our research team was supported by numerous volunteers in conducting empirical research using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

2. Methodological remarks

The empirical data collection, financed from our own resources, was conducted on 10 April 2026, two days prior to the parliamentary elections, at Heroes' Square in Budapest and its vicinity.¹ During the fieldwork, 13 volunteer research pairs — totalling 26 people² — carried out data collection following the methodology of international protest surveys. The work was carried out within pre-designated zones of the site, using a fundamentally random selection process, integrated with quota sampling techniques based on gender and age (male/female; 18–24/25–29).

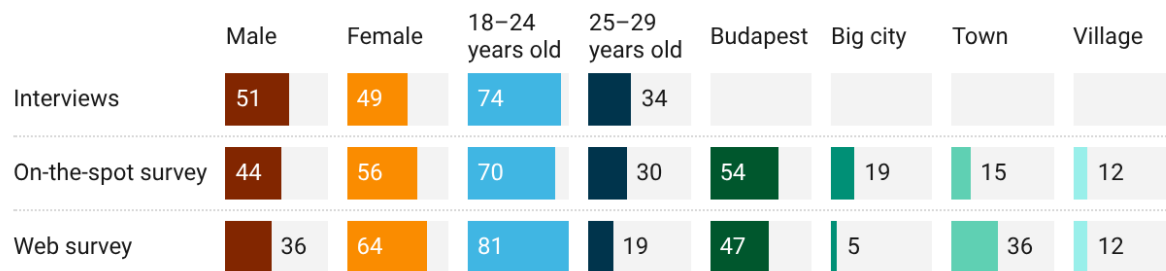
A total of 50 short, five-minute interviews were conducted in the period preceding the concert³, between 15:40 and 16:10. In addition, the volunteers administered 111 short, so-called „on-the-spot” questionnaires, and also handed out QR-code flyers encouraging respondents to fill out a somewhat longer online questionnaire. During the 24-hour window while the survey remained open, 60 people took up the opportunity. Altogether, a quantitative database of 171 respondents is thus available for analysis (for the distribution of the sample by sex, age groups and place of permanent residence, see Figure 1).

¹The concert organisers were informed about the research. Data collection was in line with the norms and standards of research ethics, the research holds research-ethics permit no. 0278/2026 from the Research Ethics Committee of ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology.

²We are very grateful to our student volunteers from the ELTE Faculty of Education and Psychology and Faculty of Law programmes for their valuable, high-quality and indispensable help. The list of volunteers can be found at the end of the report.

³Of these, 47 can be analysed. Two interviews are inaudible and one respondent is over 29 years old.

Sociodemographic aspects of the three samples (%)



Source: "End-of-system" Concert Research, ELTE FEP, Research Leader: András Déri

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Figure 1. Composition of the three samples by sociodemographic dimensions (%)

Due to their nature, the studied samples are structurally self-selected, as they are drawn from the audience of a mass anti-government rally opposing the Orbán regime. Consequently, the results cannot be considered representative of the entire Hungarian 18–29-year-old population; rather, they present the constellation of opinions, the patterns of attitudes and the reflections of this particular audience.

It is important to note that the interviews were conducted before the concert's peak period, so the sample covers the heterogeneity of participants only with respect to those present during that period. Owing to the increasingly dense crowd and the loud music, the volunteers had to finish the fieldwork uniformly at 17:00.

In the following report, each thematic area is characterised from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. The sources to be processed are therefore personal, on-site interviews; personal, on-site questionnaires; and online questionnaires.

3. Participation motivations and patterns

The motivations formulated by respondents can be organised into three, mostly overlapping blocks. Based on the empirical data, the reflections in the typical responses do not pinpoint a single cause; instead, within the participants' discourses, the dimensions of conscious political determination, the popular cultural concert experience, and the collective search for community emerge in an integrated manner, mutually reinforcing one another.

3.1. Political motivation and the anticipation of a regime change

The most frequently referred element is the explicit intention to remove the existing governmental system, together with the desire to experience the collective „regime-changing atmosphere” directly. Within the narratives, the phrase „16 years” establishes a distinct web of meaning, referencing the uninterrupted governance of Viktor Orbán since 2010, under which an entire age-group has undergone its political socialisation. Many respondents emphasised the political weariness and apathy experienced in the context of long, uninterrupted governmental cycles (e.g.: „throughout my active life I have only seen this”). In several cases, this subjective

feeling of frustration was linked in the reflections with a kind of forced emigration scenario, which interviewees raised as a possibility in the event of a victory by the governing party.

