



Debate on Hungary in the European Parliament

Hungarian press coverage between
2017.04.26 and 2017.04.28.

Content analysis

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Executive Summary

Mérték Media Monitor invited Publicus Institute to conduct a qualitative analysis on how the European Parliament's debate on Hungary has been reported on by the most read, most watched and most important Hungarian news media.

Methodology

We monitored 718 articles in total produced by four online and three printed media platforms, which includes both pro-government and critical press.¹

With regard to online news portals, we monitored the public affairs sections of origo.hu, index.hu, 444.hu and 888.hu. As regards printed media, we monitored the public affairs sections of dailies Lokál and Ripost, as well as the national and international news sections of regional newspapers in the possession of Mediaworks. From the above mentioned media, we considered index.hu and 444.hu as critical, while the rest is unquestionably pro-government.

Broadcast media are represented in our research by the early-evening news programmes of the public media channel M1 and two commercial channels (RTL Klub and TV2), as well as the public media radio channel MR1's *Déli Krónika* (Midday Chronicle – a midday news programme). RTL Klub is the only channel that can be considered critical from the above; at the same time, it also has the largest audience. However, RTL Klub's news programme (similarly to TV2's *Tények* [Facts]) is also dominated by tabloid news.²

The number of articles published on online and print platforms is high (overall 718), whereas the number of news in broadcast media is significantly lower (overall 218); therefore, in the case of the latter, we could often only make qualitative analyses. In this analysis, however, we only show figures, in which the interdependencies are significant from a mathematical-statistical point of view. However, we found plenty of this type of data in broadcast news, as well.

¹ During the three days, 718 articles in total were published on the online and print media platforms. The third of these articles did not deal with the subject of public affairs (tabloid, sports, culture, etc.), whereas fourth of them related to foreign affairs with no Hungarian relevance. The number of news on public life with Hungarian relevance was 314.

The European parliamentary debate on Hungary as a main topic occurred in the case of 6% of the articles, whereas 24% related or contained references to the topic. The focus of our qualitative analysis are these 118 articles in total.

² In the case of broadcast media, we considered clearly divided news as individual cases. These divisions are always clearly indicated by both the anchors and the taglines. During the three days there were 281 individual news pieces in total: April 26th = 84; April 27th = 100; April 28th = 97.

52% (142 pieces) of these news was either not related to the topic of public life or dealt with foreign affairs news that did not have any Hungarian relevance. Third of these news dealt with topics that related to Hungarian public life but did not even refer to the debate of the European Parliament. There were altogether 17 news pieces (6%) that dealt with the debate as a main topic and an additional 24 pieces (9%) as a side issue.

Written press

The extent of coverage on the topic

- As regards online and print media, 888.hu made the most coverage of the European Parliament's debate on Hungary – the reason partly being that this site has the lowest proportion of tabloid and other topics not related to public life.
- 888.hu published a great number of articles merely touching upon the debate, but even index.hu and 444.hu published more relating articles rather than articles that dealt with the debate on Hungary as the main topic.
- Articles and news that dealt with the debate as a side issue tended to focus more on the afterlife and evaluation of the debate, as well as on loosely relating events (e.g. the Soros-Juncker meeting, the CÖF's [Fidesz-favoured Hungarian NGO] protest in Brussels).
- The perceptibility of the debate in the press was the strongest on the 26th of April, the day of the debate itself – a total of 63 articles concerned the topic on this day. On the 28th there were only 23 articles, 19 of which merely dealt with the debate as a side issue.
- Articles treating the European parliamentary debate on Hungary as their main topic were likely to be more elaborate than articles concerning other areas of Hungarian public life or even articles that loosely related to the topic generally are. Therefore, the day of the debate excelled not only in terms of the number of articles but also their length.

The representation of migrants³ in the news

- As Viktor Orbán in the debate, and Fidesz afterwards, the pro-government media's account, too, primarily placed the debate of the European Parliament on Hungary within the framework of the fight against the refugee crisis to which the debate served as a battleground; **in addition, not even the critical media dealt with the initial causes of the debate per se.** The law against the CEU rarely occurred and was only referred to in the news; whereas the threats imposed by the NGO law amendment did not even come up.
- **In 62% of the articles dealing with the debate as a main topic, migrants were depicted in a negative manner,** and the same is true of 37% of the articles loosely relating to the debate. Anti-migrant content occurred primarily on pro-government platforms in topics with relevance to Hungarian public life which, however, were not in any way related to the debate. There was a tendency on pro-government platforms to publish foreign affairs news with no relevance to Hungary, in which migrants were depicted as negative actors (as being lazy, or as terrorists, as sexual harassers and as a group that is hated elsewhere as well).

³ Partly as a result of political communication, the media consistently blurs the difference between immigrants and refugees and simply uses the word „migrant”.

- When talking about the debate, **Viktor Orbán, Fidesz and the pro-government media all applied combative, militant rhetoric.**

The perception of the European Union

- **A high number of news pieces included anti-EU content.** In case of articles dealing with the European parliamentary debate as a main topic, 73% of the pro-government media, and even 58% of the critical media presented the European Union with a negative undertone.
- Furthermore, in the case of pro-government media it was perceptible that these platforms tended to spare space for not only anti-migrant but also anti-EU content in news on foreign affairs with no relevance to Hungary.
- The anti-EU content of opposition and otherwise pro-EU media platforms was primarily presented through the anti-EU statements of various public figures. On pro-government platforms, however, the anti-EU attitude was clearly perceptible in the opinion articles as well.
- With regard to pieces related to Hungary, 14% (13 articles) mentioned the EU in a positive light; 1 article dealt with the debate as a main topic and 4 as a side issue.

The perceptibility of an intention to discredit others

- The pro-government media tends to broadcast or articulate news that cast a favourable light on the government. However, the articles about the debate could not even be categorized as neutral, which would occasionally occur otherwise.
- In the case of the majority of the public life articles published in pro-government media an intention on the part of the editors or authors to discredit others was clearly detectable.
- As regards critical media platforms, barely any of the articles that dealt with the debate as a main topic had any clearly detectable intention to make discrediting statements (8%). Not that the critical voice is lacking on these sites, but in their case criticism is usually paired with irony, not intended smearing.
- The main target of pro-government articles with an intention to discredit another person was George Soros, but they also targeted Jean-Claude Juncker, migrants, liberals, the European parliamentary members of opposition parties and everyone else who dared to voice criticism of Viktor Orbán and/or of the controversial measures of the government
- Articles of this type on opposition media platforms mainly targeted CÖF and the pro-government media. These platforms wrote about Viktor Orbán and the government in an ironic but more objective tone.

Central actors in the articles

- In numerous articles there was a clear intention on the editors' part to either criticize or defend Viktor Orbán and the Hungarian developments. However, pro-government platforms never criticized Viktor Orbán and critical platforms never defended him or the situation in Hungary.
- The central actor of the debate in the Hungarian written press was unquestionably Viktor Orbán. His name occurred 34 times out of the 118 articles that dealt with the debate in any way. In comparison, the name of Frans Timmermans, Manfred Weber, and Guy Verhofstadt each occurred 7 times in the articles. There were altogether 28 politicians, whose name occurred in more than two articles and there were an additional 51 actors, whose name occurred in only one article.
- The main scapegoat of the debate was unquestionably George Soros; however, only two of the articles included direct quotations from him, whereas the rest included another actor mentioning his name – in most cases “the speculator” was referred to as a bogeyman, who wants to settle millions of migrants into Europe.
- In the articles dealing with the debate, there were 47 occasions in which a named or anonymous representative of the Hungarian government was mentioned (34 of these occurrences was the name of Viktor Orbán). International politicians were mentioned in 78 articles: 28 times from the EPP, 20 times left-wing and liberal politicians of the EU, 22 times far-right extremists and EU sceptics. The latter group was, in all cases, presented as supporting Viktor Orbán in the debate. Lastly, there were 8 articles that mentioned foreign politicians with no connection to the European Parliament or the Commission (e.g. Angela Merkel).
- The most frequent appearances in the articles were made by public authority figures (either from the Hungarian government or the European Commission) and Members of the European Parliament. In addition, party leaders made a frequent appearance on pro-government platforms, and there was a noticeably high number of occurrences from members of the European Parliament as well. This was because all pro-government platforms published lists of who supported Viktor Orbán in the debate and who “attacked” Hungary.

Facts and opinions

- In terms of who the agenda setter of public life news is, there was no significant difference between pro-government and critical platforms. At the same time, the number of opinion pieces generated by the media was much higher in the case of 444.hu and 888.hu.
- **In the 200 appearances in articles related to the debate, there were only 3 where actors talked exclusively about the facts.** There were 135 appearances, where actors voiced only opinions, and in 62 appearances facts and opinions were both voiced. The occurrence of persons voicing opinions was higher in the case of pro-government platforms than that of critical ones, and articles dealing with the debate as a main topic were also more tended towards communicating opinions. This was simply because these articles mainly included opinions voiced during the debate itself.
- **The written press barely reported on the main causes of, and whatever was said in connection with the debate.** In fact, readers could only be informed on who criticized and who

protected Viktor Orbán and the situation in Hungary. This was also true of critical platforms, which means that war-logics have by now somehow infected the critical press as well.

The substantial elements of the articles

- In 58% of the articles about the debate, there was at least one person who defended Viktor Orbán. In 33%, there was at least one person who defended the situation in Hungary, 11% of relating articles included criticism of Viktor Orbán, and criticism of the Hungarian situation+ occurred in 26% of the articles.
- The orientation of the various media platforms strongly affects the publication of defending or criticizing opinions. At the same time, it did not affect the appearance of persons talking about the CEU. In 40% of the relating articles, there was at least one person who referred to the CEU in any way, and implications to the “Stop Brussels” campaign (either in addition or in itself) were made in 19% of the articles.

Broadcast media

The extent of coverage on the topic

- The newscasts of the two main commercial channels (RTL Klub, TV2) are dominated by tabloids, whereas the newscast of the public media are dominated by national public affairs. Therefore, the news programmes of M1 (*Híradó*) and MR1 (*Déli Krónika*) do indeed fulfil their purpose in this respect.
- In summary, 52% of the news from broadcast news programmes was not connected to public life or was connected to foreign affairs with no relevance to Hungary. 12% of news that connected to Hungarian public affairs dealt with the debate of the European Parliament as a main topic, and an additional 18% connected to the topic in some way.
- In numbers: during the three days we monitored, there were 41 news pieces that included the debate in any way; from these, 7 could be considered as dealing with the debate as a main topic where the broadcast editor highlighted the news in the headlines. TV2’s newscast *Tények* did not highlight the debate of the European Parliament in its headlines on any of the monitored days; RTL Klub treated the event as main news only on the 26th of April, the day of the debate.
- On the channels of the public media, the *Déli Krónika* (radio broadcast) and M1 *Híradó* (television broadcast) the debate was highlighted on each of the three days, although, the main news on the 28th was not the debate itself – actors of the two highlighted news pieces only referred to the event.
- On the 26th of April all four monitored channels dealt with the debate in Brussels as a main topic (and on occasions as a side issue as well). M1’s newscast *Híradó* dealt with the debate in 6 pieces as a main topic, RTL’s newscast (of the same title) in 2 pieces, TV2 and MR1’s *Déli Krónika* each dealt with the debate as a main topic in one news piece. In the case of TV2, the

piece lasted 82 seconds, whereas the piece in *Déli Krónika* lasted 271 seconds, which made up 23% of the programme's airtime.

- Generally speaking, from among the 41 news pieces relating to the topic, 10 were short info clips (36 seconds on average), 31 were reports (165 seconds on average). There were 6 live reports (or more precisely reports set up as live), each time from a reporter located in Brussels.

Substantial elements

- From the government's perspective, the news dealing with the debate as a main topic were well-balanced; it is also worth noting that there was no news that could have been categorized as neutral. We categorize news as balanced when there are both negative and positive opinions included and we categorize news as neutral when there are no positive or negative opinions included.
- The vast majority of news dealing with the debate as a side issue was **positive from the government's perspective**. The subject of the majority of these was Viktor Orbán's victory or how the double-fence on the border was going to help defending the country from migrant masses.
- News depicting migrants negatively made the most frequent appearance in M1's *Híradó*; this, however, did not bear any relevance to whether the news connected to the debate. The same is also true of the representation of the European Union.
- From the 134 news pieces that related to Hungary, there were 43 in which the editors' choice to imply something towards the audience was clearly detectable. 24 of these connected to the debate of the European Parliament. We categorized three types of these implicit suggestions:
 - The piece defends or supports Viktor Orbán in some way
 - The piece defends the situation in Hungary
 - The piece is aimed at compromising a person or an organization
- **We did not find a type of implicit suggestion that was aimed at criticizing Viktor Orbán or the situation in Hungary in the newsfeeds of the monitored days.** This was possible because an intention to imply something was not clearly detectable in RTL Klub's news, whereas the remaining three channels we monitored are strongly pro-government.
- There were 9 news on Hungarian public affairs in which an editorial intention to defend or support Viktor Orbán could be detected. 7 out of 9 were in M1's newscast. However, more importantly, there were 8 news pieces in the support of Orbán that dealt with the debate as a main topic and 7 of these were broadcast on the 26th of April.
- Brussels as a relevant location appeared in 17 relating news pieces, most frequently in the image of the plenary room of the European Parliament. There were 11 relating news pieces that reported on press conferences.
- **Mentions of migrants occurred in all news programmes more frequently with a negative undertone, rarely in a neutral manner.** There were 18 mentions of migrants in the television newscast of the public media, all in a negative manner.
- **The European Union was mentioned with either a negative or neutral undertone, not once in a positive light.** The critical RTL Klub mentioned the EU 7 times, each in a neutral manner; however, in the case of the public media channel M1 and the commercial channel TV2, the EU's presentation was typically negative.

Actors

- Among the 41 relating news pieces, there were 31 in which at least one person is named. Viktor Orbán is evidently the most often mentioned person with 14 occasions, whereas the second place was taken by Frans Timmermans with only 5 mentions.
- There were 20 relating news pieces, where one (sometimes more) person(s) appeared with their own voices.
- There were altogether 91 actors in the 41 news pieces who talked: 5 actors only stated facts, 36 stated both facts and opinions, and lastly, 50 actors only stated opinions. This, of course, is largely affected by the platform on which the actor appeared and the date he/she appeared on; whether the debate was treated in the given news piece as a main topic or a side issue is also a relevant factor.
- There were 11 relating broadcasts in which one or more actors criticized Viktor Orbán. There were 13 news pieces where a person (or more) defends or supports Viktor Orbán. This was also dependent on whether the debate was a main topic or not.
- The CEU is mentioned in 18 news pieces by one or more actors. It is treated as a main topic in 11 news pieces and as a side issue in 7 pieces.

Debate on Hungary in the European Parliament

*Hungarian press coverage between
2017.04.26. és 2017.04.28.*

The purpose of the analysis

- Mérték Media Monitor invited Publicus Institute to conduct a qualitative analysis on what appeared in the most important Hungarian media platforms from the debate of the European Parliament
- The analysis surveyed the most watched, most read news sources:
 - 7 online/print media products
 - 4 broadcast (radio, television) news programmes

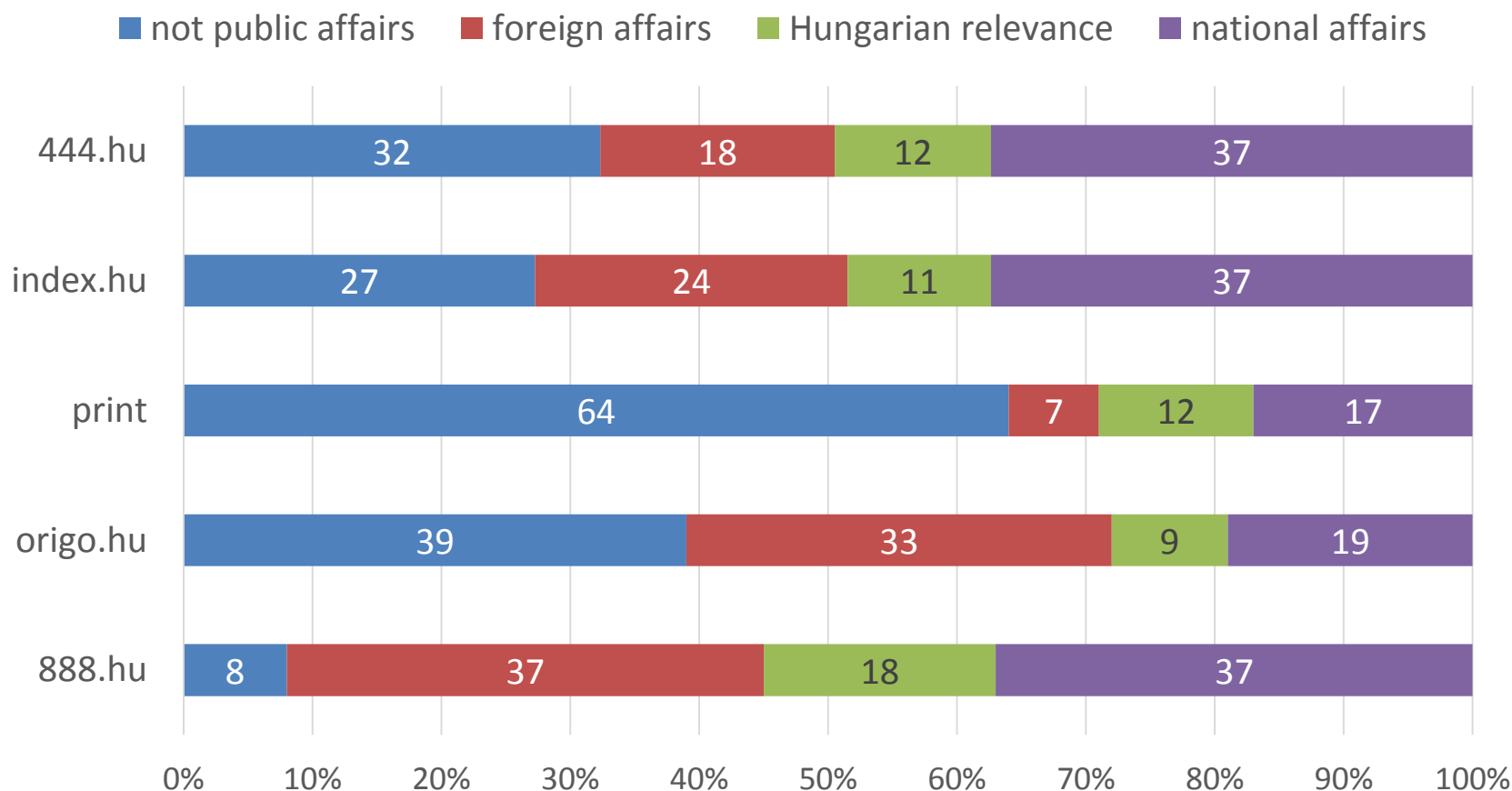
I. Online/print news sources

- Online news sources: public affairs sections of index.hu, origo.hu, 444.hu, 888.hu
- Print journals: Ripost and Lokál (public affairs pages), and the common national and international news sections of local newspapers in the possession of Mediaworks
- The monitored online and print platforms published a total 718 articles during the three days (April 26th= 257 articles, April 27th=221 articles, April 28th=240 articles)
- Third of these articles did not relate to topics of public life (tabloid, sports, culture, etc.), fourth of them related to news on foreign affairs with no relevance to Hungary
- The European Parliament's debate on Hungary was dealt as a main topic in 6% of the articles, and an additional 24% treated the topic as a side issue (118 articles total)

