

Illiberal Welfare States in the Making

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HUN
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 Democracy
Institute

Troubled times

Mega-trends

- Globalization & technological change
- Demographic challenges
- Climate change
- ...War

- Challenges to democracy

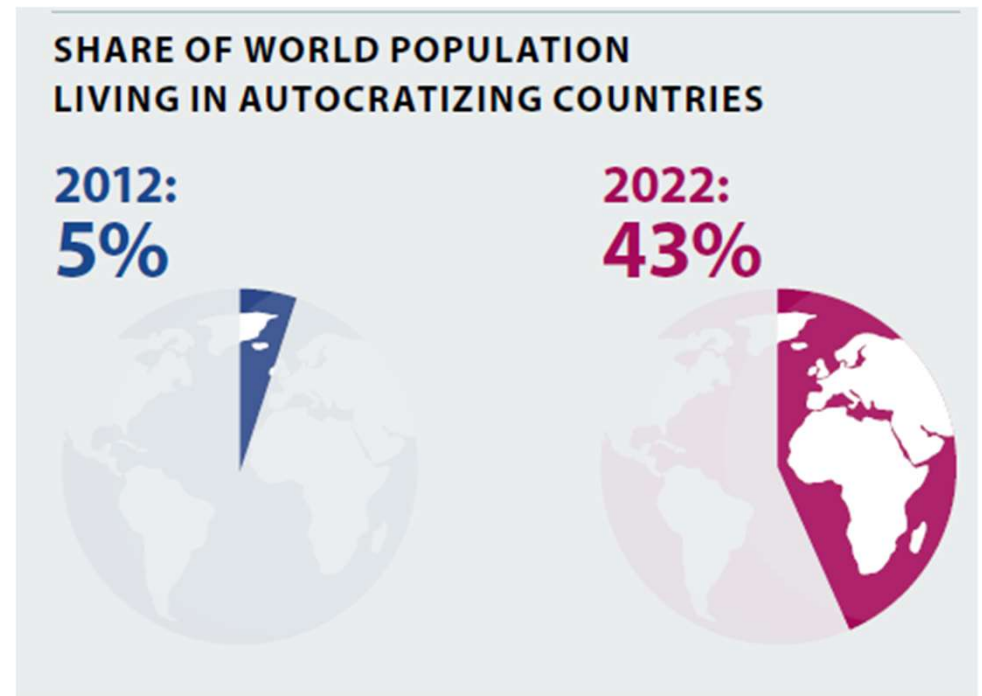
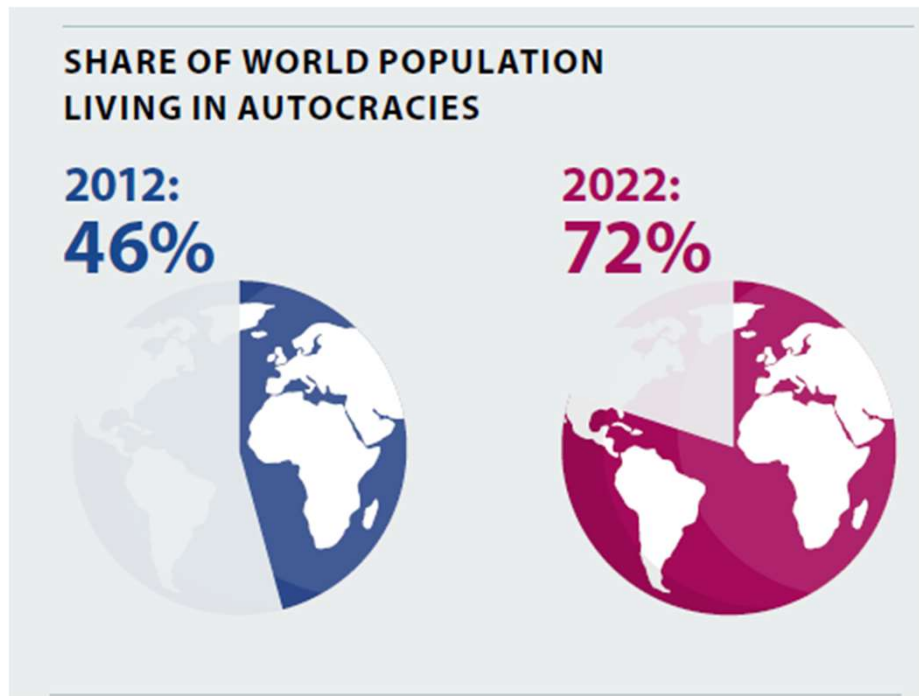
NEWS | 📅 06/02/2023

High-Level Group presents its recommendations on the future of social protection and the welfare state

