

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3099-5806>

Maciej Hartliński¹

University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn

Inter-Party Divisions and the Effectiveness of Political Parties' Appeals in Nationwide Referendums in Poland between 1996 and 2023

Abstract: This paper, based on a quantitative and qualitative approach, examines and compares the attitudes of political parties and their electorates in six national referendums held in Poland in the years 1996–2023. Multidimensional models of inter-party divisions with regard to participation in referendums and responses to individual referendum questions were proposed and applied. Trends in the positions and declarations of individual political parties, as well as declarations made by their voters were analysed. Based on the results of the research, it can be said that political parties do not play a leading role in initiating nationwide referendums. In each referendum, inter-party divisions follow different patterns, but there is a correlation between the positions and declarations made by political parties and the voting tendencies of citizens.

Keywords: political parties, voters, nationwide referendum, direct democracy

Introduction

Theoretical and empirical research on the relationship between political parties and referendums encourages reflection, conclusions and the formulation of various concepts that contribute to the development of different political theories on inter-party divisions (Ladner, Brändle, 1999; Sinnott, 2002; Uleri, 2002;

¹ Maciej Hartliński – Associate Professor at Institute of Political Science, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. He is the author of several books, chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals on party politics, political leaders and party leadership in post-communist countries. E-mail: maciej.hartlinski@uwm.edu.pl.

Crum, 2007; Shu, 2009). First and foremost, it contributes to reflection on contemporary politics and its various dimensions, especially in the context of direct democracy.

Political parties use referenda for their individual interests (Gherghina, 2019a; Vospernik, 2020), as evidenced by the case of Poland (Kuźelewska, 2003; Jasiewicz, 2004; Hartliński, 2015; 2019; Marszałek-Kawa, 2017), as well as its neighbours (Nemčok, Spáč, 2019; Gherghina, 2019b; Stoychev, Temova, 2019; van Eeden, 2019). Populist parties in particular are inclined to promote direct democracy and benefit from it (Gherghina, Pilet, 2021; Angelucci, Rojon, Vitorri, 2024).

Political parties seek to exploit opportunities and influence voting behaviour during referendums (Hobolt, 2006). By doing so, they contribute to the polarisation of the political scene during referendum campaigns (Baum, Freire, 2001; Bowler, Donovan, 2006; Morel, 2007; Greene, Spoon, Williams, 2017; Hornig, 2023). When voting in referendums, the extent to which voters identify with the positions of political parties and leaders differs from that during general elections (Laycock, 2013), as do referendum and election campaigns (LeDuc, 2002). However, taking into account the positions of individual political party with respect to referendum questions is an important source of information for voters (LeDuc, 2002; Hobolt, 2007; Selb et al., 2009; Gherghina, Silagadze, 2021; Gherghina, Tap, 2023). Party preferences influence voting in referendums (Vreese, 2006; Solivetti, 2020), although in some cases individual attitudes to an issue may play a greater role (Hobolt, 2006).

The main objective of this paper is to explore the activities of political parties and their electorates in six nationwide referendums in Poland that were held between 1996 and 2023. Particular attention has been paid to the models that explain the effectiveness of political parties' appeals on the electorate's decisions. Four main criteria have been proposed to describe the relationship between political parties and their electorates and nationwide referendums, including: initiation of referendums; inter-party divisions; effectiveness of political parties' appeals; as well as changes in the party system. Exploring answers to the research questions posed has made it possible to formulate theoretical conclusions on the contemporary relationship between political parties and direct democracy.

The analysis consists of four parts that follow the referendum procedure, and addresses issues related to the referendum initiator, attitudes and inter-party divisions in relation to participation and responses to the referendum questions, the effectiveness of political party appeals, as well as and changes in the party system.

The first main research question (RQ1) explores whether political parties play a significant role in initiating referendums. What is particularly important for this question is both the formal aspect and the context, including the question whether political parties were the direct initiators of the referendum

(RQ1.1) or whether they merely took advantage of the general political situation that called for the need for a referendum (RQ 1.2). In terms of the formal aspects, the role of the President of the Republic of Poland in this respect should also be considered (RQ1.3).

The second main research question explores the attitudes and positions taken by political parties during referendum campaign and proposed models of inter-party divisions (RQ2). It is important to determine whether the following divisions apply: initiating party vs. other parties (RQ2.1); ruling parties vs. opposition parties (RQ2.2); left-wing vs. right-wing parties (RQ2.3); parliamentary vs. extra-parliamentary parties (RQ2.4); mainstream parties vs. marginal parties (RQ2.5).

The third main research question concerns the effectiveness of political party appeals (RQ3). It needs to be determined whether political parties' positions and declarations are reflected in the voting decisions made by their electorates: whether encouraging or discouraging participation in referendums has an impact on turnout levels (RQ3.1), as well as whether voting declarations of the electorates correspond to political parties' positions (RQ3.2).

Finally, it is important to determine whether the holding of the referendum has influenced changes in the political party system (RQ4). This question is primarily related to the emergence of new political parties (RQ4.1) or new leaders with a potential to play a role in shaping the political party scene (RQ 4.2).

The analysis of the six referenda under study follows the aforementioned pattern in order to ensure consistency and collect data to serve as material for the verification of the hypotheses in a holistic and comparative way with respect to all six referenda. With political parties as the starting point and main focus of the research, the following hypotheses have been formulated: Political parties are the main initiators of nationwide referendums (H1); Models of inter-party divisions differ in successive referendums (H2); Political parties' positions and declarations are reflected in the voting tendencies of their electorates (H3); Nationwide referendums result in the emergence of new parties or leaders that lead to changes in the party system (H4).

Data from 7 opinion polls conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research between 1995 and 2023 have been used as research material. Due to a relatively long-time frame, these are not in all cases perfectly coherent and identical for each referendum. However, they make it possible to verify the research questions posed to a reliable extent. Another source of information are the 5 announcements of the National Electoral Commission containing individual data and official election results, which make it possible to compare changes in the number of votes cast, turnout and voting results for individual questions examined. Another important aspect is identification of references to the laws and regulations that regulated the individual referendum processes. The laws and orders

issued by the President and the Sejm are key for understanding the grounds determining the formal framework of each of the analysed cases.