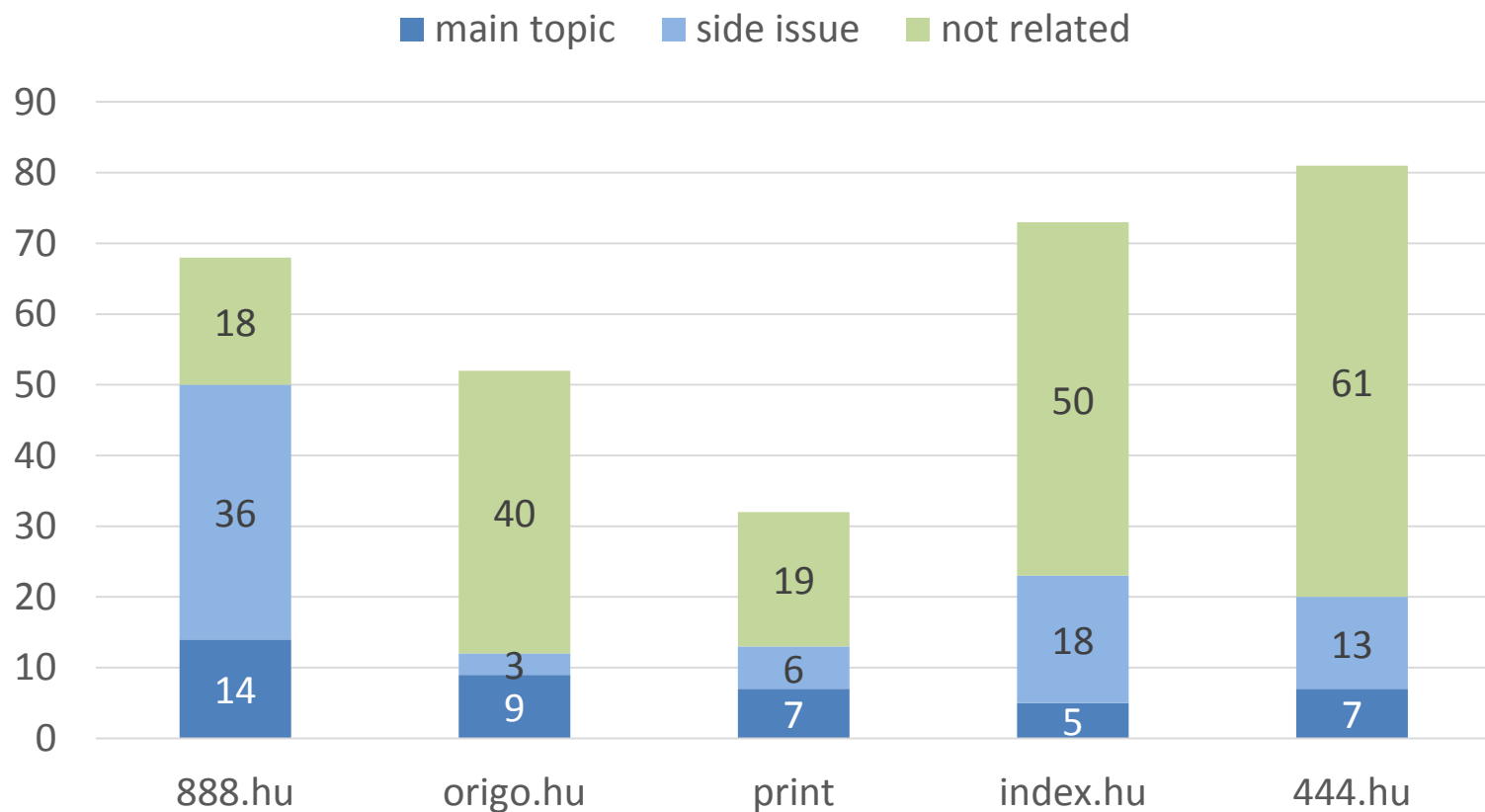
Pro-government and critical news sources

page	article	%
origo.hu	180 pieces	25%
888.hu	136 pieces	19%
print public affairs pages	89 pieces	12%
pro-government	405 pieces	56%
index.hu	150 pieces	21%
444.hu	163 pieces	23%
critical	313 pieces	44%

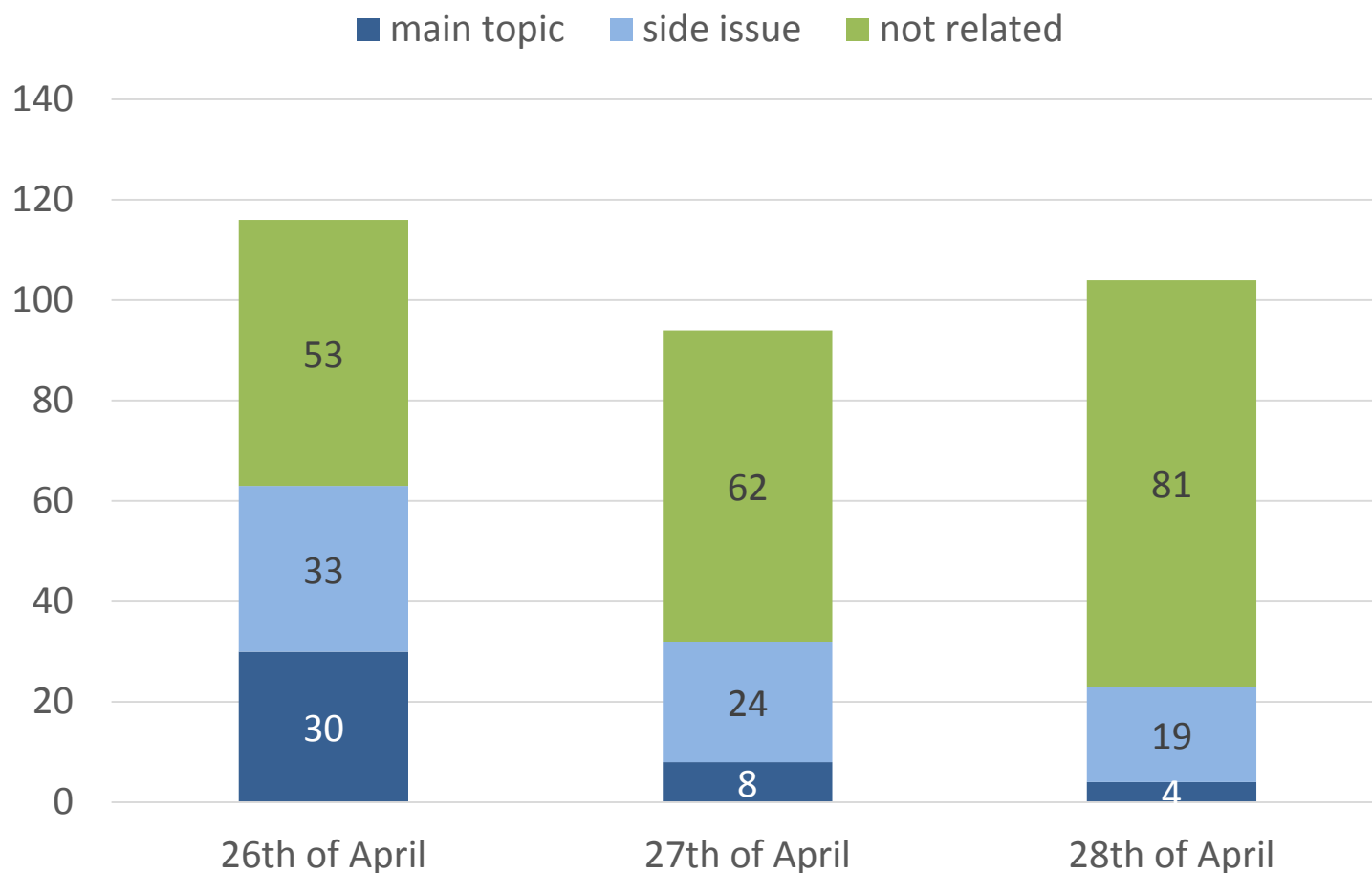
Types of content of articles divided by media platforms (%, N=718)



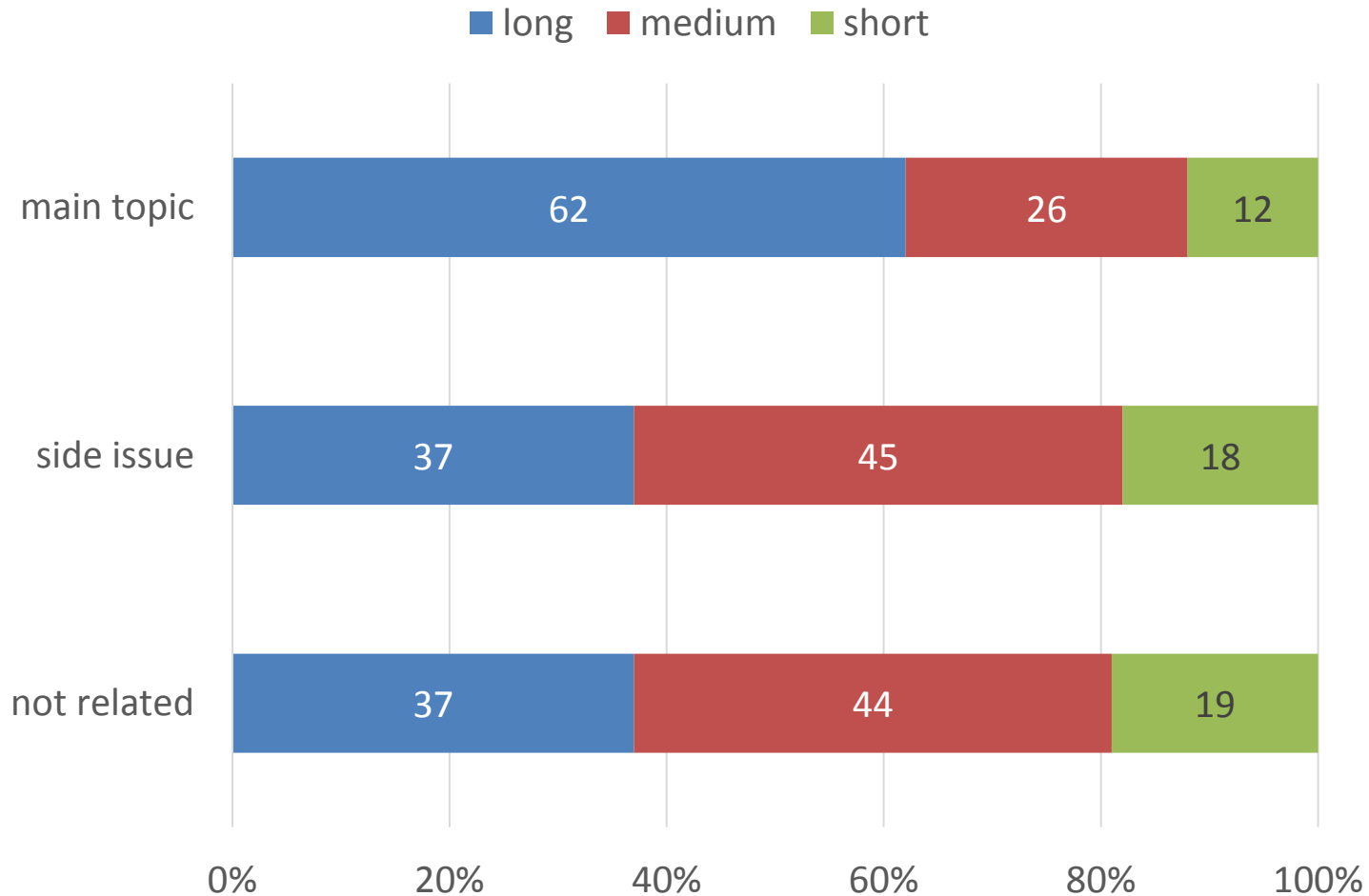
The appearance of the EP debate on Hungary in the Hungary-related public affairs articles, divided by media platforms (number of articles)



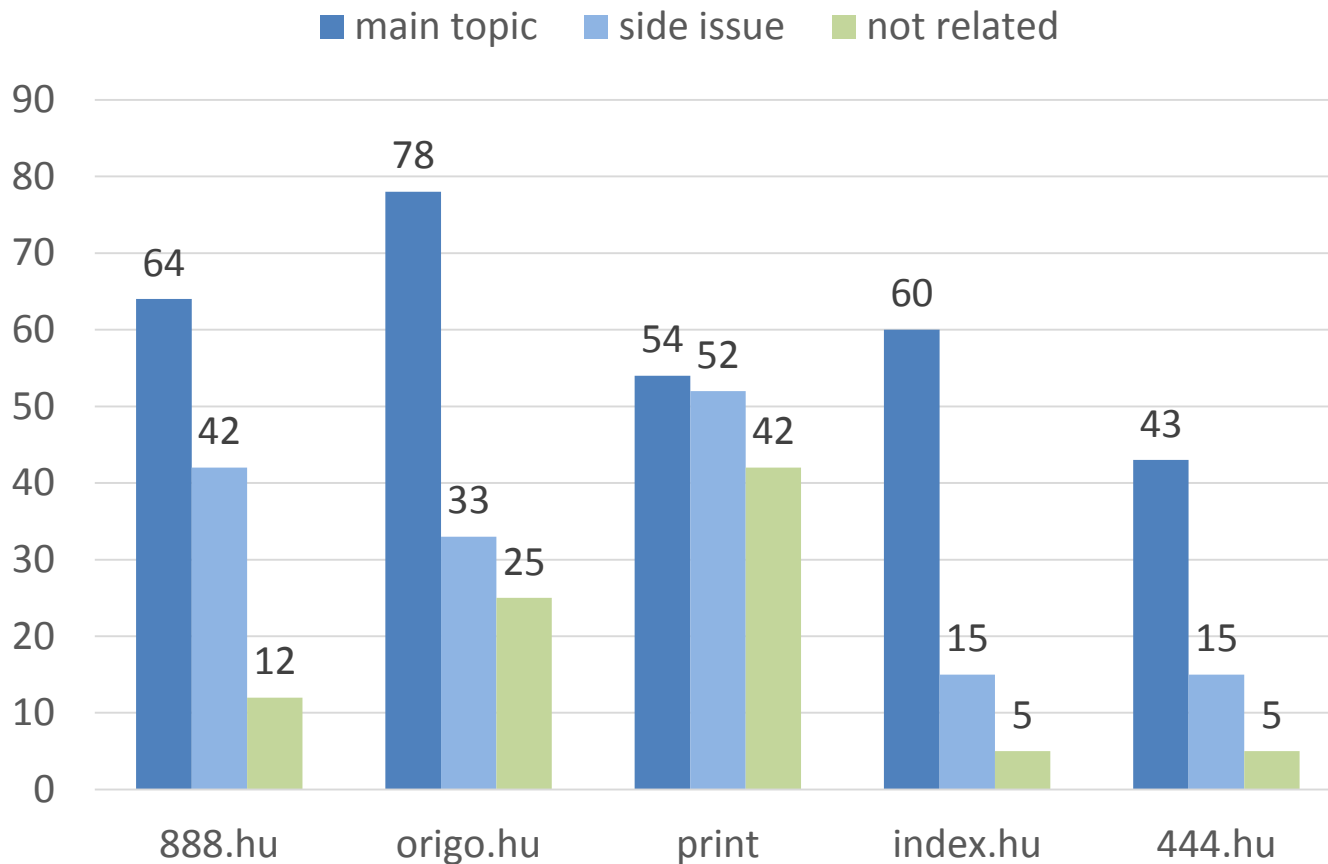
The EP debate on Hungary in the Hungary-related public affairs articles, divided by days (number of articles)



The length of public affairs articles divided by their relation (% , N=314)

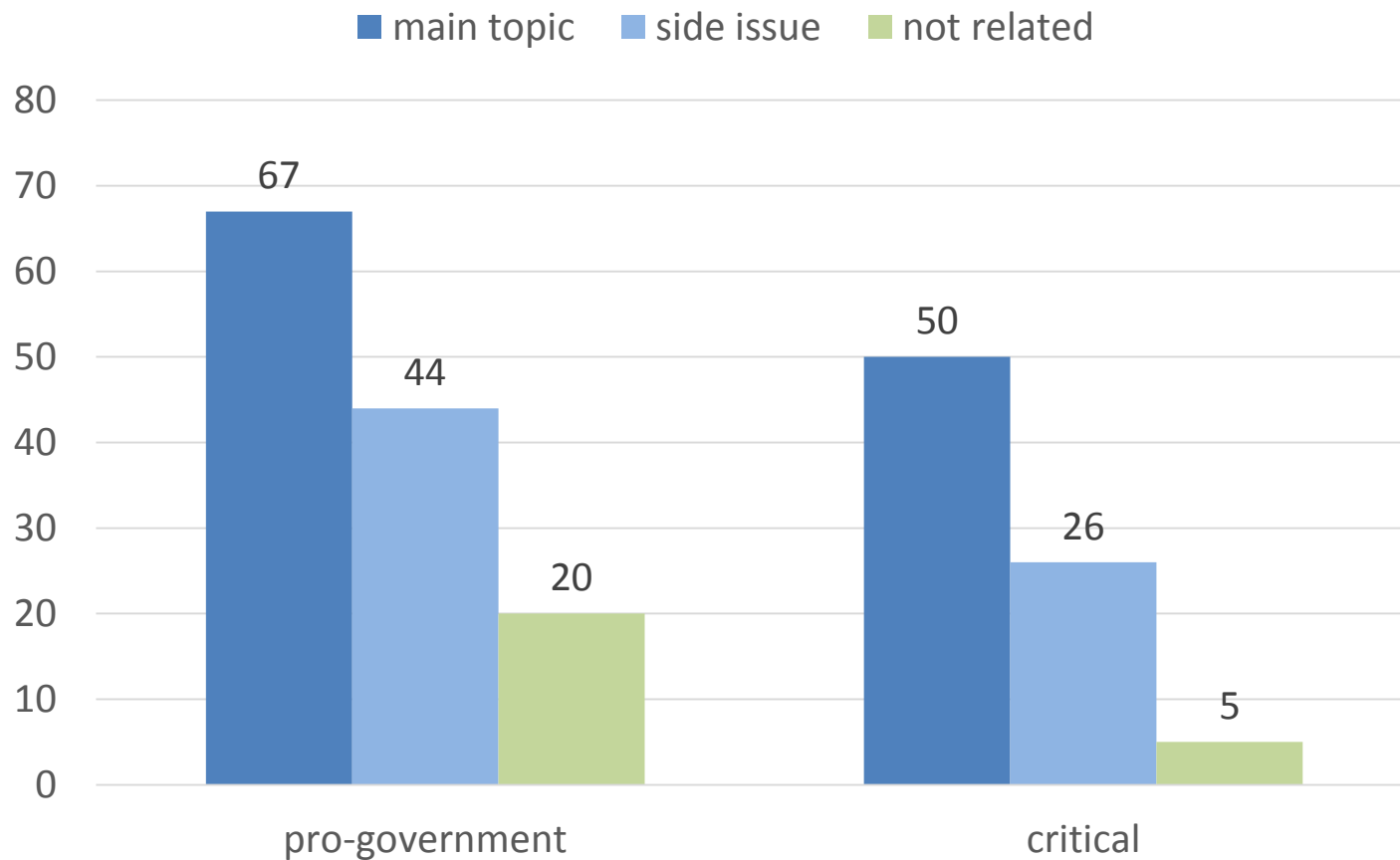


Migrants'* negative depiction, divided by topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



*Partly as a result of political communication, the media consistently blurs the difference between immigrants and refugees and simply uses the word „migrant”.

