

Analysis

The V4 countries stand for strong nation-state frameworks and the support for families

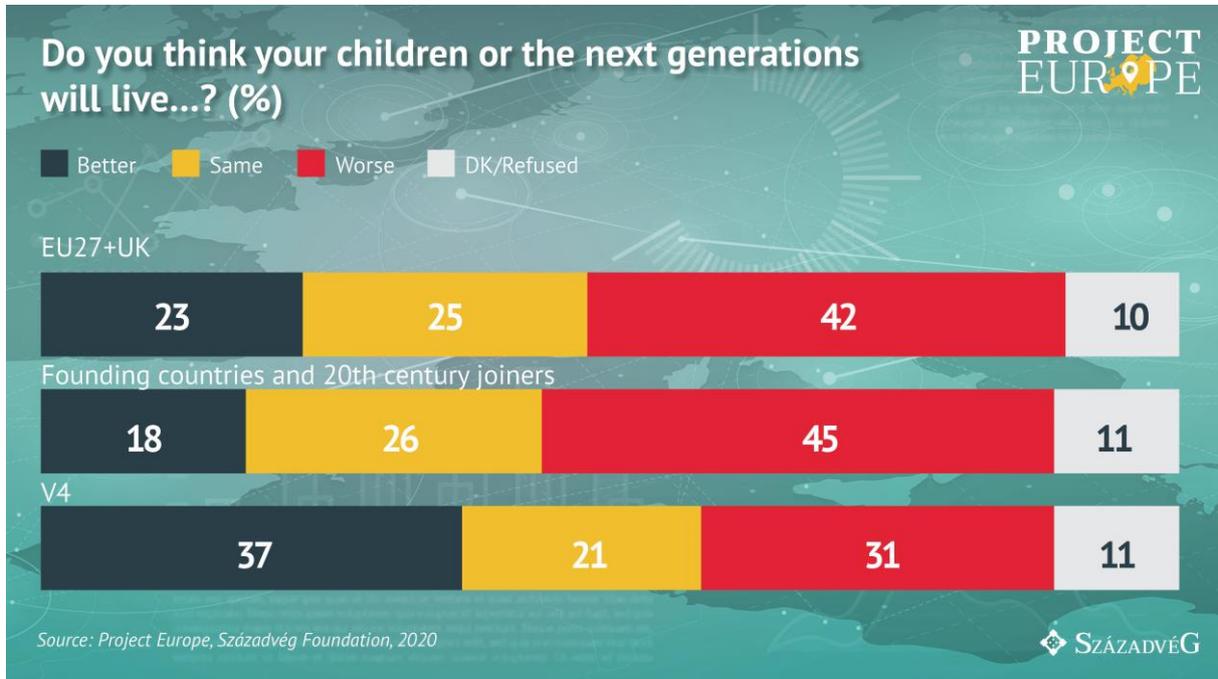
The alliance of the Visegrad countries – Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic – is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. The importance of the cooperation is demonstrated by the jubilee summit in Krakow on 17 February, attended by Charles Michel, President of the European Council. In addition to the mutual benefits of the alliance, it is important to emphasize that in recent years the V4 countries have become key players in European policy and effective advocates for the interests of the region. This analysis is based on a survey of Project Europe conducted by Századvég, involving the 27 Member States, the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland. It examined the views of the citizens of the Visegrad cooperation on the future of the European Union, the management of illegal migration, and the support for families and the promotion of childbearing.

The Visegrad countries are optimistic about the future

The research shows that the V4 countries have more confidence in EU institutions and a more positive view of the future of the European community than the European average and the founding Western European Member States. The survey shows that more than three-quarter (76 percent) of V4 respondents trust the European Union, while this proportion is 66 percent among the founding countries and those that joined in the 20th century. At the same time, 65 percent of respondents in the founding countries and the countries that joined in the last century, and 75 percent in the Visegrad countries, would vote in favour of remaining in a referendum on EU membership. It is interesting that public opinion in Europe is getting closer to the standpoint of V4 citizens on this issue year by year: In 2017, 64 percent of EU and British respondents would have voted for their country's EU membership. This proportion was 65 percent in 2018 and 2019 and 67 percent in 2020.