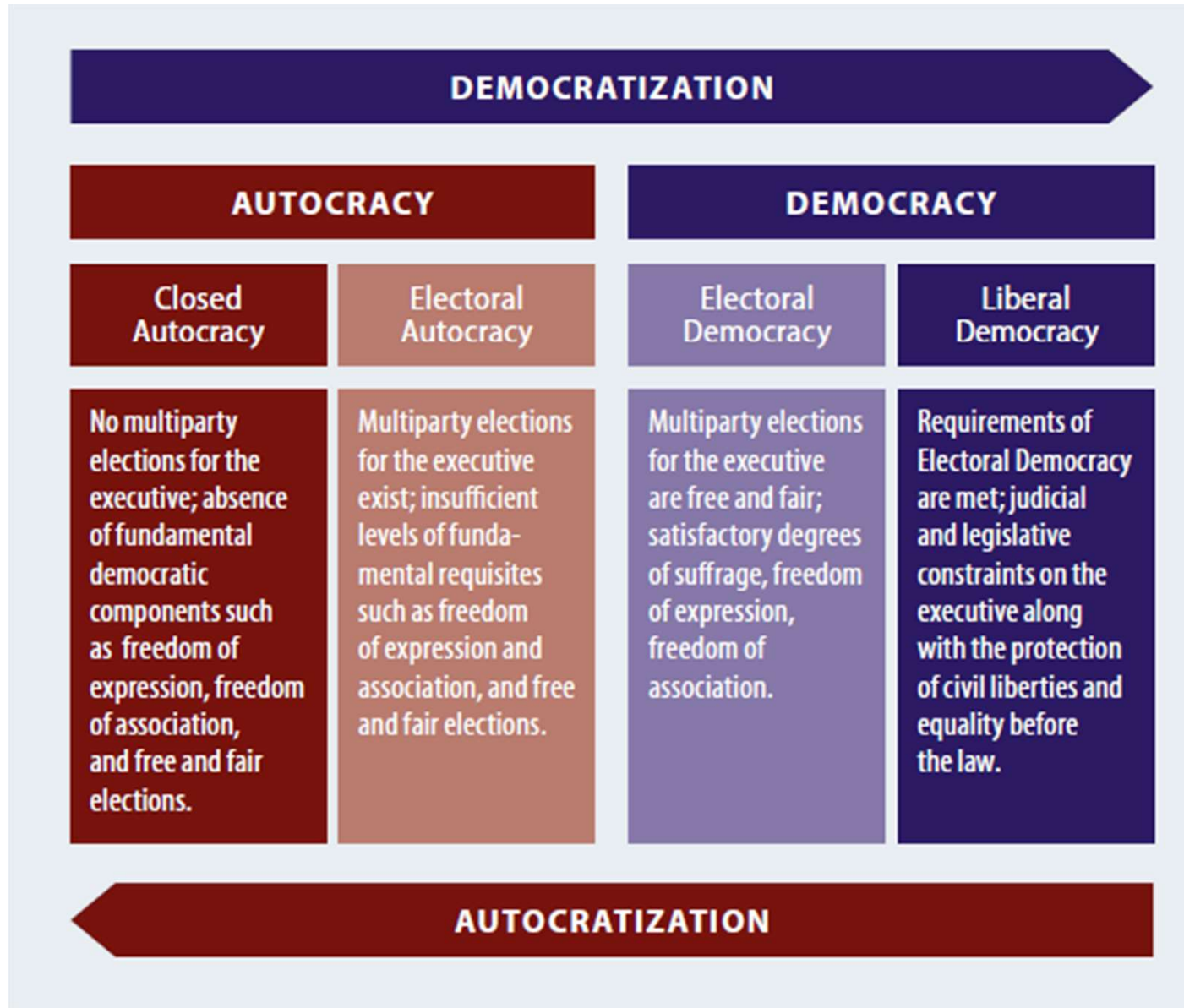
The High-Level Group on the future of social protection and of the welfare state in the EU will present its final report and recommendations tomorrow, 7 February 2023.