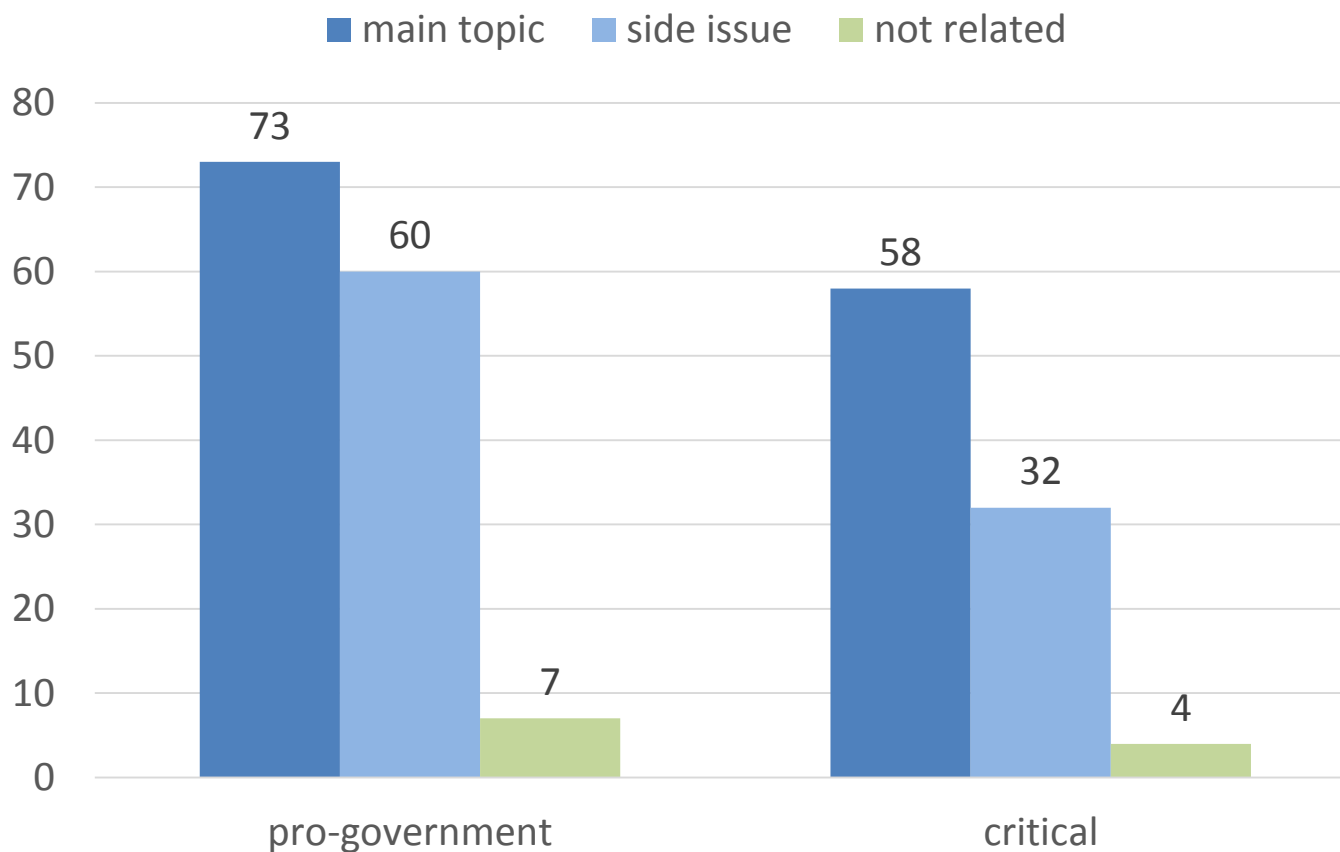
Migrants' negative depiction, divided by topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



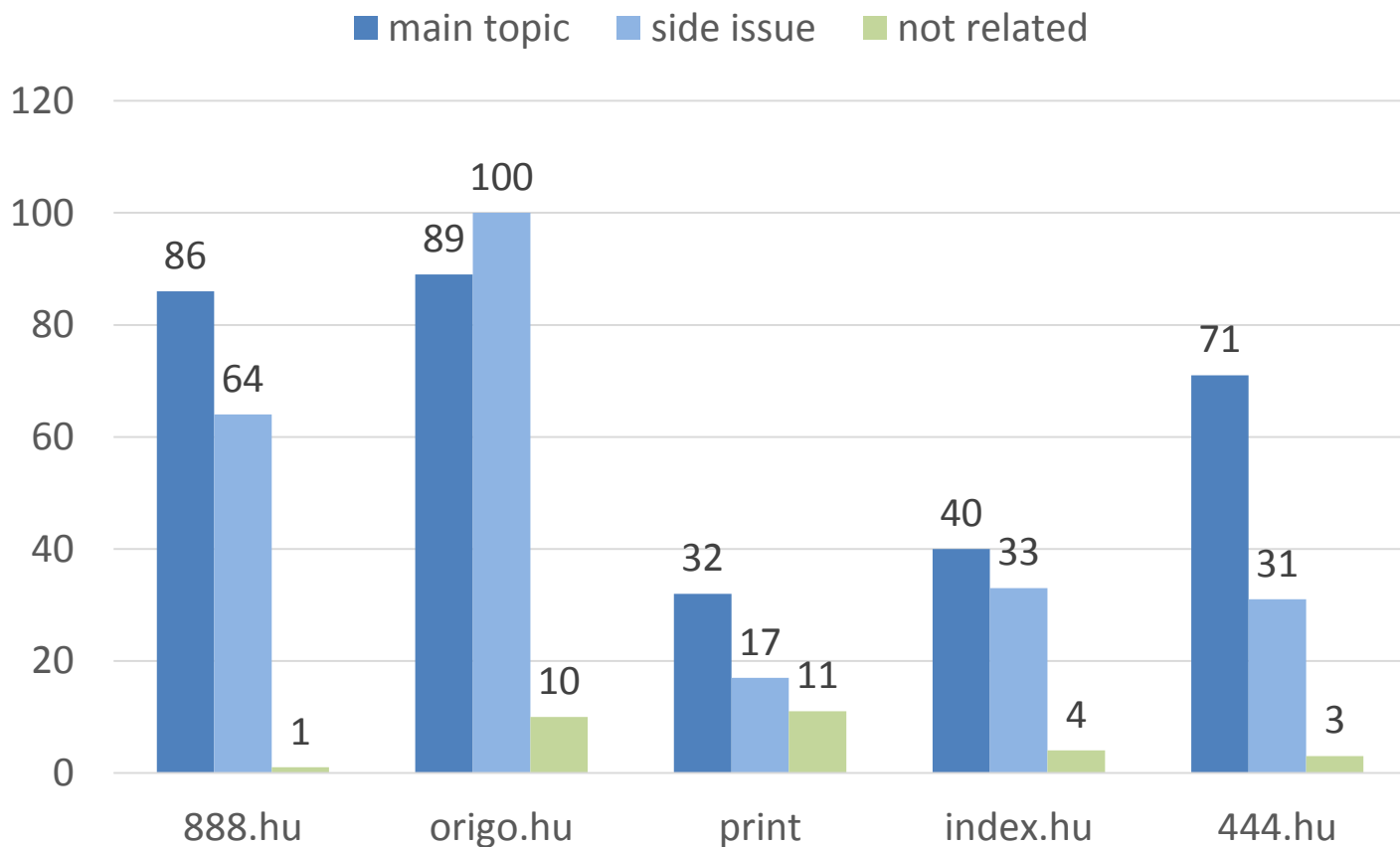
Article titles from online pro-government sites

Title	Website
Wednesday afternoon, the fight begins in Brussels	888
Viktor Orbán preparing for the clash	888
Orbán in the lion's lair	888
Viktor Orbán takes the fight in the lion's lair	origo
Viktor Orbán defends Hungary's interest in European Parliament	origo
Orbán: I came to Brussels to protect my country	888
Viktor Orbán: Hungary's interests had to be defended	origo
Brussels uses its weapon right away	888
Brussels asked for a slap from Orbán	888
Brussels' tantrum	888
Fidesz: Viktor Orbán defended Hungary	origo
Government Info: The defence of the country's interests was successful	origo

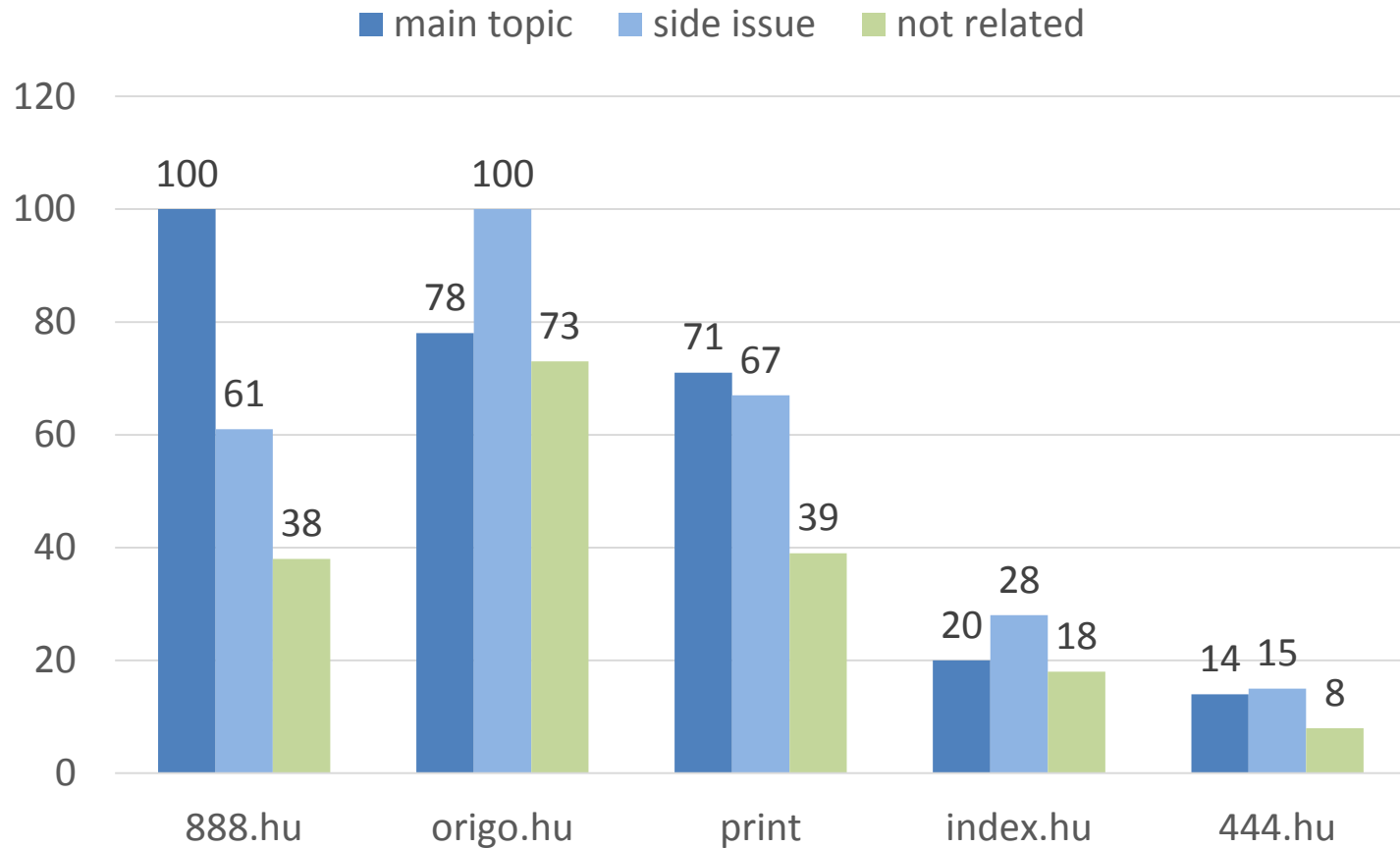
EU's negative depiction divided by topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (%, N=314)



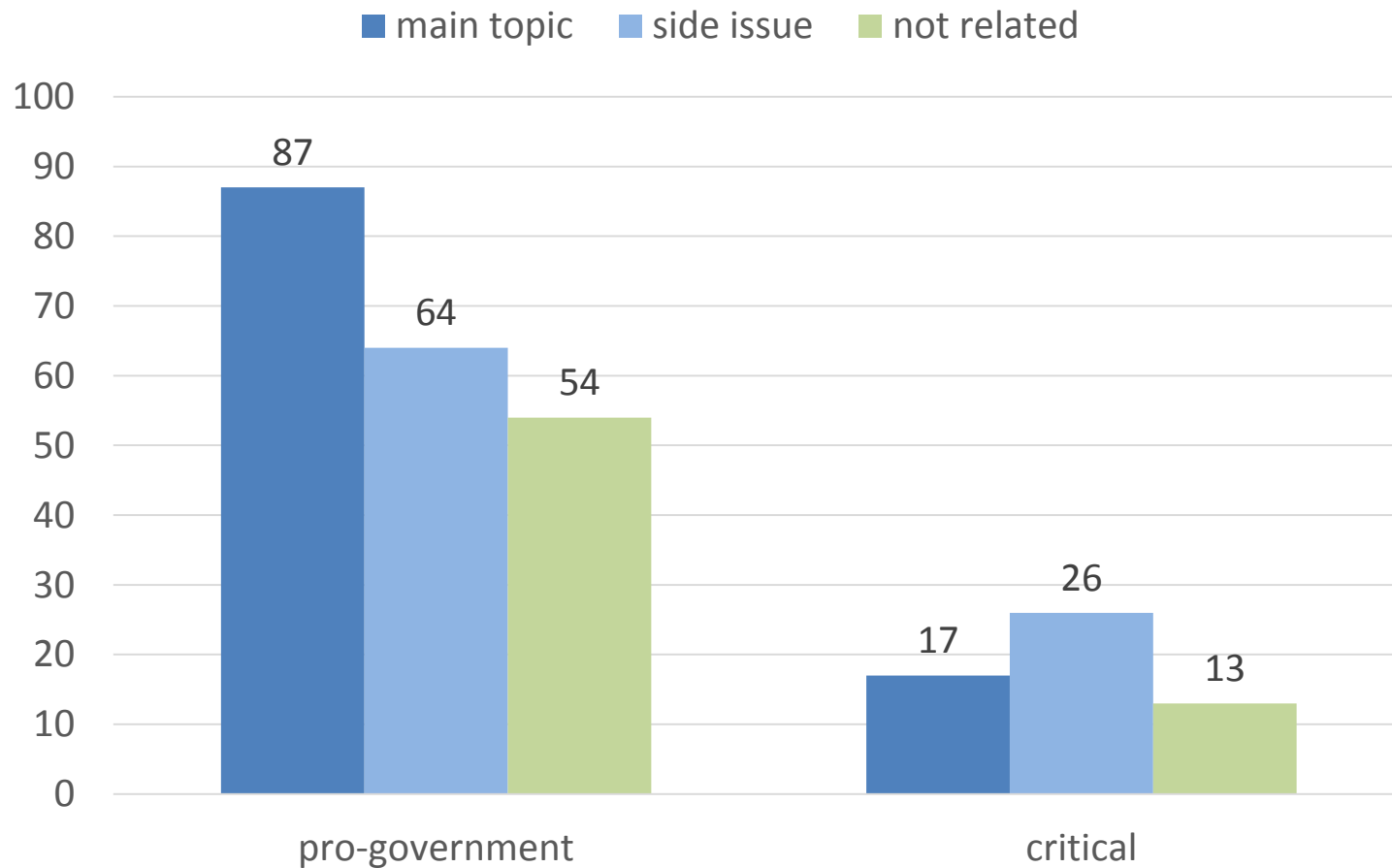
EU's negative depiction divided by media platforms and topics in Hungary-related foreign affairs news (% , N=314)