The structure of the research follows the classic pattern. The first step is an introduction signalling the main assumptions of the research process. The next one is an analysis of the individual referendums according to the proposed pattern, with a particular focus on the role of political parties in the whole process. The last step is an attempt to look at the issue from a comparative point of view and to formulate conclusions.

1996: Rivalry between the President of the Republic of Poland and the ruling party

Referendum initiator (RQ1)

With the end of 1995, the first term of office of the incumbent President Lech Wałęsa was coming to an end. Out of the candidates running for the office of head of state, the strongest one was Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a member of the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD), which, together with the agrarian Polish People's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) had held a coalition government in 1993–1997. As it turned out, the cohabitation and the right to initiate a referendum by both the President and the Sejm had a major impact on the organisation of the referendum in 1996.

It was Lech Wałęsa who proposed a referendum on the universal enfranchisement of citizens. The draft order only meets with the approval of the Senate after limiting the referendum to one question. The upper house of parliament adopted the relevant resolution on 17 November 1995.

As a result, MPs began to put forward numerous draft resolutions for potential subsequent referendums. In the course of the works, the Sejm adopted a modified version of the draft by SLD MPs, and a resolution on the holding of a referendum on the use of state assets was adopted. Thus, two referendums were to be held on the same day. Behind this turn of events was, of course, the presidential campaign and inter-party rivalry. The appeal to the will of the sovereign was only a means of political struggle.

The initiator of the first referendum after 1989 was the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa (RQ1.3). However, a counter-proposal from the Sejm resulted in political parties becoming the direct initiator of the second referendum (RQ1.1).

Attitudes of political parties (RQ2)

When it comes to political divisions, in the case of the 1996 referendum, the most important one was related to the left-right opposition (RQ2.3). The referendum was clearly backed by right-wing parties, both in the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition, including Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność", abbreviated NSZZ "Solidarność"), Nonpartisan Bloc for Support of Reforms (Bezpartyjny Blok Wspierania Reform, BBWR), Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (Ruch Odbudowy Polski, ROP), Confederation of Independent Poland (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej, KPN), as well as the centrist Freedom Union (Unia Wolności, UW). It is worth noting that the Episcopate also encouraged participation in the referendum.

What is somewhat of a paradox, SLD, the initiator of the referendum, showed the least involvement in promoting the referendum. This may have been due to the fact that the main motive of the Sejm referendum was to deprecate the idea of a referendum proposed by Wałęsa. Coalition partner PSL, despite its initial hesitation, eventually appealed to voters to take part in the referendum. When it comes to the left-wing parties, UP encouraged participation in the referendum. Thus, it can be seen that all leading parties and political actors encouraged participation in the referendum, or at least did not urge people to stay at home (SLD).

Regarding suggested answers to the referendum questions, the division between left and right was also visible. The key point was the parties' attitude to the third question, related to increasing the value of joint stock certificates in National Investment Fund by extending this programme to a greater number of enterprises. The right-wing parties appealed to their voters to vote against it.

Referendum results and effectiveness of political parties' appeals (RQ3)

The questions posed in the referendums were economic in nature. In the enfranchisement-related referendum promoted by the President, there was one general question on the attitude towards the implementation of universal enfranchisement of citizens. In turn, in the referendum proposed by the Sejm, there were four questions that were more precise and concerned the use of state assets. The first attempt at using direct democracy proved unsuccessful, as the turnout of 32.40% in the presidential referendum and 32.44% in the Sejm referendum meant that they were not binding. However, the answers to the referendum questions provided a good insight into the Polish citizens' views on the issues raised. The idea of universal enfranchisement of citizens enjoyed overwhelming support (94.54%). The results concerning the questions of privatisation were similarly quite unanimous with 92.89%, 93.70%, 27.48% and 88.30% of votes in

favour respectively. Voters' replies, despite low turnout, clearly showed (in line with earlier polls) the opinion of the sovereign.

Table 1. Results of the 1996 "Presidential" referendum

Date of referendum	18 February 1996
Electorate	28 009 715
Referendum question	Do you approve the enfranchisement of citizens?
Total votes cast	9 076 004 (32.40%)
Total valid votes	8 923 326 (98.32%)
Valid votes in favor	8 580 129 (94.54%)
Valid votes against	343 197 (5.46%)

Source: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 20 lutego 1996 r. o wynikach głosowania i wynikach referendów przeprowadzonych w dniu 18 lutego 1996.

Table 2. Results of the 1996 „Sejm” referendum

Date of referendum	18 February 1996			
Electorate	28 009 715			
Referendum question	Are you for or against – obligations towards retirees, pensioners, annuitants and employees of public sector, pursuant to rulings of the Constitutional Tribunal, will be fulfilled with the privatised state-owned assets?	Are you for or against – part of the privatised state-owned assets will be assigned to public pension funds?	Are you for or against – the value of joint stock certificates in National Investment Funds will be increased?	Are you for the use of privatisation bonds in the universal property restitution program?
Total votes cast	9 085 145 (32,44%)	9 085 145 (32,44%)	9 085 145 (32,44%)	9 085 145 (32,44%)
Total valid votes	8 876 924 (97,71%)	8 868 294 (97,61%)	8 574 126 (94,38%)	8 785 258 (96,70%)
Valid votes in favor	8 439 458 (92,89%)	8 512 931(93,70%)	1 985 567 (27,48%)	8 022 353 (88,30%)
Valid votes against	437 466 (7,11%)	255 363 (6,30%)	6 588 559 (72,52%)	762 905 (11,70%)

Source: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 20 lutego 1996 r. o wynikach głosowania i wynikach referendów przeprowadzonych w dniu 18 lutego 1996.

Given the total number of citizens participating in the referendum, one can cautiously conclude that the appeals of the political parties with regard to the participation in the referendum have had an effect. Considering that the main left-wing party forming the government (SLD) did not actively encourage participation, the turnout of about 32%, can be considered a reflection of the attitudes of the political parties, which is further confirmed by the voting structure (RQ 3.1 – YES).