Autocratization

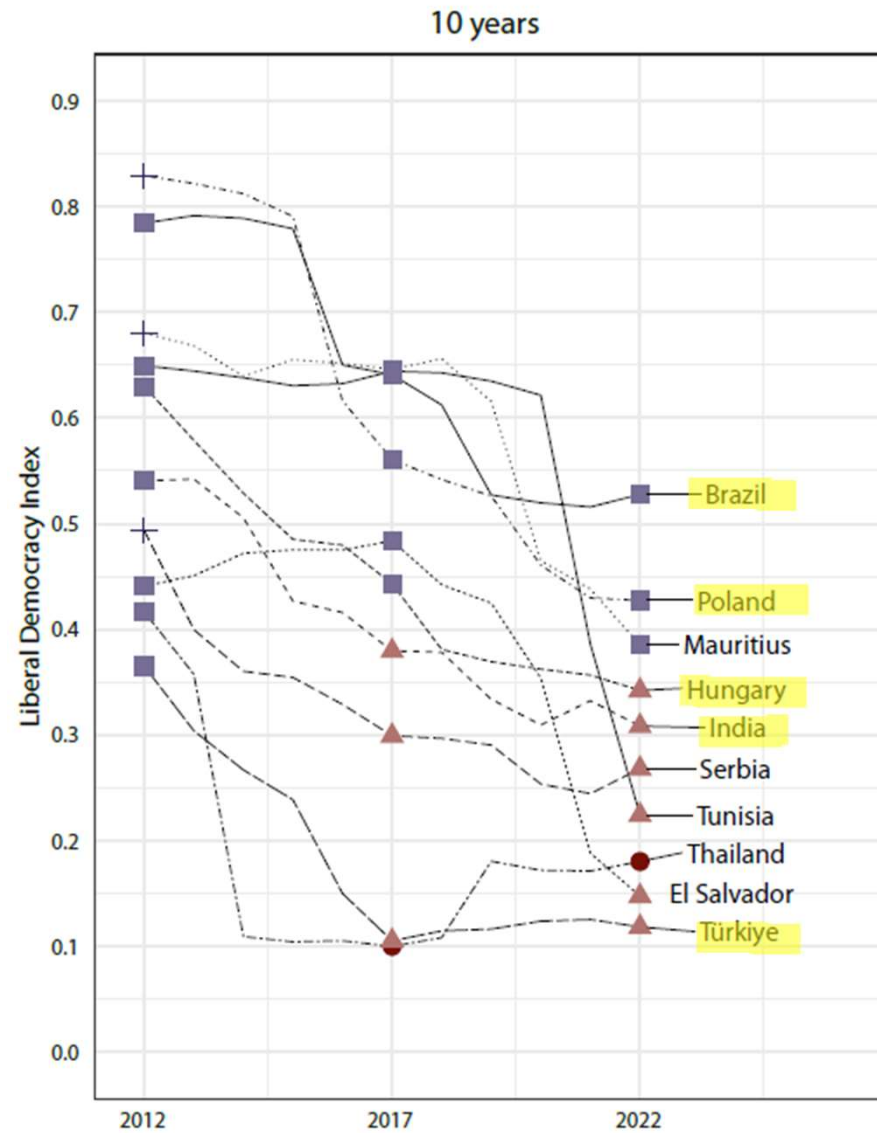


Papada et.al. 2023



Papada et.al. 2023

FIGURE 12. TOP 10 AUTOCRATIZING COUNTRIES (10-YEARS



Third wave **autocratizers**

- Hold on to the **façade of democracy** (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019)
 - Limited outright coercion – they **need legitimacy**
 - **Illiberal democracy**: grey zone between democracies and autocracies—free (even if not fair) **elections held** (Zakaria 1994)
- **Social and economic policies** are crucial for maintaining and expanding power

Populism

- Not easily quantifiable
- Style of governance
- Division of the population – *us & them* (Mudde 2016; Müller 2019)
- Sole representation of *the people*
- Strong anti-elite discourse (inc. supranational elites)
- Negation of mainstream expertese
- Opposition is the *enemy* of the nation
- Centralized, personalized decision making
- Irresponsible?

Populism can happen within liberal democracies



Politics and Governance (ISSN: 2183–2463)
2020, Volume 8, Issue 3, Pages 71–81
DOI: 10.17645/pag.v8i3.2922

Article