„Honestly, I've got pretty fed up that throughout my active life we have only experienced the Fidesz government, and I think this is a good expression of the fact that we don't like the government.⁴”

— 23-year-old male

3.2. Experience, concert, community

The performers, the free concert and the festival-style line-up appeared both on their own and in combination with the political motif. Several respondents explicitly highlighted the linkage between the two. For many, the appeal of the company of friends was a prominent motivation, though it did not replace their political drive but rather strengthened it. In a few of our interviewees, the political motive was nevertheless minimal: they had come at friends' invitation, out of curiosity, for the atmosphere.

„We're combining the pleasant with the useful — we're having a good time, and we're standing up for what we think on the political scene.”

— 20-year-old female

3.3. The sense of a "historic moment"

Several respondents came out specifically to experience the size of the crowd and the common stand-taking. In a few interviews, comparisons to the 1989 Hungarian regime change — the historical turning point that marked the end of communist rule in Hungary — appeared explicitly; speakers framed their own presence as an event they would later be able to recount.

„The main reason was that I really wanted to experience what it's like when this many people want the same thing, and to feel a bit of that regime-change atmosphere that I hope will also be there on Sunday.”

— 27-year-old female

„So that if it ever makes it into the history books, I'll be able to say I was there.”

— 18-year-old female

⁴Direct translations of verbatim quotations

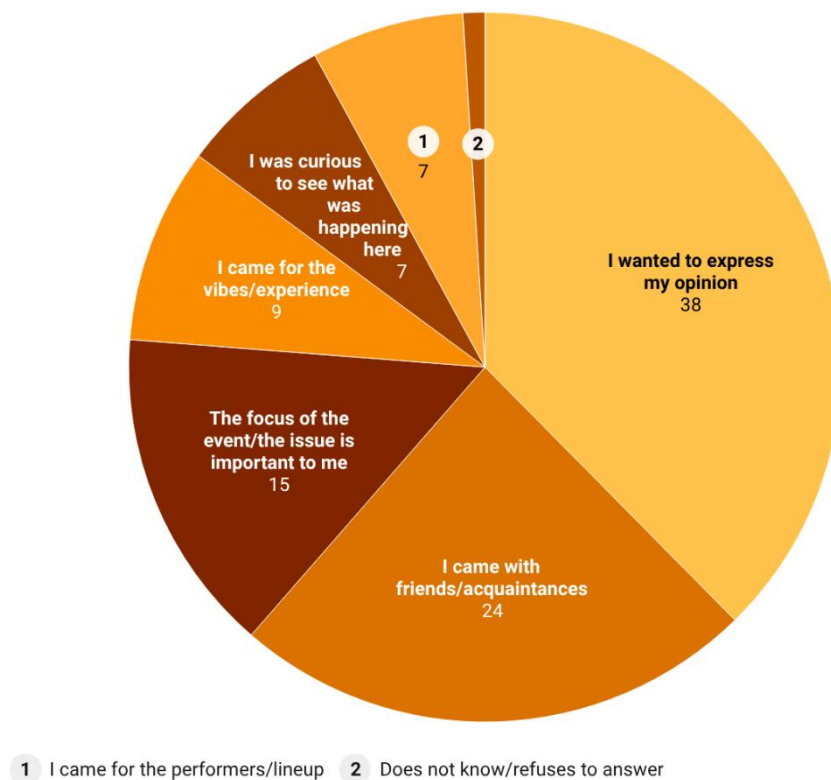
Alongside these highly politicised motivations, the profile of the weakly committed participant also emerged. Thus, it is important to note that certainly not all attendees were politically motivated:

„Honestly, I didn't have anything better to do, I would have been bored at home.”

— 21-year-old male

In the questionnaire survey, respondents could choose from 8 options of motivations to participate. Figure 2 shows that those present were most often motivated by expressing their (political) opinion (38%), which is supplemented by the fact that every seventh respondent visited the concert specifically because of the cause, the issue — i.e. to end the system. Since, however, we are dealing with young people, there is nothing to be surprised at in the fact that friends, acquaintances, the atmosphere and the performers also motivated them. In this respect, the results of the qualitative and quantitative research strands chime maximally with one another.