When it comes to the overall division between left- and right-wing supporters, the latter were far more likely to declare participation in the referendum (72%) than the former (45%) – which was an increase by 9 percentage points between January and February (CBOS 1996 – 5:2). Based on the results of the mid-January poll, most members of the Catholic Church did not intend to take part in the referendum (43%), as compared to non-religious people (60%). A turning point was the involvement of the Episcopate in the question of participation in the referendum. This appeared to have had a significant impact on the respondents' declarations, as these trends were reversed after the announcement by the Church representatives. In the February poll, as many as 63% of religious respondents said they would take part in the referendum, while this statistic for the non-religious fell to 45% (CBOS 1996 – 5:2). A similar division can be observed when looking at the electorates of the various parties. Participation in the referendum was declared by the majority of supporters of UW (83%), BBWR and KPN (75%) and NSZZ Solidarność (70%). The electorates of UP (67%), SLD (65%) and PSL (60%) were less likely to do so (CBOS 1996 – 3:4). The scenario that the right-wing electorate was more likely to declare their intention to participate in the referendum than the left-wing electorate turned out to be true, as confirmed by post-referendum poll.

Participation in the referendum depended on one's attitude towards the government (SLD and PSL). 63% of respondents who took part in the referendum declared their opposition to the current government. Those supporting the right wing (62%) were significantly more likely to take part in the referendum than those identifying with the left wing (26%). Similar statistics were observed for religious (63%) versus non-religious people (23%) (CBOS 1996 – 6:6). The majority of the voters were supporters of NSZZ Solidarność and the non-parliamentary right-wing parties (73% each). The electorates of the ruling SLD (32%) and PSL (43%) and UP (45%) were in the minority (CBOS 1996 – 6:6).

Table 3. Declarations of citizens concerning the referendum questions in 1996

			12-16 I	2-6 II	9-13 II
Presidential referendum	Q	in favour	78	79	88
		against	6	6	3
Sejm referendum	Q1	in favour	77	71	79
		against	10	13	9
	Q2	in favour	81	77	83
		against	10	10	9
	Q3	in favour	70	59	50
		against	11	19	32
	Q4	in favour	56	54	65
		against	12	16	14

Source: CBOS 1996 – 5:6.

The 1996 referenda confirm the positive correlation between the attitudes of political parties and the choices of their electorates (RQ3.2). Such a hypothesis is corroborated by opinion polls conducted before and after the referendum. In line with the positions and declarations of the political parties, citizens' declarations on the individual questions changed over time during the referendum campaign. In line with the slogans of all parties, public support for the answer in favour in the presidential referendum increased. To a lesser extent, this also applied for the first, second and fourth questions in the Sejm referendum.

With regard to all questions, changes took place in line with the positions and declarations made by the individual political parties. The effectiveness of their appeals is best seen on the example of question three. The right-wing parties clearly encouraged a negative response to this question. As a result, support for the solution proposed in the third question decreased considerably. In January, an answer in favour of this question was declared by 70% of respondents. At the beginning of February, 59%, and by the middle of that month, it dropped to 50%. In the end, only 27.5% of voters voted in favour of that question in the referendum.

1997: Rivalry between left-wing and right-wing parties over the shape of the Constitution

Referendum initiator (RQ1)

Discussions on the new shape of the political system gained momentum with the year 1989. There was general agreement on the need for major changes. All parties agreed that the existing Constitution from 1952 did not reflect the state and challenges for a democratic state. In response to the current challenges, two new amendments were introduced. The first, initial change was the April amendment of 1989 introducing the office of the President as a head of state in place of the State Council of the Polish People's Republic and the Senate. It was followed by the December amendment proclaimed in the same year, which modified the first chapter of the previous Constitution, changing the name of the state to the "Republic of Poland". It adopted the principles of a democratic state of law, political pluralism, freedom of economic activity and protection of property. In addition, articles on the leadership role of the party and friendship with the Soviet Union were removed.

As it turned out, however, the process of preparing and adopting the Constitution took eight years. During that time, two parliamentary elections were held, resulting in alternating rule of five right-wing (1991–1993) and left-wing (1993–1997) governments (Olszewski, Suchocka, Pawlak, Oleksy, Cimoszewicz), as well as two presidents (Wałęsa, Kwaśniewski). The first major step was taken with the enactment of the so-called Small Constitution (Constitutional Act of 17 October 1992 on the Mutual Relations between the Legislative and Executive Institutions of the Republic of Poland and Local Self-Government (Journal of Laws, 23 November 1992, No. 84, item 426). Work intensified in 1996, and at the beginning of 1997 the basic content and amendments were passed. The National Assembly enacted the Constitution on 2 April 1997. In support were MPs from SLD, PSL, UWM, PPS and New Democracy (Nowa Demokracja). Solidarity and BBWR-KPN MPs, as well as a few members of PSL voted against.

Given the above considerations, it was SLD that was the main driving force behind completing the work and closing the project on the draft Constitution. Thus, it can be considered that it was the political parties that played a significant and direct role in initiating the referendum (RQ1 – YES), despite the fact that, from a formal point of view, it was held on the basis of an order of the President of the Republic of Poland, which resulted from the provisions of the new Constitution.

Attitudes of political parties (RQ2)

In the context of participation in the referendum, none of the proposed divisions apply, as all major political parties encouraged it.

What can be observed, nevertheless, are divisions in terms of the attitudes towards the Constitution. Taking part in the referendum and supporting the draft was encouraged by the following parties: SLD, PSL, UP and UW. On the other hand, voting against was encouraged by: KPN, BBWR (AWS, ROP).

Thus, the division between the parties initiating the enactment of the Constitution and the group of other parties (RQ2.1), in the left-right spectrum (RQ 2.3), is quite clear.