When Populist Leaders Govern: Conceptualising Populism in Policy Making

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Ideal type of populist policy making

Policy content

Ideologically multifaceted and diverse

Heterodox policy elements with frequent policy innovations challenging mainstream policy paradigms

Reflecting majoritarian preferences, hostility against unpopular minorities

Radical and paradigmatic policy reforms

Policy process

Circumventing established institutions, downplaying veto players

Limiting participation of technocratic policy experts, opposition parties and civil society actors

Direct communication with the electorate

Policy discourse

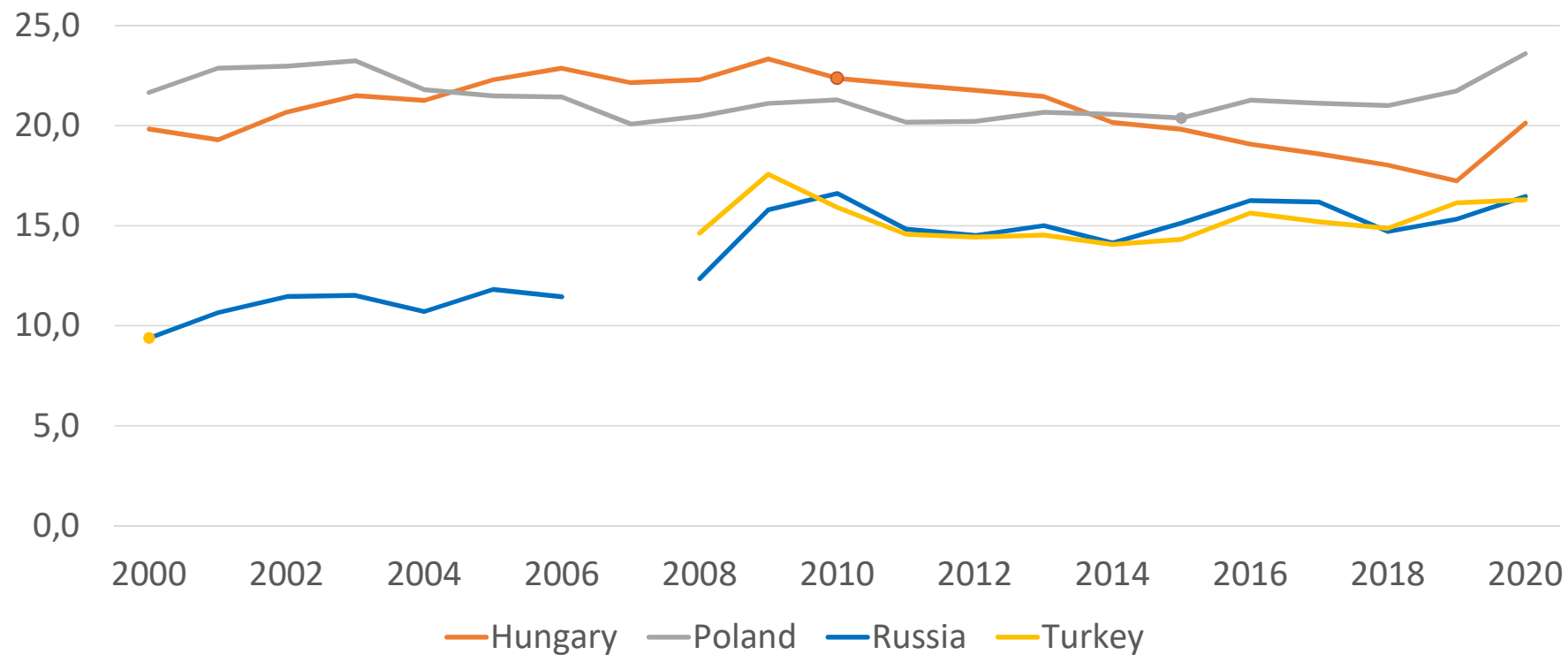
Extensive use of discursive governance

Tabloid, highly emotional communication style, recurrent crisis framing

Dominance of Manichean discourses

Comparing welfare effort

General government expenditure on social protection and health as a share of GDP



Source: IMF Government Finance Statistics. Available at:
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=a0867067-d23c-4ebc-ad23-d3b015045405>