It can also be said that a majority of respondents in the founding countries and those that joined in the 20th century (55 percent) believe that the economic situation in the European Union will weaken in the coming years, and 21 percent say it will not change. In contrast,

in the V4 countries, the proportion of those who see a weakening is 49 percent, and the proportion of those who expect the economy to stagnate is 25 percent. The fact that more than twice as many (37 percent) in the Visegrad states believe that their children and future generations will live better as in the founding countries and in the countries that joined in the last century (18 percent) fits into this picture.



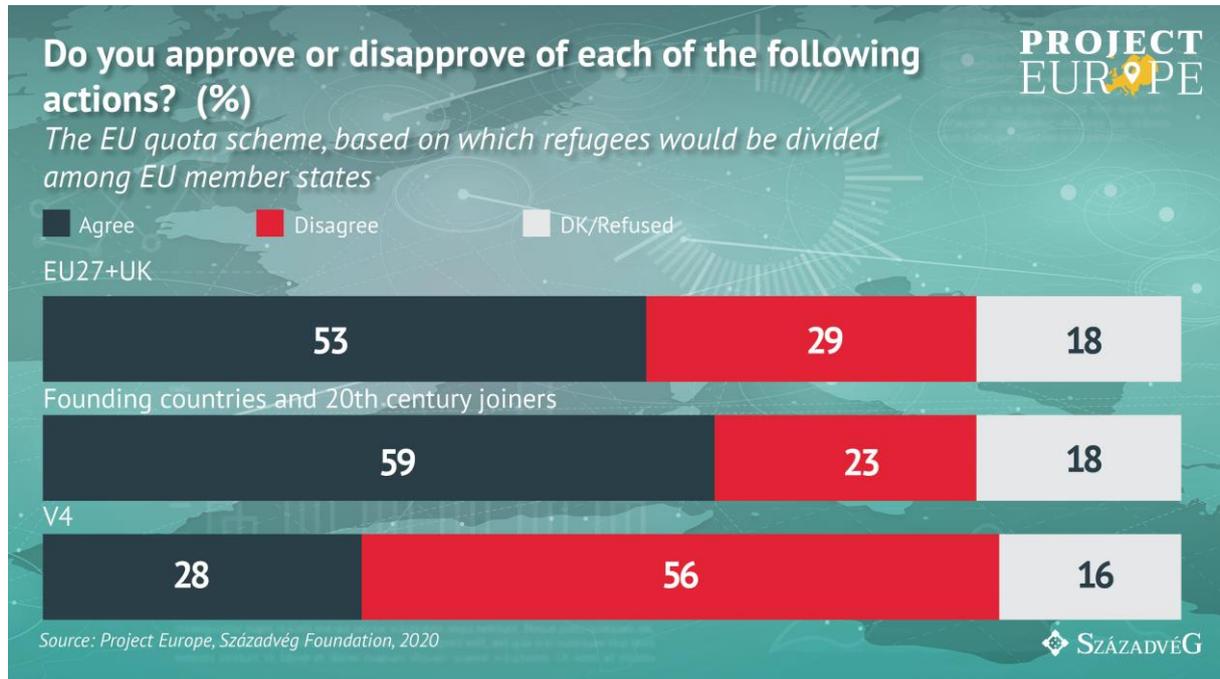
Among the V4 countries, **Hungarians (42 percent) and Poles (40 percent) are the most confident about the wellbeing of future generations.**

On this issue, it can also be observed that the opinion of Europeans is getting closer to the views of the Visegrad countries year by year. In 2019, 49 percent of EU and British respondents thought that their children would be worse off than they are today, but in 2020 this proportion fell to 42 percent.