Referendum results and effectiveness of political parties' appeals (RQ3)

The referendum on the approval of the draft Constitution of the Republic of Poland met with moderate public interest. Despite the seemingly important subject, which was a key issue for the evolution of the state system, the turnout was 42.86%. The referendum was, nevertheless, binding, as the required majority threshold did not apply, as in the case of the other four referendums. The majority of citizens (53.45%) voted in favour of the Constitution, as proposed by the National Assembly. Consequently, there was no clear majority with a large group of citizens opposing this shape of the system.

Table 4. Results of 1997 referendum

Date of referendum	25 May 1997
Electorate	28 319 650
Referendum question	Do you approve the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, passed by the National Assembly on April 2, 1997?
Total votes cast	12 137 136 (42,86%)
Total valid votes	11 967 134 (98,60%)
Valid votes in favor	6 396 641 (53,45%)
Valid votes against	5 570 493 (46,55%)

Source: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 26 maja 1997 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum konstytucyjnego przeprowadzonego w dniu 25 maja 1997 r.

Encouraging citizens to participate in such an important referendum by all leading parties did not result in a high turnout. Hence, given the common attitude to participation, as well as the importance of the question raised in the referendum, it can be concluded that the influence of the political parties on the turnout was not as significant (RQ3.1 – NO).

Table 5. Declarations of citizens concerning the referendum question in 1997

Electoralates	In favour		Against	
	II 97	III 97	II 97	III 97
SLD	71	70	1	5
UP	62	54	2	13
PSL	44	53	2	6
UW	23	48	19	17
AWS	27	19	30	32
ROP	25	21	34	37

Source: CBOS 1997 – 3: 12.

In the case of the 1997 referendum, one can talk of a correlation between the political parties' positions and declarations and citizens' views (RQ3.2 – YES). It can be seen that among the electoralates of PSL, UW, AWS and ROP, the positions of the electoralates coincided for the most part with that of the political parties. This was not the case only in the case of the electorate of UP. In the case of AWS and ROP, support showed a downward trend, while opposition to the adoption of the constitution in its proposed form was increasing. In the case of the PSL and UW electoralates, on the other hand, support for the approval of the proposed draft was increasing, while in the case of SLD, it was at a similar, constantly high level.

2003: Clash between mainstream parties and populist and radical right-wing parties

Referendum initiator (RQ1)

Another opportunity for a national referendum came in 2003 in connection with Poland's accession to the EU. In view of the changes on the political scene, it should be recalled that the broad coalition of left-wing groups SLD was

transformed into a unified party under the same name in 1999 and claimed a decisive victory in the 2001 parliamentary elections. AWS, which ruled from 1997 to 2001, broke up, resulting in the formation of Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO) and Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), which continue to play a key role to this day, taking turns in ruling the country and winning the parliamentary elections between 2005 and 2015. In 2001, representatives of Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland (Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, SRP) and the newly formed League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR) entered the Sejm for the first time. Both these parties, due to their anti-EU stance, played an important role in the referendum, and both referred to the ongoing negotiations and EU-related topics in their media narrative. The new division on the party map of Poland heralded an interesting struggle for the support of the voters ahead of the upcoming referendum.

In the case of the 2003 referendum, the role of political parties in initiating the referendum was indirect and resulted from the general political situation (RQ1.2 – YES). The EU referendum was more a result of years of preparation and the general political situation. Although certainly the negotiations conducted by the ruling SLD, UP and later also the PSL favoured attributing a causal role in this regard to the political parties. As in the case of the constitutional referendum, they hoped to take credit for successful negotiations and the successful conclusion of the process.

Attitudes of political parties (RQ2)

The party divisions based on the attitudes to the referendum question were clear in the case of mainstream parties (RQ 2.5). This group included both the government-forming SLD, PSL and UP, the opposition centre (PO) and the right wing (PiS). The other parliamentary parties, approached EU integration with a high degree of distrust, including the populist Self-Defence or the overtly critical radical right-wing LPR, albeit with varying degree of intensity. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the division between pro- and anti-accession groups, regardless, was present in the campaign at the time.

Referendum results and effectiveness of political parties' appeals (RQ3)

The 2003 referendum issues received a great deal of attention from citizens. 58.85% of eligible voters went to the polls, which, compared to the turnout in other referendums as well as presidential and parliamentary elections, was relatively high. The fact that the referendum was held over two days, which was a new solution introduced in Poland, might also have had an impact on the statistics, as did the support of John Paul II for Poland's accession to the EU. A week

before the referendum, an appeal by the bishops to participate in the vote was read out in churches.

An overwhelming majority of voters voted in favour of Poland's accession to the EU (77.45%), which clearly meant support for the direction of the proposed future Polish foreign policy. It can be said that from the point of view of the turnout and the results, the referendum was a success. It was an example of an appeal to the sovereign, which met with a massive, positive response.

The strong support for participation in the referendum shown by all groups resulted in the highest turnout in the history of Polish referendums, close to the level of the presidential election, with the turnout of 60%. It can therefore be concluded that appeals from all political parties were successful (RQ 3.1 – YES).

The data collected leads one to conclude that in the case in question there was a partial correlation between the positions of political parties and those of their electorates (RQ 3.1). The above, however, only applies to parties that supported the subject of the referendum, while it did not work in the case of political parties that opposed Poland's accession to the EU.

Table 6. Results of the 2003 referendum

Date of referendum	7–8 June 2003
Electorate	29 864 989
Referendum question	Do you approve of the Republic of Poland's accession to the European Union?
Total votes cast	17 576 714 (58,85%)
Total valid votes	17 450 527 (99,28%)
Valid votes in favor	13 514 872 (77,45%)
Valid votes against	3 935 655 (22,55%)

Źródło: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 9 czerwca 2003 r. o wyniku ogólnokrajowego referendum w sprawie wyrażenia zgody na ratyfikację Traktatu dotyczącego przystąpienia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej do Unii Europejskiej.