Article

An illiberal welfare state emerging? Welfare efforts and trajectories under democratic backsliding in Hungary and Turkey

Journal of European Social Policy
2023, Vol. 33(2) 201–215
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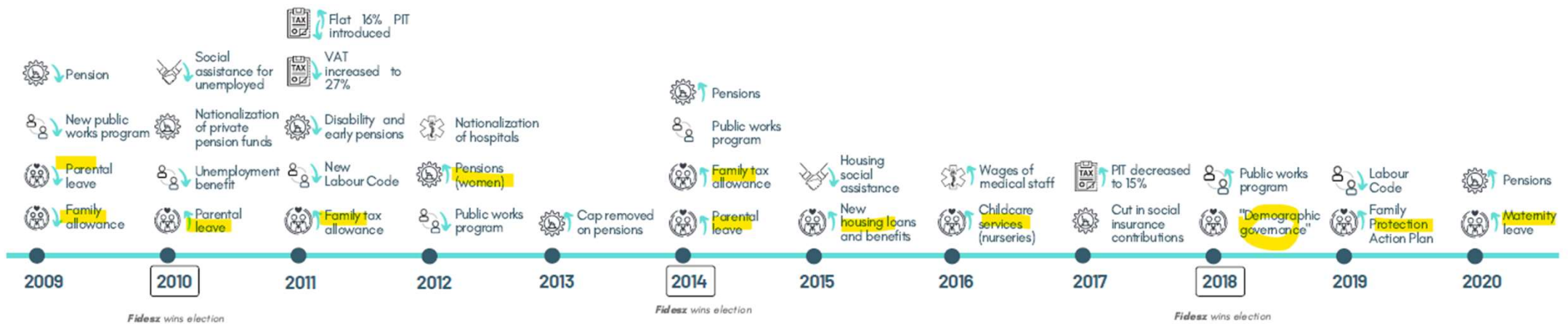
Dorottya Szikra

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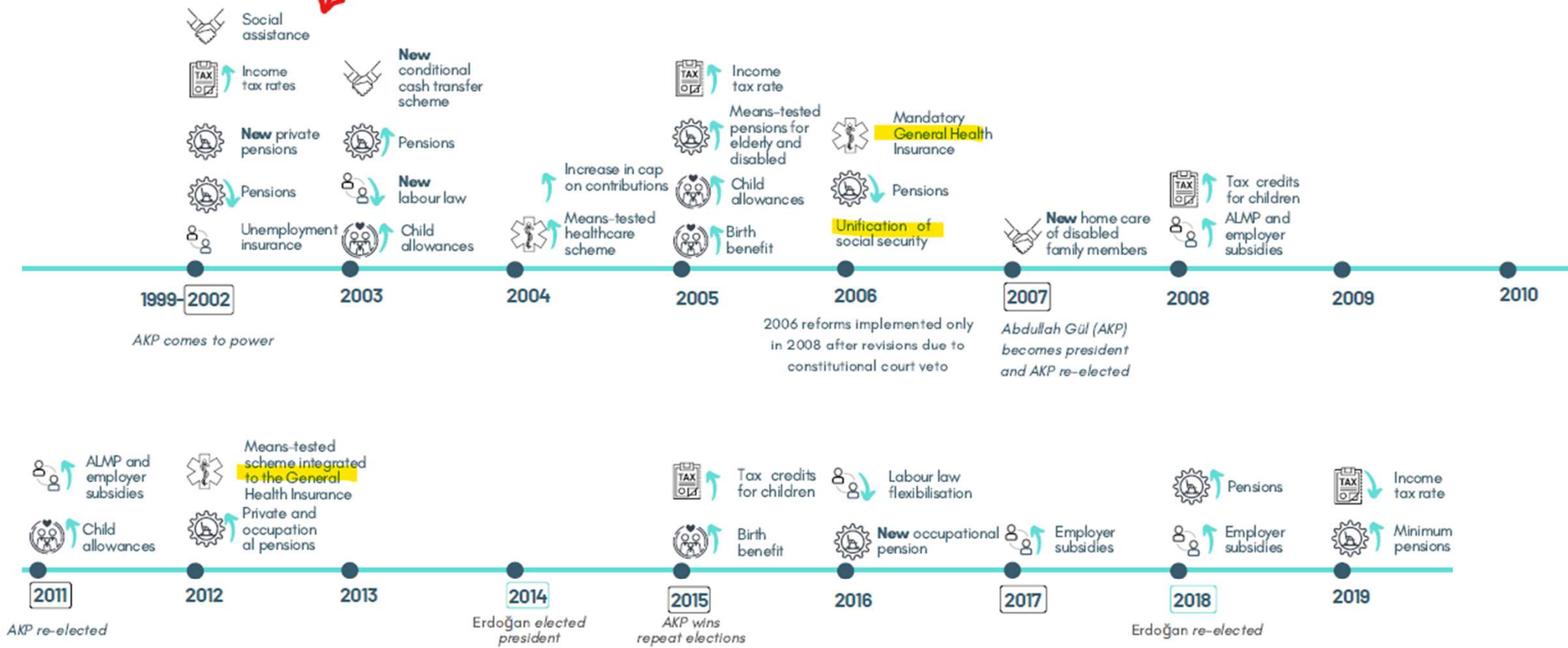
SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy, University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany

TIMELINE - HUNGARY SOCIAL POLICY REFORMS



- Family policy
- Pension policy
- Healthcare policy
- Tax policy
- Social Assistance
- Labour Market
- Election Year

TIMELINE - TURKEY SOCIAL POLICY REFORMS



- Family policy
- Pension policy
- Healthcare policy
- Tax policy
- Social Assistance
- Labour Market
- Parliamentary Election Year
- Presidential Election Year

