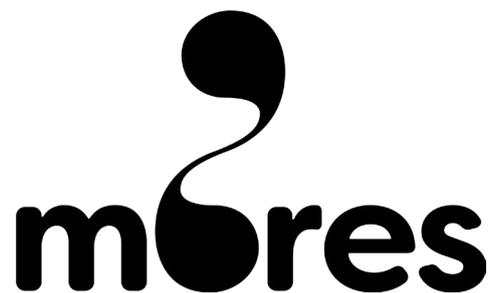


MORES Annual Report: 2025

Research, tools, and
analysis on how moral
emotions unite and
divide



WORKING PAPER SERIES



MORAL EMOTIONS IN POLITICS: HOW THEY UNITE, HOW THEY DIVIDE

Publication Title: MORES Annual Report: 2025

Contact: contact@mores-horizon.eu

Information: <https://mores-horizon.eu>



Funded by
the European Union

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Table of Contents

1. 2025 in Scientific Findings	02
2. MORES Pulse: AI-Powered Emotion Analysis	03
3. Peer-Reviewed Findings	04
4. Working Paper Series	07
5. Understanding Moral Emotions	09
6. More from Experts	10



1. 2025 in Scientific Findings

This year's contributions from MORES showcase how moral emotions structure political identities, shape policy, and influence democracy

With this report, we showcase results from a year of research, innovation, and knowledge exchange at MORES, an EU-funded project that examines how moral emotions—emotions that concern not just the person expressing them, but also the welfare of others—shape politics and society. Grounded in rigorous interdisciplinary inquiry, MORES also bridges scientific evidence with the practical need for ethical, emotionally intelligent governance in an era of populism and emotional polarisation.

A central achievement of 2025 is MORES Pulse, a multilingual AI application that detects moral emotions in text. Developed by researchers and trained on expert annotated datasets, MORES Pulse moves beyond sentiment analysis by detecting five core emotions across seven languages. It supports researchers, journalists, civil society organisations, and public institutions in understanding the emotional architecture of narratives. It also helps them—and anyone else—in producing, analysing, and even refining communication that is both audience aware and ethically responsible.

This report also synthesises findings from key MORES research, published either as part of MORES's working paper series or by prestigious scientific journals. These include analyses of Hungarian government narratives, examinations of political emotions in European television series, text mining of parliamentary discourse, and new insights into polarisation, charismatic leadership, authoritarianism, and public administration. Together, these contributions show some of the ways that moral emotions—fear, pride, anger, and others—structure political identities, shape policy debates, and influence democratic accountability. Our growing glossary of moral emotions further clarifies how these complex individual and collective feelings unite and divide society, translating scientific literature into accessible language.

Follow us online and at conferences for even more insights, new publications, and tools throughout the year. In the meantime, we trust this selection supports a more reflective, responsible engagement with political emotions—strengthening governance, social cohesion, and democratic culture.



“ MORES is a research and innovation project. Through tools, evidence, and public knowledge, it promotes a more reflective, responsible engagement with political emotions ”

Zsolt Boda

MORES's Principal Investigator, ELTE
Centre for Social Sciences,
Budapest



2. MORES Pulse: AI-powered Emotion Analysis



A powerful application that reveals anger, fear, joy, sadness, and disgust in any text. Private and free



Sentiment analysis tells you whether language is positive, negative, or neutral. That is where it stops. MORES Pulse does something more demanding. It reads for specific moral emotions.

Developed in-house by MORES researchers across Europe, Pulse is a free, multilingual AI application that detects emotional tone at the sentence level, identifying anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and joy across texts of any length or genre. Where sentiment analysis flattens meaning into a score, Pulse maps how emotion moves through a text, revealing contextual patterns that other aggregate measures miss.

What distinguishes Pulse from commercial models is also how it was built. Rather than relying on broad, unverified data, Pulse was developed with rigorous human oversight at every stage. It was designed, trained, and validated by native-speaker experts at ELTE Centre for Social Sciences, which coordinates MORES, and research teams in France, Germany, and Poland. The result is consistent, reproducible output that general-purpose AIs on the market may not match.

The application supports Czech, English, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak—covering languages that other models generally under-serve. It returns three outputs: an overview chart of a text’s emotional profile; a sentence-by-sentence analysis, showing up to two dominant emotions with confidence scores; and a heatmap tracking how emotional intensity shifts across the text.