What is the primary reason for your attendance at this event? N=171



Source: "End-of-system" Concert Research, ELTE FEP, Research Leader: András Déri
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Figure 2. What is your primary reason for attending this event?

4. Interpretations of the concept of "political participation"

One of the most critical questions of the research our ongoing research, which began in 2025, is what the concept of political participation means to a young person in the 21st century. The theories that strictly separate the various forms of participation from one another, hierarchise them and at the same time standardise them — are they interpretable at all for a citizen around 18 years of age? In our view, young people today think in far more complex, less clear-cut categories, so it is very important to see how, at a political event, they formulate the concept of political participation in their own words.

4.1. A minimalist interpretation of political participation: turnout at elections

Voting, viewed both as a duty and an accessible tool, was a central element for many respondents. Several explicitly restricted the meaning of political participation to it; for some, this was also intertwined with a sense of ineffectiveness („*we can't really do much else*"). For others, an interpretation of its basic character appeared: with the modifiers „*duty*", „*basic*", „*minimum*". The hierarchical conception of participation — voting is the threshold, anything beyond that is „*extra*" — was a recurring idea.

„It's our basic duty to make use of our rights. The minimum, in my opinion, is that we go and vote. That's not a very maximal thing, although very few people, for goodness' sake, treat it that way — that, okay, I'll go."

— 27-year-old female

4.2. Information and dialogue

For many, political participation entails cognitive and communicative activity: following the news, family/friend debates, „a formed opinion of one's own". Several interviewees mentioned talking about politics as part of participation. The intensity of „interest in public affairs" was high among most respondents: they reported daily or weekly political conversations with family, friends, often with work- or schoolmates. A recurring pattern is that being informed is a precondition for participation: several respondents speak in markedly disapproving terms of those who voice opinions while ill-informed.

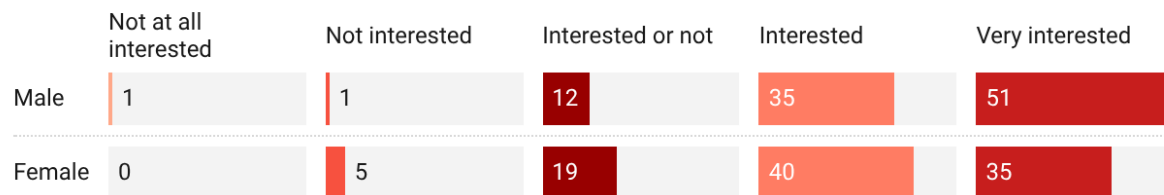
„For me it means, broadly speaking, that one is informed. And, say, follows the news and talks to people one knows."

— 20-year-old female

It is worth noting at this point that political and public-affairs interest among the young people present at the „End-of-System" Concert was extremely high. Protest survey research around the world shows that those who attend demonstrations are the politically most engaged, most active

stratum of societies. That at a cultural event also carrying a political message the level of public-affairs and/or political interest among young people should be as high as it was on 10 April is, even under these circumstances, decidedly unusual. 80 per cent of those who completed the questionnaire were either rather (42%) or very much (39%) interested in politics, which is why the average on a 1-to-5 scale was 4.17 points.

Political interest among the attendees of the concert (1-5 scale) by gender (N=168) Mean=4.17; Male=4.32; Female=4.06)



Source: "End-of-system concert" Research, ELTE FEP, Research Leader: András Déri
Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3. Political interest among those present at the "End-of-System" Concert (1–5 scale)

For comparison, researchers at the ELTE CSS Institute for Political Science analysed the social backgrounds of participants in two mass demonstrations held on 23 October 2025. 23 October is a major national holiday in Hungary, commemorating the 1956 anti-Soviet revolution, and it is traditionally a highly politicised day when the country's primary political forces hold competing mass rallies. On this occasion, the governing party mobilised its supporters through the Békemenet (Peace March), while the emerging opposition force, Péter Magyar's TISZA Party, organised the Nemzeti Menet (National March). According to the report by Pál Susánszky, Dániel Mikecz and Andrea Szabó, „nearly two-thirds of the Peace March participants (63%) and half of the National March participants (53%) declared themselves to be very interested in politics”⁵. That is, the political interest of the 18–29-year-old young people at the „End-of-System” Concert matched the level of interest of those who attended the National March.