HUNGARY – EXCLUSIONARY SOCIAL POLICY

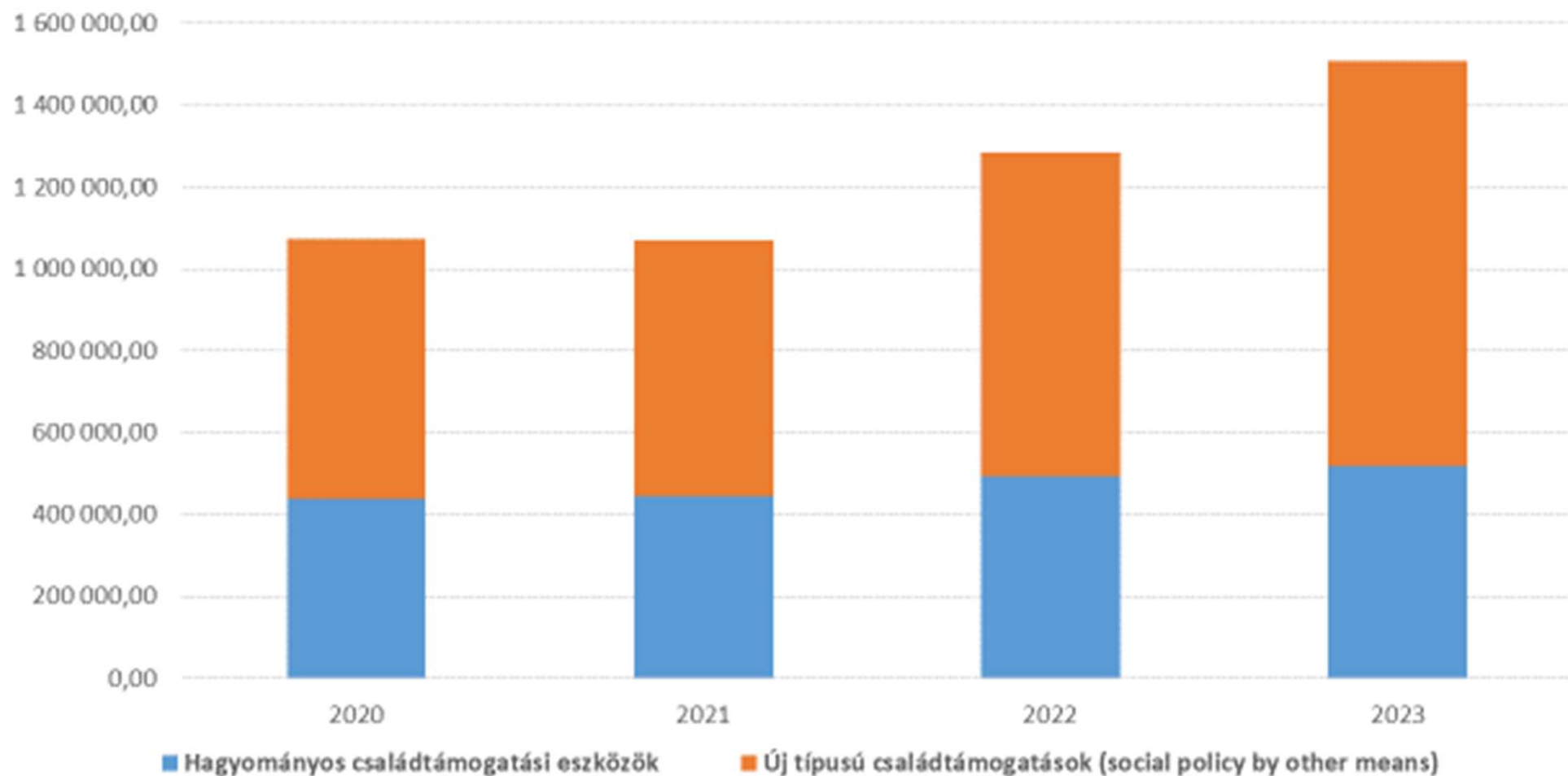


Policy change

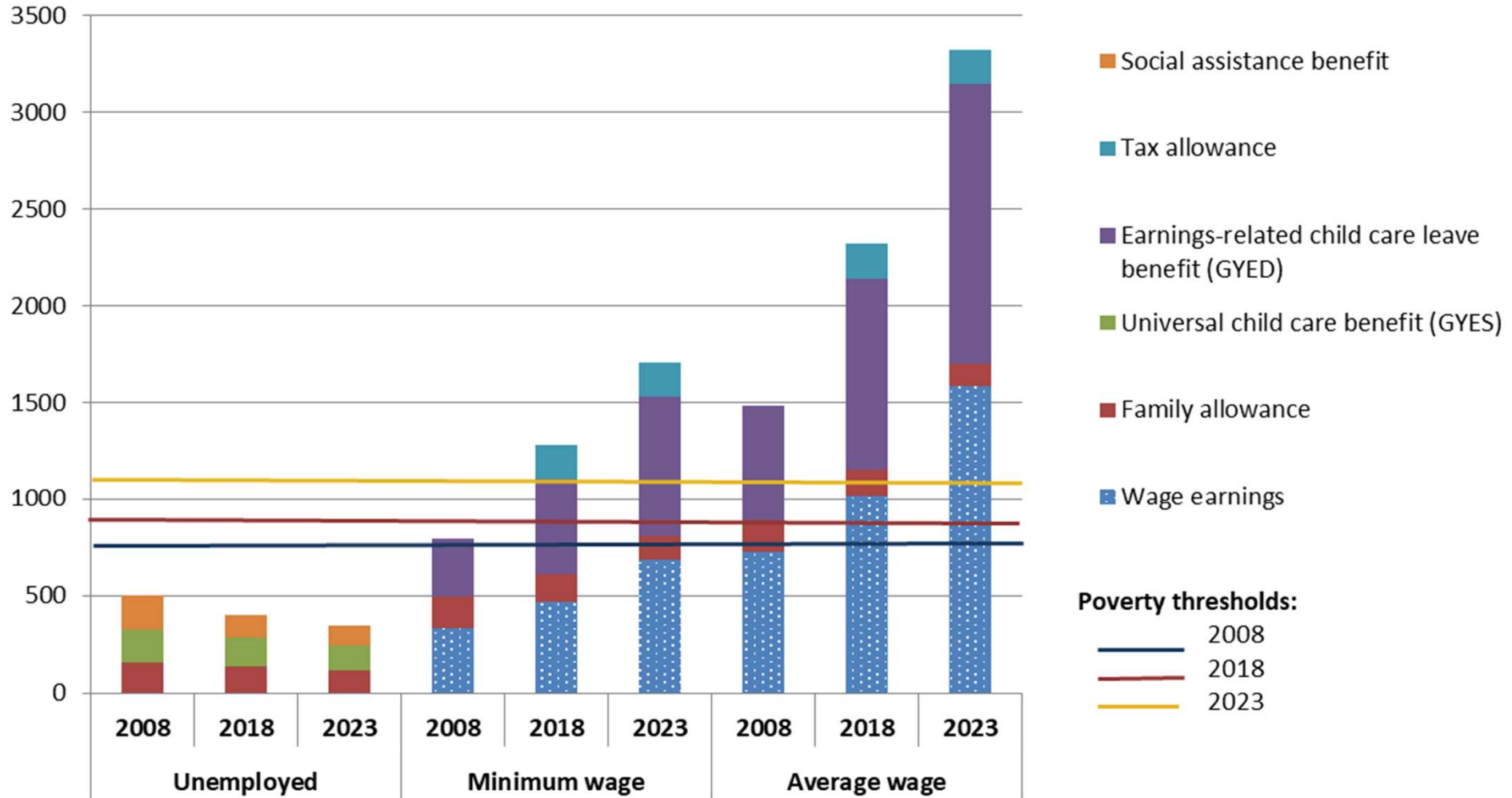
- Tax allowance expansion
 - 2015 – New grants and loans
 - **2018 – Demographic governance** - Grants, loans linked to *marriage*, employment and wage
-

- Starving universal & means tested benefits
- 2017-2020s – anti-gender equality & LGBTQ propaganda & legislation
(-- Russia)

Hagyományos és „más típusú” családtámogatásra fordított költségvetési kiadások (millió forint)



Estimated income for three types of families with two dependent children (one below 2 years old) in 2008, 2018 and 2023 in Hungary