Another advantage provided by MORES Pulse is privacy. GDPR-compliant, it stores no personal data, deletes all submitted text immediately after analysis, requires no registration, and runs on European servers.

Designed for researchers, journalists, civil society organisations, and communications professionals, Pulse is open to all. Try it at: mores-horizon.eu/news/introducing-mores-pulse-ai.

“ MORES Pulse shows how scientific innovation can serve society. Users across sectors can analyse the emotionalisation of political debate and refine their communication in a free, privacy-first tool ”

Vinicius Gorczeski
MORES’s Communications Manager,
ELTE Centre for Social Sciences,
Budapest



3. Peer-Reviewed Findings

MORES's researchers published in several high-impact factor journals in 2025

The Rise of the Authoritarian Populist Right

MORES scholar Péter Krekó argues that the populist right's rise rests on its strategic appropriation of freedom: rebranding itself as the defender of free speech, autonomy, and sovereignty while advancing policies that erode these very rights. According to the author, Hungary serves as the clearest case, with Viktor Orbán invoking liberty as he constrains civil rights, minority protections, judicial independence, and assembly. This framing mirrors trends across the United States and Europe, where once-fringe actors now shape the mainstream. To counter this shift, the author proposes five principles: accept the far right's permanence, respect democratic outcomes, reclaim freedom, expose illiberal hypocrisy, and clearly name today's threats. Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/the-rise-of-the-authoritarian-populist-right.

Does Political Polarisation Undermine Democratic Accountability?

Drawing on observations from 28 European democracies between 2000 and 2020, Veronika Patkós and Bendegúz Plesz find a clear pattern: the more polarised a country is, the weaker its democratic accountability becomes. Using data from the ESS, World Bank, and V-Dem, the authors show that ideological and partisan polarisation make it harder for citizens to judge, reward, or punish governments—with partisan polarisation having the strongest effect. Within-country increases and between-country differences point in the same direction: more polarisation, less accountabil-

Published by the Brown Journal of World Affairs, Kreko's article shows how authoritarian leaders pose as "freedom fighters" while curbing rights

ity. The results hold across multiple models, highlighting a steady erosion of accountability in countries where political camps drift further apart. Learn more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/does-political-polarisation-undermine-democratic-accountability.

(Don't) Fear the Bad Leader

Much of what we call “bad leadership” is misdiagnosed, argues MORES scholar Rudolf Metz. Rather than the product of a leader’s flawed personality, harmful authority grows out of the relationship between leaders, followers, and the political environment. The article dismantles three common assumptions: that bad leadership stems from individual pathology, that followers merely conform, and that support reflects psychological similarity. Instead, followers actively legitimise leaders through shared identity, while traits such as authoritarianism, populism, or dark personality markers matter mainly when they reinforce group belonging. The analysis shows that identity, group prototypicality, and affective polarisation (or emotional divide)—and not deviation—shape moral judgment and political legitimacy. Learn more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/don-t-fear-the-bad-leader.

Nothing to See Here, Move Along!

Using European Social Survey data from 31 countries, Márton Hadarics and Péter Krekó show that authoritarian-leaning individuals misread the quality of democracy, especially in illiberal states. Authoritarian-leaning citizens consistently rate liberal-democratic principles as less important, yet they judge those same principles to be functioning better where democracy is actually weaker. This motivated misperception is strongest in countries undergoing democratic backsliding, such as Hungary, Poland, and Serbia. The authors argue that this “seeing democracy where it isn’t” shields illiberal governments from criticism by making authoritarian-inclined voters less alert to democratic erosion. Learn more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/nothing-to-see-here-move-along.

The Irresistible Allure of Charismatic Leaders?

Drawing on a 2022 Hungarian election survey, MORES scholar Rudolf Metz examines how populist attitudes and partisan identity shape how citizens attribute charisma to Viktor Orbán and Péter Márki-Zay, the joint opposition candidate. It distinguishes three layers of charisma: idealisation of leadership, perceptions of charismatic behaviour, and emotional attachment. Populist attitudes fuel broad leader idealisation, but partisanship more strongly determines both positive and negative charisma perceptions and emotional bonds. Populism does not directly increase leader-centred affective polarisation; idealising leadership does. Identity strength boosts emotional attachment to one’s own leader but does not intensify rejection of the rival, showing that out-group dislike is already built into group identity.



“ Before, the far right often used ‘politically correct’ language. Today, many no longer feel the need to mask openly racist views behind claims of free speech ”

Péter Krekó

MORES’s Team Leader at Eötvös
Loránd University, Budapest



Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/the-irresistible-allure-of-charismatic-leaders.