4.3. A broader approach: an activist interpretation of political participation

Taking part in demonstrations, carrying on public-affairs debates in private settings, and the forms of expressing opinion also appeared in our research. For some respondents, the category of political participation covers practically „everything” in the way of public-affairs expression.

„In my opinion, everything. From voting, to taking part in demonstrations, any kind of political expression — I think that counts.”

— 19-year-old female

⁵ Pál Susánszky, Andrea Szabó, Dániel Mikecz, Sebastian Haunss, and Priska Daphi, *Hungarian Protest Survey – 2025*, 5, https://politikatudomany.tk.elte.hu/uploads/files/Report_Hungarian_Protest_Survey_-_2025.pdf.

4.4. Pessimistic pragmatism and alienation

Two minority, rather dismissive stances appeared in the sample: a few respondents justified their distance with perceived ineffectiveness, and one interviewee mentioned voting as the only possible political action.

„In fact, for me it only means voting. I mean, I don't think we can really do much else.“

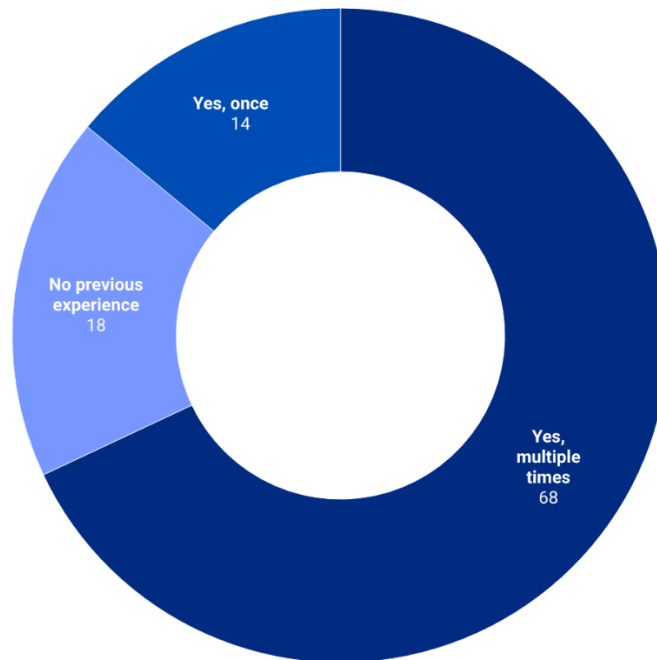
— 21-year-old male

5. The assessment of chanting

that first emerged at concerts and festivals during the summer of 2024 and have since become a common feature at large-scale cultural mass events (typically the chant "Mocskos Fidesz!" — "Filthy Fidesz!") were examined in the research from several angles.

According to the results of the questionnaire strand, a dominant, decisive majority (82%) of the young people who attended the „End-of-System” Concert and took part in the quantitative research had already been to a concert or festival where chants with political content or character were heard. So uniform is this experience that no sociodemographic or sociocultural factor segments the young people in this regard. At festivals and large concerts, this has thus, in recent years, become a generalised event functioning as an accustomed ritual.

Have you ever been to a concert/festival where political chanting occurred (e.g., "Mocskos Fidesz")?



Source: "End-of-system" Concert Research, ELTE FEP, Research Leader: András Déri
Created with Datawrapper

Figure 4. Previous experience with political chanting

Two thirds of the „End-of-System Concert's participants stated that they themselves joined in the chanting during the event, e.g. shouting slogans such as „*Mocskos Fidesz!*“ („Filthy Fidesz!“) or „*Ruszkik haza!*“ („Russians, go home!“). Among those who chanted at the „End-of-System“ Concert, one third reported that the chanting filled them with a kind of feeling of belonging to a community; more than two fifths said it gave them strength; and one in six declared that reciting the political slogans collectively elicited joy and enthusiasm in them.

The assessment of the chanting is clearly, though not unanimously, accepted. The interview responses sort themselves into four main patterns.

5.1. Accepting or supportive position (majority)

A characteristic argument is that, even despite the morally questionable style, it is „*justified*“; that they „*had it coming*“; that it is suitable for expressing frustration. A double assessment was typical: normatively, they would not approve, in the given situation, they accept it or join in themselves.

