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**Euro scepticism and Othering in the EU Migration Crisis 2015/16:
Analysing Patterns of Discourse in the European Parliament**

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Abstract

In summer 2015, the European Union (EU) faced an unprecedented migration crisis, when hundreds of thousands of people crossed the external borders of the Union. This caused a debate not only about the humanitarian dimension of this crisis, but also about the question of whether migration policy should be increasingly organised at the EU level, with more burden sharing among the member states. Throughout the crisis, the countries of the Visegrad Group were particularly vocal in opposing common EU approaches towards solving the crisis, especially when this meant accepting migrants on their own territory.

This dissertation examines the linkage between Euroscepticism and processes of othering in the context of the migration crisis by analysing the statements of the Visegrad deputies in the European Parliament (EP) debates on migration in 2015/16. The main argument of this study is that the migration crisis provoked a dual conflict in which (1) migrants as *other* initiated a critical evaluation of who is and can be a part of Europe and (2) EU measures, such as the relocation mechanism, touched on the very essence of nation-state competences. To support this argument, this thesis examines how the representatives of the EP describe the ‘migrant other’, as well as how they make use of these references, or rather, what conclusions they draw from this for European integration.

EU Migration Crisis – Euroscepticism – Migrant Other– European Identity – Visegrad Group

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Abbreviations

ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
EC	European Commission
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
EFDD	Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom Group
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GUE/NGL	Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
IvČRn	‘We don’t want Islam in the Czech Republic’ Initiative
LSNS	People’s Party Our Slovakia
MEP	Member of European Parliament
MS	EU member state(s)
ODS	Civic Democratic Party
PiS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość
PO	Civic Platform
PPE	European People’s Party
PSL	Polish People's Party
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
SLD	Democratic Left Alliance
SMER-SD	Direction Social Democracy
SNS	Slovak National Party
Verts/ALE	Group of the Greens/ European Free Alliance

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

This dissertation was inspired by the growing opposition to the European Union (EU) in different forms and by various member states (MS). In an increasingly globalised world in which the single nation state is bound to sink into oblivion if it is not integrated into some form of multilateral structure, a rebellion against precisely these structures seems at first glance paradoxical. Furthermore, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism becomes increasingly visible in the form of national plebiscites, such as the 2016 UK Brexit referendum in which a majority voted to leave the EU. Other examples are the nation-centric rhetoric employed by politicians such as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Hungary or the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) government in Poland, which was elected in 2015. On a European level, the successes of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament (EP) illustrate similar trends.

These tensions grew particularly noticeable in the wake of the so called ‘European migration crisis’¹, which began in 2015 when the amount of people applying for first-time asylum in the EU more than doubled in comparison to the years before and reached 1,257,030 – a number that hardly changed in 2016 (Eurostat, 2017). During these events, the MS failed to reach a consensus on how to provide for so many people and to ensure the efficient processing of asylum applications. Even border controls within the Schengen area were temporarily reinstated. One of the key challenges the union faced was the unwillingness of some MS to accept migrants² in their own countries. Instead, political leaders from respective MS sharpened their nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric, such as Orbán speaking of the need to defend ‘one’s own family’ (Orbán, 2015). This led to an intensified discussion about the decision-making competence of the EU in this specific

¹ Various terms have been used to refer to this crisis: e.g. Schengen crisis (Börzel & Risse, 2017), refugee crisis (Carrera et al., 2015), migration crisis (Scipioni, 2017). For this dissertation, I use the term ‘migration crisis’ since the notion of ‘Schengen’ refers to the issue of borders, whereas this thesis focuses on the direct notion of the other in the form of other people entering the Union. The term ‘refugee crisis’ was not used, as the term ‘refugee’ has developed a rather negative connotation, and not all people coming to Europe had a genuine claim to asylum.

² I use the term ‘migrant’ to refer to all people coming to the EU during the migration crisis, including those who are likely to be granted asylum, as well as people who would legally be labelled ‘economic migrants’, as they cannot officially claim asylum, but in most cases come to Europe for better living conditions.

field as well as about the question of what the arrival of these new members of European society would mean for Europe.