Hungary as an Ideological Informational Autocracy

MORES's analysis shows how Hungary has evolved into an ideological informational autocracy sustained by a “moral panic button”: centrally designed, repeatedly “pressed” campaigns—national consultations, referenda, billboards, push-polls—that manufacture crisis and mobilise moral emotions such as fear. Using qualitative visual and discourse analysis of the full corpus of government campaigns (2015–2024), researchers Endre Sik and Péter Krekó show how scapegoats (above all the “Soros phenomenon”) are framed as existential threats, fusing migration, anti-EU, gender and war and peace narratives. Media capture, state advertising, and influencer networks amplify these cues, normalising what the authors assess as permanent mobilisation and legitimising executive dominance. Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/hungary-as-an-ideological-informational-autocracy.

MORES research shows that authoritarian-leaning citizens judge liberal-democratic principles to work better where it actually performs worse

Behaviour in Public Administration

Jonathan Kamkhaji and Claudio Radaelli revisit how public administration understands individual behaviour. They trace three ideal-types: Homo Oeconomicus, driven by rational calculation; Homo Discentis, who learns and adapts under uncertainty; and Homo Emotionalis, whose reactions—especially in crises—shape decisions before conscious reasoning sets in. None of these perspectives alone explains how public managers actually act. The authors therefore propose Homo Faber, a more realistic image of the public manager who combines calculation, learning, and emotional responses. This integrated view offers a clearer foundation for analysing decisions and designing reforms in contemporary public organisations. Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/behaviour-in-public-administration.



4. Working Paper Series

New MORES research from
project scholars across Europe

Patterns of Emotionalisation in Policy Narratives

Jonathan Kamkhaji and Claudio Radaelli examine how the Hungarian government has framed its opposition to the EU’s Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy through emotionalised policy narratives. Using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), the study examined 53 official narratives (close to 800 sentences) and combined expert human coding with benchmarking via MORES Pulse. The results show a pronounced emotional style in a policy domain often technical and evidence-driven. In Hungary’s public narratives around the F2F, the country itself was portrayed as the hero, farmers as victims, and the European Commission—or “Brussels”—as the villain. Emotionalisation focused on characters, and over half of the corpus contained detectable emotions. Positive and negative emotions appear in these texts in near equal measure: pride and enthusiasm frame the hero; anger and frustration define the villain; fear, along with anger and occasional empathy, shapes the victim.

Catastrophic “doomsday” lines are rare but narratively pivotal. Evidence-based argumentation is largely absent. Instead, the government deploys rhetorical entrapment, accusing the Commission of failing to present early impact assessments, while integrating external shocks to food policy (such as the war in Ukraine and agricultural protests) into its storyline. The study shows that emotionalised discourse thrives even in complex EU policy settings, raising a central question: how should liberal democratic actors respond? Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/patterns-of-emotionalisation-in-policy-narratives.

Inventing an alternative: Populist Imaginations of Political Leaders in Audiovisual Culture

Thomas Scherer, Timm Beichelt, and Daniel Illger analyse how contem-

porary European television series imagine political leadership in times of democratic crisis and public disillusionment with elites. Drawing on empirical media aesthetics and political theory, their study examined three TV series—*Servant of the People* (Ukraine), *Represent* (France), and *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard* (UK)—that depict protagonists from underrepresented groups rising to power by channelling moral emotions into political action. A recurring trope, which the authors call “democratic just anger,” describes how an initial emotional outburst against perceived injustice propels these characters into public office. Subsequent episodes test their idealism against the realities of governance. Using multimodal film analysis, the research shows how emotions help these series build an alternative political imagination. Their scripts are not mere mirrors of real-world populist movements; they function as populism laboratories, exploring whether and how populist thought patterns can align with liberal democratic values. The analysis highlights the figure of the public educator, whose emotional labour and moral struggle become central to contemporary political storytelling. By staging politics as a field of affective engagement and moral conflict, these series suggest new ways of thinking about leadership, emotions, and democratic participation. Learn more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/populist-imaginations-of-political-leaders-in-audiovisual-culture.



“ We explored how Hungary’s government dismantled a highly technical EU policy using emotional storytelling. In its narrative, Hungary cast itself as the hero and ‘Brussels’ as the villain ”

Claudio Radaelli

MORES’s Team Leader at European University Institute, Florence

What Kinds of Emotions Are Mobilised by Different Policy Fields?

