

*Eötvös Loránd University*  
*Faculty of Humanities*

**Theses for doctoral (PhD) dissertation**

by  
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with the title:

*„Norway’s European integration in the wake of the referendums”*

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## **1. Goals of the research, sources used**

Concerning the Scandinavian countries' process of integration with the EC and then later the EU, several analyses and works have already been published in Hungary, mainly concentrating on the countries that are already members of the EU, and analysing their political progress in this field. Norway's case, however, is unique among the Nordic nations, as the kingdom's voters have already twice rejected membership in the Union: first in 1972, and later in 1994. The field of Norwegian-EU relations, and the Norwegian attempts towards full accession still remain a sparsely researched and written field in Hungary, with few, if any works that offer full synthesizing approach. The books and papers published in Hungarian rather deal with some specific aspects of the Norwegian political and economic system, and the country's attitude towards Europe and the EU – however, they still count as very valuable sources in their own field.

Our goal was mainly to compile a dissertation which offers a complex and comprehensive analysis of the Norwegian EU-accession attempts, and the historical, economical and social reasons which were behind the rejection of membership. In this, we dare and try to include both a historical view of Norway, and a political analysis of the events. In our view it is indeed necessary to include a monographic introduction of the Norwegian political system, due to the relative absence of it from Hungarian literature in this field – and also because knowledge concerning the state, political decision-making procedures, and political parties in Norway is imperative in understanding the details of the EU-accession process, the historical and social background behind the Norwegian voters' decision, and their relationship with and approach to the political elite.

Besides giving a historical and political overview, the focal point of the dissertation is logically placed on the two Norwegian referenda of 1972 and 1994, but due to limitations of the size of our works, we rather concentrate on the deeper and more thorough analysis of the 1994 event, which is closer in its moment and its effects as well.

After World War II. Norway gave up her former neutrality, and became a founding member of NATO, and later of EFTA, the European Free Trade Association. From this a most logical path led the country towards full prospective membership in the EC and later the EU – and this issue enjoyed a healthy majority of assent amongst the main political actors – the parliamentary parties, and the elite. The people, the voters however disagreed on both occasions, and rejected the accession treaties by a clear –if small- popular vote. This striking fact brings up the phenomenon of a clear dichotomy between people and elite, and should lead us to try and look for the reasons along the lines of political and social cleavages. It is by

this reason that after covering the 1972 plebiscite, we try to analyse the political events of the second half of the 1980's –when the idea of EU-membership once more gained momentum– and later to explore the road leading up to the 1994 referendum. This later voting we try to cover much more in depth, and not only to write about the conditions and circumstances in the Norwegian political arena of the time, but also about the European political procedures connected to this point, and finally to discover and analyse attitudes and points of view of probably the most important, and in itself, highly polarized political actor: the mass of Norwegian voters. After covering the pro- and contra-EU arguments of the contending parties, we must also deal with a very important field: the current relations between Norway and the EU, as these constitute the framework of contacts, and Norway's possibilities up to this very day. Finally, as the dissertation aims to take a multi-disciplinary approach, we must not overlook the introduction of the part of Norwegian legal system and framework which is relevant to the accession process.

Our basic approach and hypothesis is that we can hardly expect Norway to join the EU in the coming few years – and this theory we must contrast with the current political climate and possibilities of the two EEA members that opted to stay out of the EU, not the least because the outcome of recent parliamentary elections in Norway on the fall of 2009 held high importance in the question of EU-membership. The main goal and aim of the dissertation is to introduce the arguments and factors both supporting and contradicting our slightly pessimistic hypothesis, and although the author lacks a good enough crystal ball to make predictions, also to chalk out the future possibilities for Norway.

In the process of preparing and compiling the dissertation, considerable assistance and support was provided to this author by his previous undergraduate and doctoral studies, as well as the experience of conducting extensive research work in libraries and archives of Norway. Essential support was given by the Royal Norwegian Foreign Ministry, which graciously provided a research scholarship in 1999, and which enabled this author to familiarise himself with the system and stock of primarily the University Library of Oslo. In later years, while aiming to collect as much relevant primary sources as possible, the greatest help and support was given by the Archives of the Parliament of Norway (*Stortingsarkivet*). Without these valuable and easily researchable materials –drafts and full texts of bills, interpellations, and background materials– the author would surely have achieved less – and in fact the amount of accessible material was so extensive that we needed to select and pick the

most important ones. Also among the primary sources, the data and compilations about Norwegian elections and referenda, published by the Central Statistical Bureau of Norway had a very high relevance to our topic, as without these we would have been unable to analyse the results of the voting in depth. As we were aiming to cover the human-geographic aspects of the negative outcome of the plebiscite, these data were more than essential to obtain.