„It's not necessarily the most effective or the cleanest thing, but in the current situation I'd say sure, and it's justified, totally justified.“

— 23-year-old male

„In an ideal world this wouldn't be okay, but they had it coming.”

— 24-year-old male

In several respondents the accepting position appeared in more nuanced form; some thought that in assessing the „Mocskos Fidesz!” chant one has to take into account the context of the situation, and that in certain cases it can have inappropriate modes of expression.

„In my view, at commemorations one shouldn't be doing these things. At concerts it depends. If the performer is openly political or, well, we know their views, then I think it's fine.”

— 19-year-old female

5.2. Functional reading

Many described the chanting not (only) as a symbolic stand-taking but as an emotion-regulating, community-forming mechanism. Recurring words were: „venting”, „letting out frustration”, „release of pent-up emotions”, „dopamine”, „togetherness”. While this interpretation does not exclude political meaning, it subordinates it to a social-emotional function.

„Well, I think the last 16 years can finally come out of people, as a release. It's one of those things — as I think Puzsér⁶ said, it's a national minimum, the filthy Fidesz-ing.”

— 19-year-old male

5.3. Critical or rejecting position (a minority, but a pronounced one)

Several signalled that the chanting is „uncivilised”, „vulgar”, „there's no need to disparage the other side”. Two logics appeared in the discourses: on the one hand, an aesthetic-stylistic critique (uttering „filthy” at a concert spoils the experience); on the other, a principled-democratic critique („this shouldn't be done by either side”), particularly typically among those who have Fidesz-voting acquaintances.

„I think neither side should disparage the other. This is precisely what I don't like about Fidesz — that now they're doing this too. [...] From that point on this is already society-fragmenting.”

— 21-year-old male

⁶ Róbert Puzsér, well-known Hungarian publicist, critic, media personality, the main organiser of the concert.

5.4. Chanting as a form of political participation

One of the most important questions of the research is how the young people themselves interpret the politically charged chanting that has become ever more frequent and intense since 2024. Do they understand it as a new, modern expressive form of political participation and action, or do they interpret the communicative act in some other way?

In this regard, the responses obtained during the interviews scattered considerably. The positions defining it as, at least partly, a political action were in the majority, but the view is also frequent that the chanting is an expression of opinion but not active action. The specific content also influenced the assessment: more people regarded the „Mocskos Fidesz!” chant as political participation than the general expression of dissatisfaction. Other respondents firmly separated the categories of expressing opinion and action and placed the chanting in the former.

„I think on some level yes, but obviously it's not a... well, it's not the kind of participation where I also do something so that there is change.”

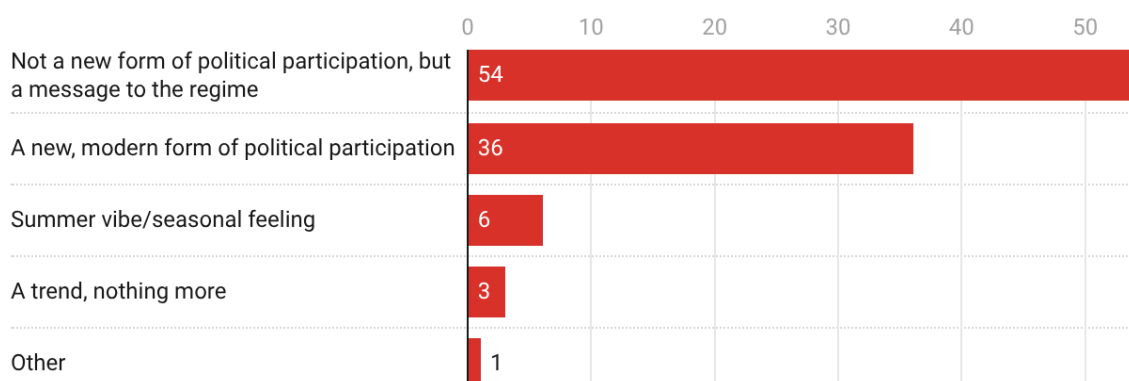
— 27-year-old female

„It's a kind of participation where I express my belonging, if you will. But, but it's not yet an active step toward actually making change happen.”