Zsolt Boda, Orsolya Ring, and Gabriella Szabó present the results of a text-mining exercise concerning the emotional patterns of policy discourses. The parliamentary speech databases of the Hungarian Comparative Agendas Project were analysed using state-of-the-art large language models fine-tuned for emotion analysis. Instead of relying on the widespread dictionary approach in identifying emotional content in discourse, MORES developed a BERT-based language model trained on manually annotated political texts by the emotions of anger, fear, sadness, disgust, joy, and surprise.

The findings indicate a clear trend of increasing emotionalisation in parliamentary discourse, with emotional expressions becoming more frequent over the past decades, particularly those related to fear and joy. Opposition members consistently use more emotional language than members of governing parties, especially negative emotions such as fear and anger, while party populism appears to further amplify emotionalisation. Across policy fields, fear, joy, and anger dominate the emotional landscape, although the degree of emotionalisation varies by issue. Immigration emerges as the most emotionalised policy field, especially after the 2015–2016 migration crisis, while transportation is the least, with macroeconomics unexpectedly ranking high.

The study supports future comparative and causal analyses, including cross-national research within the MORES project, to further assess the drivers and consequences of emotionalised policymaking. Read more: mores-horizon.eu/publications/what-emotions-are-mobilised-by-policy-fields.



5. Understanding Moral Emotions

Short definitions that help readers navigate the research behind MORES—and current politics

Moral emotions shape how people interact with politics, how they unite, and how they divide. To explain how, MORES compiled a glossary on its website, grounding each entry in current research while keeping the language accessible. Entries can be filtered by themes and families (e.g., self-conscious, other-condemning, other-praising). They also cover related ideas. That anger, disgust, and affective polarisation are part of the most-read list may reflect, beyond curiosity, a readership trying to make sense of a political moment defined less by competing ideas than by feelings: mores-horizon.eu/glossary.

Most read entries on the MORES website in 2025

ENTRY	HOW THEY UNITE, HOW THEY DIVIDE
Anger	It arises when people perceive obstruction, unfairness, or moral violation. Its striking feature is its focus on the wrongdoer, demanding recognition or redress. Shared anger can mobilise communities against injustice and drive social change. But it can also sharpen divides: leaders can inflame anger to fuel “us versus them” conflicts, undermine democratic debate, and justify hostility or exclusion.
Disgust	It is a universal emotion of aversion that belongs to the category of other-condemning moral emotions, responding to both physical and moral contamination. While moral disgust helps communities preserve unity and uphold trust, it also deepens social divisions by marking certain acts, behaviours, or individuals as unacceptable.
Sadness	A self-directed negative emotion linked to the experience or anticipation of loss. While not moralising in itself, sadness becomes morally meaningful when it reflects the loss of shared values, public goods, or social cohesion, inviting reflection rather than retaliation. It reveals disillusionment, which is often overlooked in polarised environments.
Guilt	A self-conscious moral emotion arising from violating social or moral norms that motivates reparative behaviour like apologies, distinct from shame in being action-oriented rather than identity-based. Politicians may engage in guilt—accusing opponents of moral failure—or scapegoating to shift blame. These tactics may widen political divisions.
Affective Polarisation	The emotional split where political affiliations evoke strong feelings of affinity for one’s group and hostility towards opponents, driven more by differences in values, attitudes, and emotions than socio-economic factors. Understanding and addressing affective polarisation is key as it threatens democratic dialogue and social cohesion.
Affective Disconnect	The idea describes the emotional distancing citizens feel from democratic politics, marked by alienation, distrust, and disengagement. An example is the feeling that politics has become “talk without action,” disconnected from lived experience. When people feel unheard or unrepresented, they withdraw—or turn to disruptive political alternatives. This gap weakens participation, fuels polarisation, and leaves people vulnerable to manipulation.



6. More from Experts

Moral emotions are shaping politics.
Follow MORES to understand how

MORES is an innovative research project that addresses the challenges faced by liberal democracy. It focuses on how moral emotions, values, and identities interact with politics and affect democratic life. When citizens emotionally disconnect from politics, they miss opportunities to participate in important decision-making processes. When politicians overly emotionalise public debates, polarisation deepens and constructive dialogue is obstructed. Both extremes threaten democracy. Funded by Horizon Europe, MORES argues for a balanced approach to political engagement. Learn more: mores-horizon.eu.

THE MORES TEAM

The project is carried out by scholars and experts from nine institutions across Europe.

