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**Social Attitudes towards Homosexuality in Hungary  
and Romania: Does the Main Religious Denomination  
Matter?**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines social attitudes towards homosexuality in two Central-Eastern European neighbouring countries - Romania and Hungary - with many common points, but that do differ in their religious traditions.

Our main research question is whether the main religious denomination can influence social attitudes towards homosexuality, after controlling for all the important individual level variables (gender, age, education, type of settlement, family status, employment background, and attitudes related to family and gender norms). Among the examined variables we especially focus on the religious ones since the dominant denominations are different in these otherwise similar societies.

The empirical base of our study comprises two longitudinal databases: the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Values Study (EVS). We use data from two ESS rounds (of 2006 and 2008) and three EVS rounds (of 1990, 1999 and 2008). Since Romania participated only in the 3rd and the 4th rounds of the ESS (in 2006 and 2008), the Romanian results from 2008 are the most recent ones. We apply descriptive statistics and regression models. Our main conclusion is that belonging to the Orthodox Church had a more negative effect on social attitudes towards homosexuality than belonging to the Catholic Church (as previous studies have also found).

*Keywords:* homosexuality, religious denomination, attitudes, European Values Study, European Social Survey.

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## 1. Introduction

Our study examines social attitudes towards homosexuality in two Central-Eastern European countries: Hungary and Romania. We have compared empirical data from two adjacent countries within the same region, which is a relatively infrequent practice among large-scale survey based studies of social attitudes. Our investigation is based on the comparison of Romanian and Hungarian data of two large-scale longitudinal surveys, the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Values Study (EVS), both applying multi-stage probabilistic sampling plans.

The first EVS question reviewed in our analysis is about ‘justification’ of homosexuality in connection with religiosity in the sense of belonging to a specific denomination. Since we assume that this variable and four others on the ‘justification’ of abortion, prostitution, casual sexual relationships and extramarital relationships were included in the EVS to measure the latent concept of sexual morality, we also provide a brief descriptive statistical overview on these variables. Then we examine non-preference for homosexual neighbours in comparison with other social groups and provide a brief review of social attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples in both countries. Next, we present descriptive statistical results of the ESS variable for measuring social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women. Finally, by using linear and logistic regression models we analyse factors that might explain the evolution of attitudes towards homosexuality in the two countries.

Investigation into these issues can be relevant from several aspects. For instance, marriage equality and joint adoption by same-sex couples have become legally established in many European countries, but Romania and Hungary still lack these institutions. In both countries it has often been contested whether it makes sense to consider the establishment of legal instruments providing equal family and social policy treatment for different and same-sex couples in societies characterized by a homophobic social climate. According to arguments that can often be heard from policy-makers in this context such issues could not (yet) be on the political agenda since society is not ‘ready’ or ‘mature enough’ for providing full *intimate citizenship* (Plummer, 2003) rights for gay and lesbian citizens.

Even though these two countries have many common points – their post-socialist past, the transition period, preferences towards traditional family practices, high gender inequality compared to Western societies, and a lack of long-lasting democratic traditions – they do differ in their religious traditions.

By comparing Romania and Hungary we follow the ideas of Neyer and Andersson (2008) who suggested disentangling the effects of country or region specificities on policy effects by comparing the potentially most similar contexts, which display well-recognized differences. In this case we try to understand the different homosexuality-related attitudes in two similar countries with different main or dominant religious denominations. We aim to answer the question whether different religious denominations can lead to different attitudes related to the acceptance of homosexuality. Furthermore, this study also wants to highlight that homosexuality-related attitudes are not in the least static or unified, as opinions might change both in time and depending on the various social-demographic factors as well.

## *2. Religiosity and social attitudes towards homosexuality: A background*

A recent overview of empirical research on religiosity and prejudice concluded that ‘all around the globe more religious people seem to be more likely to express homophobic attitudes as compared to not religious people’ (Klein et al., 2018: 33). On the basis of analysing World Values Survey (WVS) data from 33 countries Adamczyk and Pitt (2009) found no significant difference in attitudes about homosexuality for people who live in countries with the dominant religion being Roman Catholic or Orthodox. Another study analysing WVS data from 87 countries found that while Muslims were among those expressing the most homophobic views, and non-religious respondents were characterised by the least homophobic views, Catholic, Orthodox, and Buddhist respondents fell in the middle (Adamczyk, 2017).

However, recent European findings based on analyses of European Value Study (EVS) data collected from 43 countries indicated that among those belonging to a denomination, Orthodox and Muslim respondents displayed the highest levels of homophobia, while Protestants were the least prejudiced regarding both the moral rejection of homosexuality as a practice and intolerance towards homosexuals as a group (Doebler, 2015). The author also pointed out that regarding social distancing ‘both Orthodox and Muslims stand out as the most intolerant denominations independent of their levels of religious practice and belief, while Catholics and Protestants are no more likely than people with no affiliation to reject homosexuals’, and this difference between denominations remained robust when controlling for religious, political and economic national contexts (Doebler, 2015: 14).

Another study, also using EVS data, explored the relationship between religious authority and tolerance by comparing opinions on homosexuality among Orthodox citizens in Romania and Bulgaria, and found that ‘while all Orthodox churches may denounce homosexuality, not all churches wield equivalent influence over their members’ beliefs and attitudes’ (Spina, 2016: 37). More specifically, the findings indicated that in comparison to Bulgaria, Romanian Orthodox citizens seemed to be influenced more by the church in developing negative attitudes towards homosexuality regardless of how active they were in the church.

Regarding our two examined countries, both the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church consider homosexual behaviour as morally wrong. Since they are perceived as credible moral authorities by their followers, both churches are able to frame homosexuality related issues according to their preferences as ‘ostensibly credible elites’ can do, when citizens seek guidance from them (Druckman, 2001: 1045).

According to the 2008 ESS dataset, 93 per cent of the Romanian and 59 per cent of the Hungarian respondents considered themselves as belonging to a particular religion or denomination (where identification was meant, not official membership), and according to self-assessed religiousness, Romania (with a mean value of 6.79) is shown to be much more religious than Hungary (with a mean value of 4.29).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents had to answer to the question ‘Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?’ on an eleven-point scale, where 0 meant ‘not at all religious’ and 10 meant ‘very religious’. Another more practical indicator of religiousness is the frequency of attending religious services, which we will also use in our analyses.

According to the latest (2008) EVS data, among those who belong to a denomination three-quarters identified as belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, while in Romania almost 90 per cent identified as belonging to the Orthodox denomination.<sup>2</sup>

The notable difference regarding religiosity of the two examined countries is also reflected in the data that 82 per cent of the Romanian respondents identified as being a religious person, 12 per cent as a non-religious person, and 1 per cent considered themselves a convinced atheist, while in Hungary 53 per cent identified as a religious person, 43 per cent as non-religious and 4 per cent as a convinced atheist (EVS 2008 data). Figure 1 indicates how the respondents evaluated the importance of religion in their life in both countries.

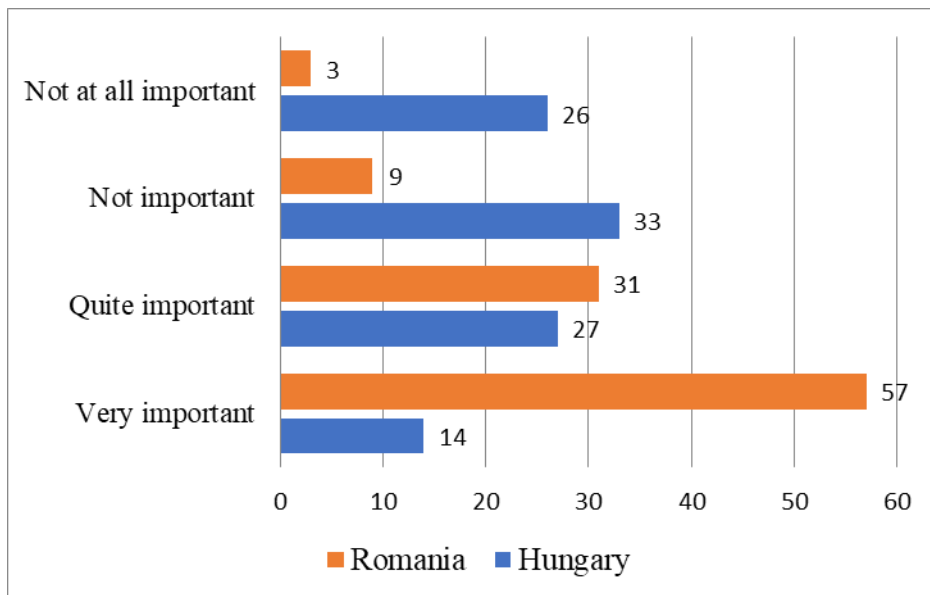


Figure 1. Importance of religion (%)

Source: EVS 2008; own calculation

Concerning the general social acceptance of lesbian women and gay men, numerous cross-national surveys were conducted that discussed the issue in respect of the respondents' gender, age, religiosity, concept of traditional gender roles and heterosexism, views on gender equality and abortion, and moral and political attitudes (for detailed references see Takács and Szalma, 2013: 9). Findings on religiosity and homophobia often indicate that not just belonging to a denomination, but the type of denomination also matters. For example, in our previous studies (Takács and Szalma, 2011; 2013) we also found that those who belonged to the Orthodox Church had less tolerant attitudes towards gays and lesbians than those who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>2</sup> Among those who considered themselves as belonging to a specific denomination 74.5 per cent identified as Roman Catholic and 23.2 per cent as Protestant in Hungary, while in Romania 88.8 per cent identified as Orthodox, 5.2 per cent as Roman Catholic and 2.5 per cent as Protestant.