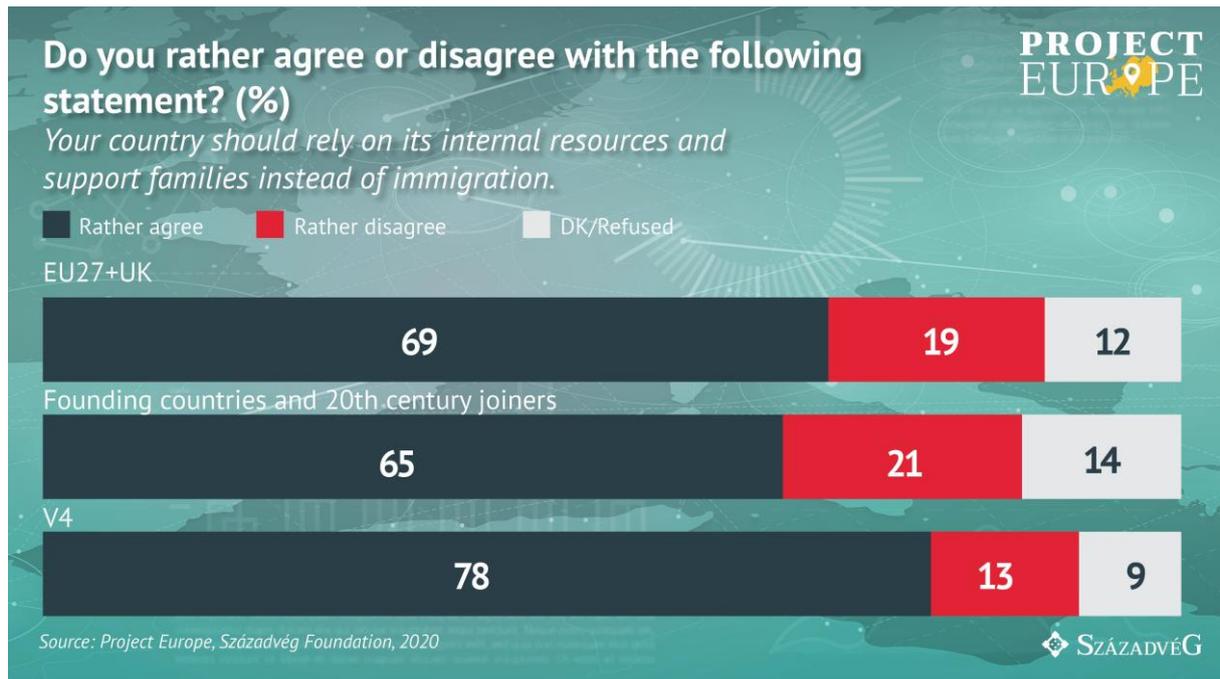
There is a significant rejection of migrant quotas in the V4 countries

Europe has been under increasing migratory pressure since the summer of 2015, which does not seem to show signs of easing in the near future. The research reveals that the citizens of the Visegrad countries realistically perceive the causes of illegal migration, while public opinion in Europe is also gradually approaching the standpoint of the V4 countries. Fifty-seven of European respondents and 68 percent in the V4 countries believe that most migrants come to the European Union in the hope of economic and social benefits. In contrast, 37 percent of EU and British respondents and 26 percent of V4 citizens think that illegal migrants come to Europe because they are not safe in their home country. It is important to note that in 2016 the majority of Europeans (51 percent)

thought that mass influx of migrants into our continent was due to the lack of security in the country of origin, while this proportion was 42 percent in 2017.