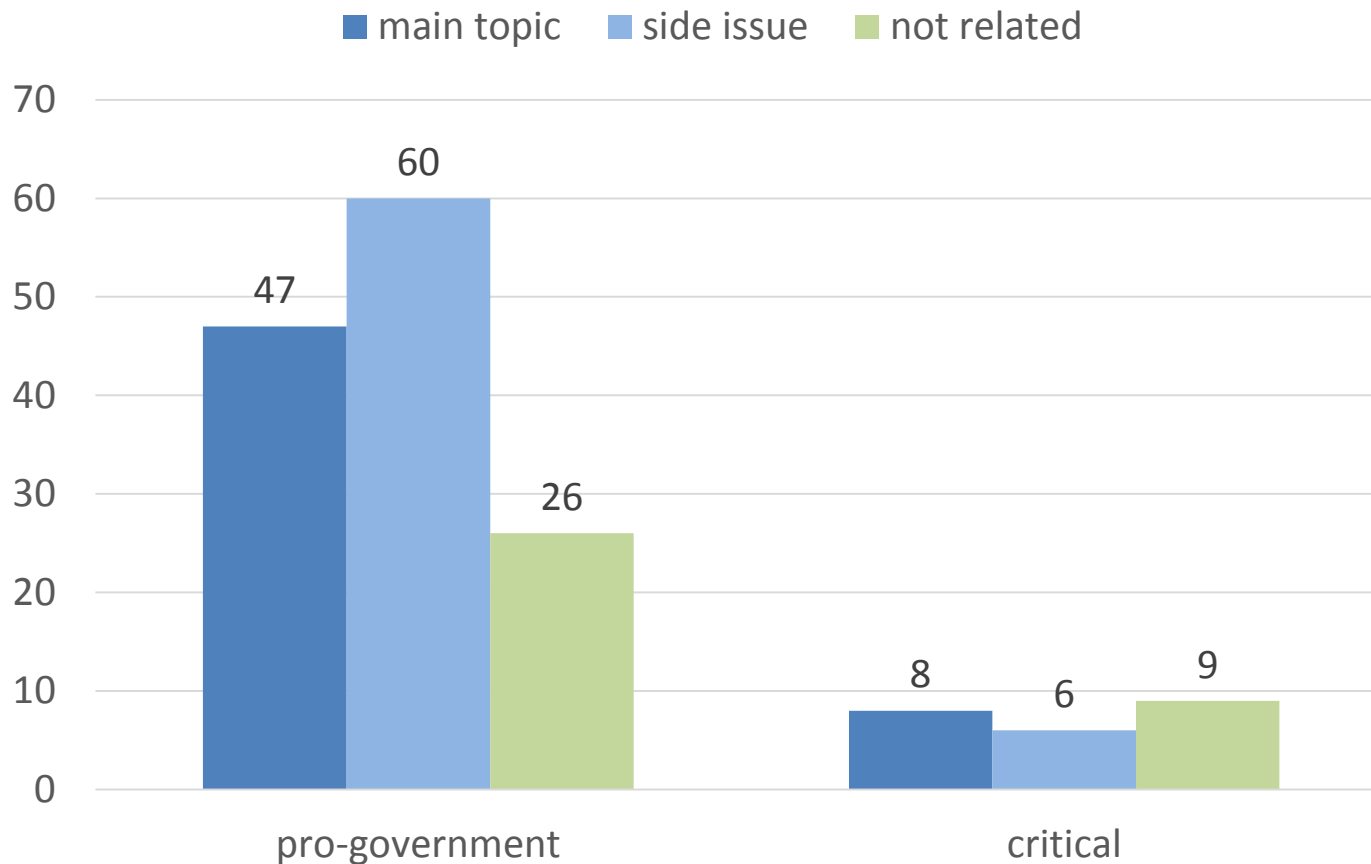
Content positive from the government's perspective, divided by topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (%, N=314)



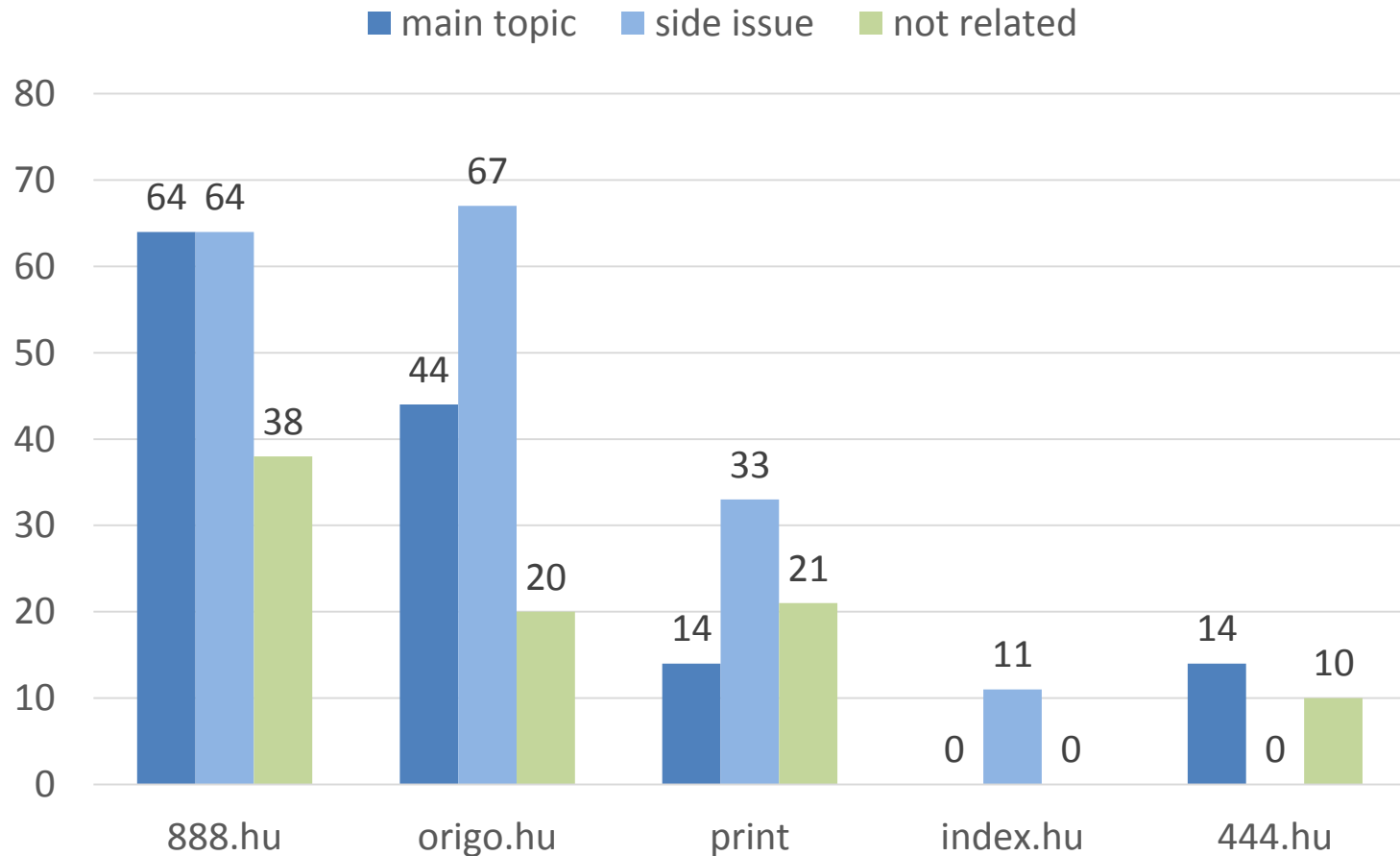
Content positive from the government's perspective, divided by orientation and topic in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



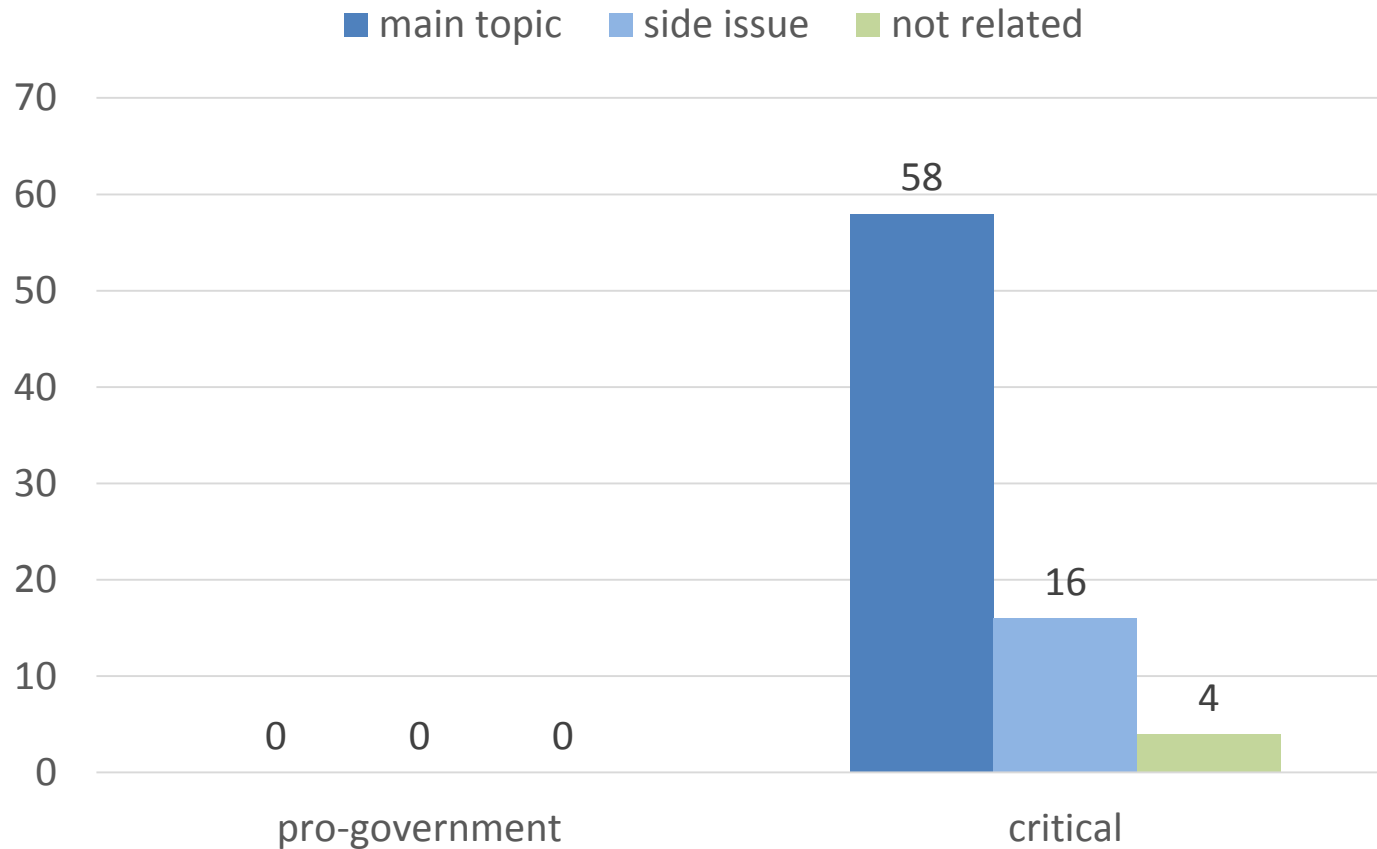
Intention of discrediting others, divided by orientation and topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



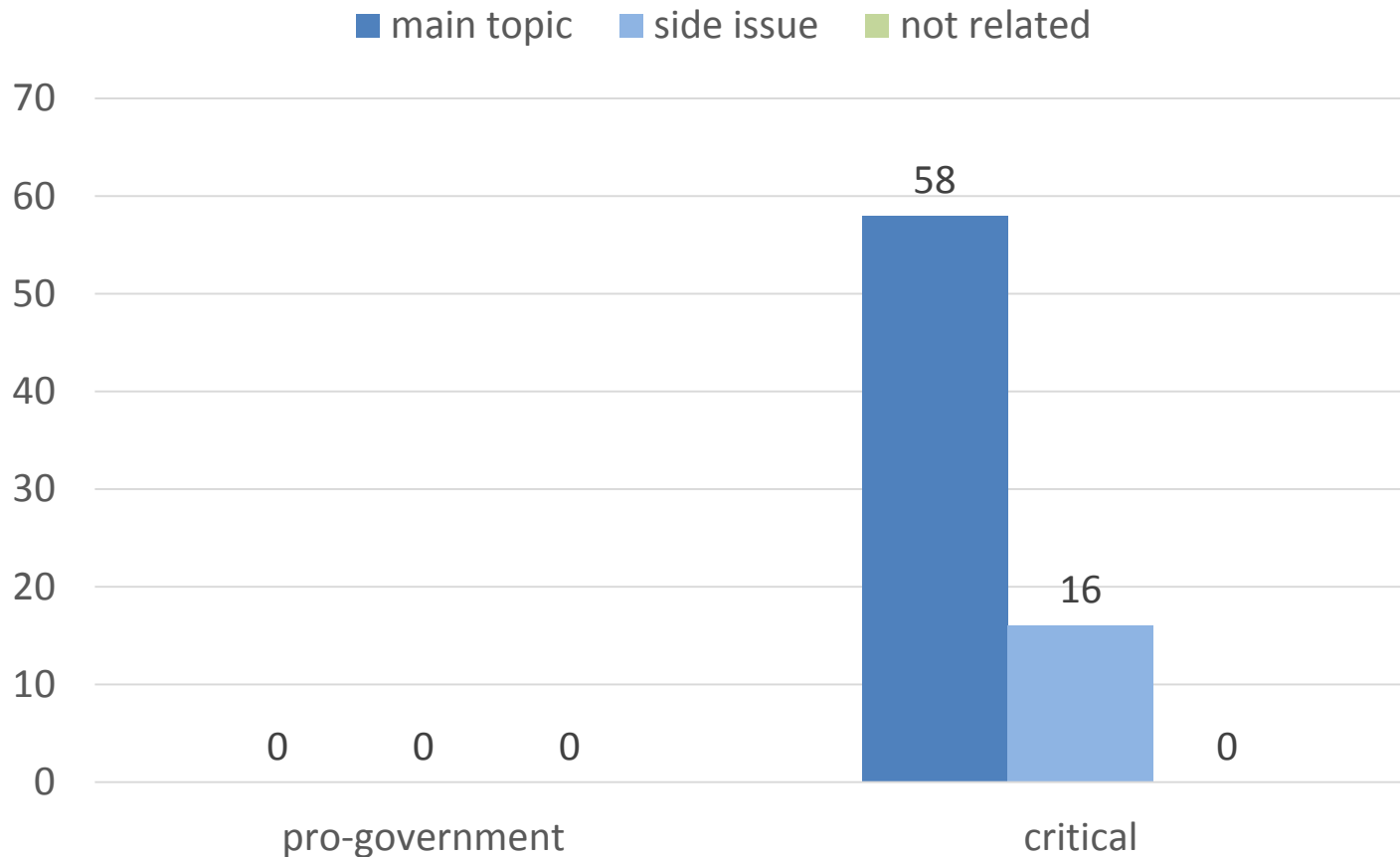
Intention of discrediting others, divided by media platforms and topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



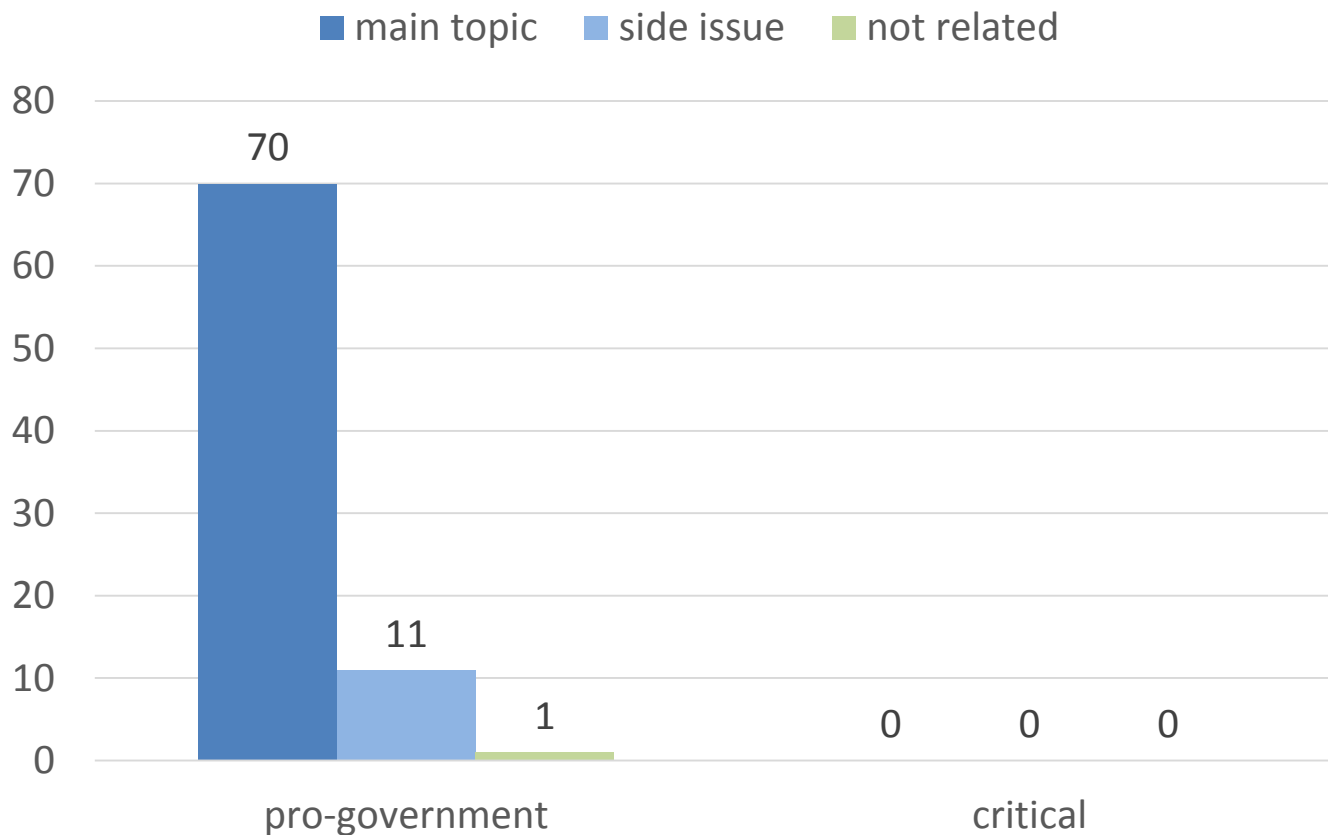
Critical of Orbán Viktor on the whole – divided by topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