However, the relationship between religious denominations and attitudes towards abortion or assisted reproduction technologies (ART) does not coincide with these results, namely those who belong to the Orthodox Church have more tolerant attitudes towards abortion and ART than those who belong to the Catholic Church (Deflem and Weismayer, 2002; Szalma and Djundeva, 2014). This contradiction might derive from the fact that the Orthodox Church is dominant in the Western Balkans where religion serves to bolster national and cultural identities, and homosexuality is socially created as an internally unifying enemy (van den Berg et al., 2014), but ART and abortion are not included in this national and cultural enemy image. In Romania the Orthodox Church had an important role in providing differentiation from the significant Hungarian minorities (around 6.6 per cent of the population according to the Romanian census in 2001) belonging to the Roman Catholic or Protestant denominations.

Attitudes towards homosexuality are also highly influenced by the current legal regulations of the specific countries. In countries where legislation in the field had already been introduced, public opinion also seemed more supportive: for example, an analysis of ESS data from 20 countries collected between 2002 and 2008 found that social attitudes towards homosexuality were the most favourable where the legal institutions of marriage and adoption by same-sex couples existed (van den Akker, van der Ploeg and Scheepers, 2013). Similar results were found about European attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples (Takács, Szalma and Bartus, 2016). Such approaches can be criticized for their assumption of reverse causality: a more tolerant society is beyond doubt more likely to introduce 'gay-friendly' institutions. However, we do have reason to suppose that legal institutions also affect the shaping of social attitudes (as indicated in one of our earlier studies: see Takács and Szalma, 2011).

Even within the European Union great variety can be observed concerning which countries offer same-sex marriage, registered partnership and joint adoption by same-sex couples as legal options. Table 1 summarizes dates between 1989 and 2018 when these institutions were established in 23 countries in Europe. Marriage and joint adoption for gay and lesbian couples was allowed for the first time in the world in the Netherlands in 2001, when Dutch policy-makers decided to make the institution of marriage equally available in the Netherlands for different- as well as same-sex couples. At the same time the 'opening' of marriage for same-sex couples also implied the extension of parental rights, unlike for example in Belgium and Portugal, where introducing the legal institution of same-sex marriage did not entail such an extension immediately, only a few years later.

Table 1 Introduction of same-sex marriage, registered partnership and adoption by same-sex couples in 23 European countries (1989–2018)

Countries	Same-sex marriage	Registered partnership	Adoption by same-sex couples
Austria	(2017/2019)	2010	2013
Belgium	2003	2000	2006
Croatia	-	2014	(2014 stepchildguardianship)
Czech Republic	-	2006	-
Denmark	2012	1989	2007/2009
Estonia	-	2014/2016	(2016 stepchild)
Finland	2014/2017	2002	2009/2014
France	2013	1999 (PACS)	2013
Germany	2017	2001	(2004/5 stepchild)2017
Hungary	-	2009	-
Iceland	2010	1996	2006
Ireland	2015	2010/2011	2017
Italy	-	2016	(2016 stepchild)
Luxembourg	2014/2015	2004	2014/2015
Malta	2017	2014	2014
The Netherlands	2001	1998	2001
Norway	2008/2009	1993	2009
Portugal	2010	-	2016
Slovenia	-	2005	2011
Spain	2005	-	2005
Sweden	2009	1994	2003
Switzerland	-	2007	(2016/8 stepchild)
United Kingdom	2013	2005	2002/2008

There is no legal option for same-sex marriage or joint adoption in either country of our investigation; although in Hungary same-sex couples can have their partnership registered since 2009. Looking back, during the second half of the 20th century we may observe that Hungary overtook Romania in respect of decriminalizing homosexuality and introducing legislation for same-sex registered partnerships.

In Hungary since 1961 no criminal sanction can be imposed for consensual homosexual practices between consenting adults (which previously had penalized men only). Nevertheless, the age of sexual consent remained different for heterosexual and homosexual relationships for decades. Additionally, the sanctioning of unnatural fornication ‘in a scandalous manner’ appeared, and the gendered discrimination of men and women was abolished. Since then, women also became punishable if their relationship with a female partner was regarded as outrageous and thus reported to the police (Takács, 2015). In 1978 the age of consent in homosexual acts was lowered to 18 years (previously it was 20), then in 2002 a unified 14 years of consent age was introduced for both hetero- and homosexual acts. In January 2004 Act CXXV of 2003 ‘on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities’ came into effect,

where categories to be protected from discrimination included sexual orientation and gender identity, respectively. Cohabiting partnership of same-sex couples has been acknowledged by law in Hungary since 1996, after Act XLII of 1996 extended the provisions of the Civil Code on cohabiting partnerships to include same-sex couples (Farkas, 2001). Although Act CLXXXIV of 2007 institutionalized registered partnerships, it came into force only upon the introduction of Act XXIX of 2009 'on registered partnership, and on the amendment of legal acts relating thereto and needed for the facilitation of the justification of the partnership.' Today non-heteronormative reproduction is limited in several ways in Hungary (Takács, 2018): for example, lesbians are excluded from using ART, and only married couples are eligible for joint adoption. However, the regulation does not exclude the possibility of individual adoption by single lesbian or gay people, and recent research findings on Hungarian adoption practices showed that gay men and lesbians do use the opportunity for - officially - single-parent adoption in Hungary (Neményi and Takács, 2015; Háttér Társaság, 2017).

In Romania homosexual acts had been criminalized until 1996: those days consensual homosexual acts between both men and women could be penalized by imprisonment from one to five years (Carstocea, 2010). As of 1996, new legislation entered into force sanctioning homosexual acts performed in public places or in a scandalous manner; in addition, the legal regulations opposing 'homosexual propaganda' also restricted gay and lesbian people's freedom of expression and association (Long, 1999). The infamous 'section number 200' (Article 200 of the Romanian Penal Code, which was introduced in 1968, criminalizing public manifestations of homosexuality) was abolished only in 2001, although a Government Ordinance (GO 137/2000 regarding the prevention and the punishment of all forms of discrimination) entered into force already in August 2000, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of, among others, sexual orientation (EC, 2016). According to Nachescu, the reluctance to decriminalize homosexual relations in Romania derives from 'essentialist nationalist assumptions' about homosexuals being 'alien and threatening to the family- and religion-oriented Romanian way of life' (2005: 130).

Currently Romania does not acknowledge any form of same-sex partnership officially. The Romanian regulations allow adoption by single people, thus theoretically making it possible for lesbian women or gay men to adopt without revealing their sexual orientation; however, the official consequences are rather unpredictable if an adopting parent subsequently turns out to be gay or lesbian (Carstocea, 2010). In 2009 the Romanian Civil Code was amended by redefining marriage as a union of a man and a woman, and family as being founded on marriage,<sup>3</sup> while in 2018 the national equality body (the National Council for Combating Discrimination) introduced a bill granting legal recognition to same-sex civil partnerships (Andreescu, 2018).

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<sup>3</sup> Similar amendments were adopted to the Fundamental Law of Hungary in 2013 (Source: <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/hungary-constitutional-amendments-adopted/>, accessed 2019-02-21)

### *3. Data, methods and hypotheses*

Our data on social attitudes towards homosexuality derive from the datasets of the European Social Survey (ESS) and the European Values Study (EVS) of 2008. Both datasets involve more than 30 European countries, but our present study focuses only on data from Hungary and Romania. Since Romania participated only in the 3rd and the 4th rounds of the ESS (in 2006 and 2008), the Romanian results from 2008 are the most recent ones.