POLAND – UNIVERSALISM FOR FAMILIES

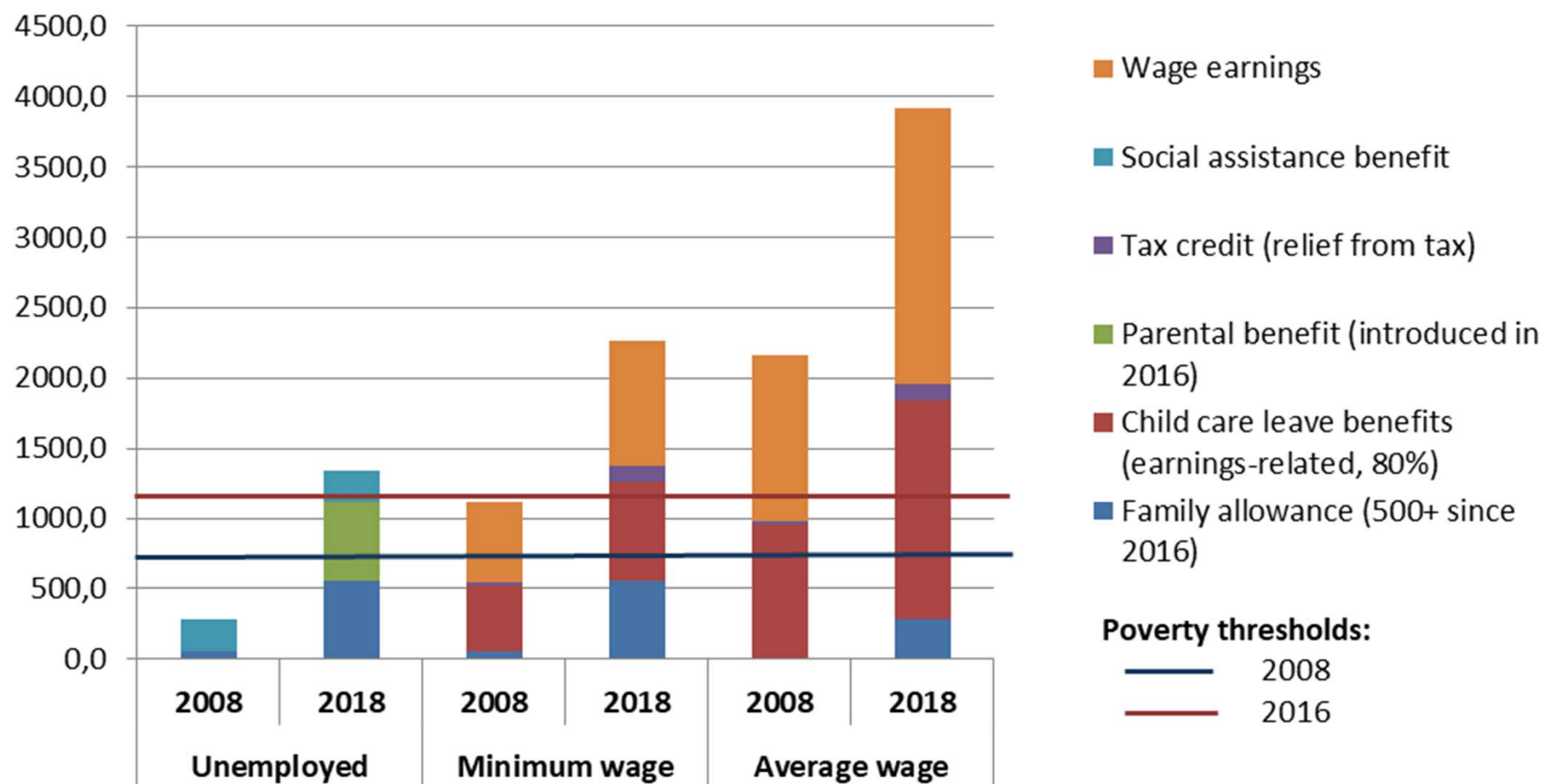


Poland, 2016-2023

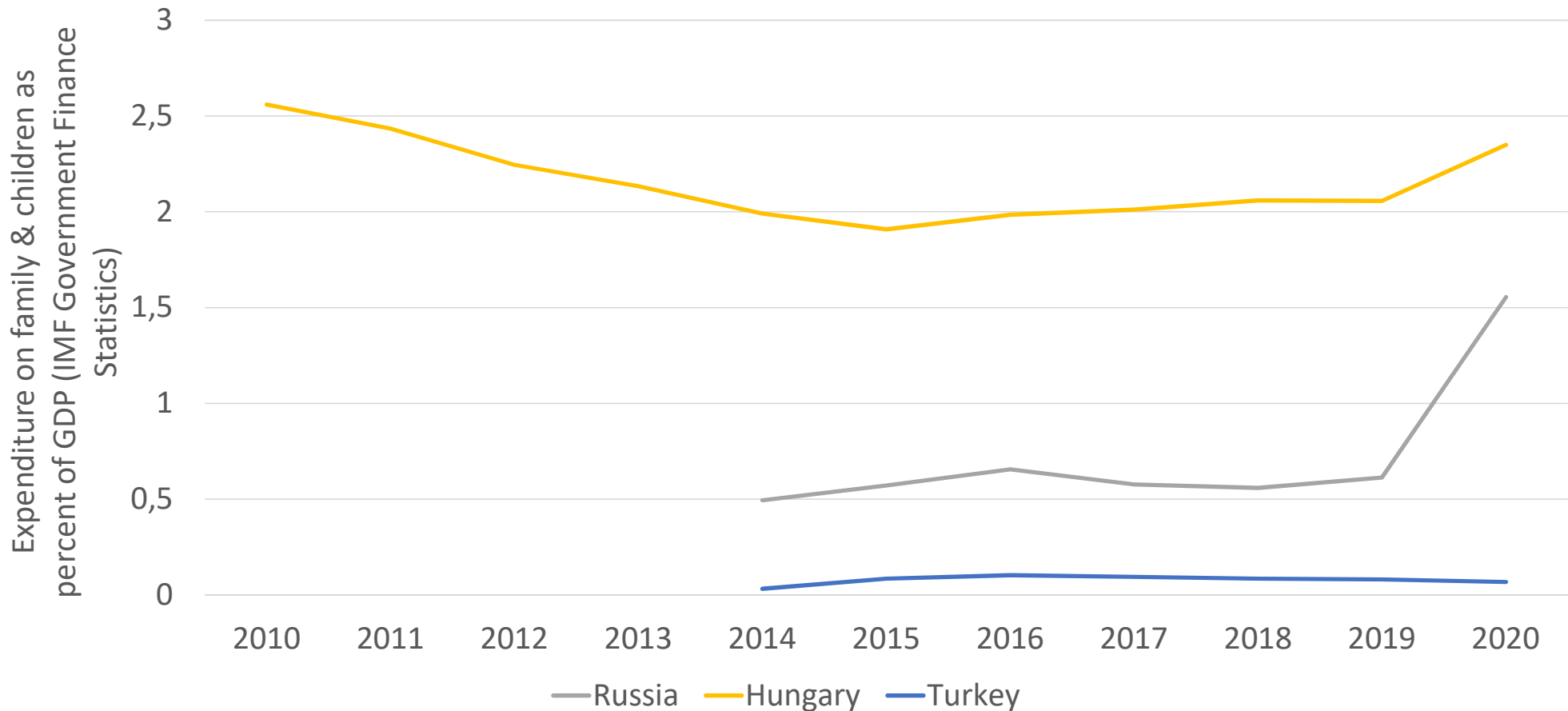
- Focus on fertility rates, well-being of families, child poverty
- 500+ family allowance (800+ since 2024!)
- 1000 Zł for parental leave benefit for the non-employed
- Expansion of work-related benefits
- Services (kindergarten and nurseries)
- 2020 – anti-abortion law
- **Paradigm shift**
 - IDEATIONAL – towards FAMILIES
 - SOCIAL POLICY – towards universalism
- **Eliminating child poverty**



Changes in the income structure of families with two dependent children between 2008 and 2018 in PPS in Poland