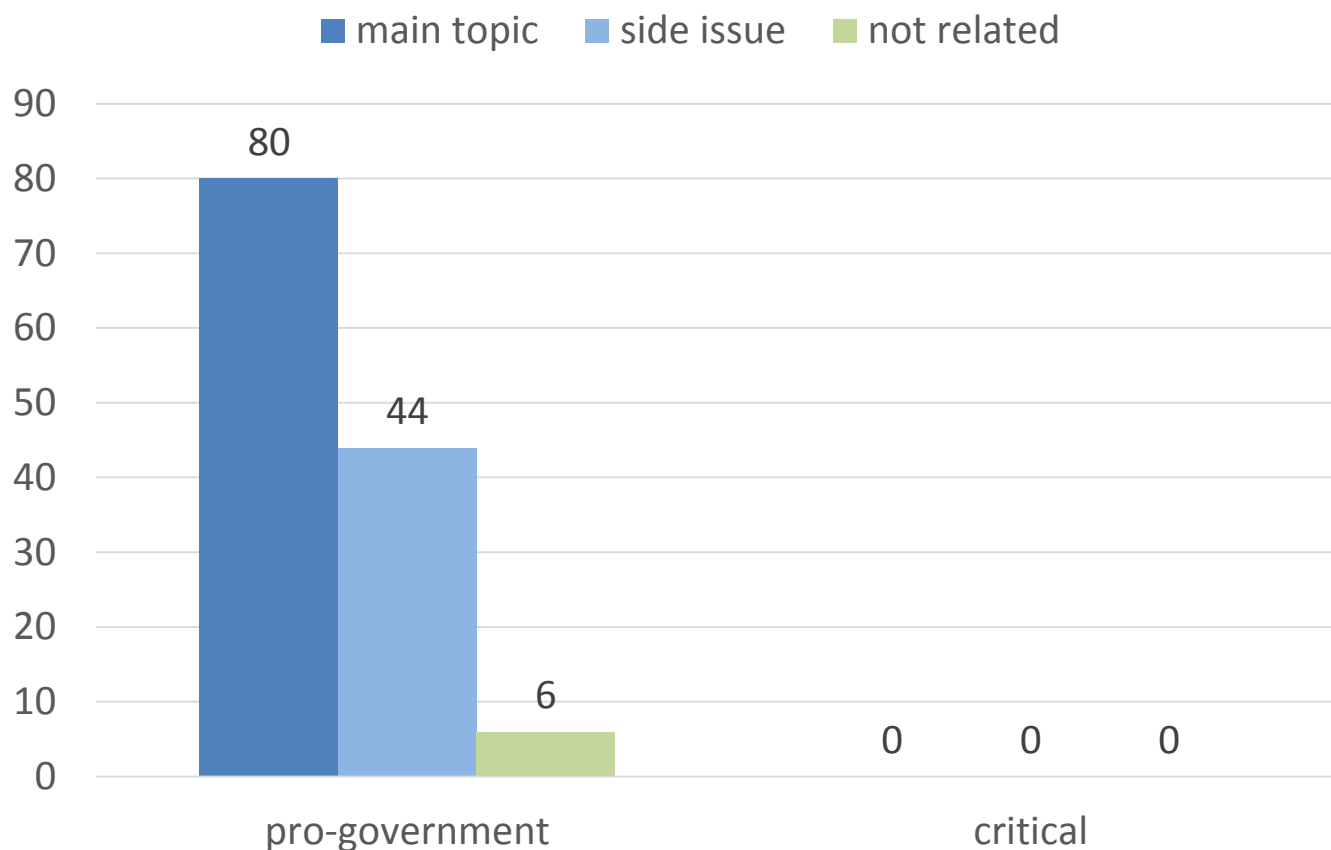
Critical of the situation in Hungary on the whole, divided by orientation and topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (%, N=314)



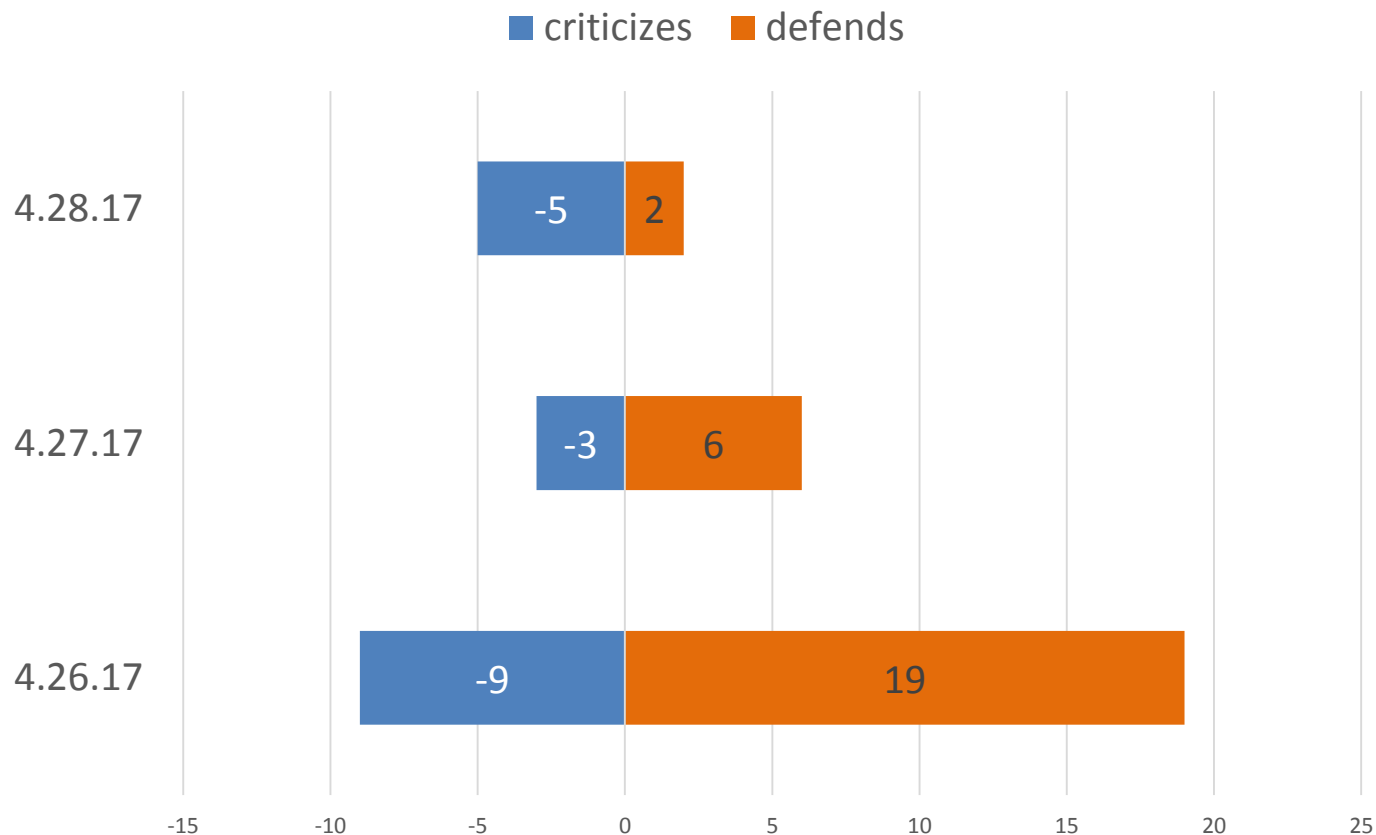
Defends Viktor Orbán on the whole, divided by orientation and topics in Hungary-related public affairs news (%, N=314)



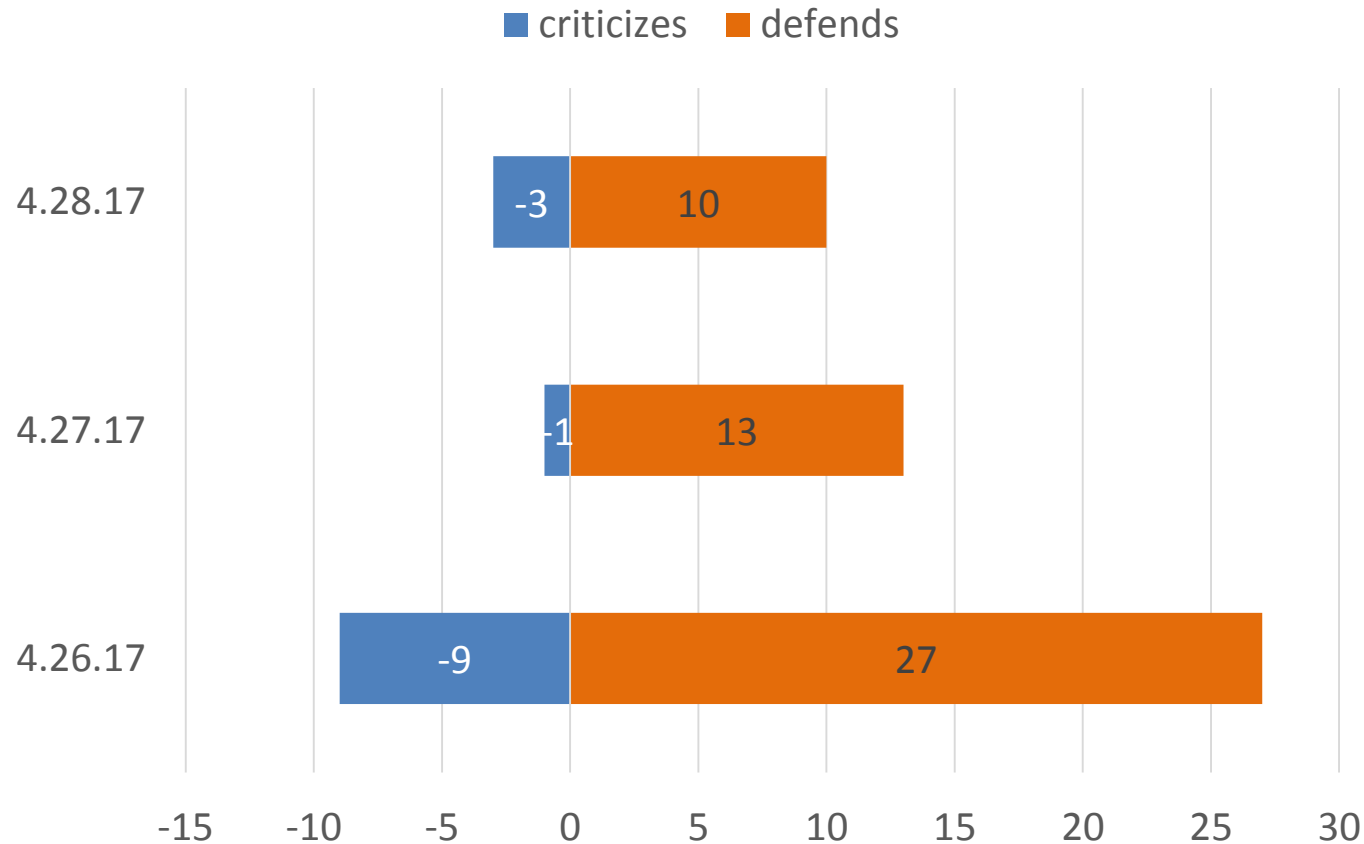
Defends the situation in Hungary on the whole, divided by orientation in Hungary-related public affairs news (% , N=314)



Defends or criticizes Viktor Orbán on the whole – number of articles per day



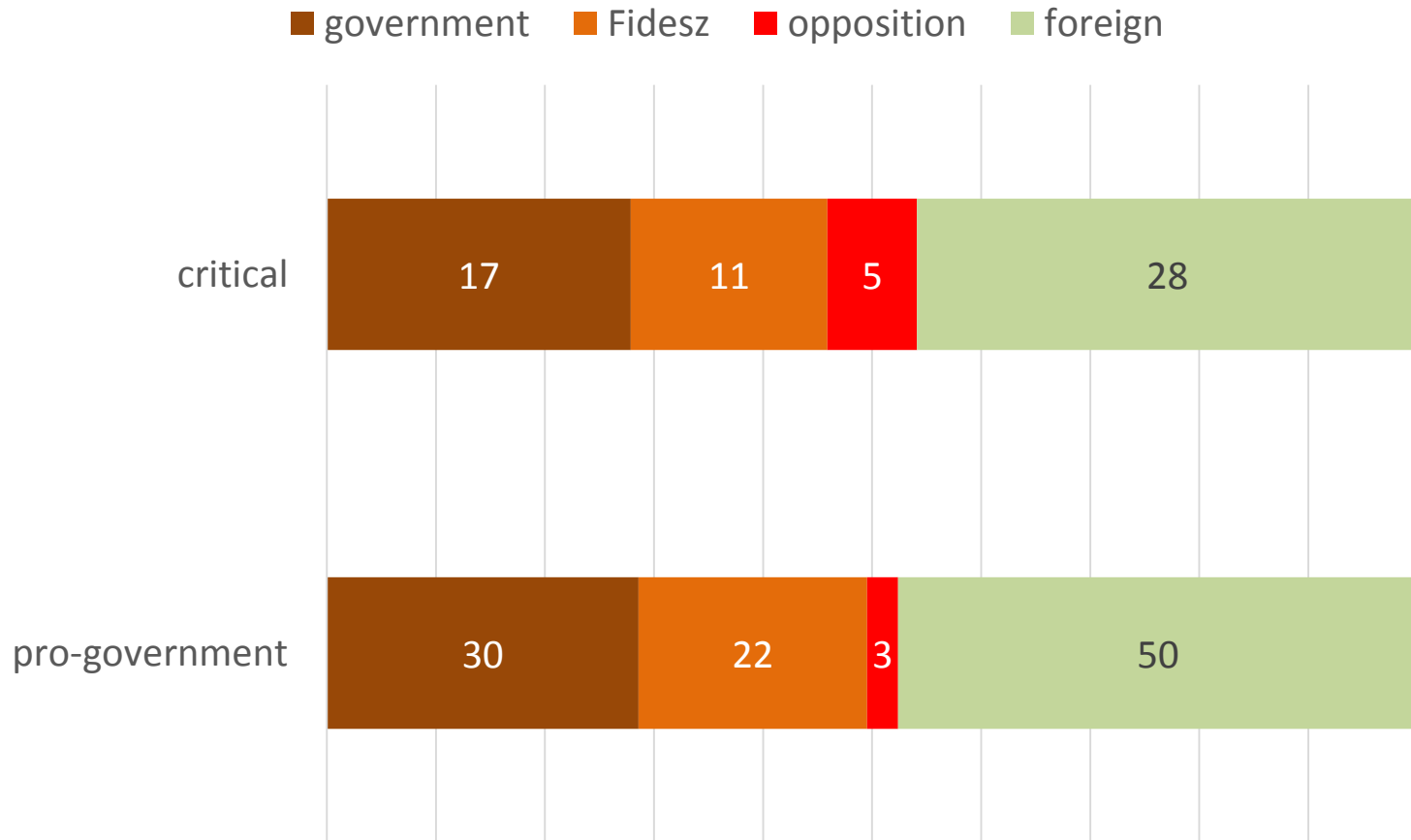
Defends or criticizes the situation in Hungary on the whole – number of articles per day



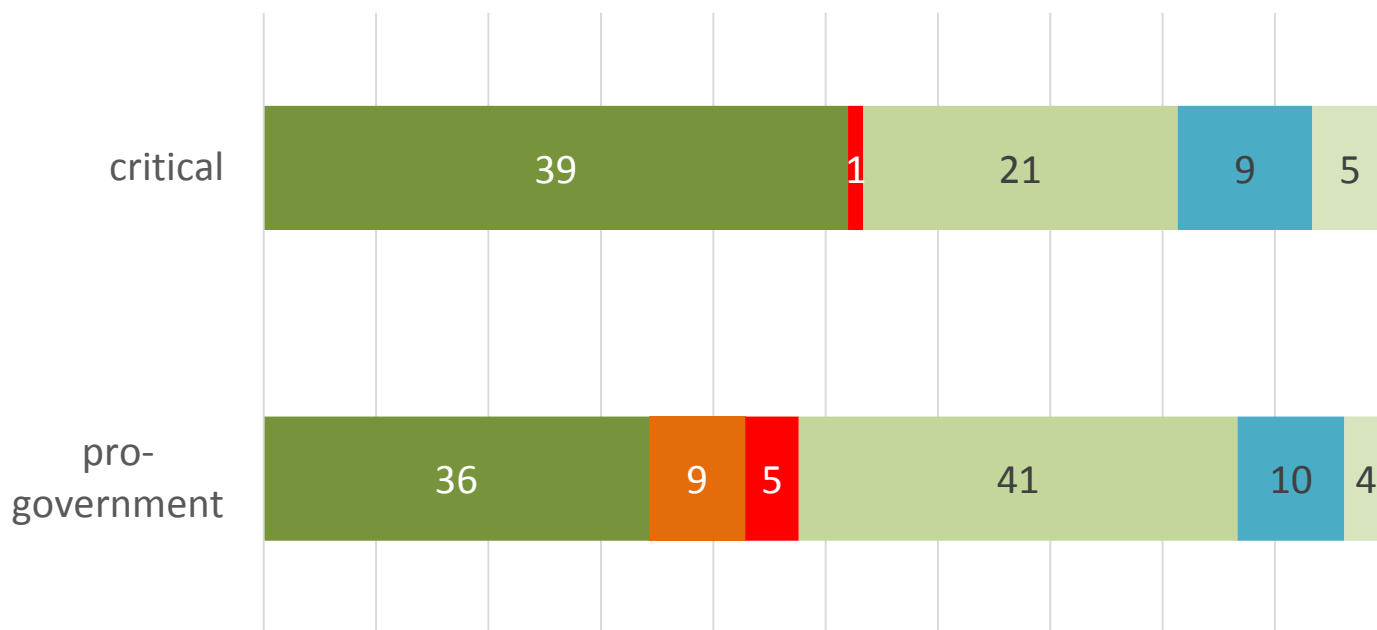
Actors of the press coverage of the debate *(quoted in at least 4 articles)*

Name	Appearance
Viktor Orbán	34
Frans Timmermans	7
Guy Verhofstadt	7
Manfred Weber	7
Beatrix von Storch	4
László Csizmadia	4
Gergely Gulyás	4
János Halász	4
János Lázár	4
Matteo Salvini	4
Nigel Farage	4
Zdzisław Krasnodebski	4