The EVS assesses the value choices, attitudes and norms of citizens on the continent according to a standardized set of criteria every nine years since 1981. The first three rounds of EVS (1981, 1990, 1999) had two variables measuring homosexuality- and homophobia-related attitudes. One was an acceptance question to be answered on a 10-point scale asking ‘Please tell me ... whether you think the following ideas can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between: Homosexuality.’ Unfortunately the interpretation of this variable is quite problematic, as it is difficult to decide what exactly ‘justification’ refers to.<sup>4</sup> A more specific, thus more easily interpretable variable is the other EVS question on preference for neighbours, which allows us to measure how much people keep their social distance from homosexuals and other (mostly rejected) groups. The question was the following: ‘On this list are various groups of people (including people with a criminal record; people of a different race;<sup>5</sup> left wing extremists, heavy drinkers, right wing extremists, people with large families, emotionally unstable people, Muslims, immigrants/foreign workers, people who have AIDS, drug addicts, homosexuals, Jews, Gypsies, Christians) – could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?’

In the fourth round of EVS, conducted between 2008 and 2010, a third question was introduced concerning adoption by homosexual couples. EVS is a cross-national comparative survey planned according to rigorous standards in the frame of which each participating country must (should) list variables in exactly the same form as they appear in the master questionnaire. Despite that, instead of the original variable of the English version, which said ‘Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children,’ the Hungarian version of the questionnaire included a statement to the contrary saying, ‘Homosexual couples should not be allowed to adopt children.’<sup>6</sup> Due to the ‘wording effect’ (that survey participants prefer to express agreement over disagreement with statements), well-known in the literature of survey methodology (Holleman, 1999; Rugg, 1941), the data remain incomparable, even if the scale is reversed. Therefore, the Hungarian data cannot be compared to the results of the

<sup>4</sup> Our concerns about the wording of this variable were already pointed out in one of our previous studies: ‘in present day survey research using the term “homosexuality” can be problematic for several reasons. “Homosexuality” can refer to specific forms of homosexual behaviour and identity at the same time, while there is no necessary connection between the two’ (Takács and Szalma, 2011: 359).

<sup>5</sup> An ambiguous translation of the expression ‘people of a different race’ can be found in the Hungarian version of the EVS questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/surveys/survey-2008/participatingcountries/Q47.C>, accessed: 2010-11-26. The authors have no knowledge about the reasons for changing the content of the original question in the EVS survey. There was one more country among the EVS participants in 2008, where the variable was translated with a meaning contrary to the original, namely Spain. See: [http://info1.gesis.org/EVS/Translation/EVS\\_Table\\_Translation2008.html](http://info1.gesis.org/EVS/Translation/EVS_Table_Translation2008.html), accessed: 2013-03-05.

other countries in the survey. During data recording in Romania no such mistakes were made, thus leaving the possibility of a cross-European comparison.

Our ESS variable measured agreement with the statement 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish' on a five-point scale (where 1 expressed strong disagreement, i.e. reflecting low social acceptance of gay and lesbian people, while 5 expressed strong agreement, reflecting their high social acceptance).<sup>7</sup> This is a core variable, which was included in the ESS questionnaires in each data collection round since 2002. A major advantage of this variable lies in its clear wording and unambiguous sense; contrary to the EVS variable about the 'justification' of homosexuality for example, it clearly refers to people. However, it should be noted that we examined the effect of different measurement of homophobia in a previous study and we found that 'there is quite a high probability that the agreement level with the statement that gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish and the - let's face it, not only *prima facie*, utterly meaningless - "justification" of homosexuality variables as well as the non-preference for homosexual neighbours indicator can be used for measuring homophobia, or indeed, genderphobia' (Takács and Szalma, 2013: 40).

Various methods were used during data analysis: first we examined descriptive statistics by comparing mean values and frequencies, then we analysed explanatory models with the help of linear and logistic regression. Our regression analyses were conducted using the STATA 13 statistical program.

Attitudes towards the 'justification' of homosexuality, the social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women and opinions about joint adoption by same-sex couples may be influenced by several factors, including the cultural and religious background of the given country, its democratic traditions and conceptions about traditional gender roles, which, however, will not be examined very closely in our present study. Instead of focusing on country-level effects, we concentrated on only individual level variables as we examined only two countries. However, we assume that the difference between the two countries that cannot be explained on the basis of individual level variables derives from the difference in their legislation (whether same-sex partnerships are recognized by law) and their religious culture (related to the dominant denomination).

During the construction of our hypotheses we relied on our earlier findings about attitude questions on homosexuality surveyed in Hungary and in Europe as well (Takács and Szalma, 2011; 2013; 2019; Takács, Szalma and Bartus, 2016). Thus, in our present study, besides basic demographic features influencing one's social background, by applying the functional theory of attitudes<sup>8</sup> we focus mainly on those symbolic functions of attitudes that can be associated with religious and political

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<sup>7</sup> During our analysis we reversed and re-coded the original order of the agreement scale.

<sup>8</sup> According to this approach there are three major needs that could be met by individuals' attitudes towards lesbian women and gay men: (i) *experiential* attitudes are based on past interactions with gays and lesbians, and can be generalized to all gays and lesbians; (ii) *defensive* attitudes can have ego-protective functions by helping to cope with one's anxieties (for instance, about the possibility of being gay); (iii) and *symbolic* attitudes, deriving from socialization experiences, express important values in the context of developing one's concept of self and in the process of (publicly) identifying with important reference groups (Herek, 1984; 2004).

socialization processes, the operation of traditional gender roles and prejudices against various social minorities, for example, migrants.

Based on the above, we have constructed the following hypotheses:

(H1) *Women, younger people, those with higher level of education and living in more urbanized environments are 'more tolerant towards homosexuality' (whatever that means exactly), more open towards gay men, lesbian women and homosexual neighbours than men, older people, those with lower level of education and living in smaller settlements.*

(H2) *Concerning religiosity we assume that both church membership and the frequency of attending religious services can strongly - and negatively - affect attitudes towards homosexuality.*

(H3) *Concerning political views, xenophobia, acceptance of traditional female roles, satisfaction with democracy and one's own life, we formulated the following assumptions: extreme right-wing political orientation, negative attitude towards immigrants, the acceptance of the traditional role of women and dissatisfaction with democracy and with one's own life can correlate with homophobic attitudes.*

(H4) *We assume that there are greater differences between those people who belong to the Orthodox denomination and those who do not adhere to any denomination than between those who belong to the Roman Catholic Church and those who do not adhere to any denomination.*

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 'Justification' of homosexuality*

From the EVS data we may conclude that respondents in most European countries became more tolerant towards homosexuality between 1990 and 2008. As for the non-response rate we found it stable around 5 per cent across time in the pooled data, although it varied across countries a lot: for example, in 2008 it exceeded 10 per cent in Bulgaria, Malta, Portugal, Sweden, and Ukraine. Figure 2 also indicates that in the European field both Hungary and - in particular - Romania belong to the less tolerant countries. However, compared to 1990, the trend moved towards higher tolerance, i.e. an increasing number of societies' attitudes became less homophobic.<sup>9</sup> Still, in contrast with Northern European countries the social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women is considered low in both countries.

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<sup>9</sup> According to EVS data between 1990 and 2008 the Hungarian mean value increased from 2.7 to 3.2, while the Romanian increased from 1.5 to 2.1. The Hungarian value decreased between 1990 and 1999, and then by 2008 the 'justification' of homosexuality increased to a value higher than the previous two. A phenomenon similar to the Hungarian decrease between 1990 and 1999 (from a mean value of 2.7 to 1.4) was not observed in any other country, thus we had probably better treat these Hungarian results reservedly.

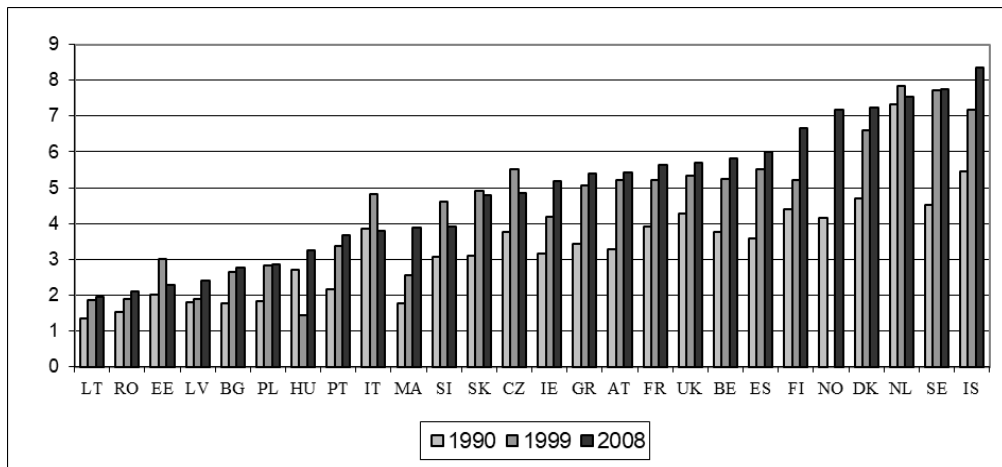


Figure 2. 'Justification' of homosexuality in 26 European countries between 1990 and 2008 (1 = can never be justified; 10 = can always be justified)<sup>10</sup>