Table 7. Declarations of citizens concerning the referendum question in 2003

Electores	Attitudes to integration								
	in favour			against			uncommitted		
	III 03	IV 03	V 03	III 03	IV 03	V 03	III 03	IV 03	V 03
SLD	88	92	90	4	6	5	8	2	5
PO	83	91	99	15	6	0	2	3	1
PiS	72	58	77	13	21	7	15	21	7
PSL	58	67	82	26	29	1	16	4	1
S	37	43	48	51	46	22	12	11	22
LPR	18	33	30	80	49	10	2	18	10

Source: CBOS 2003 – 11: 4; CBOS 2003 – 10: 6; CBOS 2003 – 8: 5.

In the electorates of all parties, the number of supporters of Poland's accession to the EU increased, while the number of opponents fell significantly. The highest support for integration was declared by the electorates of PO (99%), SLD (90%) and PSL (82%). Slight increase in the number of supporters, with simultaneous decreases in the number of opponents, was observed in the case of the electorates of SLD (+2/+1) and PiS (+5/-6).

What is interesting is that despite the clear stance against the EU, ultimately the LPR electorate was more in favour of integration (30% – up from 18%) than against (10% – down from 80%). The situation was similar among the Self-Defence electorate, in the case of whom almost half was in favour of integration (48% – up from 37%), despite the initial strong opposition (80% – down from 10%). In both cases, there is no empirical research on that issue. However, assuming that there was a dominant group of members of the Catholic Church among both electorates, especially LPR, the position of the Pope and the church may have played a significant role in shaping people's attitudes towards integration, far greater than that of the political parties.

2015: Referendum as part of the presidential campaign

Referendum initiator (RQ1)

Another case where the referendum became an important part of the political game was the 2015 presidential campaign. Incumbent President Bronisław Komorowski (33.77%) and his main opponent Andrzej Duda (34.76%) advanced

to the second round. A very good result was achieved by Paweł Kukiz (20.8%), whose programme included the introduction of single-mandate constituencies to the Sejm, attracting the votes of those disillusioned with current politics. President Komorowski decided to act quickly and seek the votes of these voters. For this reason, he ordered a referendum the very next day after the elections. In this case, it was not the political parties that played a role in initiating the referendum but the President of Poland (RQ 1.3).

Attitudes of political parties (RQ2)

The inter-party divisions generally stemmed from support for candidates in the presidential elections. The ruling PO, a member of which was Komorowski, encouraged participation in the referendum. In contrast, PiS, supporting its candidate Duda, declared participation in the referendum, although it did not actively encourage its supporters to do so. Politicians from PSL, SLD and TR, in turn, decided that they would not take part in the referendum.

In the context of the referendum questions, similar dividing lines can also be observed. PO was in favour of single-mandate constituencies, while PiS, PSL, SLD and TR were against it. PO and TR, on the other hand, were opposed to maintaining the current method of financing political parties. All political parties were in favour of citizen empowerment. Given the above, it is impossible to identify clear overall divisions in the proposed pattern. The ruling centrist PO was on a par with Kukiz's new anti-establishment initiative in terms of encouraging participation in the referendum. The coalition party PSL represented a position similar to the right-wing (PiS) and the left-wing opposition (SLD).

Referendum results and effectiveness of political parties' appeals (RQ3)

The results of the referendum were quite clear, as in the case of three questions, there was an overwhelming majority either in favour or against. Voters were in favour of single-member constituencies (78.75%), against the current system of financing political parties (82.63%), and in favour of resolving doubts concerning tax laws in favour of the taxpayers (94.51%). However, what was most significant was the low turnout (7.8%), which showed the negative attitude of citizens towards the idea of participating in the referendum.

The unexpectedly low turnout can be regarded as confirmation of the hypothesis of the influence of political parties on citizens' participation in referendums (RQ 3.1 – YES). Statistics in this respect show that appeals from most political parties made the majority of citizens reluctant to participate in the referendum. PO and Kukiz's calls for participation in the referendum proved to be insufficient encouragement.

Table 8. Results of the 2015 referendum

Date of referendum	6 September 2015		
Electorate	30 565 826		
Referendum question	Are you in favour of introducing single-member constituencies in elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland?	Are you in favour of maintaining the current system of financing political parties from the state budget?	Are you in favour of introducing a general principle whereby any legal doubts in interpreting tax law would be resolved in favour of taxpayers?
Total votes cast	2 384 780 (7,8%)	2 384 780 (7,8%)	2 384 780 (7,8%)
Total valid votes	2 323 930 (97,45%)	2 328 509 (97,64%)	2 322 084 (97,37%)
Valid votes in favor	1 829 995 (78,75%)	404 515 (17,37%)	2 194 689(94,51%)
Valid votes against	493 935 (21,25%)	1 923 994 (82,63%)	127 395 (5,49%)

Source: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 7 września 2015 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum przeprowadzonego w dniu 6 września 2015 r.

Table 9. Declarations of citizens concerning the referendum question in 2015

Electora- tes	Are you in favour of introducing single-member constituencies in elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland?						Are you in favour of maintaining the current system of financing political parties from the state budget?					
	In favour			Against			In favour			Against		
	VI 15	VI 15	VIII 15	VI 15	VII 15	VIII 15	VI 15	VII 15	VIII 15	VI 15	VII 15	VIII 15
PO	53	42	44	28	28	27	16	14	20	78	82	74
PSL	54	57	38	36	10	18	23	17	6	59	79	84
PiS	52	47	42	20	16	27	22	23	25	66	59	62
SLD/ZL	45	29	69	41	38	16	33	11	22	60	84	70
Kukiz	82	77	69	4	6	16	12	6	5	84	93	90
N	53	56	28	43	39	51	24	37	58	64	63	58

Source: CBOS 2015 – 2: 8, 10.

In the case of the 2015 referendum, there was no correlation between the attitudes of political parties and those of citizens (RQ 3.2 – NO). In particular, with regard to the first question, the electorates of PO, Kukiz'15 and SLD/ZL behaved in the opposite way to what the parties encouraged. In the case of both the electorates of PO and Kukiz'15, as the referendum approached, the support for the

introduction of single-mandate constituencies decreased, while in the case of the electorate of SLD/ZL, it increased significantly (from 45% to 69%).