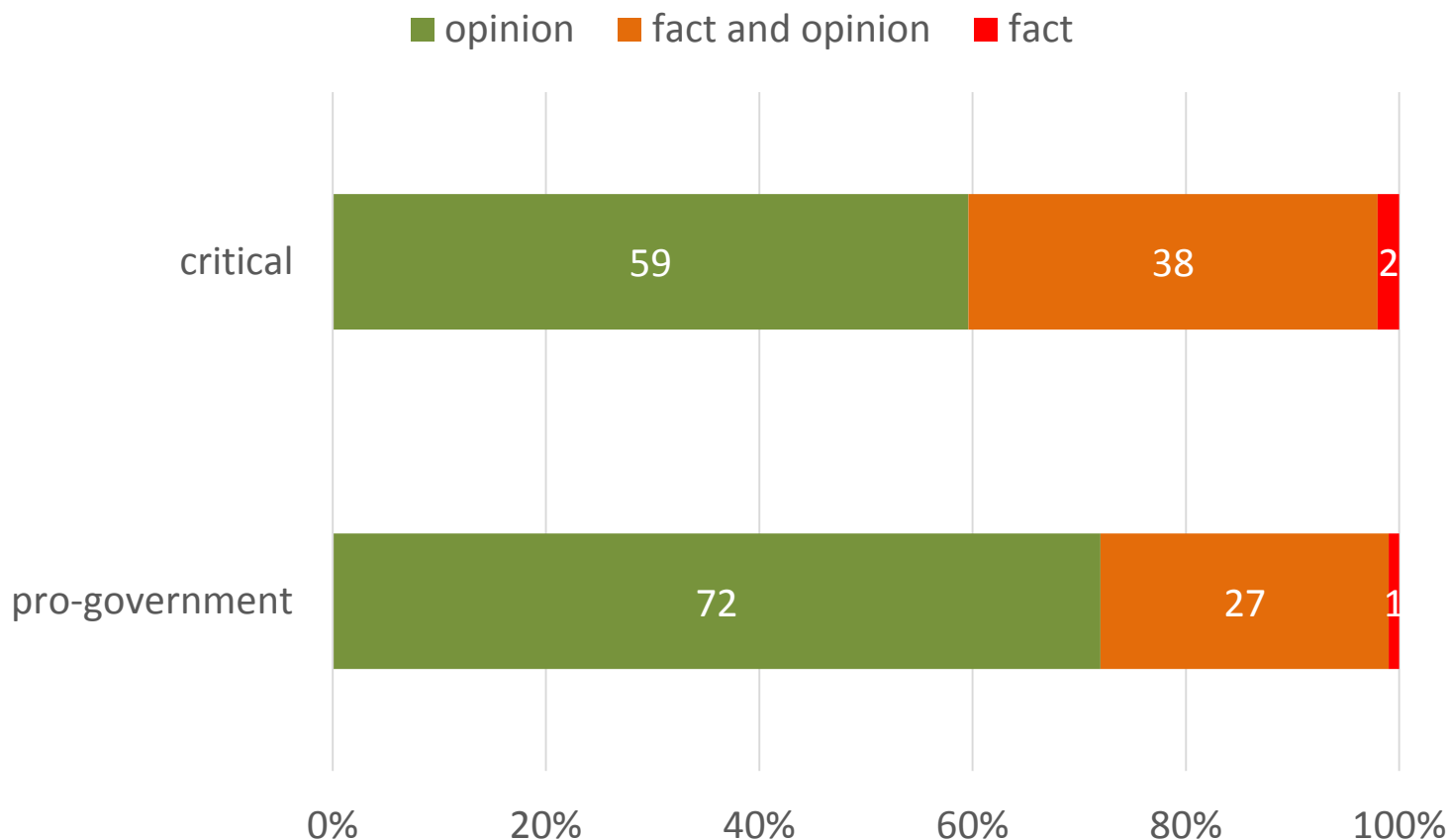
Political orientation of politicians in articles relating to the debate, divided by the orientation of platforms (piece)



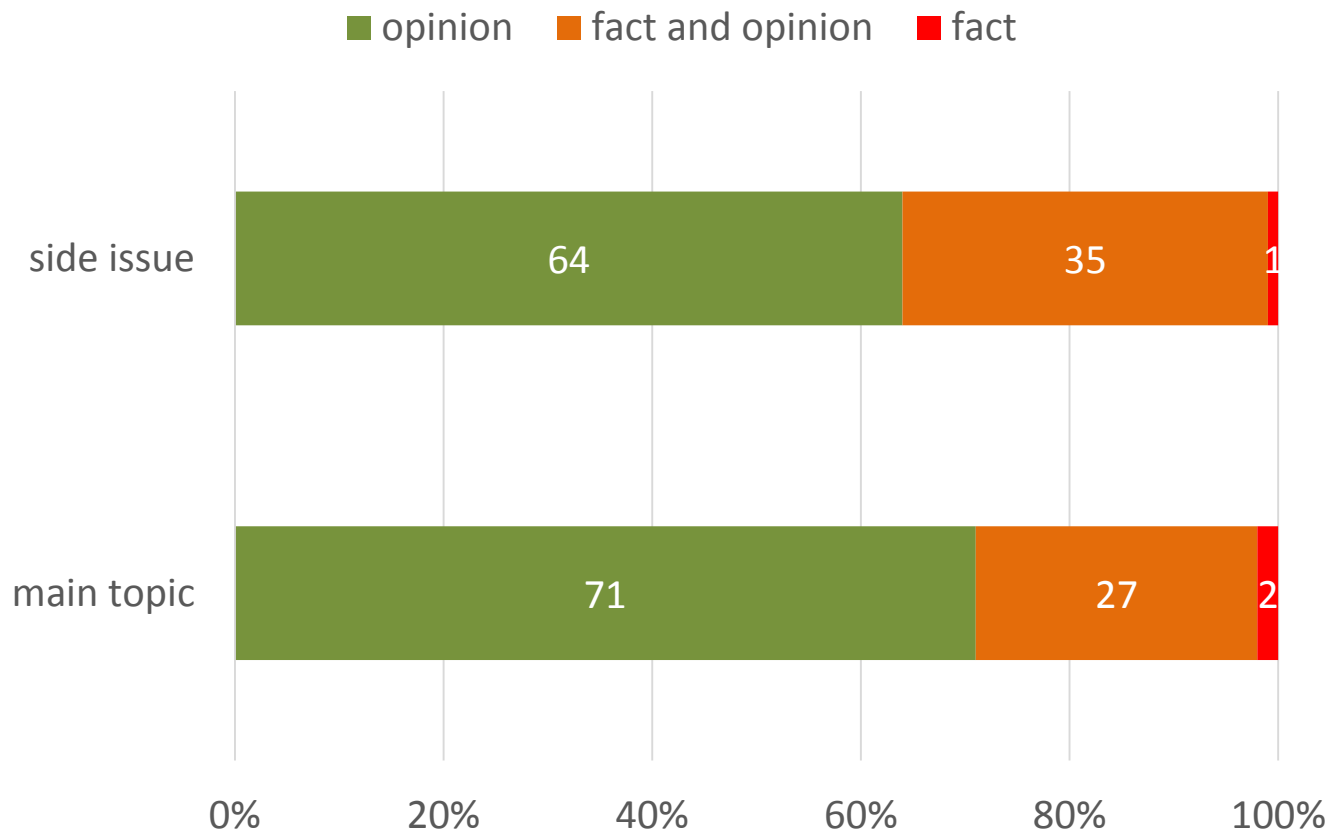
The function of politicians appearing in the articles related to the debate, divided by the orientation of platforms (piece)



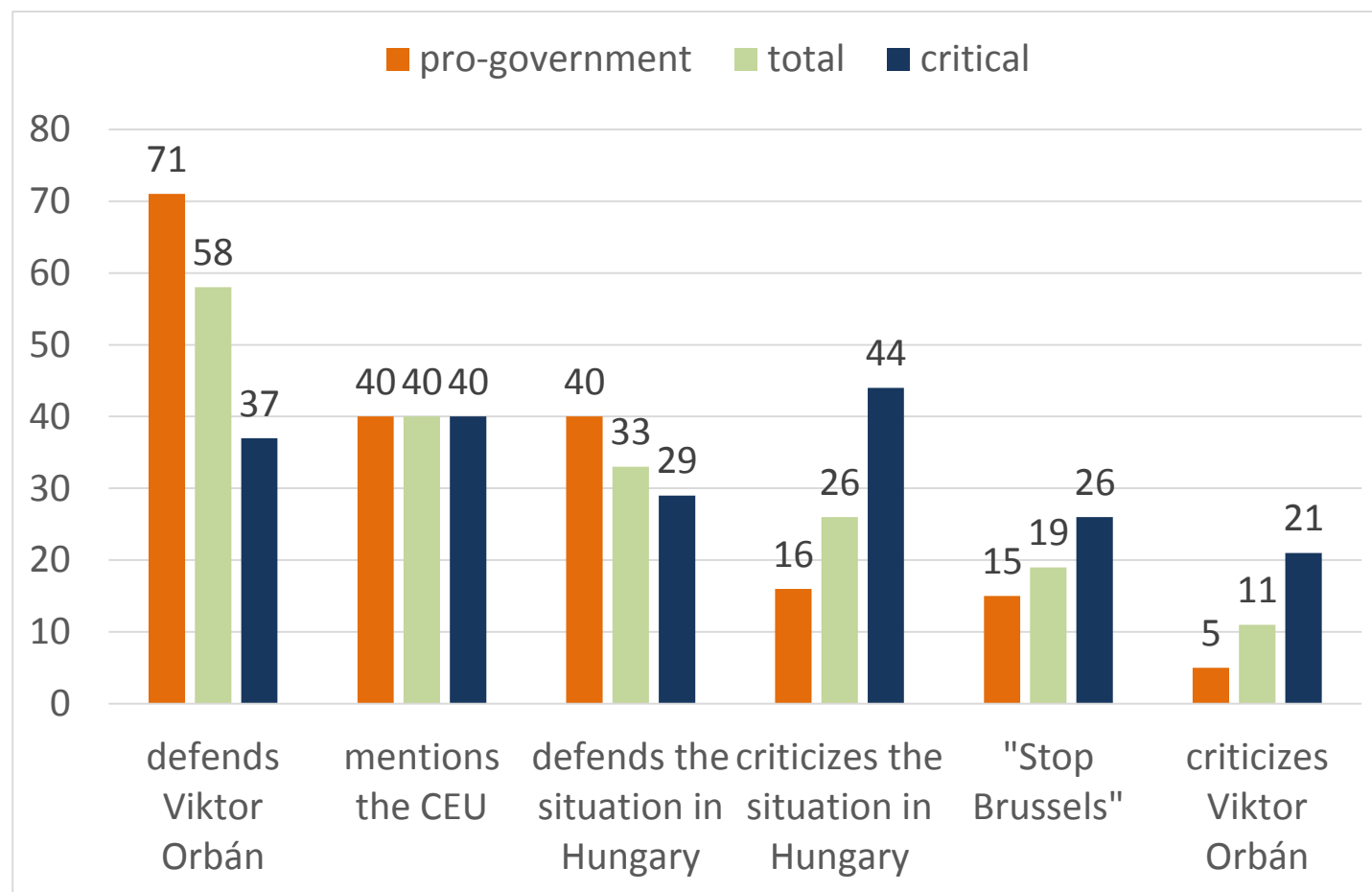
Facts vs opinions among the actors in the articles related to the debate (%)



Facts vs opinions among the actors in the articles related to the debate (%)



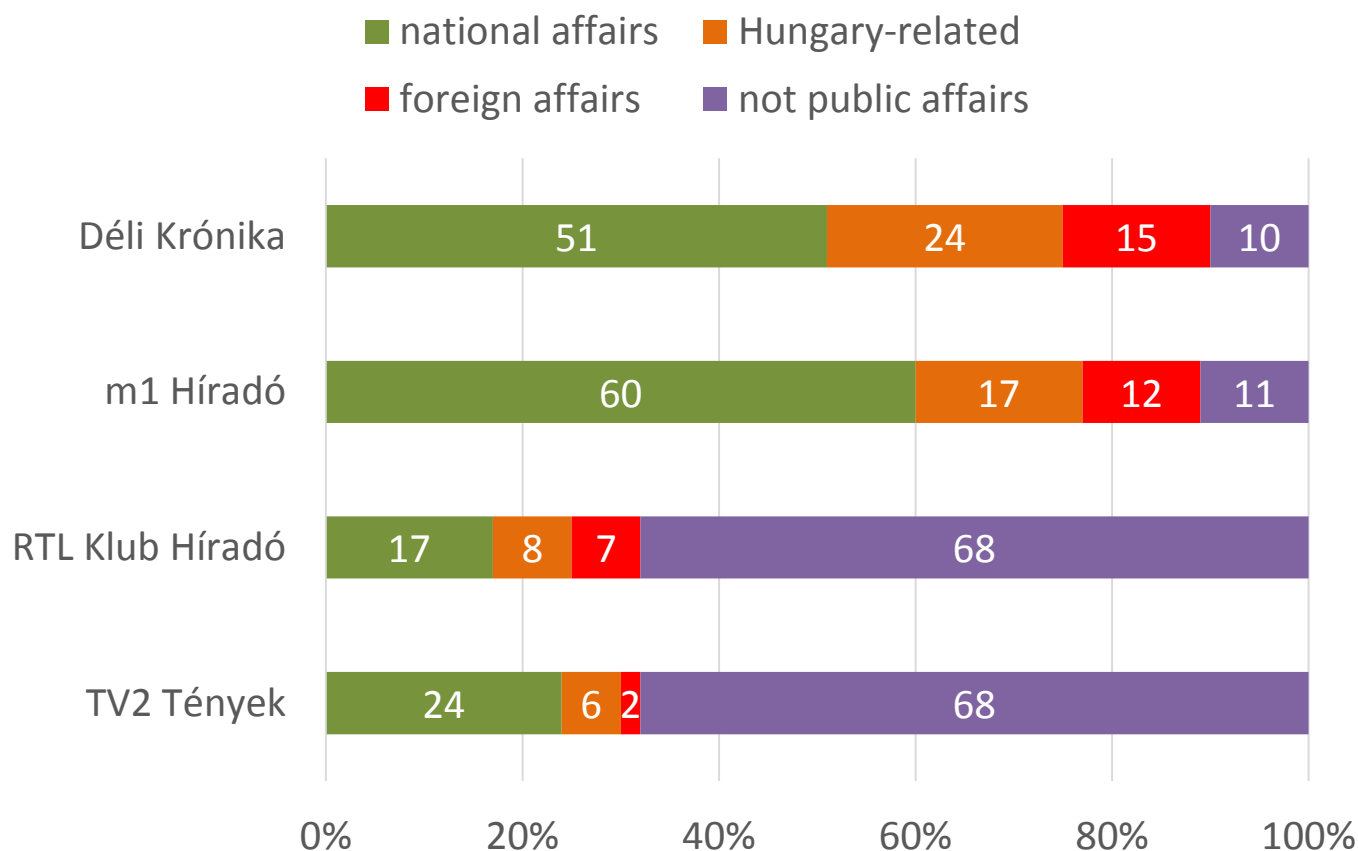
Substantial elements among the actors, divided by the percentage of articles related to the debate



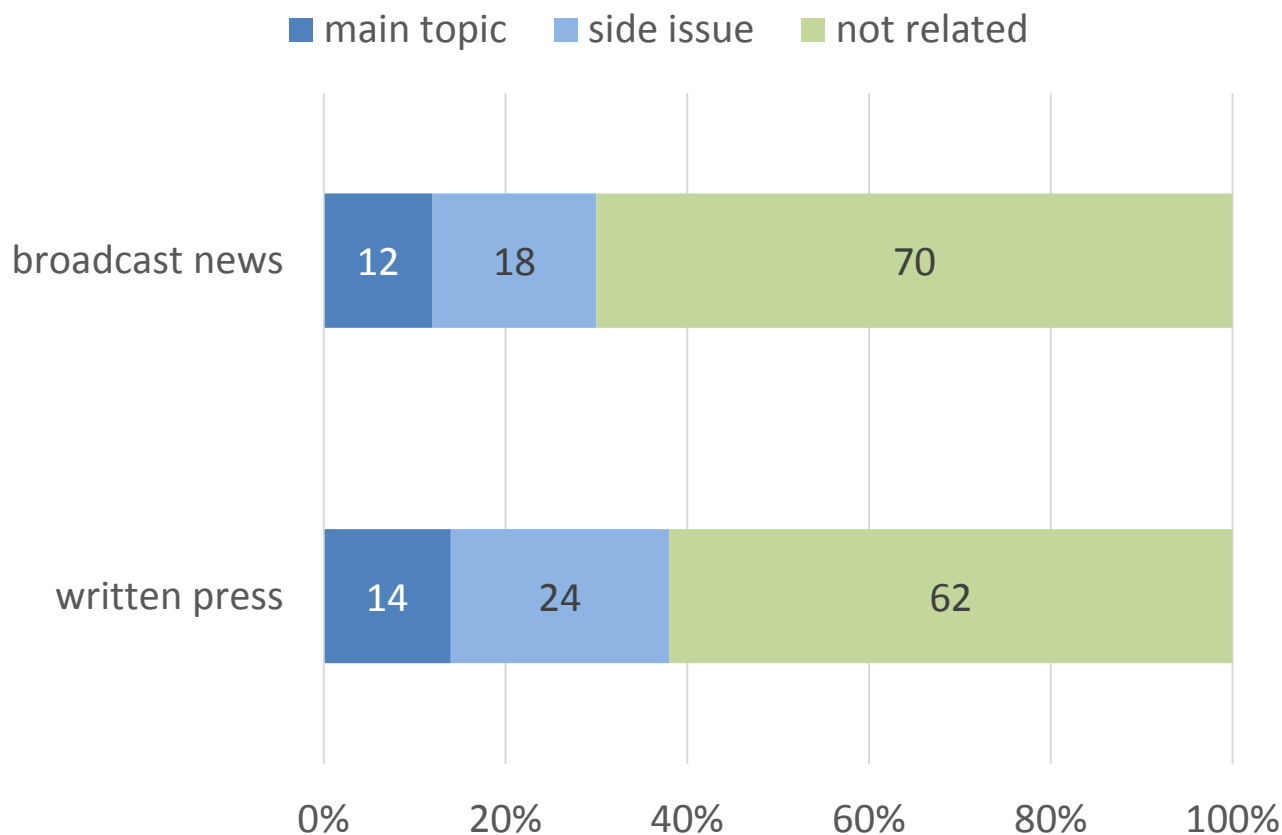
II. Broadcast news sources

- Broadcast media is represented in our research by the early-evening newscasts of the public service television channel M1, the two commercial television channels (TV2, RTL Klub), and the public media radio channel's midday news programme (*Déli Krónika*)
- In the case of broadcast media, we considered completely divided news as individual cases. There were 281 individual news pieces in total on the four channels we monitored during the three days.
- 52% of these news (142 pieces) did not concern issues of public life or related to foreign affairs topics that had no Hungarian relevance. In the third of these news, the topic related to Hungarian public affairs, but did not even refer to the debate of the European Parliament. There were 17 news in total (6%) that dealt with the debate as the main topic and an additional 24 news pieces (9%) dealt with it as a side issue.