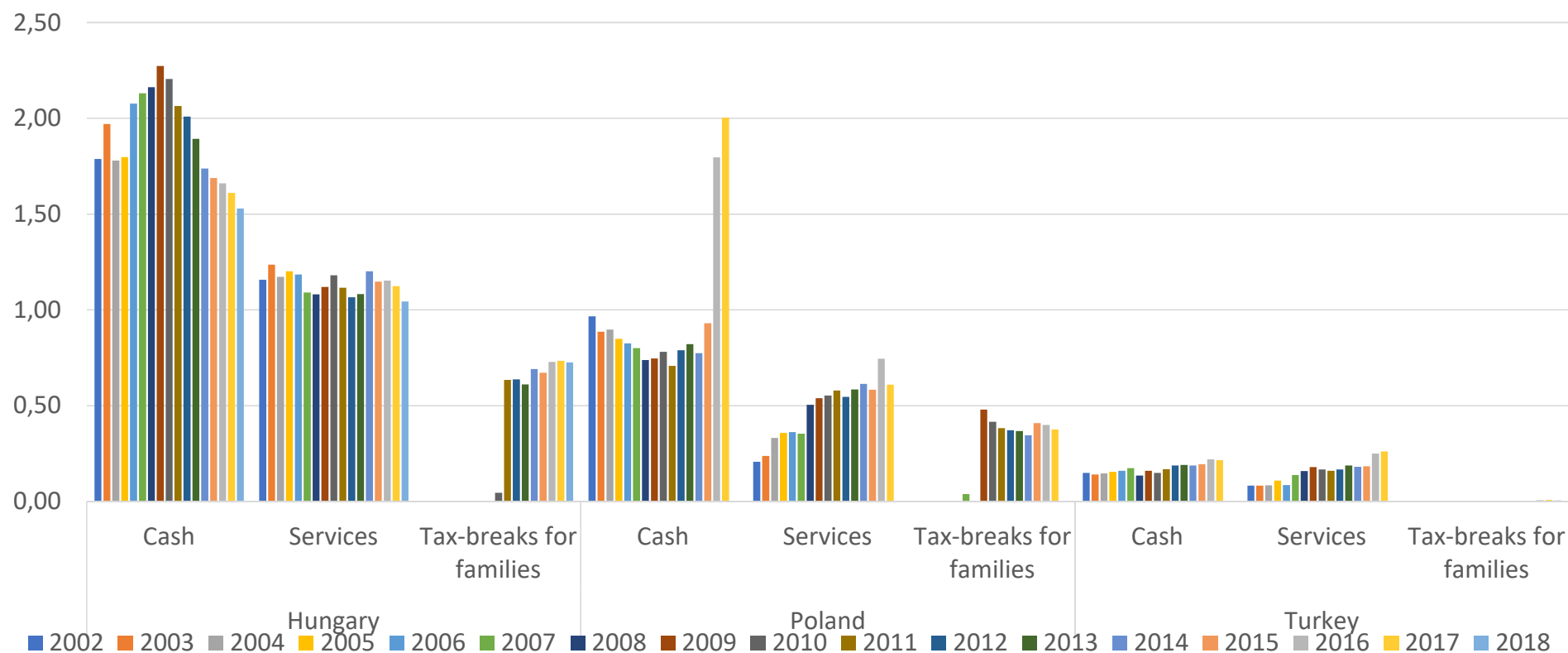


Expenditure on family & children - % of GDP



IMF data for family policy is lower than comparable OECD data – may be underestimating spending

Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures, % of GDP



Source: OECD Family Database, 2000-2019. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

	POLAND (2015-2023)	HUNGARY (2010-)
EXPENDITURE	Increase	Decrease (+ tax expenditure)
POLICY CHANGE	Pro-natalism + child poverty 3-child family model Major policy expansion (Family500+) New parental leave (1000 ZI) Expansion of childcare services - Maluch + program Universalizing	Pro-natalism 3-child family model Policy expansion – social policy by other means (tax credits, grants, loans) Expansion of nursery coverage Stratifying
COMPLEMENTING MEASURES	Early retirement for women Parental supplement to pensions	Early retirement for women Parental leave for grandparents

	INDIA	TURKEY	RUSSIA	POLAND	HUNGARY
Institutional features/	Residual welfare state Welfareism	Unification of social security Universalizing Modernizing	Universalizing Innovation	Universalizing	Exclusionary expansion
Flagship social policy programs	Conditional Transfers Cash Public works	Health care Public works	Family policy Pensions	Family policy Pensions	Family policy Public works
Who is included? (Target groups)	Lower casts Women	Informal workers Women (incl. housewives)	Families Women Elderly Poor	Families Women Elderly	Families with stable income Poor
Who is excluded?	Some of the most impoverished (incl. Muslims)	-	-	-	Long-term unemployed Most impoverished (incl. Roma)
Discourses	Re-branding programs Hindi families Paternalism	Large family Employment	Traditional family Poverty	Traditional family Poverty	Traditional family

Content: What kind of social policies?

- Come to power during economic crises and campaign with welfarist promises
- Expand welfare programs right away
- Issue paradigmatic reforms
- Two flagship programs
 - Cross-class coalition
 - Targeted to the poor
- Universalizing (Turkey, Poland) or selective (India, Hungary)

Procedures: HOW do autocratizers make decisions?

- ABRUPT
- CENTRALIZED
- PERSONALIZED
- CONSULTS ONLY WITH LOYAL CIVIL SOCIETY – EXCLUDES OTHERS
- NEGLECTS OPPOSITION
- MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION
- NON-TRANSPARENT
- AVOID PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES – individual motions, PM orders
- SIDELINES VETO-PLAYERS

Discourses

- FOCUS ON WOMEN as mothers
- TRADITIONAL FAMILIES & DEMOGRAPHY
- SOCIAL POLICY PROPAGANDA – MEDIATIZED LAUNCHING OF PROGRAMS
- DESERVINGNESS
- NATIVISM
- TACIT EXCLUSION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES
- RE-BRANDING OLD PROGRAMS

Thank you, comments welcome!

Related publications

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- Szelewa, Dorota és D. Szikra (2024) Fighting gender equality under the pandemic. The case of Polish and Hungarian anti-gender equality and anti-LGBTQ+ policies under the COVID-19 crisis. In *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, (forthcoming)