In the camp opposing the introduction of such a solution, on the other hand, declarations of the electorates of PiS and PSL coincided with those of the political parties in question, who were opposing the referendum and had a negative attitude towards the referendum questions.

2023: Referendum as a pretext for inter-party rivalry in the parliamentary campaign

Referendum initiator (RQ1)

The initiative to hold a referendum was Law and Justice's idea to improve its ratings. The only reason for holding it was to polarise the political scene and to try to win the parliamentary elections. Once again, a nationwide referendum was used in the election campaign. In formal terms, the proposal was made by the Council of Ministers. On 17 August 2023, the Sejm passed a resolution to order the referendum, which was to be held on the same day as the elections to the government and the Senate. Thus, it is clear that the political parties were the direct initiators of the referendum (RQ1.1).

Attitudes of political parties (RQ2)

Inter-party divisions were very clear in the context of holding the referendum, which was supported only by the ruling party. The other parties were strongly opposed to it, as, according to them, it contradicted the very idea of a referendum and served only the purpose related to the parliamentary election campaign. The wording of the questions and possible answers was also directly linked to the views of Law and Justice. The other parliamentary parties, Civic Coalition (Koalicja Obywatelska, KO), the Third Way (Trzecia Droga), the New Left (Nowa Lewica) and the Confederation (Konfederacja), called not to take part in the referendum.

Referendum results and effectiveness of political parties' appeals (RQ3)

The results of the referendum were quite clear. Almost all voters were against each of the four questions. However, it is also important to look at these results from another perspective. The turnout was around 40%, which clearly indicates

that the majority of voters of the opposition parties did not participate in the referendum. It is worth noting that in order not to participate in the referendum, the voter needed to refuse the referendum ballot paper in front of the commission, while at the same time collecting a ballot paper for the elections to the Sejm and the Senate.

What can be observed in the case of the 2023 referendum is the high effectiveness of the appeals of the political parties. On the one hand, the majority of the supporters of the government coalition took part in the referendum and voted in a consistent manner. On the other hand, the appeals of the opposition were also successful, as their electorates overwhelmingly chose not to participate in the referendum.

Table 10. Results of the 2023 referendum

Date of referendum	15 October 2023			
Electorate	29 532 595			
Referendum question	Do you support the selling off of state assets to foreign entities, leading to the loss of Poles' control over strategic sectors of the economy?	Do you support an increase in the retirement age, including the restoration of the increased retirement age to 67 for men and women?	Do you support the removal of the barrier on the border between Poland and Belarus?	Do you support the admission of thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, in accordance with the forced relocation mechanism imposed by the European bureaucracy?
Total votes cast	12 082 588 (40,91%)	12 082 588 (40,91%)	12 082 588 (40,91%)	12 082 588 (40,91%)
Total valid votes	11 252 200 (93,13%)	11 283 465 (93,39%)	11 253 680 (93,14%)	11 239 666 (93,02%)
Valid votes in favor	394 704 (3,51%)	608 254 (5,39%)	445 270 (3,96%)	360 803 (3,21%)
Valid votes against	10 857 496 (96,49%)	10 675 211 (94,61%)	10 808 410 (96,04%)	10 878 863 (96,79%)

Source: Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 17 października 2023 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum przeprowadzonego w dniu 15 października 2023 r.

Table 11. Declarations of citizens concerning the referendum question in 2015

Electorates	Do you intend to take part in the referendum that will be held on the day of the elections to the Sejm and Senate?		
	I will definitely take part in it	I don't know yet if I will take part in it	I will definitely not take part in it
PiS	77	20	3
Confederation	53	27	20
Third Way	30	35	35
KO	22	25	53
Left	20	37	43
Uncommitted	52	30	18
Not intending to vote	2	6	92

Source: CBOS 108/2023.

Unfortunately, in this case it is difficult to track changes in trends in the views of the electorates, as the only source of comparative data is one opinion poll. It was conducted from 14 to 27 April 2023, i.e. two months before the referendum and the election. Based on the results, however, what can be observed is an evolution and adaptation to the appeals of the political parties, especially in the context of the correlation between the refusal to participate in the referendum with the support for the opposition parties.

Conclusions from a comparative perspective

An important aspect of the analysis undertaken is the comparative view and the verification of the hypotheses assumed. In general, political parties were not direct initiators of nationwide referendums (H1 – NO). Political parties used their power and played a direct role in initiating a referendum only twice, in 1996 and 2023, when the tool of direct democracy was used for particular interests of a given political party. It must be acknowledged, however, that in the case of the 1996 referendum, it was a secondary initiative, being a reaction to the steps taken by the President. In 2023, however, the referendum was clearly used exclusively for party purposes. In the 1997 and 2003 referendums, on the other hand, the initiative to hold them stemmed from the need to appeal to the public's vote on the Polish Constitution and Poland's accession to the EU. The political parties played an indirect role in these cases, as it was not on their direct initiative that the referendums were ordered. In contrast, in the case of the referendums in 1996 and 2015, it was the presidents who played a direct role.

Table 12. A comparative perspective on the role of political parties in conducting referenda

		1996	1996	1997	2003	2015	2023
Initiator of the referendum	Political parties – directly	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
	Political parties – indirectly	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
	President	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Attitudes and divisions between parties	Initiating parties vs. remaining parties	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
	Government parties vs opposition parties	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
	left-wing parties vs right-wing parties	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
	parliamentary parties vs non-parliamentary parties	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
	mainstream parties vs fringe/extreme parties	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Effectiveness of political parties' appeals	Turnout	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
	Political appeals	YES	YES	YES	YES/ NO	NO/ YES	YES
Changes in the party system	New political parties	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
	New political leaders	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Source: own.

It was not possible to determine clear divisions between political parties with regard to the nationwide referendums (H2 – YES). In 1996 and 1997, the left-right axis was at play. When it comes to the referendum concerning Poland's accession to the EU, the dividing line was mainstream parties vs. marginal parties and the radical right wing. In the case of the last referendum, it is difficult to find a clear justification for the positions of the political parties at all, although they were reflected in the positions of their electorates (H3 – YES). In all cases, the attitudes of political parties towards participation in the referendum were reflected in the behaviour of citizens. When all political parties encouraged voting, turnout was at the level of the parliamentary (1997 – 47%) or presidential (2003 – 58%) elections. When the ruling left-wing party exercised restraint in encouraging participation, turnout was low (32%). In contrast, when the majority of the parties were more or less opposed to participation in the referendum, the turnout was the lowest ever (2015 – 7%).