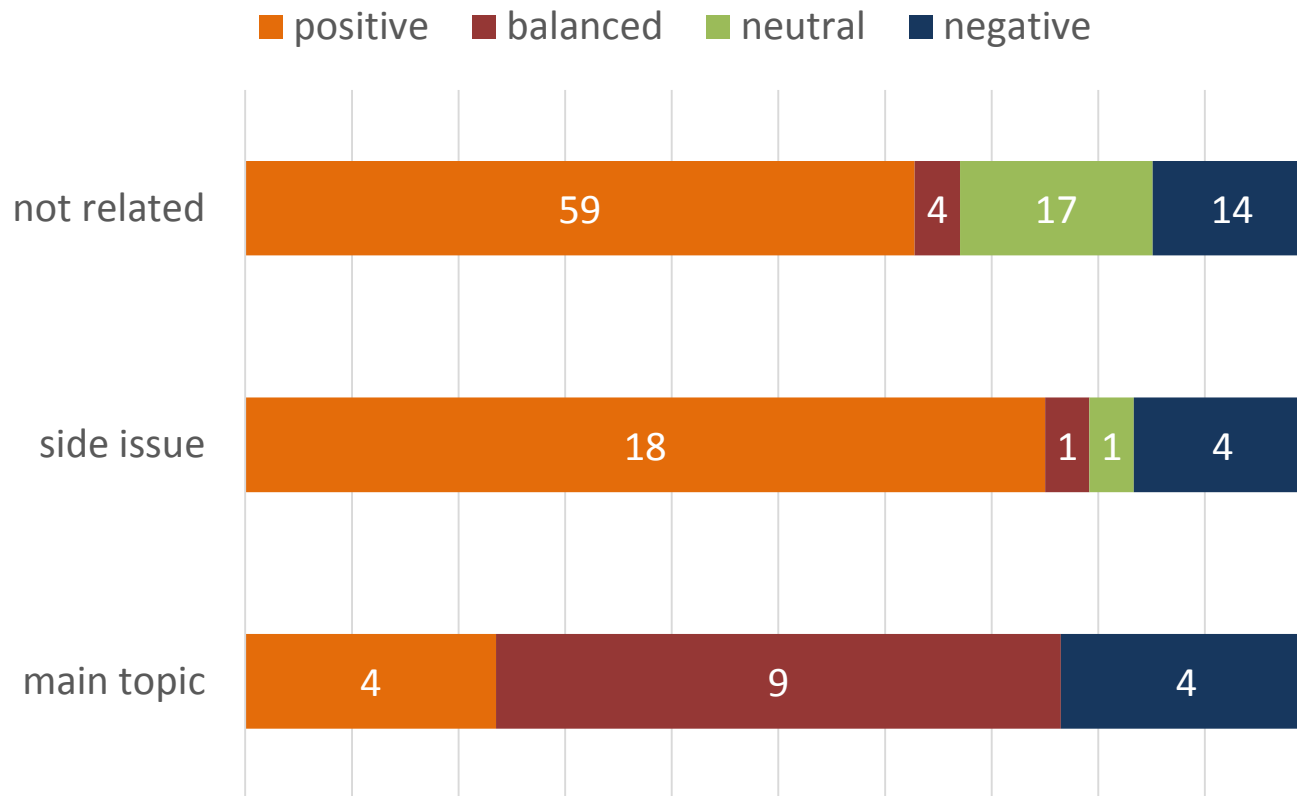
Types of news on broadcast channels (% , N=218)



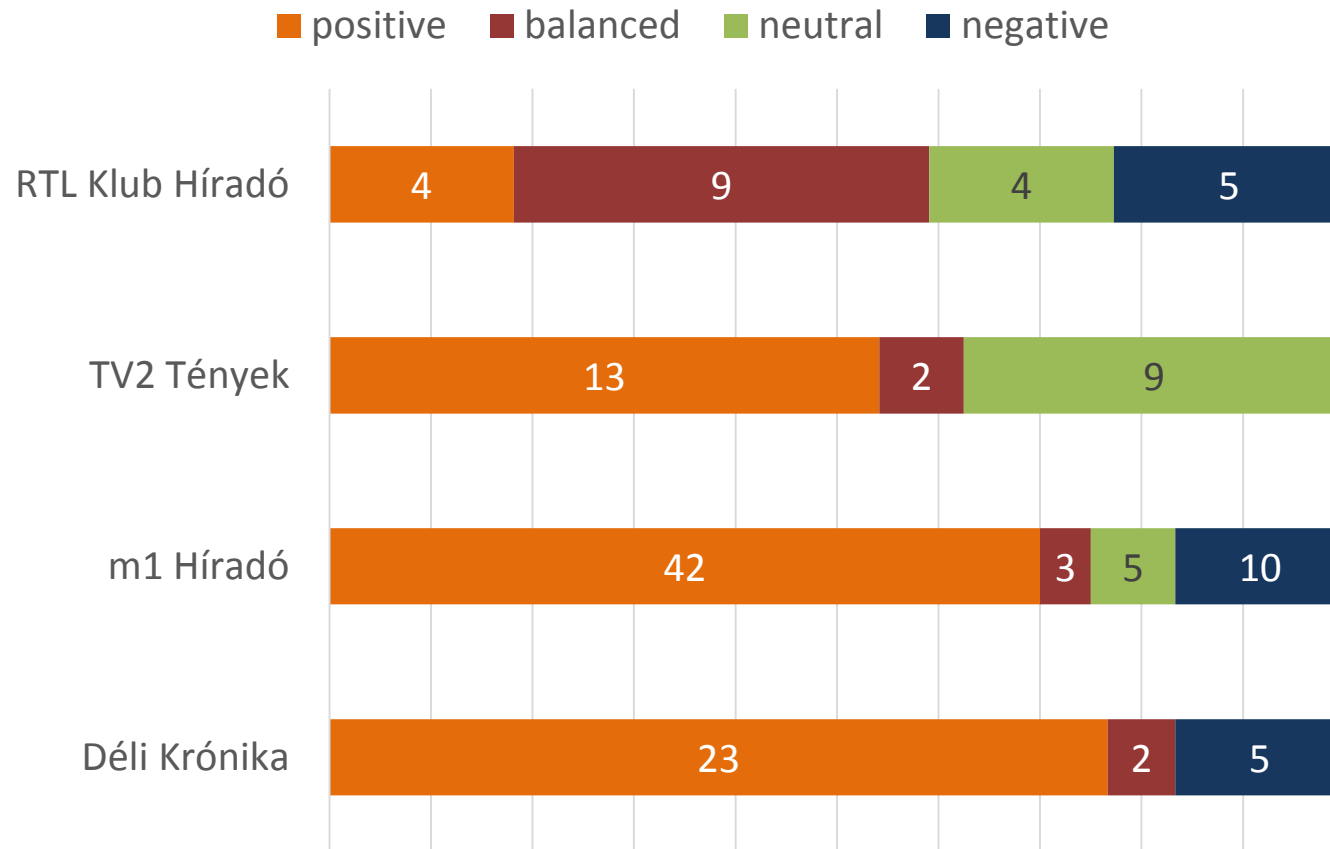
The perceptibility of the EP debate on Hungary in Hungary-related public affairs news (%)



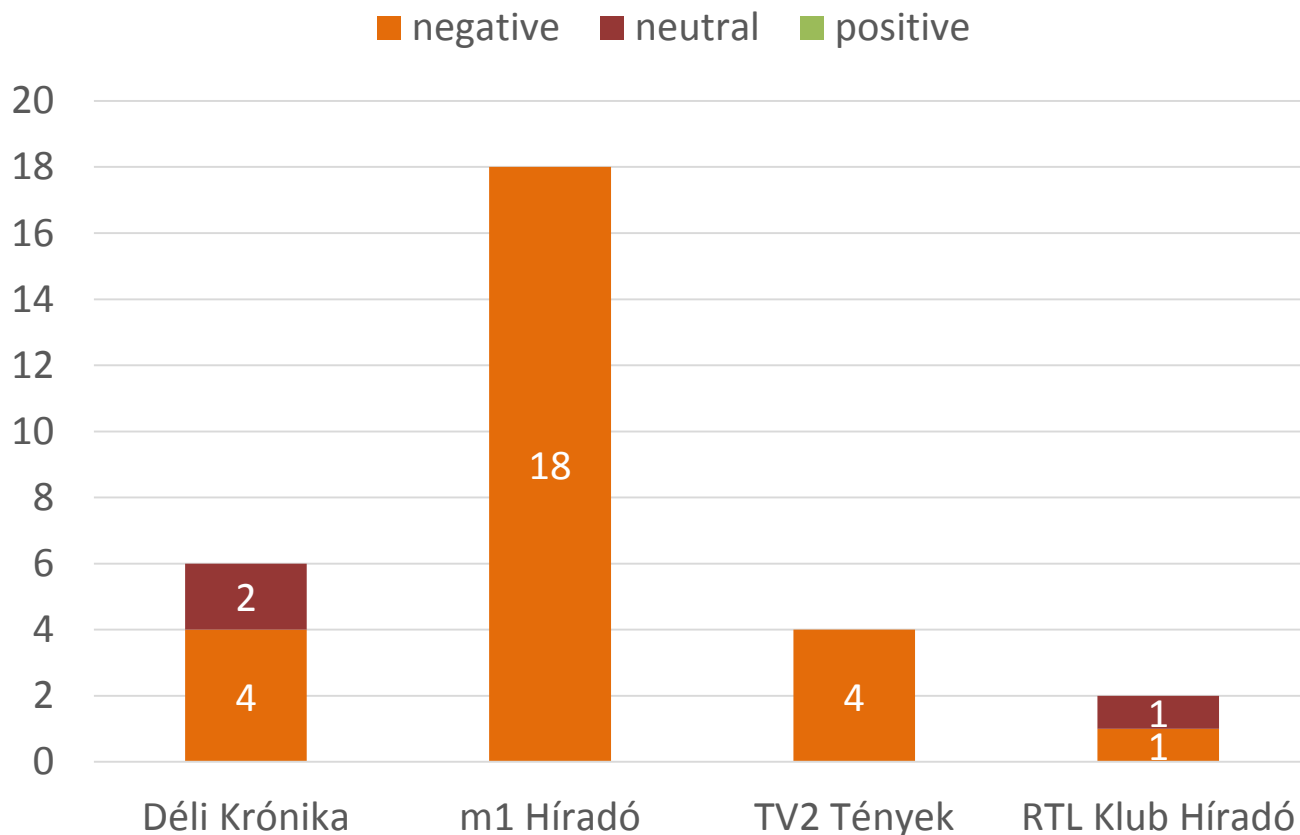
News of positive, balanced, neutral, and negative tone from the government's perspective in Hungary-related public affairs news (piece)



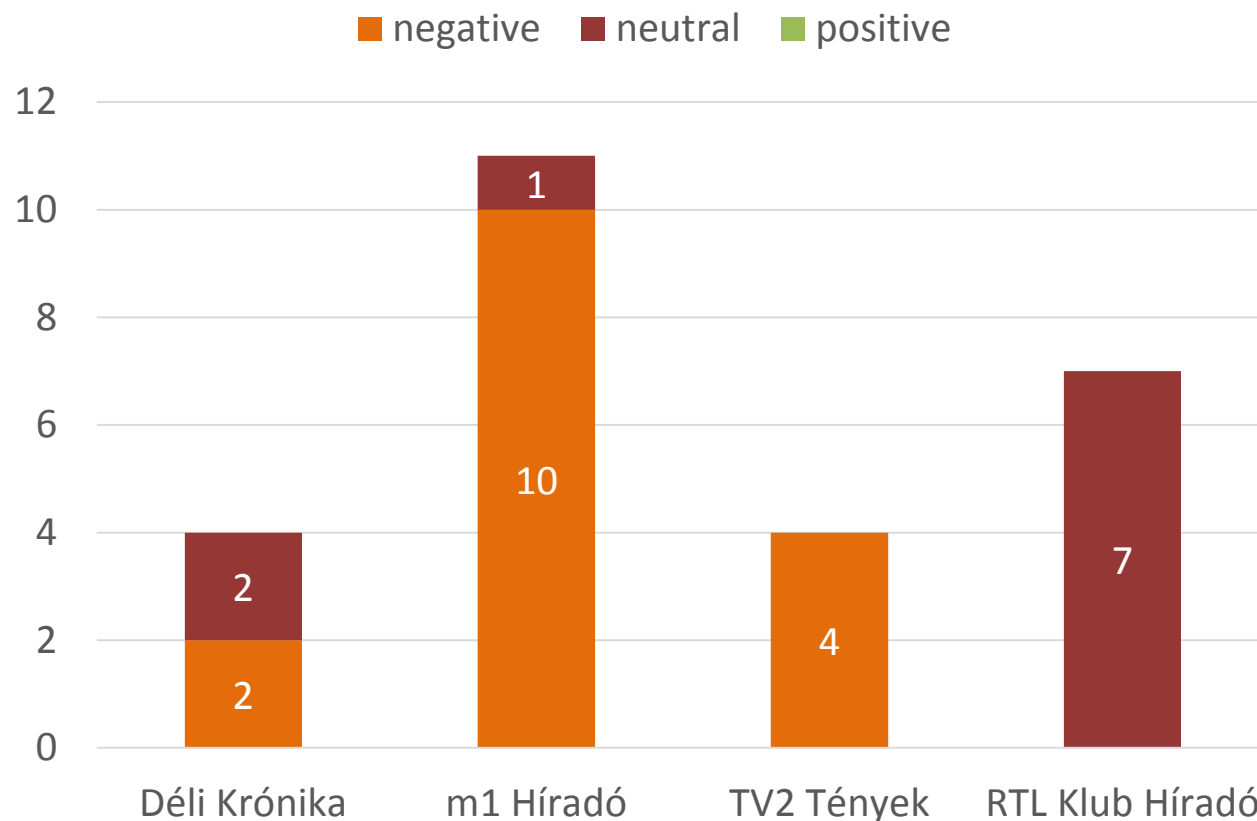
News of positive, balanced, neutral, and negative tone from the government's perspective in Hungary-related public affairs news (piece)



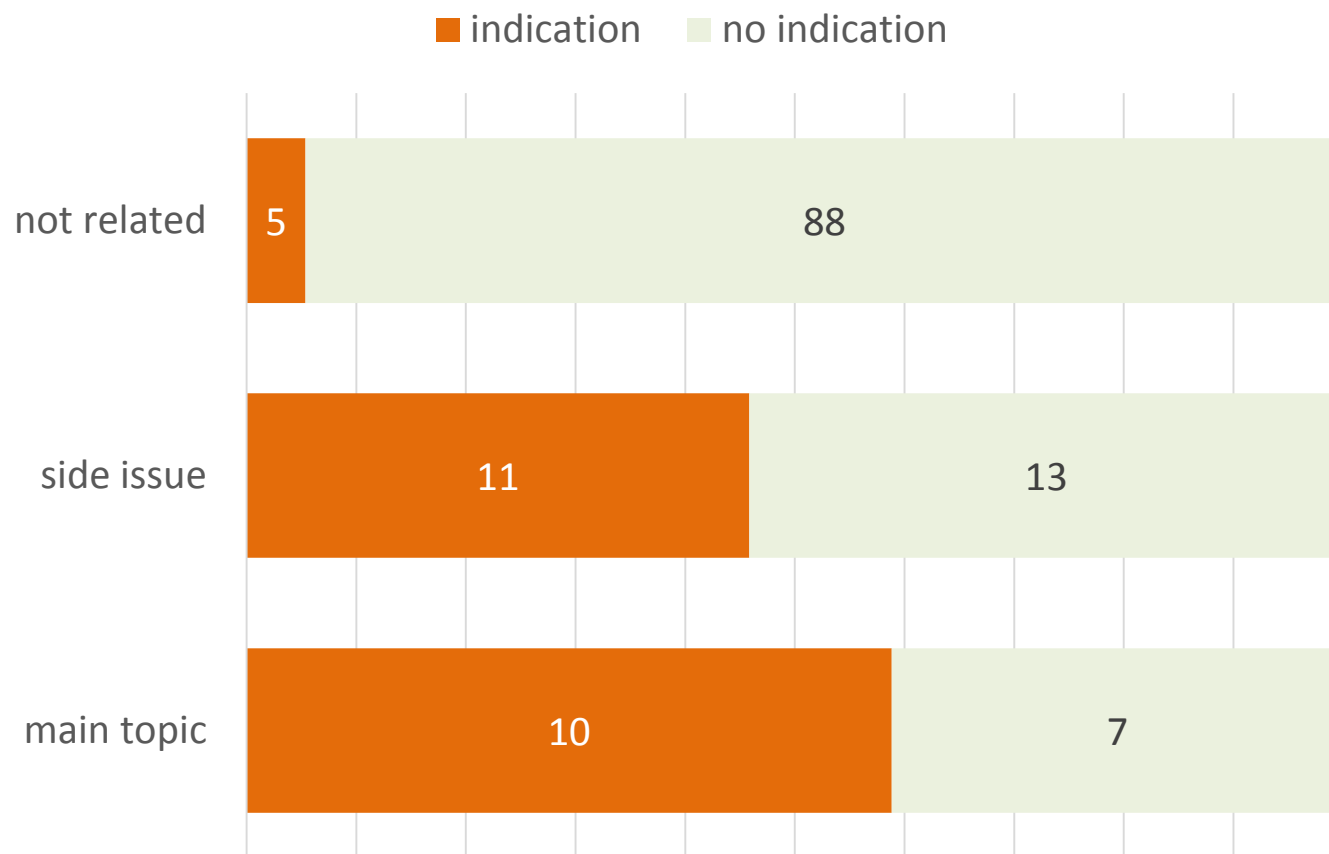
Mentions of migrants in the Hungary-related public affairs news pieces of broadcast news