This crisis not only revealed the problematically reactive character of the EU migration policy, but also an underlying and more severe issue: the attitudes towards the EU and further integration vary widely across member states. During the crisis, the Visegrad countries in particular stood out as a group of member states which unitedly rejected proposals that favoured a reallocation mechanism for migrants and an overall holistic approach to migration (Barigazzi & de la Baume, 2015). While observers often point to the homogenous make-up of Central European populations and the resulting lack of experience with immigrants as one of the main reasons for this stance, this does not seem to be sufficient, as immigrant groups from Ukraine and Vietnam were successfully integrated in the region, and refugees from the Balkans were previously able to receive temporary protection (Hokovský, 2016). Hence, the underlying issues of the migration crisis need to be further explored.

In contemporary Europe, it seems like Europe is no longer ‘forged in crises’ as once proposed by Monnet, but rather breaks in crises (in European Commission, 2011). In this context, it is noticeable that all the above-mentioned opposition movements or parties emphasise ‘the national’ and a certain feeling of belonging to gain support. Consequently, it is crucial to consider that identity is an important component of this growing opposition to Europe. The migration crisis provides a promising analytical frame for examining this dynamic as it has mobilised identity components that were directly linked to the EU polity while also introducing an immediate *other*, in form of the migrants, to the discussion. As pointed out by Risse, knowing more about the ‘European others’ is necessary for a better understanding of the ‘substance of European identity’ (2004: 257). This thesis sets out to link these notions of identity and *othering* to the phenomenon of Euroscepticism.

1.2 Research Focus

One major issue in early Euroscepticism research concerned the characterisation of party-based Euroscepticism. Primarily, these studies investigated the nature of opposition to the EU and developed categorisation schemes, e.g. if opposition was directed towards certain policies or against the European project as such (Kopeck & Mudde, 2002; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002a). However, such expositions are unsatisfactory, as they do not offer an account of how to use these categories further – leaving researchers on this topic in an ‘analytical deadlock’ (Crespy & Verschueren, 2009). Moreover, most studies in the field

focusing on the party dimension of Euroscepticism eclipsed other venues of Euroscepticism such as public opinion or non-partisan organisations and events (Usherwood & Startin, 2013: 5-6).

More recently, literature has emerged that suggests the rethinking of Euroscepticism as a discourse rather than an ideology, opening up the research agenda to fields other than partisan studies (e.g. Leconte, 2015). With this dissertation, I follow this approach, focusing on how Euroscepticism is constructed discursively, rather than on statically applying various categories. The debate about this discursive approach has gained fresh prominence with the recent crises the EU has faced. In this context, several scholars have investigated Eurosceptic discourse during the financial and migration crises and its implications for European identity or further integration (see Börzel & Risse, 2017; Crespy & Schmidt, 2014; Schimmelfennig, 2017). Considering the migration crisis, Börzel and Risse (2017) point out that the discourse throughout the crisis was constructed around *the other* and the question of ‘who belongs to Europe’ as a vehicle to discuss the future of Europe. In the words of the authors, ‘the main conflict line in the debate [...] is not about national priorities and the like, but about visions of Europe’.

This is the context in which this dissertation is located; although Börzel and Risse identified this tendency, no previous empirical study has examined the connection between Euroscepticism and discourses of *othering* and identity. Moreover, research on the subject has been mostly restricted to analysing Euroscepticism in the context of a domestic case study or within a comparative study. However, few writers have conducted systematic research on the supranational level, which this dissertation is based on.

1.3 Overall Research Aim and Individual Research Objectives

This dissertation follows a case study design with an in-depth analysis of the plenary contributions from Visegrad members of European Parliament (MEP) during debates on migration from January 2015 to December 2016.

As a subject of investigation, I focus on the four members of the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary, Czechia, and Slovakia), as they played a special role during the crisis and were particularly vocal about their rejection of propositions in the sphere of common EU migration policy. Furthermore, as the four countries are often perceived as a block, presenting their stances in detail might provide a more nuanced perspective on their positions.

The EP was chosen as the arena for investigation. As the only directly-elected institution of the EU, the EP might indicate influences of national attitudes more directly during debates. Moreover, all four Visegrad Group members are represented by their MEPs, making it possible to examine the discourse among these politicians from different countries as well as different political parties in the same political arena.