Source: *European Values Study 1990, 1999, 2008; own calculation*

When examining the role of denominations in justification of homosexuality items in Hungary and Romania over the period after the transitions (1990, 1999 and 2008),<sup>11</sup> we found that there are more people who belonged to a denomination in Romania than in Hungary in all of the three years. In 1990, 58 per cent of the Hungarian respondents belonged to a denomination compared to 94 per cent in Romania, by 1999 the number of people who belonged to a denomination increased in Romania (98 per cent) and it did not change in Hungary (58 per cent). The number of those who belonged to a denomination remained unchanged by 2008 in Romania (98 per cent) and slightly decreased in Hungary (54 per cent). The proportion of the dominant denomination changed just slightly during that period. In Romania the proportion of those belonging to the Orthodox Church was 93 per cent in 1990, 87 per cent in 1999, and 89 per cent in 2008, while in Hungary the proportion of those belonging to the Catholic Church was 68 per cent in 1990, 73 per cent in 1999, and 74 per cent in 2008. We also checked the change in religious attendance and found considerable difference between the two countries at all of the time points. In Romania the proportion of those who at least weekly attend religious services shows an increasing trend with 19 per cent in 1990, 25 per cent in 1999, and 30 per cent in 2008, while in Hungary the trend is the opposite with 14 per cent in 1990, 11 per cent in 1999, and 8 per cent in 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Countries included in the table are: LT=Lithuania, RO=Romania, EE=Estonia, LV=Latvia, BG=Bulgaria, PL=Poland, HU=Hungary, PT=Portugal, IT=Italy, MA=Malta, SI=Slovenia, SK=Slovakia, CZ=The Czech Republic, IE=Ireland, UK=United Kingdom, AT=Austria, FR=France, GR=Greece, BE=Belgium, ES=Spain, FI=Finland, NO=Norway, DK=Denmark, NL=The Netherlands, SE=Sweden, IS=Iceland.

<sup>11</sup> Neither Hungary nor Romania participated in the first round of EVS so we are not able to measure the relationship between religiosity and acceptance of homosexuality before 1990 in the two countries. Furthermore, in the state-socialist system religiousness was oppressed, thus we can assume that those people who formed their religious beliefs during state-socialism had different values (less traditional) than their Western European religious counterparts (Roccas and Schwartz, 1997).

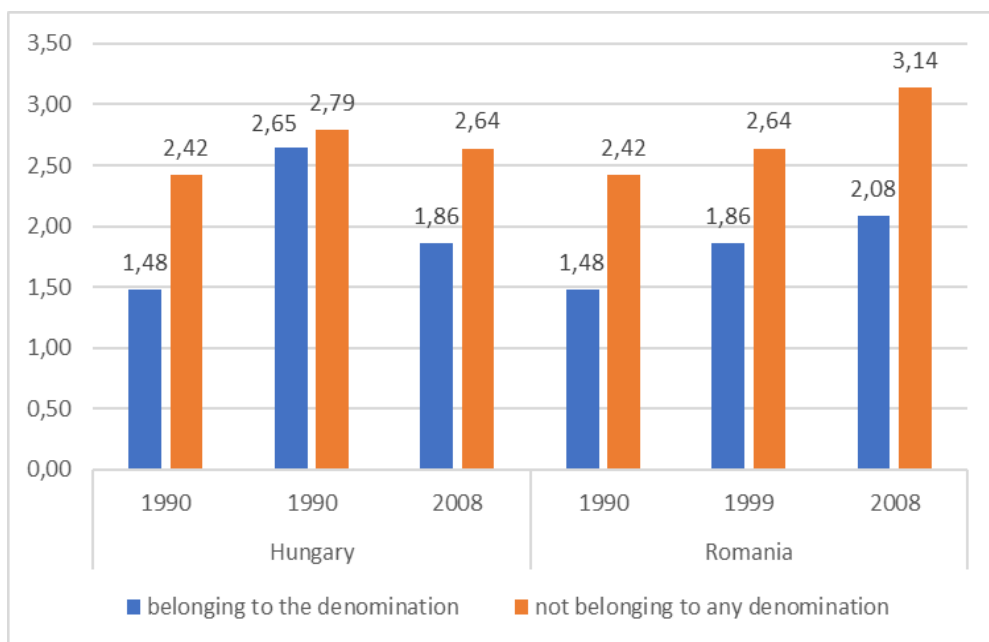


Figure 3. The role of belonging to a denomination regarding the 'justification' of homosexuality (1 = can never be justified; 10 = can always be justified)

*Source: European Values Study 1990, 1999, 2008; own calculation*

Figure 3 shows greater difference between belonging to the dominant denomination and not belonging to any religious denomination in Romania than in Hungary over the examined periods, which indicates that the Orthodox Church can generate more negative attitudes towards acceptance of homosexuality than the Catholic Church. If we consider the changes over time we can find that there is a linear trend in Romania: both those who belong to the Orthodox Church and also those who do not belong to any denomination became increasingly tolerant. At the same time we can find a drop in the Hungarian results in 1999,<sup>12</sup> otherwise Hungarians – both those who belong to the Catholic Church and also those who do not belong to any denomination – were more tolerant in 1990 and in 2008 than their Romanian counterparts.

Here it should be noted that our analyses focus on the dominant denomination effect. On the basis of Special Eurobarometer data collected in Romania in 2015, Andreescu (2018) found that belonging to a minority religious denomination such as the Roman Catholic Church in Romania made it more likely to express heterosexist views than belonging to the dominant, Orthodox denomination. In our analysis of ESS data we found the opposite: Roman Catholic respondents even in Romania were more tolerant than those who belonged to the Orthodox Church. This contradiction might be due to the different forms of measurement, since in the ESS and the Eurobarometer homophobia was measured with different variables. The ESS variable we used is a general acceptance variable, while the Eurobarometer variables, 'Gay, lesbian and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people' and

<sup>12</sup> We cannot explain this drop, which might be due to erroneous data collection.

'Same sex marriages should be allowed throughout Europe', are more related to rights issues, which might cause higher levels of disagreement on behalf of ethnic and religious minorities such as people belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in Romania.

Based on the EVS database we can compare results of not only the 'justification' of homosexuality, but also of the justification of abortion, prostitution, casual sexual relationships and extramarital relationships variables. These five variables were included in the EVS questionnaire – among twenty controversial or contestable issues such as euthanasia or tax fraud – probably in order to measure the latent concept of sexual morality. Table 2 shows that attitudes to abortion are the most permissive among the five issues in Hungary, while extramarital affairs are the least tolerated ones, especially among female respondents. This gender-specific difference is statistically significant in both countries. Women seemed to be more open-minded towards homosexuality compared to men, but remarkable differences can only be found in the Romanian data. At the same time, in comparison to men, women showed less tolerance towards prostitution, a result with statistically significant difference between genders only in Hungary.

Table 2. 'Justification' of homosexuality, abortion, prostitution, casual sexual and extramarital relationships in Hungary and Romania.

Mean values (1 = can never be justified; 10 = can always be justified)

	HUNGARY		ROMANIA	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Married men/women having an affair</b>	<b>1.73</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>2.25</b>
<b>Homosexuality</b>	3.47	3.06	2	2.25
<b>Abortion</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>3.77</b>
<b>Having casual sex</b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>1.94</b>	<b>2.64</b>
<b>Prostitution</b>	<b>2.21</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>2.13</b>

*Source: European Values Study 2008; own calculation*

As shown by the results in Table 2, among variables related to sexual morality abortion seems to be the most tolerated act in Romania, similarly to Hungary. However, while Hungarian respondents are the least liberal with adultery, Romanians regard prostitution as the least acceptable act.

#### *4.2 (Non-)Preference for homosexual neighbours*

The question about (non-)preference for neighbours is much more specific and thus easier to interpret than the 'justification' of homosexuality, allowing us to measure how much people keep their social distance from homosexuals and other (mostly rejected) groups. As for non-response rate it was lower than in the case of the 'justification' of homosexuality variable: it was under 3 per cent across time in the pooled data, and it was less varied among countries, not exceeding 6 per cent in any of the examined countries. Figure 4 illustrates that most respondents in Turkey, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland reported in 1990 and between 1999 and 2008 that they would prefer not to have homosexual neighbours. In contrast, the rejection of potential

homosexual neighbours significantly decreased (from 75.3 per cent to 29.5 per cent) in Hungary between 1990 and 2008.