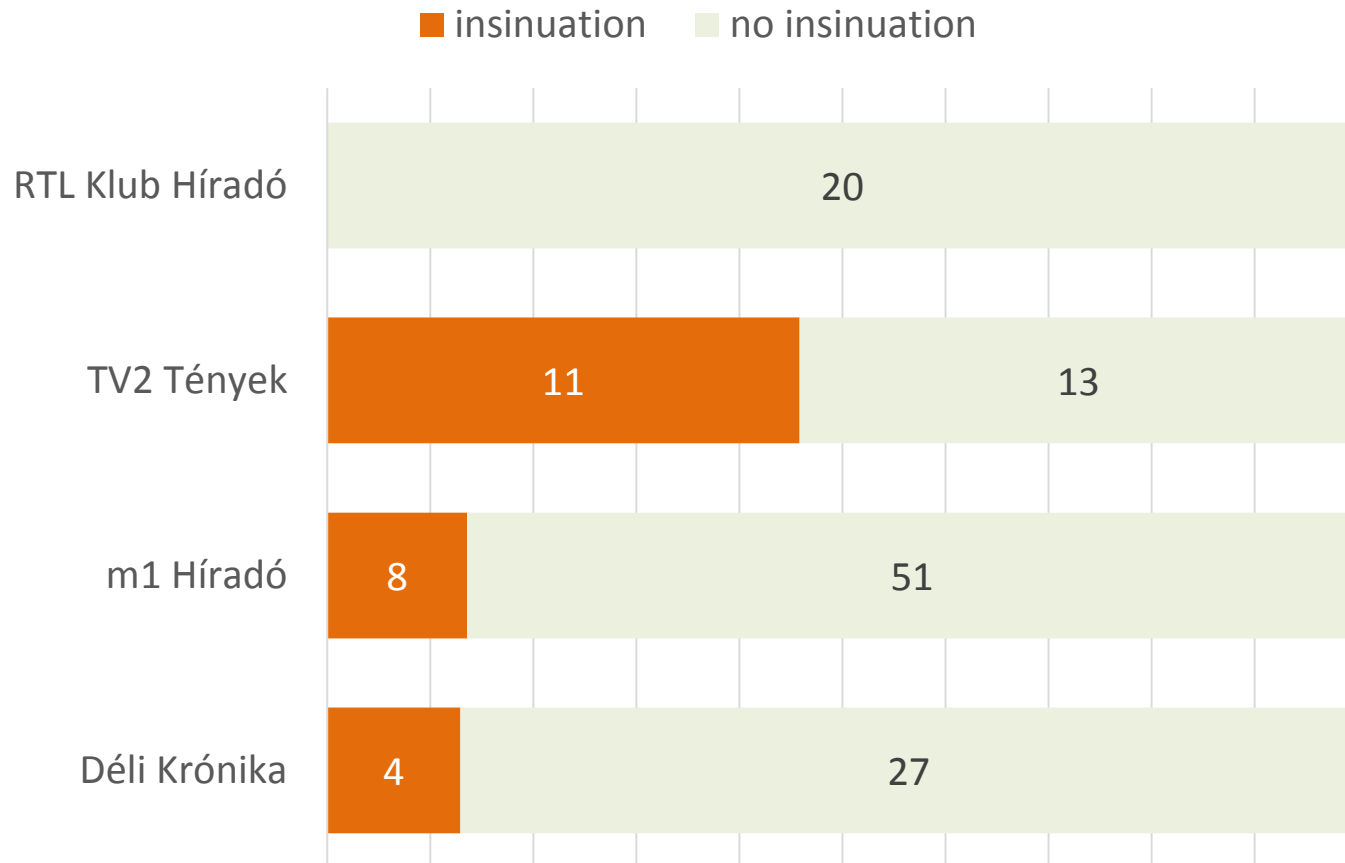
The representation of the EU in the Hungary-related public affairs news pieces of broadcast news (piece)



Defensive, supporting indications to the situation in Hungary in the Hungary-related public affairs news pieces of broadcast news – divided by relation (piece)



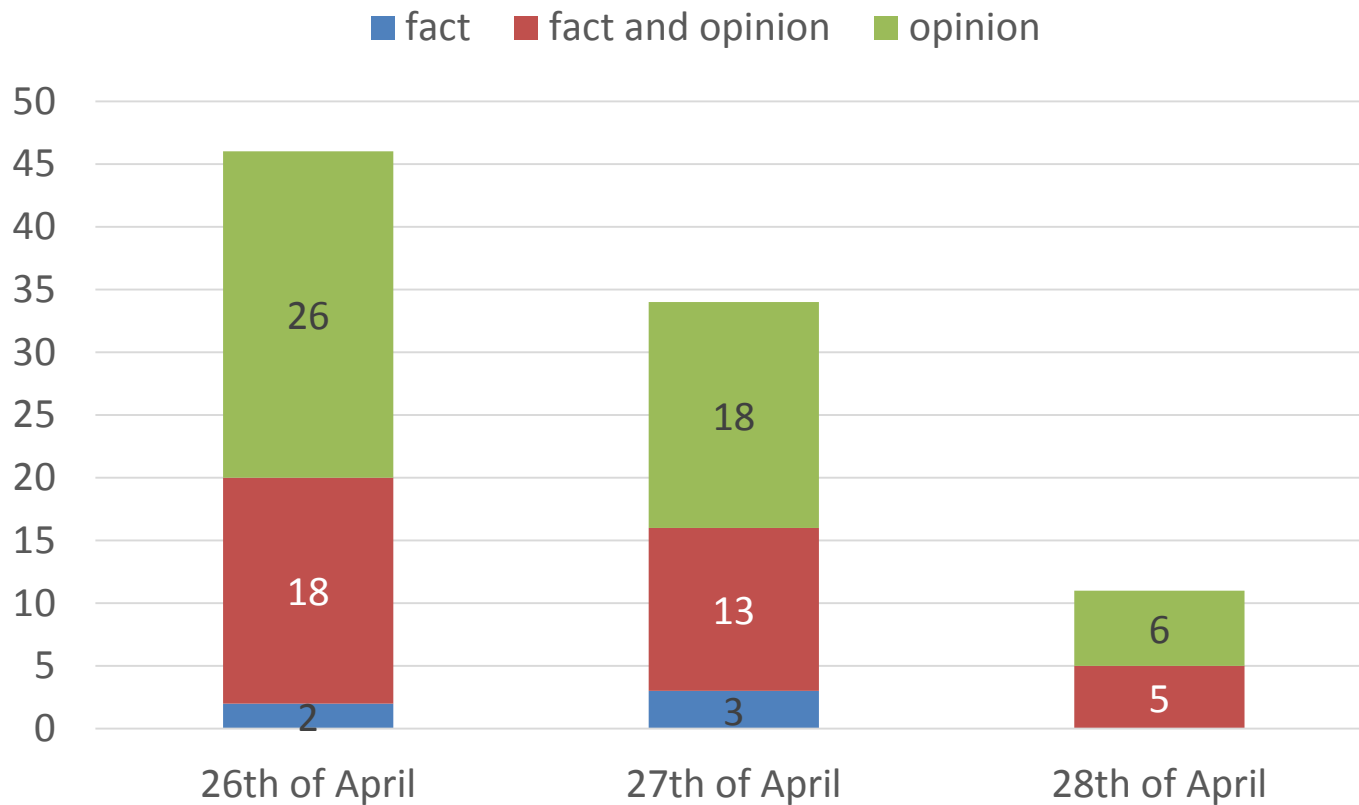
Implicit suggestion of the intention to discredit others in the Hungary-related public affairs news pieces of broadcast news – divided by channels (piece)



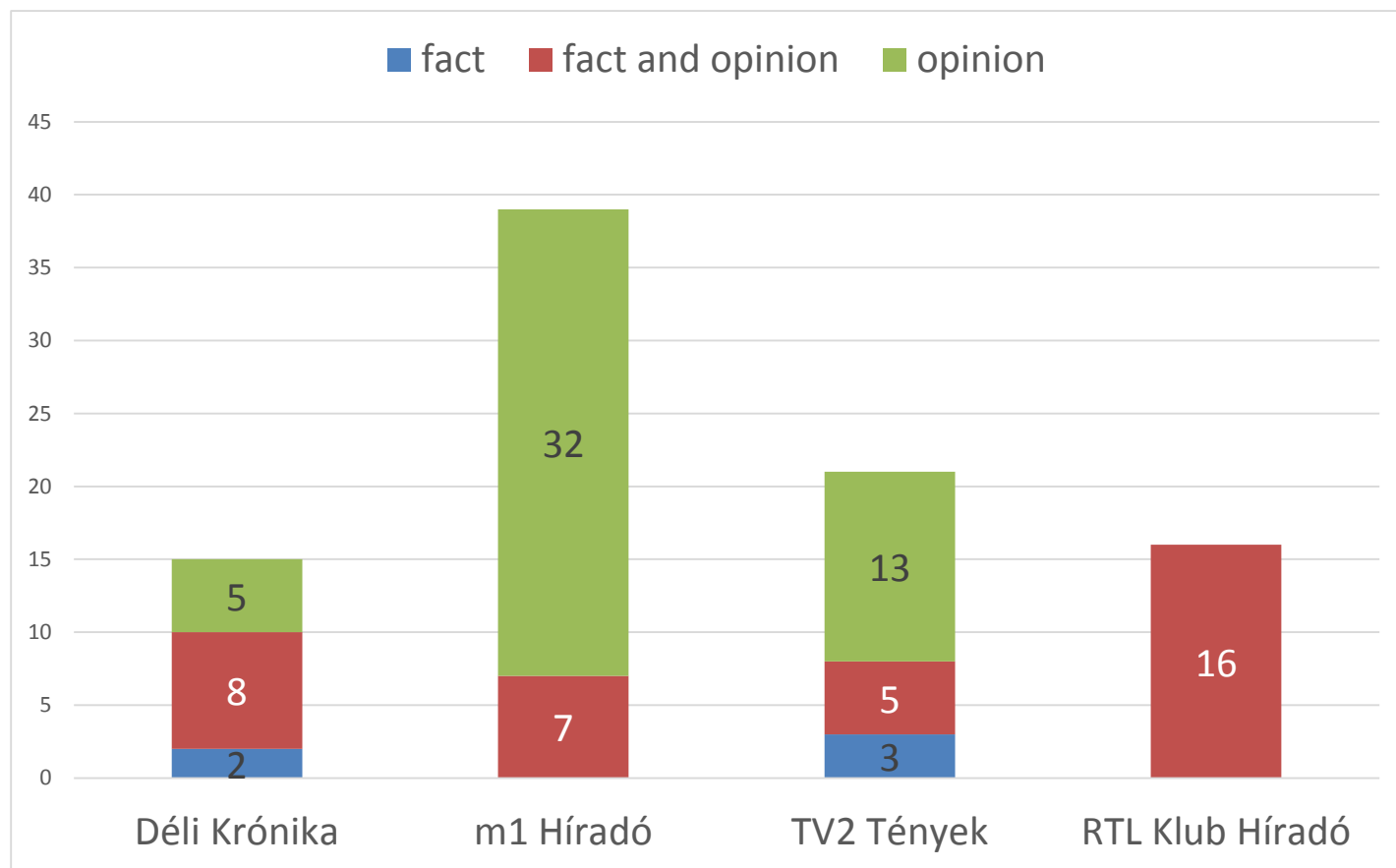
Central actors of relating news

Name	Number of news pieces	With own voice
Viktor Orbán	16	376 mp
László Csizmadia	4	66 mp
János Halász	3	42 mp
Frans Timmermans	5	35 mp
Tamás Lánczi	2	26 mp
Gianni Pittella	3	25 mp
Manfred Weber	4	24 mp
János Lázár	3	23 mp
Matteo Salvini	2	19 mp
Péter Szijjártó	2	15 mp
Károly Konrád	4	12 mp
Gergely Gulyás	2	11 mp
Szilárd Németh	2	8 mp
Zdzislaw Krasnodebski	3	
Margaritis Schinas	2	

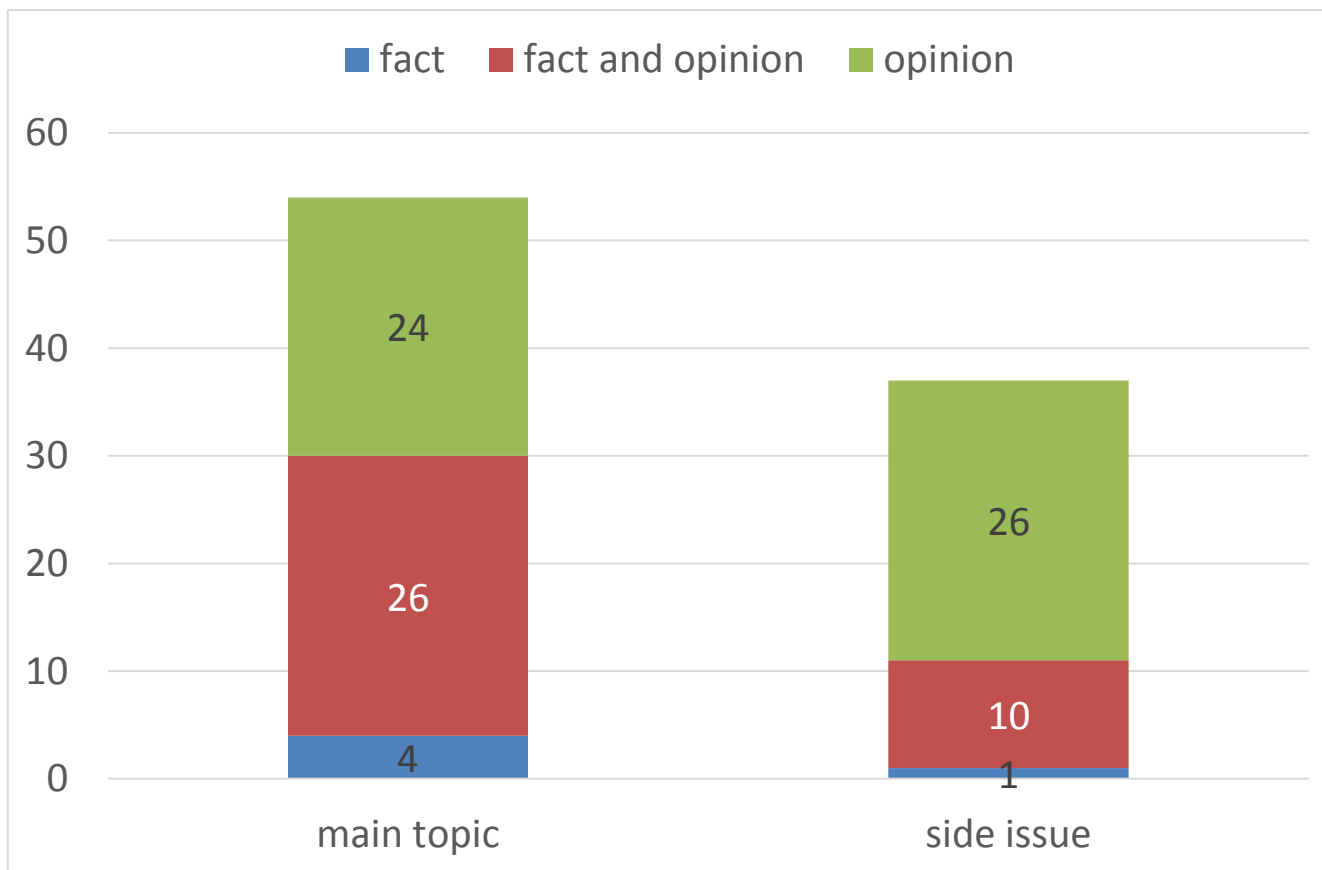
Facts vs opinions in appearances – divided by days (piece)



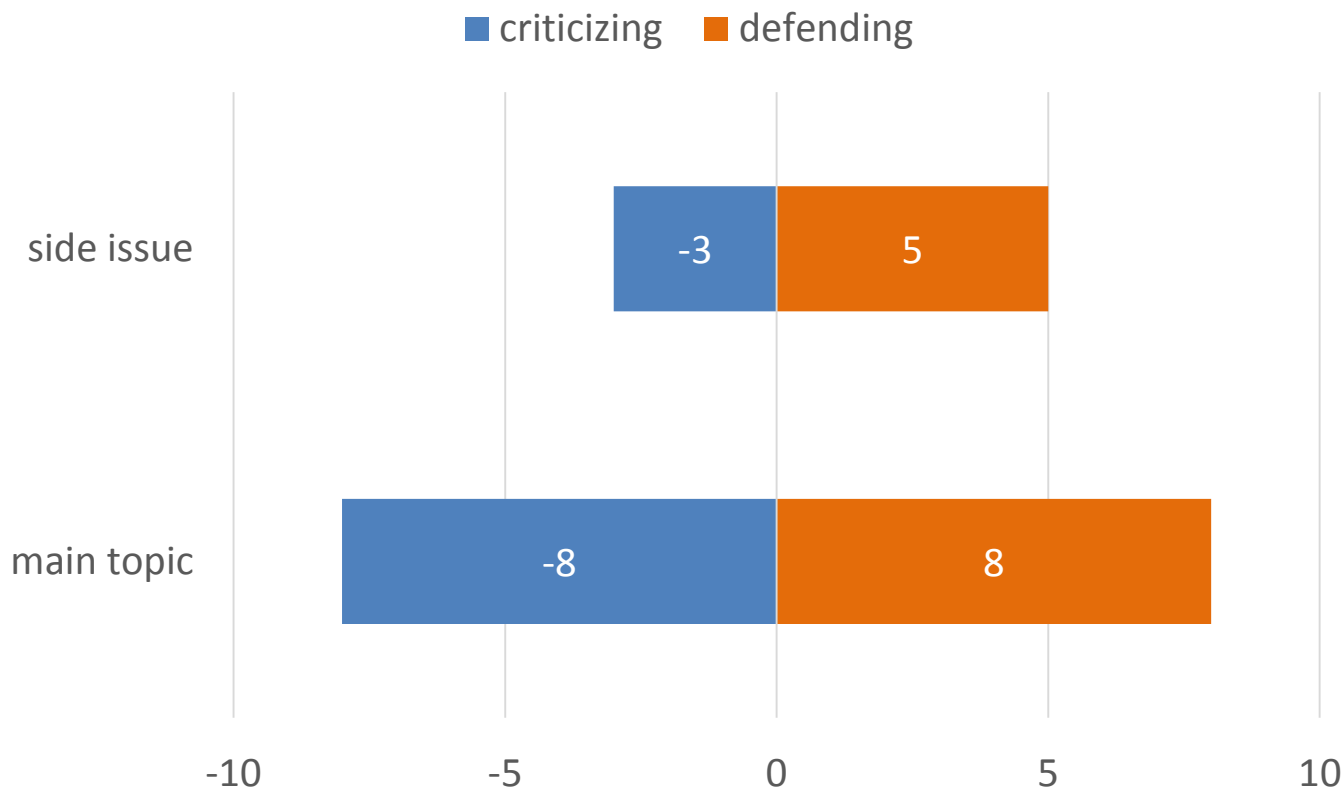
Facts vs. opinions in appearances – divided by news programmes (piece)



Facts vs. opinions in appearances – divided by relation (piece)



Number of news pieces containing actors criticizing or supporting Viktor Orbán – divided by relation (piece)



Number of news containing an actor or more criticizing or defending the situation in Hungary – divided by relation (piece)