The timeframe from 2015 to 2016 was chosen since the topic of migration dominated the political agenda during this period and, therefore, a vast number of debates concerning this issue were held. This is not to say that the migration across the Mediterranean Sea or EU land borders to seek asylum was a new phenomenon on the European policy agenda; however, it did gain an unprecedented salience with the onset of the crisis. Instead of focusing solely on the year when the crisis emerged, both 2015 and 2016 are included in the analysis to allow for a greater variety in data and to capture nuances in the discourse.

The data for this study was collected using the catalogue available on the EP website³ with recordings of all the plenary sessions. Scanning the main topics of the debates, I then selected the material that seemed most relevant for the proposed research focus. Using the data analysis software QDA Miner, I applied a discourse analysis, which was primarily qualitative, exploratory and interpretative in nature, while relying on some quantitative elements for verification purposes.

This dissertation aims to uncover patterns of discourse and contextualise them within the previously-outlined theoretical findings about European identity and Euroscepticism. In other words: Which lines of argumentation emerge? Which topics are cross-referenced by the MEPs? The main argument of this dissertation is that the migration crisis provoked a dual conflict in which (1) migrants as *other* initiated a critical evaluation of who is and can be a part of Europe and (2) EU measures, such as the relocation mechanism, touched on the very essence of nation-state competences. This put the extent to which Europe is wanted or needed up for negotiation.

³ See: European Parliament Plenary: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html#sides-Form>.

Consequently, the aim of this dissertation is to answer the following research questions:

1. *How do the MEPs describe the ‘migrant other’ in the context of the migration crisis?*

Sub-Questions: How is the ‘us versus them’ distinction being discursively applied? How do the MEPs portray Europe, the nation and the other? What elements of belonging to Europe do the MEPs emphasise?

2. *How do the politicians, as the object of this study, make use of this, or rather, what conclusions do they draw from this for European integration?*

Sub-Questions: Does a ‘counter-narrative’ against the EU emerge? Which visions for Europe do the MEPs presuppose?

Along with these research questions, this dissertation aims to contribute to our understanding of the interconnectedness of identity patterns and Euroscepticism, shedding light on both the differences and commonalities among the stances of the Visegrad countries as well as between the EP party groups.

1.4 Outline

This thesis consists of six chapters including the Introduction. The second Chapter introduces the main methodological framework for the discourse analysis this dissertation is based on. In Chapter 3, the theoretical context for this study is established by reviewing relevant literature on Euroscepticism from which I derive the main theoretical framework for the analysis. I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of identity as a component of Euroscepticism, the notion of *the self* and *the other* in different fields of social science and how this is applicable to the migration crisis. This includes a critical review of models of identity in a European context. Chapter 4 provides thematic background information for the following analysis, focusing on the events of the migration crisis in general, the domestic context of the debate on migration in the Visegrad countries and the countries’ representation in the EP. Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on the discussion of the analysis’ findings before summarising the key findings of the study in the concluding Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodological framework on which this research project is based. In the first section, I give a brief overview of discourse analysis as a method in general and in the context of European Studies. Following this outline, the second and third sections describe the composition of the data set and delineate the framework of analysis for the research questions. Finally, the limitations of the study are outlined in the last segment of this chapter.

2.1 Discourse Analysis in European Studies

As a method, discourse analysis draws on manifold definitions of ‘discourse’ and ‘meaning’, along with a vast number of interpretations of how to translate these concepts into a methodological framework and which analytical tools to use for applying it. While some definitions of discourse focus on the influence of language (Chilton, 2004) and others examine discourse as social practice (Potter, 1996) or in relation to knowledge (Jäger, 2004), all of these approaches to discourse deal with ‘the production of collective perceptions and meanings’ (Lynggaard, 2012: 88). In other words, these approaches outline the development of meaning systems and the effect these systems have on what people write or say and vice versa, along with how these systems are reinforced through different forms of communication. The understanding of meaning systems and the study of discourse is crucial as nothing has meaning out of context; things become meaningful through discourse, which makes it a promising research subject.