The most important secondary sources and works are available mainly in Norwegian and English, and probably the single most important one is the monography edited by Jenssen and Valen, with the title „*Brussel midt imot*”<sup>1</sup>. Among the relevant Norwegian publications we must also mention the works of Tor Bjørklund: his book covering the 1972 referendum<sup>2</sup>, and his papers on the various aspects of the 1994 voting. Professor Bjørklund also provided invaluable personal help to this author, as the supervisor of his 1999 research scholarship in Oslo, giving assistance in obtaining the important works and sources.

Concerning the Norwegian-EU relations, we generally find less monographic works and more dedicated papers on this topic, both in English and Norwegian, but the advantage of this is certainly the fact that we are able to rely on many different sources, and thus having the opportunity of giving a more thorough overview.

Among the Hungarian-language publications we find very few works dealing with our main topic, it being a mostly uncharted territory in this country. This fact is on one hand a bit of a disadvantage, as we were able to include less sources: the book by Sándor Gallai<sup>3</sup> that covers the Scandinavian countries' welfare models and their European integration is more or less the single monographic work dealing at least partly with our topic. We were able to find interesting and valuable papers, though, and this author hopes, that an advantage of this situation can be that his work hopefully would fill a gap, and have a suppletory role.

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<sup>1</sup> JENSSEN, Anders Todal - VALEN, Henry (red.) (1995): *Brussel midt imot (folkeavstemningen om EU)*, Oslo, ad Notam Gyldendal

<sup>2</sup> BJØRKLUND, Tor (1982): *Mot strømmen: Kampen mot EF 1961-1972* Universitetsforlaget, Oslo

<sup>3</sup> GALLAI Sándor (1998) : *A skandináv modell története: nemzeti utak és európai integráció* Aula Kiadó, Budapest

## **2. Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into five parts, of which the first part deals with the chronological introduction and coverage of the history of Norway, starting with the Viking age up until contemporary times. Among the events we place a specific importance on the year 1814 which saw the drafting and introduction of Norway's first constitution – being observably foretimed in its era. Later, the years around the turn of the 19th-20th centuries also has a prominent place in Norwegian history, and therefore in our dissertation as well. This was the era of the introduction of parliamentary democracy in Norway, and perhaps even more importantly, the year 1905 saw the country regain its full independence after more than 500 years. These tide of events and , and their circumstances had a long-lasting effect in the formation of Norwegian democratic traditions, and the rebirth of national pride. The notion and feeling of independence remained so important in the hearts of Norwegians, that it did in fact become a decisive factor in both EU-referenda many decades later.

The first part of the dissertation concludes with the events of the 1950s and 1960s, and the following are later chronicled in the third and fourth parts.

The second part of our work deals with and covers the Norwegian political system in detail. After references to the constitutional law, the electoral system, the functions and composition of parliament and government, we also cover the issue and institution of the monarchy – although less thoroughly, as the king and kingdom has all but ceremonial roles in the political arena. The second part then deals with the political and social cleavages present in Norway, and analyses the seven important political parties – those that regularly make it into the parliament at elections. We also delve into the parties' histories, structure, their ideological background, and their embedment in society.

The third part of the dissertation handles the first Norwegian referendum about EC-membership, held in 1972. We delineate the chain of events of the 1960s, and the road leading up to the accession negotiations – also covering the international environment and circumstances in which Norway was placed at this time. We try to give an outline of the other Nordic states' aspirations on joining the EC, and take into account the factors, that led to the first attempts being maimed. With reference to the Nordic cooperation this part also includes the history of the fledgling, and then later, developed organizations of Scandinavian integration – and compares these with the European integrational process, which was

sometimes happening parallel with them. We try to analyse whether the effects of these were competitive with or complementing to each other.

Referring particularly to the Norwegian situation we present the national debate on EC-membership, which was a relatively new phenomenon in the sense, that it became an unexpectedly heated one, with social and civil organizations taking up really rigorous stances in it, and engaging in sometimes desperate and bitter quarrels.

Finally, the third part concludes with the in-depth analysis of the events and results of the 1972 referendum, and the covering of the reasons why the people moved on to reject Norway's EC-membership.

The fourth part of the dissertation is the most extensive one both in terms of range and depth of contents. We follow up the events from the 1980-s, and first deal with the institutional attachment and relationship between the EFTA-member Norway on one side, and the EU on the other. This process eventually led to a new organization being formed by the 1990's: the EEA, or European Economic Area. The EEA has an utmost importance in the Norwegian-EU relationship even nowadays, as this is the institution which gives the legal and practical framework. From the point of view of the dissertation it also has an interesting role, as the already established EEA-membership was perceived as a major argument by the EU-opponents for voting „No”.