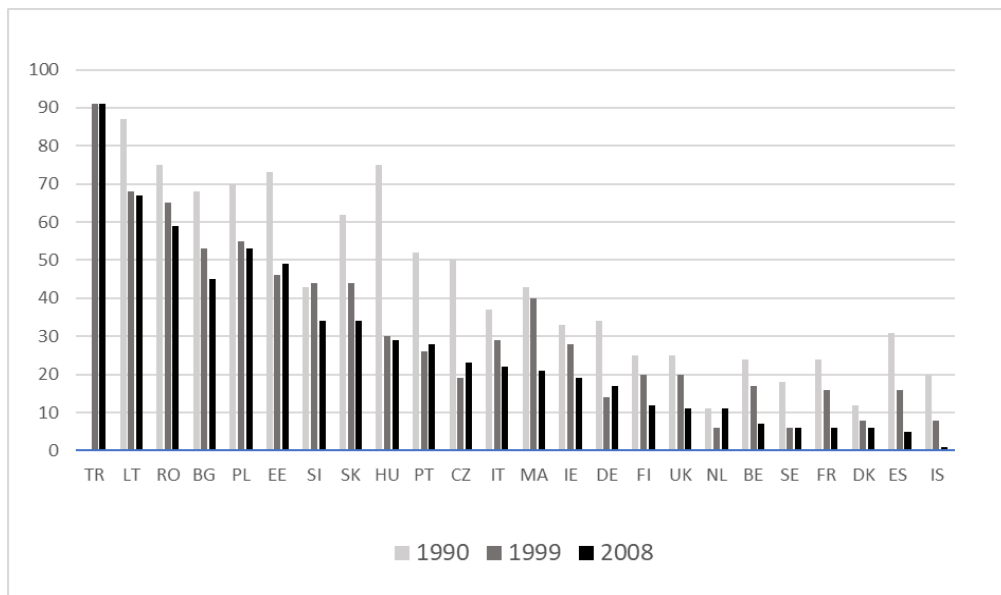


Figure 4 (Non-)Preference for homosexual neighbours in Europe between 1990 and 2008: Ratio of respondents with non-preference for homosexual neighbours (%)<sup>13</sup>  
*Source: European Values Study 1990, 1999, 2008; own calculation*

According to the results summarized in Table 3, showing the ratio of respondents with non-preference for homosexual neighbours, prejudices against various social groups manifestly decreased between 1990 and 2008 both in Hungary and Romania. Hungarian respondents became saliently more tolerant towards homosexuals. In Romania between 1990 and 1999 non-preference for homosexual neighbours dropped by 10 per cent (from 75.4 per cent to 65.2 per cent), further decreasing to 59.3 per cent by 2008. This way, a significant gap had emerged between the two countries by 2008: while in Romania more than half of the population still rejected the idea of homosexual neighbours, in Hungary only less than a third of the respondents reported the same. Over the almost twenty-year period drug abusers, heavy drinkers and people with a criminal record continued to be the most rejected groups in both countries: more than half of the respondents wished no such neighbours in 2008 either.

<sup>13</sup> Countries included in the table are: TR=Turkey, LT=Lithuania, RO=Romania, BG=Bulgaria, PL=Poland, EE=Estonia, LA=Latvia, SI=Slovenia, SK=Slovakia, HU= Hungary, PT=Portugal, CZ=Czech Republic, IT=Italy, MA=Malta, IE=Ireland, DE=Germany, FI=Finland, UK=United Kingdom, NL=Netherlands, BE=Belgium, SE=Sweden, FR=France, DK=Denmark, ES=Spain, IS=Iceland.

Table 3 Non-preference for neighbours in Hungary and Romania by genders (1990 and 2008)

HUNGARY	1990			2008		
	Mean (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Mean (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
People with a criminal record	77.3	81.2	73	50	53.5	46.1
People of a different race	22.9	22.7	23.2	9	8.1	9.9
Left-wing extremists	21	16.9	25.5	11.5	8.4	14.9
Heavy drinkers	81.5	84.9	77.8	57	59.3	54.5
Right-wing extremists	20.3	16.3	24.7	12.7	9.1	16.6
People with large families	7.4	6.5	8.3	4.7	5.8	3.4
Emotionally unstable people	23.4	23	23.9	13.8	13.1	14.7
Muslims	18.3	19.2	17.4	11	10.4	11.7
Immigrants, foreigners	22.2	23	21.3	15.2	15.1	15.4
People who have AIDS	65.9	68.9	62.6	30.6	30.1	31.2
Drug addicts	83.6	86.8	80.1	64	64.3	63.7
Homosexuals	75.3	74.1	76.6	29.5	25.1	34.2
Jews	10.3	10.8	9.8	6.4	5.2	7.7
Gypsies	-	-	-	38.7	38.6	38.8
Christians	-	-	-	2.1	2.4	1.8
ROMANIA	1990			2000		
	Mean (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Mean (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
People with a criminal record	66.8	71.1	62.3	55.5	54.8	56
People of a different race	27.7	27.	27.7	21.1	207	21.5
Left-wing extremists	45.1	43.3	46.9	24.6	22.8	26.6
Heavy drinkers	79.1	84	74.1	62.7	65.4	59.8
Right-wing extremists	42.2	39.6	45	23	21.5	24.7
People with large families	21.6	21.7	21.5	16.5	18	15
Emotionally unstable people	64	65.6	62.5	45	44.3	45.7
Muslims	34.4	33.5	35.4	22.7	23.3	22.1
Immigrants, foreigners	30.1	29.9	30.4	20.9	20.9	20.9
People who have AIDS	65.8	68.4	63.1	39.5	39.7	39.2
Drug addicts	76	77.8	74.1	60.4	60.5	60.4
Homosexuals	75.4	77.4	73.4	54.1	53	55.3

<b>Jews</b>	28.1	28.5	27.8	18	17.3	18.8
<b>Gypsies</b>	-	-	-	43.7	42.1	45.2
<b>Christians</b>	-	-	-	14.2	14.4	14

*Source: European Values Study 1990 and 2008; own calculation*

We also investigated the role of denomination in the non-preference for neighbours items in the two examined countries over the period after the transitions (1990, 1999 and 2008). We found trends similar to those in the justification of homosexuality items (see Figure 5).

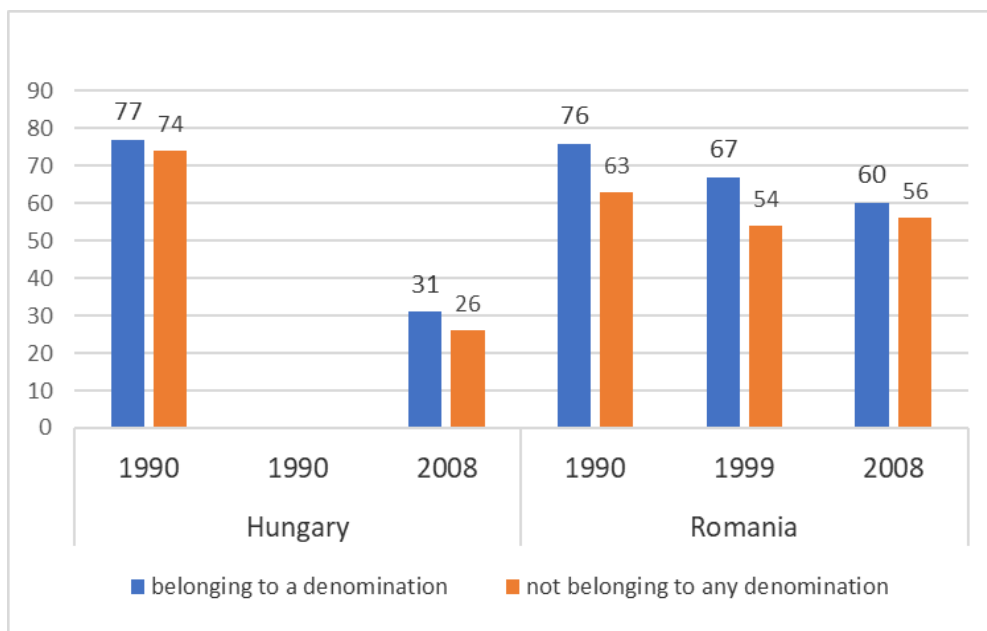


Figure 5. The role of belonging to a denomination regarding non-preference for neighbours in Hungary and Romania<sup>11</sup>

*Source: European Values Study 1990, 1999, 2008; own calculation*

We can see that there is a greater difference between belonging to the dominant denomination and not belonging to any denomination in Romania than in Hungary, which indicates that the Orthodox Church has more negative attitudes towards the acceptance of homosexuality than the Catholic Church in this dimension, as well.