In all six cases, there was a correlation between the positions of political parties and those of their electorates towards the referendum, although in the 2003 and 2015 referendums this did not apply to all political parties. However, it was

observed in the majority of the cases analysed, thus corroborating the hypothesis formulated.

None of the referendums modified the party scene (H4 – NO), nor give rise to the emergence of new parties or leaders who could change the balance of power. It can be concluded that they did not create new actors with sufficient power to have an impact on the shape of the party system.

The referendum tool was directly used for political purposes more often by presidents (1996, 2015) than by political parties (1996, 2023). When it comes to the initiation of referendums, such measures were taken by left-wing parties: by the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, SdRP) as part of the SLD coalition (1996, 1997), and then acting as an independent party (2003).

The idea of ordering a referendum always had unfavourable consequences for the initiator. Wałęsa and Komorowski lost the presidential elections and were not elected for a second term. SLD suffered defeat in two parliamentary elections held in 1997 and 2005. In 2023, in turn, Law and Justice lost its power. While the referendum was probably not the sole and predominant reason, this correlation is, nevertheless, interesting and worth mentioning as a warning to future initiators of referendums designed to serve vested interests.

The number of voters is a disappointing indicator of the state of direct democracy in Poland. Four referendums (1996, 1996, 2015 and 2023) turned out to be non-binding due to turnout. In 1997, the turnout did not exceed 50% either, although in this case it was not formally required.

Although, on the one hand, political parties' appeals and attitudes are reflected in their electorates' votes, the referendums themselves have so far proved not to be beneficial for their initiators. The above conclusions lead to far-reaching caution on the part of potential initiators of subsequent nationwide referendums in Poland.

The analysis of referendums in terms of inter-party divisions complemented the existing political science literature showing the context of competition in campaigns between individual party groups (Piasecki, 2004; 2005; 2006; 2020; Musiał-Karg, 2008; 2016; Marczevska-Rytko, 2013; 2014; 2018). This particularly concerns the comparative aspect and the one emphasizing the role of political parties and their interests.

Another important aspect is to pay attention to when parties encourage or discourage participation in the referendum. Of course, the main premise is the calculation of political gains and losses, which is the result of the values professed by a given party, as well as its political strategy and positioning in the electoral arena. Taking the above considerations into account, two main attitudes can be identified in discouraging participation in the referendum: passive and active one. The first example is SLD in 1996 and PiS in 2015. Since it is not possible to officially deny the validity of participating in referenda when

one initiates a referendum oneself or often emphasises how important the will of the citizens is, the principle of not encouraging participation through passivity has been adopted. Secondly, active discouragement from participating, as was the case in 2015 with PSL and SLD, as well as with the entire opposition in 2023. The argument was based primarily on the statement that the referendum was solely a tool of political and electoral struggle, which had nothing to do with direct democracy.

It is also worth emphasizing that the referendums were largely a political competition between parties. The competition between them was the main axis of the campaign and public discourse. It far outweighed the content that attempted to constitute an information campaign about the pros and cons of specific solutions, as well as the consequences for the state and its citizens. The referendum questions seem to be of secondary importance in terms of their importance for the state and of primary importance in terms of the particular interests of political parties. It can certainly be said that many times their content resulted primarily from political calculations and the appropriate shaping of discourse and polarization, as exemplified by the referenda in 1996, 2015 and 2023. It is difficult to see, especially in the last two referenda, any real concern for knowing the will of the sovereign in matters of particular importance to the state.

References

- Angelucci, D., Rojon, S., Vittori, D. (2024). "Do Populist Parties Promote Direct Democracy? An Empirical Assessment in 29 Countries in the Last Two Decades". *Contemporary Politics*, 30(4), pp. 473–493.
- Baum, M.A., Freire, A. (2001). "Political Parties, Cleavage Structures and Referendum Voting: Electoral Behaviour in the Portuguese Regionalization Referendum of 1998". *South European Society and Politics*, 6(1), pp. 1–26.
- Bowler, S., Donovan, T. (2006). "Direct Democracy and Political Parties in America". *Party Politics*, 12(5), pp. 649–669.
- Crum, B. (2007). "Party Stances in the Referendums on the UE Constitution: Causes and Consequences of Competition and Collusion". *European Union Politics*, 8(1), pp. 61–82.
- Gherghina, S. (2019a). "How Political Parties Use Referendums: An Analytical Framework". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3), pp. 677–690.
- Gherghina, S. (2019b). "Hijacked Direct Democracy: The Instrumental Use of Referendums in Romania". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13511610.2021.1995335#d1e233> (accessed: 22.10.2024).
- Gherghina, S., Pilet, J.B. (2021). "Do Populist Parties Support Referendums? A Comparative Analysis of Election Manifestos in Europe". *Electoral Studies*, 74, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379421001311> (accessed: 22.10.2024).

