

# Populist Radical Right (PRR) and Health: The Case of Hungary

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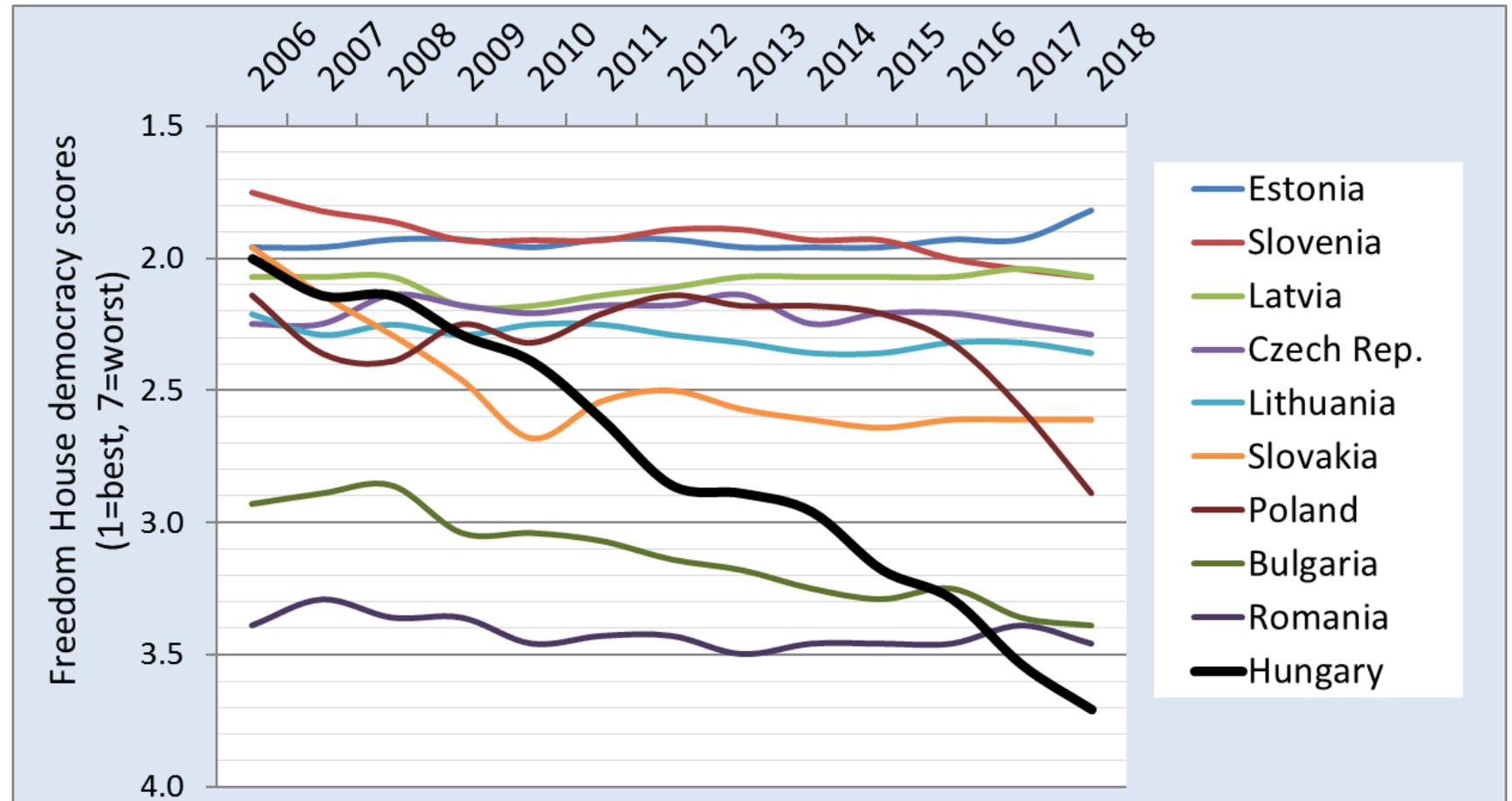
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## Massive democratic backsliding in Hungary



## PRR party context: Fidesz and authoritarian populism in Hungary

- **From avant-garde neoliberalism to avant-garde populism**
  - Hungary was a “star pupil” of postsocialist neoliberalism
  - Neoliberal “Left”: Privatization of public utilities, pension, attempted health insurance privatization in 2007-2008
  - Severe social and economic disintegration: populist countermovement
  - Viktor Orbán elected in 2010, 2014, 2018 with two-thirds majority
  - However, Orbán’s populism: pro-business, exclusionary neoliberalism = liberal chauvinism

## Key post-2010 health policies of the Fidesz government

PRR Policy	Comments/Outcomes	“Flavor”
<b>National budget acts</b>	Significant reduction of public health care spending	Liberal chauvinism
<b>Act XLII of 2010</b>	Dissolves Ministry of Health	Statism
<b>Act CXXII of 2019</b>	Exclusion of non-paying patients from treatment	Liberal chauvinism
<b>Act CXXXIV of 2012</b>	Nationalized tobacco sale. Licenses for party loyalists	Statism, clientelism
<b>Act CLIV of 2010</b>	Renationalized hospitals in Budapest	Statism
<b>Act XXXVIII of 2012</b>	Renationalized municipal and county level hospitals	Statism
<b>Act XLI of 2011</b>	Smoke-free law covering all indoors public spaces	Statism
<b>Act CIII of 2011</b>	“Chips Tax”: fee for unhealthy food and beverage products	Statism
<b>Decree No. 71 of 2013</b>	Regulating the amount of trans-fats in food products	Statism
<b>Decree No. 37/2014.</b>	Stricter rules on public catering	Statism

## Fidesz and the corona crisis

- **Liberal chauvinism (exclusionary neoliberalism) in full speed**
  - Mitigated the first wave properly with a strict lock down, but failed to prepare for the second wave
  - Avant-garde (exclusionary neoliberal) anti-covid measures:
    - Suspension of admission of migrants from transit zones
    - Centralized military leadership in hospitals and care homes
    - Freeing up 60% of hospital beds in publicly funded hospitals (significant savings on hospitals)
    - Cutting access to health care for those unable to pay health insurance contribution (summer 2020)
    - Limited social assistance: limited wage guarantee scheme, 3 months unemployment benefit
    - Generous assistance to businesses: subsidies, suspension (!) of the labor code

## Conclusions

- The health policies of Fidesz benefit the broader welfare framework (liberal chauvinism = exclusionary neoliberalism):
  - Social divestment (declining health spending), upward redistribution (pro-business covid-intervention)
- However, health policies also diverge from social policies:
  - 2007-08 protest against health insurance privatization limits Fidesz's wiggle room in health policy
  - More emphasis on statism: nationalizations, centralized pro-health regulations (tobacco, foods, beverages)
  - Less direct – more covert – push for neoliberalization (increase in private, out-of-pocket health payments)
- Authoritarian-populist “fixes” needed to make this divisive policy regime politically sustainable

Thank you for your attention!



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