#### 4.3 Adoption by homosexual couples

The question about adoption by homosexual couples was first included in the last data collection round of EVS, which was completed in 2008, but as we have already mentioned, it was incorrectly formulated in the Hungarian version, thus we had to

<sup>11</sup> Hungarian data from 1999 are not comparable to the Master Questionnaire variable. In the Hungarian field questionnaire each item was read to the respondent, so the respondent had to decide in each case, and could not choose from a list (as was the case in the other countries).

omit the Hungarian data from the European comparison (for a more detailed discussion of European attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples see: Takács, Szalma and Bartus, 2016). This is why only one of our examined countries, Romania is included in Figure 6 illustrating the levels of agreement with the statement ‘Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children’ in 28 European countries.

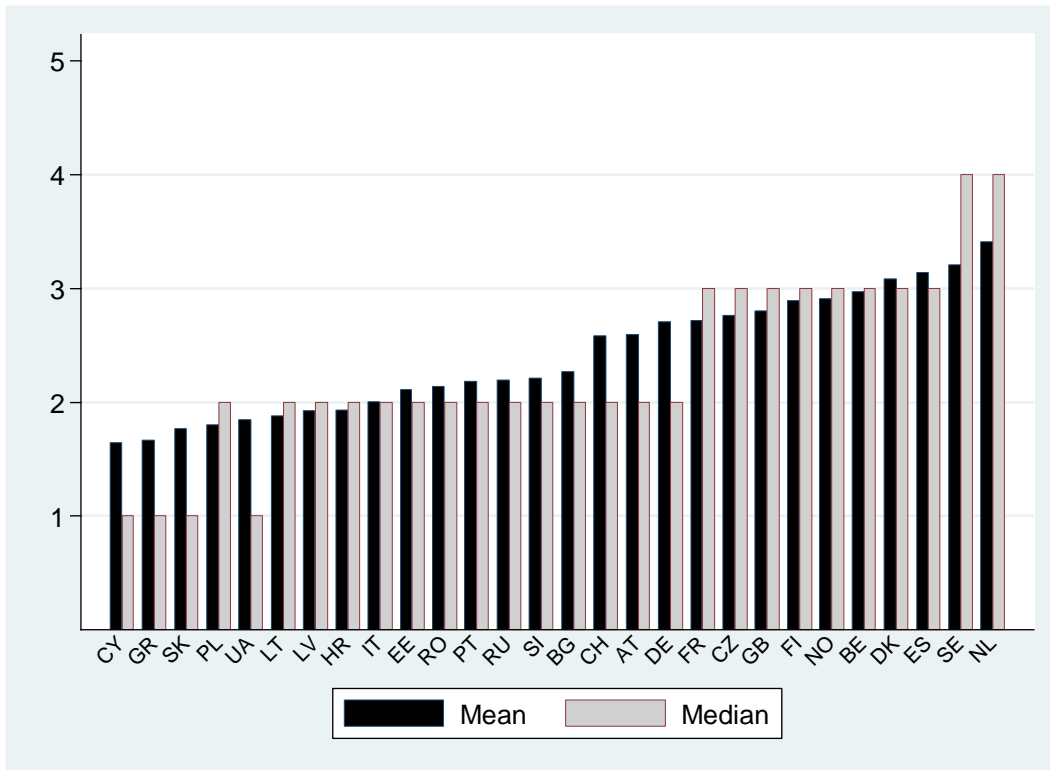


Figure 6. Agreement with the statement ‘Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children’ in 28 European countries (1 – strong disagreement; 5 – strong agreement)  
 Source: *European Values Study 2008; own calculation*

For the same reason Table 4 can also illustrate only the similar ratio of respondents strongly agreeing (or disagreeing) with the statement ‘Homosexual couples should not be allowed to adopt children’ in Hungary to the ratio of those in Romania rejecting (or supporting) the statement ‘Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children’. The results, nevertheless, allow us to conclude that in both countries most respondents seem particularly negative about granting same-sex couples the opportunity for joint adoption. Concerning the non-response rate, this was around 6 per cent in the pooled data and it varied significantly among countries, being above 10 per cent in Bulgaria, Hungary and Ukraine.

Table 4. Attitudes to allowing homosexual couples to adopt children in Hungary and Romania

EVS - 2008	Homosexual couples should <b>NOT</b> be allowed to adopt children	Homosexual couples should be able to adopt children
	Hungary	Romania
Agree strongly	39.7%	5.5%
Agree	24.4%	10.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	19.1%	15.8%
Disagree	12.0%	28.8%
Disagree strongly	4.8%	39.4%
Total	100%	100%

Source: *European Values Study 2008; own calculation*

We also examined the relationship between adoption by same sex-couples and belonging to the dominant denomination. We should be aware that there is no point in comparing the two countries due to the differently phrased variables. However, if we compare the differences between those people who belong to the dominant denomination and those who do not belong to any denomination (see Figure 7), we can observe that there is again greater difference between religious and non-religious respondents in Romania than in Hungary. These results support our hypothesis H4 (assuming that there are greater differences between those people who belong to the Orthodox denomination and those who do not adhere to any denomination than between those who belong to the Catholic Church and those who do not adhere to any denomination).

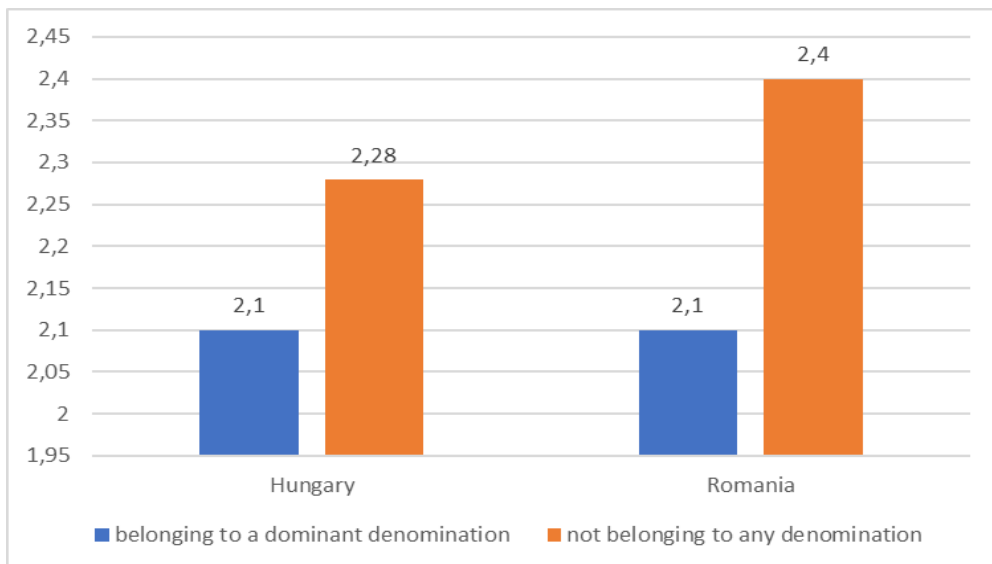


Figure 7. The role of belonging to a denomination regarding attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples in Hungary and Romania

Source: *EVS 2008; own calculation*

4.4 Social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women

In addition to the available EVS data we could also use ESS data from the same year. In 2008 both Hungary and Romania participated in the ESS data collection, thus we can compare social acceptance of lesbian women and gay men in both countries. The results of the 2008 ESS variable ‘Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish’ are illustrated in Figure 8. Concerning the non-response rate, this was under 4 per cent in the pooled data but we could find considerable variation among countries. For example, it was above 10 per cent in the following countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.

It can also be observed that the acceptance of gay men and lesbian women both in Romania and Hungary is far below the average of the examined European countries, especially if we focus on some of the North-Western European countries. In Hungary between 2002 and 2010 and in Romania between 2006 and 2008 the mean values of this variable barely changed,<sup>15</sup> while in most North-Western European countries the mean values show an increasing trend since 2002.