We try to give a thorough analysis of Norway's general situation at the time of the commencing EU-accession negotiations, with references being made to the country's place in the international arena, the state of its economy, its inter-Nordic framework of relations, but we also give a mention to the language issues, and the legal background of the whole accession process – both on the Norwegian and the EU-side.

An important section of the fourth part deals with the ever-important development of Norwegian public opinion towards EU-membership, this being a topic of utmost implications, as the question of Norwegian accession to the EU was ultimately decided by the people. We give an analysis of the external and internal elements and factors influencing the formation of public opinion not only in Norway, but in Sweden and Finland. The latter two countries were conducting accession negotiations parallel with Norway, and the tide of public opinion in these three Nordic countries were highly interdependent on each other.

Connected to the public opinion, we analyse the campaign of the referendum as well, and try to round up the important and more or less decisive arguments of both sides, that could have influenced the final outcome of the plebiscite.

Arguably, the most important sub-chapter of the fourth part deals with the in-depth analysis of the final outcome of the referendum, and the examination of the possible causes that saw Norwegian voters rejecting EU-membership for a second time – an unprecedented event in the history of European integration. In this analysis we cannot by-pass the cleavages in the society, which, after 1972, again seemed to have a decisive role. Many pundits consider the almost evenly balanced camps of EU-supporters and opponents a result of the stark contrast between centre and periphery – socially and geographically as well, and we have to agree that certain groups of the population, or certain strata of society were almost predestined to take this or that side in the campaign.

The final, fifth part of the dissertation covers the period of time from the 1994 referendum to nowadays. We try to get an insight into the setting and processes of Norwegian politics after the less than unexpected decision, into the phasing of public opinion once more, and also the otherwise ever-deepening ties between Norway and the EU within the framework of the EEA. This latter organization and Norway's commitment to it also raises the question that despite the Norwegians opting not to join the EU, can we consider it a quasi-member, or not – given the fact that it practically cooperates with the EU on an institutional level in almost all fields. When analysing this we also cover the situation and possibilities given by the existing treaties, the EEA-framework, and last but not least, Norway's full membership in the Schengen Zone.

The dissertation finally concludes with weighing up the future possibilities of Norway, and deliberating when and how will it become possible for the country to take steps towards full EU-membership – if at all. The situation is certainly delicate, as in the past 15 years the EU itself has also undergone considerable changes, and has enlarged itself. All this certainly means that not only has Norway to weigh up her options, but the country also has to deal with the fact that the European Union itself is a sensibly different organization than the one Norway has tried to join in 1994.

### **3. Scientific results of the dissertation**

With the dissertation encompassing many areas and fields of Norwegian history previously mainly unresearched and unpublished in Hungary, the author hopes that it can provide a thorough background for understanding the complex and unique history and relations of Norway and the European Union.

As for the methodology of the dissertation, a work in the field of contemporary history can hardly go without an inter-disciplinary approach, and the necessary historiography, and analyses from the side of political sciences. Dealing with the history and background of the European integration of Norway, one must delve into several different areas of political sciences. Examining the political institutions, the conflicts of political processes, and the general substance of politics we try to approach the Norwegian political system from different viewpoints, and cover the field of governmental system, division of powers, party structure, and public policy as well. In this field a very important element that our work uses extensively is the comparative approach to analysis – as we need to compare the Norwegian situation not only with its Nordic neighbours, but with contemporary European proceedings as well. The dissertation mentions a few events of European integrational history, but as our work primarily deals with Norway, we cannot undertake an in-depth introduction of general history of European integration. However at the relevant connecting points with Norway we do make mention of the difference between and the significance of the two main integrational models: the federalist and the functional ones.

It is by no means an easy task to sum up, why and how the Norwegian voters have rejected the country's full EU-membership on two occasions. This author does believe that it is practically impossible to give a direct answer to this questions, all the more because both plebiscites brought a very small difference between supporters and opponents. Some pundits believe –and we can give a certain amount of credit to this- that the referenda, however inconclusive they have been, constituted a success in the sense, that the stronger Euro-sceptics managed to defeat the political establishment on two occasions. True, the staunch defenders of Norwegian independence perceived the rejections a great national success and feat. In searching for an answer why the public rejected EU-membership we must contemplate the possible historical reasons, examine the social and economic cleavages, and try to analyse the outcome in the light of all these. The author firmly does believe that all these factors, together with others did all play their own role in the evolution of public opinion.