- Gherghina, S., Silagadze, N. (2021). "Party Cues and Pre-Campaign Attitudes: Voting Choice in Referendums in Eastern Europe". *Problems of Post-Communism*, 70(6), pp. 1–12.
- Gherghina, S., Tap, P. (2023). "Close to Politics and to Policies: Subjective Knowledge About Referendum Topics in Eastern Europe". *Comparative European Politics*, 22, pp. 267–285.
- Greene, Z., Spoon, J.J., Williams, C.J. (2017). "Reading Between the Lines: Party Cues and SNP Support for Scottish Independence and Brexit". *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 28(3), pp. 307–329.
- Hartliński, M. (2015). "The 2015 Referendum in Poland". *East European Quarterly*, 43(2), pp. 235–242.
- Hartliński, M. (2019). "The Effect of Political Parties on Nationwide Referendums in Poland After 1989". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3).
- Hobolt, S.B. (2006). "How Parties Affect Vote Choice in European Integration Referendums". *Party Politics*, 12(5), pp. 623–647.
- Hobolt, S.B. (2007). "Taking Cues on Europe? Voter Competence and Party Endorsements in Referendums on European Integration". *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(2), pp. 151–182.
- Hornig, E.Ch. (2023). "Patterns of Party Positioning in Referendums in Switzerland". *Political Studies Review*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14789299231165455?icid=int.sj-abstract.citing-articles.4> (accessed: 22.10.2024).
- Jasiewicz, K. (2004). "Knocking on Europe's Door: Voting Behavior in the EU Accession Referendum in Poland". *Problems of Post-Communism*, 51(5), pp. 34–44.
- Kuzelewska, E. (2003). "Referendum Voting Behaviour: Polish Referendum on Membership in the EU". *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 38, pp. 38–50.
- Ladner, A., Brändle, M. (1999). "Does Direct Democracy Matter for Political Parties?". *Party Politics*, 5(3), pp. 283–302.
- Laycock, S. (2013). "Is Referendum Voting Distinctive? Evidence from Three UK Cases". *Electoral Studies*, 32(2), pp. 236–252.
- LeDuc, L. (2002a). "Referendums and Elections: How Do Campaigns Differ?". In: D.M. Farrell, R. Schmitt-Beck (eds.). *Do Political Campaigns Matter? Campaign Effects in Elections and Referendums*. London: Routledge, pp. 63–83.
- LeDuc, L. (2002b). "Opinion Change and Voting Behaviour in Referendums". *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(6), pp. 711–732.
- Marczewska-Rytko, M. (2013). "Direct Democracy at National Level in Poland. Case of Referendum". *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio K: Politologia*, 20(1), pp. 103–115.
- Marczewska-Rytko, M. (2014). "Kampania przed referendum akcesyjnym Polski do UE w kontekście doradztwa politycznego". *Rocznik Nauk Społecznych*, 6(42), pp. 77–94.
- Marczewska-Rytko, M. (2018). "Direct Democracy in Poland". In: M. Marczewska-Rytko (ed.). *Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe After 1989*. Leverkusen–Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, pp. 203–223.
- Marszałek-Kawa, J. (2017). "Comments on the Issue of the Institution of a Nationwide Referendum in Poland: The Case of the Referendum of 6 September 2015". *Athenaeum*, 56, pp. 54–74.

- Morel, L. (1993). "Party Attitudes Towards Referendums in Western Europe". *West European Politics*, 16(3), pp. 225–244.
- Musiał-Karg, M. (2008). *Referenda w państwach europejskich. Teoria, praktyka, perspektywy*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
- Musiał-Karg, M. (2016). "The Role of National Referendum in Central and Eastern European Countries. Selected Experiences". *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, 3, pp. 41–58.
- Nemčok, M., Spáč, P. (2019). "Referendum as a Party Tool: The Case of Slovakia". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3), pp. 755–777.
- Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 20 lutego 1996 r. o wynikach głosowania i wynikach referendów przeprowadzonych w dniu 18 lutego 1996 r.
- Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 26 maja 1997 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum konstytucyjnego przeprowadzonego w dniu 25 maja 1997 r.
- Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 9 czerwca 2003 r. o wyniku ogólnokrajowego referendum w sprawie wyrażenia zgody na ratyfikację Traktatu dotyczącego przystąpienia Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej do Unii Europejskiej.
- Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 7 września 2015 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum przeprowadzonego w dniu 6 września 2015 r.
- Obwieszczenie Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z dnia 17 października 2023 r. o wynikach głosowania i wyniku referendum przeprowadzonego w dniu 15 października 2023 r.
- Piasecki, A.K. (2004). "Referendum akcesyjne z 2003 r. Próba bilansu". *Annales Academiae Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Politologica*, 2, pp. 147–170.
- Piasecki, A.K. (2005). *Referenda w III RP*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Piasecki, A.K. (2006). "Demokracja bezpośrednia w Polsce po 1989 roku". *Przegląd Sejmowy*, 1(72), pp. 9–27.
- Piasecki A.K. (2020). "Błędy, zaniechania i manipulacje polityków na przykładzie referendów w Polsce w 1996 i 2015 roku". *Polityka i Społeczeństwo*, 15(2), pp. 104–120.
- Selb, P., Kriesi, H., Hänggli, R., Marr, M. (2009). "Partisan Choices in a Direct-Democratic Campaign". *European Political Science Review*, 1(1), pp. 155–172.
- Shu, M. (2009). "Coping with a Two-Dimensional Political Space: Party Mobilisation in Referendums on European Integration". *European Journal of Political Research*, 48(3), pp. 397–431.
- Sinnott, R. (2002). "Cleavages, Parties and Referendums: Relationship Between Representative and Direct Democracy in the Republic of Ireland". *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(6), pp. 811–826.
- Solivetti, L.M. (2019). "Political Partisanship Versus Turnout in Italy's 2016 Referendum". *Quality & Quantity*, 54(3), pp. 709–734.
- Stoychev, S.P., Tomova, G. (2019). "Campaigning Outside the Campaign: Political Parties and Referendums in Bulgaria". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3), pp. 691–704.
- Uleri, P.V. (2002). "On Referendum Voting in Italy: YES, NO or Non-vote? How Italian Parties Learned to Control Referendums". *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(6), pp. 863–883.

- van Eeden, P. (2019). "Discover, Instrumentalize, Monopolize: Fidesz's Three-Step Blueprint for a Populist Take-Over of Referendums". *East European Politics and Societies*, 33(3), pp. 705–732.
- Vospernik, S. (2018). "Effects of Referendums on Party Cohesion and Cleavages: Empirical Findings from 21 EU countries". In: L. Morel, M. Qvortrup (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook to Referendums and Direct Democracy*. New York: Routledge.
- Vreese de, C.H. (2006). "Political Parties in Dire Straits: Consequences of National Referendums for Political Parties". *Party Politics*, 12(5), pp. 581–598.

Early View