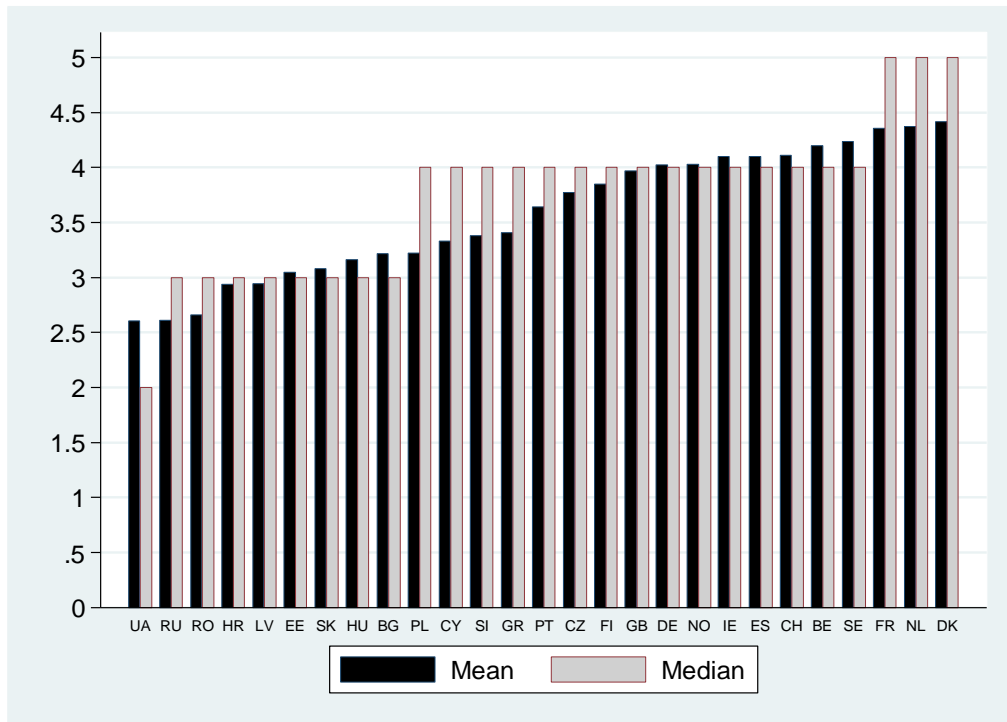


Figure 8. Mean values of the social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women in 26 European countries (1= disagree strongly; 5=agree strongly)

Source: European Social Survey 2008-2009; own calculation

<sup>15</sup> The evolution of the Hungarian mean values is the following: ESS round 1(2002) - 3.21; ESS round 2 - 3.17; ESS round 3 - 3.2; ESS round 4 - 3.16; ESS round 5 - 3.31; ESS round 6 - 3.16 ESS round 7 - 3.26 and ESS round 8 - 3.16 Romania took part in only two rounds, where the mean values were the following: ESS round 3 - 2.53; ESS round 4 - 2.66.

#### 4.5 Regression results

Finally, in Tables 6 and 7 we summarized the regression coefficients analysed in the frame of linear and logistic regression models, by which we aimed to find out which factors may explain the evolution of attitudes concerning homosexuality in the two countries. Using regression models adds to the better understanding of the relationship between attitudes towards homosexuality and religion because this way we can filter out the impact of other variables, e.g. the difference in age and gender composition between those belonging to a denomination and those who do not belong to any denomination in the two examined countries.

Table 6 Social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women in Hungary and Romania:  
Regression coefficients derived from linear regression

Explanatory and control variables		A) Dependent variable: Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish	
		A) Hungary	A) Romania
Gender (Women)		0.12	-0.01
Age		-0.01 ***	-0.02 ***
Settlement type	<b>Big city</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Ref.</b>
	Suburbs	-0.33	-0.43
	Town	-0.13	0.15
	Village	-0.9	0.03
	Farm	-0.38	0.06
Level of education	Primary	-0.14	0.02
	Secondary	Ref.	Ref.
	Tertiary	-0.17	0.11
Denomination	Roman Catholic	-0.07	-0.53 **
	Protestant	-0.13	-0.64 **
	Eastern Orthodox	-	-0.26 *
	Others	-0.27	-0.28
	<b>Not belonging to any</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Ref.</b>
Attendance at religious services	More than once a week	Ref.	Ref.
	Once a week	0.54 *	0.01
	At least once a month	0.74 **	0.03
	Only on special holy days	0.93 ***	0.13
	Never	0.91 ***	0.18
When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	Agree strongly	-0.21	-0.06
	Agree	0.21	0.14

		A) Dependent variable: Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish	
Explanatory and control variables		A) Hungary	A) Romania
	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Ref.</b>
	Disagree	0.28	0.04
	Disagree strongly	0.85	0.21
Satisfaction with one's private life <sup>16</sup>		-0.01	-0.02
Satisfaction with democracy		0.01	-0.02
Political view <sup>17</sup>	Left-wing orientation	0.19	-0.02
	Moderate left-wing orientation	0.09	-0.03
	Neutral	Ref.	Ref.
	Moderate right-wing orientation	-0.12	0.12
	Right-wing orientation	-0.34**	0.14
The country's cultural life is rather enriched than undermined by people coming to live here from other countries.		0.06***	0.07***
<b>Number of observations</b>		1379	1880
<b>R to the second power</b>		0.088	0.102

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.00$ ; Source: European Social Survey 2008; own calculation

The dependent variable of model A 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish' shown in Table 6 comes from the ESS database of 2008. More than 10 per cent of respondents in Romania and Hungary did not give a valid answer to this question, which qualifies as a high refusal rate. Concerning less sensitive questions, the rate of invalid responses remained between 4 and 5 per cent in both countries. Regarding the demographic control variables, gender, settlement type and educational level, these did not have a significant effect anywhere, while the level of tolerance seemed to decrease with age in both examined countries. Regarding religiosity measured in two dimensions, membership of a religious denomination had a significant effect only in Romania, while the frequency of attending religious services had a significant effect only in Hungary. In Romania, compared to those not belonging to any denomination, members of the Protestant Church expressed the

<sup>16</sup> In the ESS the questionnaire 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?' could be answered on an eleven-point scale, where 0 meant being extremely dissatisfied and 10 meant extremely satisfied.

<sup>17</sup> The ESS included the following variable: 'In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right" ... where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?' We have recoded the answers into five categories, where 0-2 meant left-wing orientation, 3-4 meant moderate left-wing orientation, 5 meant neutral, 6-7 meant moderate right-wing orientation and 8-10 meant right-wing orientation.

least tolerant views towards homosexuality, followed by members of the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Similar results were found in a previous study on predictors of heterosexism in Romania on the basis of analysing ESS data (Andreescu, 2011). At the same time in Hungary lower frequency of attending religious services correlated with a more liberal attitude towards lesbians and gays. This difference might be due to Romanian society being more traditional, implying that those who belong to a denomination are also more likely to attend religious services.

Explanatory variables related to gender roles, satisfaction with private life, and satisfaction with democracy had no significant effect in this model. As for political views we found that right-wing political orientation had a negative effect only in Hungary. However, opinions about the impact of immigrants on culture did prove to be significant in both countries: those who thought that immigrants enrich cultural life had more supportive attitudes towards gay men and lesbian women too.

Table 7 'Justification' of homosexuality and (non-)preference for homosexual neighbours in Hungary and Romania. Standardized regression coefficients derived from linear and logistic regressions

Explanatory and control variables		B) Dependent variable: Homosexuality can be 'justified'		C) Dependent variable: (Non-) Preference for homosexual neighbours	
		B) Hungary	B) Romania	C) Hungary	C) Romania
Gender (Women)		0.62***	-0.19	-0.52***	-0.05
Age		-0.03***	-0.01***	0.004	0.01**
Settlement type	Population below 2000	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	2000–5000	-0.21	-0.18	-0.15	-0.16
	5000–10,000	-0.51	0.4	0.2	-0.73
	10,000–20,000	-0.49	0.001	-0.82*	-0.56
	20,000–50,000	-0.03	-0.24	-0.19	-0.91*
	50,000–100,000	0.41	-0.49	-0.52*	-0.04
	100,000–500,000	0.29	-0.38	0.13	-0.66
	Population over 500,000	0.76**	-0.37	-0.76**	-0.52
Level of education	Primary	-0.34	-0.07	0.17	0.34
	Secondary	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Tertiary	0.22	0.3	-0.32	-0.03
Denomination	Roman Catholic	-0.1	-0.28	0.04	-0.18
	Protestant	-0.04	-0.52	0.31	-0.55

		B) Dependent variable: Homosexuality can be 'justified'		C) Dependent variable: (Non-) Preference for homosexual neighbours	
Explanatory and control variables		B) Hungary	B) Romania	C) Hungary	C) Romania
	Eastern Orthodox	-	-0.46	-	<b>-0.79*</b>
	Others	-0.7	-0.81	0.62	-0.95*
	Not belonging to any	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Attendance at religious services	More than once a week	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Once a week	0.85	0.14	0.25	-0.51
	Once a month	1.46	0.28	0.23	-0.57
	Only on special holy days	1.8*	0.08	0.29	-0.5
	Once a year	1.9*	0.26	-0.09	-0.46
	Less often than once a year or never	2.15*	0.36	-0.09	-0.38
Satisfaction with democracy	Very satisfied	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Rather satisfied	0.93	-0.71	0.51	0.85
	Not very satisfied	0.96	-0.68	0.79	1.02
	Not at all satisfied	1.08	-0.79*	0.9	1.48**
When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women	Agree	0.86	0.28	1.6*	-0.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Disagree	1.01	0.56****	1.3	-0.55**
Satisfaction with one's private life <sup>18</sup>	0.06*	-0.06*	-0.06*	0.06*	
Political view <sup>19</sup>	Left-wing orientation	-0.44	-0.36	-0.56*	-0.59*

<sup>18</sup> In the EVS 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?' could be answered on a ten-point scale, where 1 indicated extreme dissatisfaction and 10 indicated extreme satisfaction.