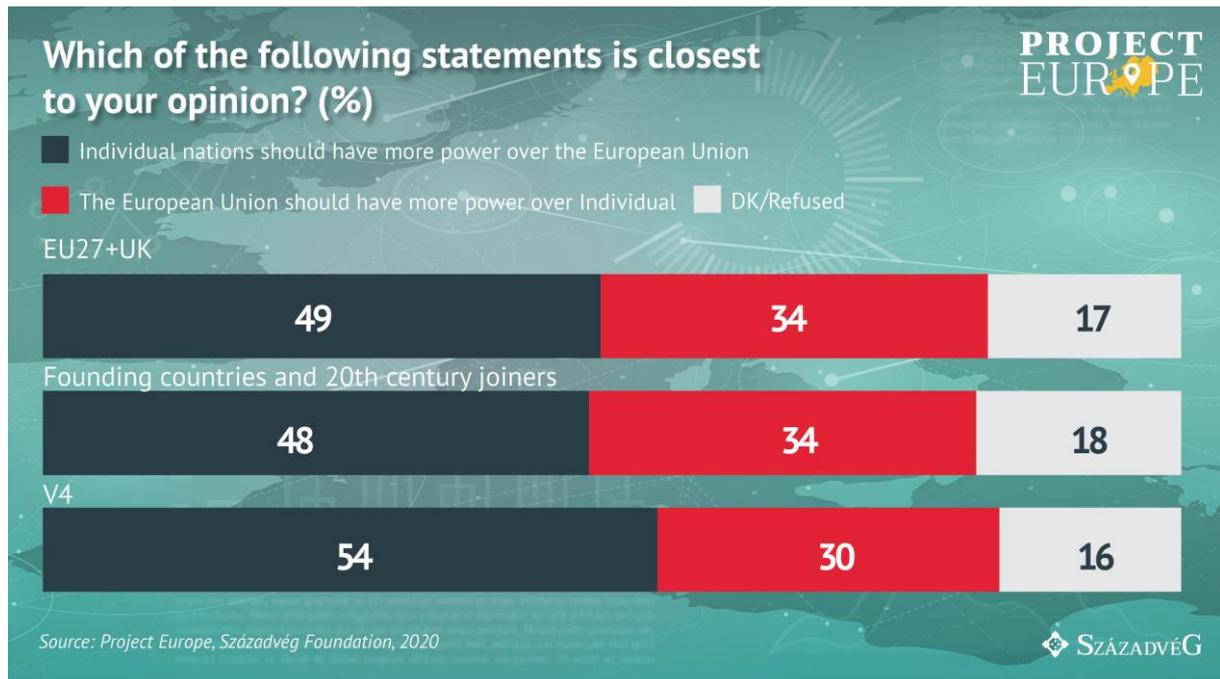
The proportion of quota-system supporters is the highest (59 percent) among the founding countries and those that joined in the 20th century, while it is the lowest (28 percent) in the V4 countries among the countries examined in this respect. However, there is a sharp fault line in the perception of the Brussels quota system for the distribution of migrants between Western and Central European Member States. **The proportion of those who oppose the plan for the distribution of migrants between the Member States is 23 percent among the citizens of the founding Member States and those that joined in the last century, while this proportion is 56 percent regarding the Visegrad countries.** The issue related to this is the preservation of Europe's traditional Christian image as a top priority among the states of the V4 cooperation. The survey shows that 53 percent of respondents in the founding countries and those that joined in the 20th century, **and 59 percent of citizens in the Visegrad countries, believe that Europe must preserve its Christian culture and traditions.** Going beyond Christian traditions and shifting towards a more secular culture would be supported by 37 percent of respondents in the founding countries and those that joined in the last century, and by 32 percent of citizens in the V4 countries.



The European Union has been struggling with demographic and economic difficulties for years, and possible solutions to these problems are a constant topic of debate in European public discourse. Research shows that more than three-quarter (78 percent) of V4 citizens agree that their country should rely on domestic resources or support local families instead of migration, while this ratio is 65 percent among the founders and those that joined in the 20th century. At the same time, 72 percent of citizens in the Visegrad countries and 53 percent of respondents in the founding countries and those that joined in the last century believe that the problem of population decline should not be solved by encouraging immigration but by increasing the number of children being born. Thus, it is clear that the citizens of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic want to address the emerging demographic and related economic challenges by supporting families and childbearing and not by facilitating mass immigration.

Instead of Brussels' excessive power, the V4s are committed to national sovereignty

The key question for the European Union is whether European cooperation should shift towards further concentration of power in Brussels or the protection of Member States' sovereignty in the coming years. The survey shows that the V4 countries are more committed than the European average to respecting national sovereignty as opposed to increasing the power of Brussels.



Thirty-four percent of EU and British respondents and 30 percent of Visegrad citizens believe that Brussels should be given more power over Member States, while **the proportion of those who would give more power to Member States is 49 percent among European respondents and 54 percent among the V4s.** The phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the Visegrad countries see the guarantee of enforcing the interests of their country and region within a strong nation-state framework.

Budapest, 11 March 2021

Századvég Foundation

The Project Europe research

In the first half of 2016, the Századvég Foundation conducted a public opinion poll survey covering all 28 European Union Member States, with the aim to analyse the opinions of EU citizens regarding the issues that most affect the future of the EU. In a unique way, Project28 conducted the widest possible survey of 1,000, that is a total of 28,000 randomly selected adults in each country. Gaining an understanding of society's sense of prosperity and mapping the population's attitudes towards the performance of the European Union, the migration crisis and the increasing terrorism were among the most important goals of the analysis. The Századvég Foundation, on behalf of the Hungarian Government, conducted the research again in 2017, 2018 and 2019, which continued to reflect on the topics that most determined the European political and social discourse.

In 2020, the survey, now called the Project Europe, will continue, with the aim of mapping the population's attitude towards the most important public issues affecting our continent. In addition

to society's sense of prosperity, the performance of the European Union and the attitudes towards the migration crisis, in line with the latest challenges affecting Europe, the dominant theme of this year's poll is the coronavirus pandemic, climate change and anti-Semitism. In addition to the European Union Member States, the 2020 research covered the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland, interviewing a total of 30,000 randomly selected adults using the CATI method.