The cleavages in Norwegian society became clearly visible in the case of both referenda, and by determining these we can accept the fact, that the question of Norwegian EU-membership became an issue between centre and periphery, in geographical, social, economic and political senses as well. Finally, as the results show us, the periphery managed to defeat the centre on both occasions, also due to the fact, that the opponents' camp was much more organized, and managed to present more clean-cut concepts and answers.

As for Norway's situation nowadays, and its relations with the EU, we can establish as a fact, that however strong the anti-European sentiments are in the country, Norway is probably the one independent nation, that the EU as an organization and unit has the strongest ties with. Norway is part of the EEA framework, the internal EU market, the Schengen Zone, and is an active participant in the overwhelming majority of the Union's programmes. Practically the only –and single most important- disadvantage is, that not being part of the established decision-making institutions, Norway politically –but not economically- is still something of an outsider.

The most recent events of the 2008-2009 financial and economic crisis had limited negative effects on the generally healthy Norwegian economy, but brought a new, indirect factor into the picture, namely Iceland. The island nation had been another firm opponent of EU in the past, but with the crisis destroying its banking sector, the political situation underwent fundamental changes, and Reykjavik has already submitted its application for full EU-membership. This of course does not have any direct effects or repercussion to Norway, but with regards to the near future, it might have to re-evaluate its position in the EEA, as it is not by far impossible, that Norway will remain the sole member of it.

An almost certain focal point with any possible Norwegian EU-application in the future has to be the question of referendum. With this we have to turn once more to the title of our dissertation, as the public vote can certainly not be left out in the future. As the people have already twice defeated the government and the political elite in this field, it is a safe guess, that any future Norwegian application for EU-membership will only be submitted if there is a strong enough –and decisive- support from the public. This not being the situation presently, the author believes that he shall and ought not prognosticate when and how Norway can get political closer to the Union. The only certain thing is, that just like in the past, this has to be, and will be a democratic process. As for anything else, only time can tell us.

#### **4. Opportunities for further research**

The area covered in the dissertation still leaves us with many more possibilities to research, and to widen and deepen this work. A possibly more complex monography on Norway will have to include deeper insight into the history, the culture, and even the relevant literature of Norway, to make a genuinely multi-disciplinary product.

Another section which has ample possibilities for a deeper approach is the part dealing with the 1972 referendum, firstly with the inclusion of primary governmental and parliamentary sources, but also those secondary works that had to be omitted from this dissertation. There are still many more available materials open for research in the Parliamentary Archives, and one must also try to obtain any relevant and public documents from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry's archives. These can provide for an even more in-depth analysis especially of the political decision-making processes connected to the 1994 application.

A topic which is covered by this dissertation only in a cursory manner, and one that definitely deserves extensive research is Norwegian NATO-membership, and its implications in the country's security policies. This field has some intersections with EU-membership, which we have also mentioned in this dissertation, and would constitute an interesting addition to our main topic. Together with the relevant topics of general history of European integration this possible compilation has the chance and possibilities of making into a most interesting monography.

To sum up, this author's future plans for research and work in this field would first and foremost include a more in-depth coverage of the topics already included in this dissertation, and secondly the new inclusion of relevant topics that can provide even more insight in understanding the complicated and intertwining system of relations that exist between Norway and the European Union.

### **The author's publications connected to the subject**

1. „*Politikai rendszer és –kultúra Norvégiában*” („*Political system in Norway*”)  
In: Köz-Politika, 2001/5, pp. 35-45
2. „*Jobboldali-konzervatív pártok Norvégiában*” (*Right-wing, and conservative political parties in Norway*)  
In: Politikai Elemzések, 2002/3, pp. 61-74
3. „*Norway and European integration: prelude and consequences of the 1972 referendum*”  
In: Öt Kontinens, 2006 (ELTE-BTK Új- és Jelenkori Egyetemes Történeti Tanszék, Budapest) pp. 273-288
4. „*Norway's problematic European integration: the road from 1972 to the 1994 referendum*”  
In: Öt Kontinens, 2007 (ELTE-BTK Új- és Jelenkori Egyetemes Történeti Tanszék, Budapest) pp. 223-237
5. „*A kudarcot vallott 1994-es EU-népszavazás Norvégiában: az elutasítás okai és érvrendszerei*” (*The failed 1994 EU-referendum in Norway: reasons and arguments behind rejection*)  
In: Az Európai Unió a 21.század elején – az integráció múltja és aktualitásai (tanulmánykötet) Politológiai Párbeszéd Társasága – L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2010\*

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