<sup>19</sup> The EVS included the following variable: 'In political matters, people talk of "the left" and the "the right". How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking [where "1" means left and "10" means right]?' We have recoded the answers into five categories, where 1-2 meant left-wing orientation,

		B) Dependent variable: Homosexuality can be 'justified'		C) Dependent variable: (Non-) Preference for homosexual neighbours	
Explanatory and control variables		B) Hungary	B) Romania	C) Hungary	C) Romania
	Moderate left-wing orientation	0.52*	-0.05	0.02	0.06
	Neutral	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
	Moderate right-wing orientation	-0.4	0.4*	-0.11	0.09
	Right-wing orientation	1.06	-0.06	-0.41*	-0.11
The country's cultural life is not undermined by immigrants		0.21***	-0.02	-0.08***	0.01
<b>Number of observations</b>		1461	1400	1491	1377
<b>R to the second power</b>		0.159	0.076	0.08	0.057

*Note:* \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; *Source:* *European Values Study 2008; own calculation*

Regarding the dependent variables of Models B and C (see Table 7), 5 per cent of the Romanian and Hungarian respondents refused to answer the question about the 'justification' of homosexuality. However, the response rate of the other question about (non-)preference for homosexual neighbours was different in the two countries: in Hungary less than 1 per cent gave no answer, while in Romania almost 8 per cent of respondents refused to answer.

In Model B among the demographic control variables gender proved to have a significant effect only in Hungary: women were more tolerant than men. Age, however, had a significant effect in both countries: liberal attitudes towards homosexuality seem to decrease with age. Educational level had no major effect, while in terms of settlement type in Hungary only respondents living in a big city with over 500 thousand residents, i.e. Budapest, were significantly more tolerant than those living in settlements of fewer than 2000 people chosen as the reference category.

Membership of a denomination again did not have a significant effect, but, just like in our previous model, the frequency of attending services did prove to be significant in Hungary. As for satisfaction with democracy only Romania showed a notable correlation: compared with those who were very much satisfied with democracy the respondents who were extremely dissatisfied were also less permissive of homosexuality. Examining satisfaction with one's private life we found contrasting correlations in the two countries. In Hungary the more satisfied respondents were with their private life, the more tolerant they were towards homosexuality, while in Romania we found exactly the opposite.

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3-4 meant moderate left-wing orientation, 5-6 meant neutral, 7-8 meant moderate right-wing orientation and 9-10 meant right-wing orientation.

Regarding political views the regression results showed that people with moderate left-wing orientation were more likely to think that homosexuality can be justified among Hungarians, while people with moderate right-wing orientation seemed to be more tolerant in Romania. Positive attitudes towards immigrants also had a significant positive effect on expressing less homophobic views only in Hungary. At the same time, attitudes towards gender roles had a significant effect only in Romania: those with less traditional gender role attitudes were more likely to be more open-minded towards homosexuality and homosexual neighbours.

In Model C used for measuring social distance, gender – again – turned out to have a significant effect only in Hungary: women also proved to be more tolerant in this respect than men. Nevertheless, age had a significant effect in Romania only: as the age of respondents increased, the more likely they were not to prefer potential homosexual neighbours. According to settlement type, in Hungary respondents from larger settlements were less likely to report non-preference for homosexual neighbours than residents of the smallest settlements chosen as reference. In Romania settlements of 20 to 50 thousand people seemed to be the most tolerant. Educational level showed no significant correlation in either of the countries.

Concerning variables related to religiosity, the membership in a denomination variable had a significant effect only in Romania, where compared to Catholics, which was chosen as the reference group, members of the Orthodox Church as well as other Churches reported lower preferences for potential homosexual neighbours.

Similarly to the results of Model B those Romanian respondents who were less satisfied with democracy were also more intolerant towards homosexual neighbours. Views on gender roles also proved to be relevant only in Romania: those with less traditional views on gender roles had less negative ideas about having homosexual neighbours. Regarding political views, Hungarian respondents with pronounced left-wing orientation were less likely to prefer homosexual neighbours, while in Romania people with pronounced right-wing orientation had similar negative attitudes. At the same time, attitudes towards immigrants showed an effect only in Hungary again: respondents more open towards immigrants seemed also more supportive about the issue of homosexual neighbours.

## *5. Conclusion*

Based on descriptive statistical results we can state that Romania and Hungary belong to the less liberal European countries regarding all of the examined EVS and ESS variables, including the ‘justification’ of homosexuality, non-preference for homosexual neighbours, attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples and social acceptance of gay men and lesbian women. Although on the geographical and geopolitical verge of Europe we can find countries that are even less liberal (among others for example Russia or Turkey), we can probably state that most North-Western European countries have a more open-minded atmosphere around homosexuality related issues than Hungary or Romania. Additionally, we can empirically demonstrate that at the beginning of the 21st century Hungarian respondents tend to express more open-minded views regarding the ‘justification’ of homosexuality, (non-) preference for homosexual neighbours and acceptance of gay men and lesbian women than Romanians. At the same time, Romanian and Hungarian respondents

seemed to manifest equally restricted levels of tolerance towards adoption by same-sex couples. It is rather difficult to draw solid conclusions on this item since the question about allowing same-sex couples to adopt children was formulated differently in the two countries: the Hungarian version of the EVS ended up including a statement contrary to the original, making any further comparative analysis impossible.

Our main focus was on the relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuality related issues in the two examined countries, and more specifically whether different religious denominations can lead to different attitudes regarding the social acceptance of gays, lesbians, and homosexuality. On the basis of our analyses as well as previous research we can certainly say that religiosity has a role in shaping homosexuality related attitudes in Romania and Hungary, two neighbouring countries with a lot of similarities but different dominant religious denominations. We have also highlighted that homosexuality-related attitudes are not in the least static or unified, as views might change both in time and depending on various social-demographic factors.

One of our main findings is that belonging to the Orthodox Church was shown to have a more negative effect on homosexuality related attitudes in Romania than belonging to the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary. However, it remains unclear whether in Romania those who belong to the Roman Catholic Church are more permissive to homosexuality-related issues or those who belong to the Orthodox Church – as we had contradictory results in the models using the EVS and the ESS datasets, which might be explained by the different focus and formulation of the dependent variables.

Furthermore, we also found somewhat unexpected differences between the two countries based on our regression models: in Romania belonging to a denomination seems to matter more, while in Hungary the frequency of attending religious services matters more. This might be due to Romanian society being more traditional than the Hungarian, with those who belong to a denomination in Romania being more likely to attend religious services than their Hungarian counterparts.

Reviewing the results of the regression models we must admit that not all of the expected results assumed in our hypotheses were verified in all three (A, B and C) models. However, from the control variables age and religiosity (more precisely, at least one of its dimensions: belonging to a denomination or the frequency of attending religious services), while from the explanatory variables questions about attitudes regarding gender roles and immigrants had significant effects in all of the models and thus were found to be the most effective during the comparison of the two countries. In addition, in Hungary, where women tended to be more open-minded than men, gender played an important role in forming attitudes towards homosexuality, at least regarding the ‘justification’ of homosexuality and the (non-)preference of homosexual neighbours variables, while in Romania this was not the case.

Most studies investigating homosexuality related attitudes aim at comparing several European countries based on cross-national databases (such as ESS, EVS, Eurobarometer). These comparative analyses, however, sometimes apply country-group typologies that – to a certain extent unavoidably – make the components of the specific country groups homogenous. At other times we can see that a study focuses on country characteristics based on the deep knowledge of local features. In the present study we compared two adjacent countries within the same region, which does

not happen very often in international attitude research. Our study highlighted major differences between the two countries not only in their legislative history but also concerning personal attitudes – although according to cross-national comparative results both countries are less tolerant towards homosexuality, lesbian women and gay men than the examined European average.

In our present study we had to deal with numerous restricting factors. Similarly to most large-scale surveys, one of the most important restrictions stems from the fact that the measurement tools are set, and the ready-made variables do not always measure what researchers would actually wish to examine and in a way that they would approve of. For example, the available EVS and ESS variables do not allow us to examine gender-specific attitudes towards adoption by same-sex couples. In the future our aim will be (and hence, we encourage all social scientists interested in the topic) to further analyse these issues with more detailed and sensitive tools, among others by collecting and analysing qualitative data, which could contribute to a better understanding of non-heteronormative family issues in particular.

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