— 27-year-old female

In the questionnaires respondents could choose from four categories: they could label the chanting as political participation; they could say that it is not participation but a firm expression of opinion to those in power. There were also two milder options: rather, just a fleeting summer trend; or plain fashion for young people.

Definition of chanting (%) N=171



Source: "End-of-system" Concert Research, ELTE FEP, Research Leader: András Déri

Created with Datawrapper

Figure 5. The definition of chanting

On the basis of Figure 5, the absolute majority of the 18–29-year-old young people who completed the questionnaire believe that the chants cannot be regarded as a new form of political participation, but they do nevertheless carry a kind of message — that is, they are communicative acts directed against the Orbán regime. In contrast, somewhat more than one third of respondents understand the shouting of politically charged chants in cultural spaces specifically as political participation. The young people's views are, in sociodemographic and sociocultural terms, entirely uniform: there is no substantive difference of opinion between men and women, between the somewhat younger and the somewhat older, or by place of permanent residence.

6. Further points of interest from the personal interviews

- **Public life as a mental burden.** During the interviews several respondents reported emotional saturation explicitly: they are interested „too much“, „I've become a bit depressed about it“, „it's starting to get to be too much“. High political interest and burnout/avoidance appear together within the same sample.
- **The political role-taking of the performers.** Most respondents considered it important that their favourite performers take a stance on public-affairs questions; many specifically attributed a moral responsibility to them. According to the online questionnaires, two thirds of respondents fall into this group and believe that musicians and singers should speak out on social or political issues. The recurrently mentioned signs of credibility are: consistency, willingness to take risks, argued speech (rather than empty phrases), and the continuous presence of the political message in the musician's musical/media presence. A few, however, were specifically sceptical of those who speak up at the last moments before the election.
- **The decision to emigrate appearing as a personal stake of the election.** Several interviewees (both among the 18–19-year-olds and among those over 25) indicated that in the event of a Fidesz victory they would move abroad or continue their studies abroad. The result of the election thus appeared in several interviewees not as an abstract political consequence but as a direct life-strategic decision.
- **The expected impact of the election result.** Respondents reacted in two characteristic ways: either they perceived a very great, fate-altering impact (often expecting a positive outcome), or they formulated more distancing expectations ("it won't change from one day to the next"). Explicitly rare was the "it won't affect me" type of answer — when it occurred, it generally appeared together with the pattern of alienation from participation.

7. Summary

Among the 18–29-year-old participants of the „End-of-System” Concert held on 10 April 2026, the motivations for participation organise themselves into three overlapping blocks: the anticipation of regime change, the concert and community experience, and the desire to experience the „historic moment” — the typical answer mentions several of these together, and is often accompanied by the experiential frame of „the 16 years”, as well as by an emigration scenario formulated in case of a Fidesz victory.

The meaning of political participation scatters between voting as a minimum duty, information and dialogue, and the broader participatory-activist interpretation; informedness recurrently appears as a precondition.

The chanting that has become customary at concerts and in public squares is a familiar, accustomed phenomenon whose assessment is, in the majority, accepting — typically in the formula "justified, but not nice" — and is positioned rather as an expression of opinion than as active political action; the functional reading (release of frustration, community-forming) is, for several respondents, placed alongside — indeed, ahead of — the political interpretation.

Acknowledgements

We thank the volunteers who took part in the research and in the preparatory training without compensation for their key help in carrying out the research. We would especially like to thank the contribution of Nóra Monostori, who, in addition to the data collection, also took part in the cleaning, preparation and analysis of the data. Further volunteers: Máté Arany, Vera Balog, Botond Benkő, Anka Dankánics, Talullah Eseosa Ekiudoko, Kinga Gabányi, Máté Hidász, Enikő Jánosi, Dorottya Kálmán, Hanna Kéri, Mercédesz Kis, Fanni Korponai, Mirella Kónya, Virág Mundrusz, Kinga Pál, Lilla Pozsgai, Bendegúz Sárközy, Emese Sebestyén, Márton Soós, Borbála Sós, Simon Szemző, Dominika Szigeti, Edina Tudlik-Blaskó, Emese Vágási, Laura Vörös.

We also thank to the respondents for their participation in this research, and to the organizers for providing the crucial information required for the research planning.

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