All of these approaches have their philosophical roots in discourse theory with one of the main dividing lines situated between structuralism and post-structuralism. The former primarily draws on Foucault’s ‘Archaeology of Knowledge’ (2010), in which underlying structures of signs and language were analysed in a static and mostly linguistic-based manner to reveal mechanisms leading to the emergence of statements, thereby creating the objects of society. In other words, structuralism focuses on how meaning works. Post-structuralist tradition, on the other hand, emphasises rather the notion of agency and the open-ended character of discourse and meaning. Systems of meaning are ongoing and dynamic as every component, every sign or symbol, refers to another system of meaning. It is possible to frame a concept in a certain manner; for example, the notion of granting asylum can to an extent be shaped into a conservative discourse, but the notion itself will still maintain other meanings in other discourses. Hence, how various discourses compete

in different settings and how agents or subjects of discourse, as political actors, interact and shape discourse influences which discourses gain salience (see Schneider, 2013a; Wæver, 2009: 163-167). In terms of applying these notions to discourse analysis as a methodology, approaches drawing on structuralism traditionally focus on a linguistic manner of operationalisation along the lines of metaphors, sentence structure and quantitative data, whereas post-structuralism takes a more qualitative route and differentiates diverse strands and dynamics of discourse. Yet, the two approaches are evidently not unambiguously distinguishable in practice.

In a European integration studies context, Wæver (2009) distinguishes three schools of discourse analysis and emphasises that discourse analysis in European integration studies primarily focuses on political discourse. The first two approaches he outlines focus on (1) the struggle of governance and (2) discourse analysis in EU foreign policy, whereas (3) the ‘depth-discursive approach’ centres on the conceptualisation of the EU integration process, analysing identity structures, concepts of citizenship, and the negotiation of legitimacy, history and politics in a European polity context. This dissertation mostly draws on the latter school, which Wæver also refers to as the examination of the ‘European project as productive paradox’ since it directly focuses on the discourses and institutions of the EU as such (ibid: 173-177).

To create the analytical framework of this study, I primarily draw on works of authors who contributed to the field by applying discourse analysis approaches to uncover patterns of identity construction (Crespy, 2015; Crespy & Schmidt, 2014; Hansen, 2006) as well as general introductions to the field (Mills, 2004; Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2000). Both Crespy and Hansen concentrate their analysis on the interaction of different strands of discourse and their ‘intertextuality’. In this context, Crespy (2015: 112-114) refers to identifying themes which relate to previously-categorised central themes and considers how various actors include different sub-themes in their frame of reference, thereby creating diverging discourse dynamics. Similarly, Hansen (2006: 28) builds on the idea that different political discourses often intertwine and challenge each other, as they are linked by ideas of policy and identity based on differing interpretations of events and facts. According to her, numbers of discourses bind together around common themes or basic discourses, which can be identified in debates and texts, and ‘point to the main points of contestation within a debate and facilitate a structured account of the relationship between discourses’ (ibid: 46).

In the following, I outline in detail the composition of the data set, the framework of this discourse analysis, the research questions under examination, as well as limitations of the study.

2.2 Data Set

The source material for this analysis is composed of the debate contributions made by the MEPs from the Visegrad states during selected debates on migration between January 2015 and December 2016, which are available online as text and voice recordings⁴. These statements indicate how the MEPs interact with each other and how they structure their arguments during the migration crisis when debating amongst each other or with MEPs from other countries. Unfortunately, the EP Plenary Service ceased to provide English transcripts of the debate contributions. Consequently, the data used in this dissertation consists of independently-created transcripts of the oral translations provided in the EP video catalogue. To create these transcripts, I used the transcription software Voice Base for a first draft, which I then edited manually by listening to the recordings. The timeframe was chosen because it encompasses the peak of the migration crisis in 2015, when the issue was at the forefront of the political agenda in most European countries. Obviously, the issue of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea existed prior to the period chosen for this analysis (see Dennison & Janning, 2016); however, the worsening of the situation in Syria as well as an increased number of migrants entering the EU via the land border gave the matter political salience. In this context, the migration crisis functions as a ‘discursive event’ (Jäger 2004: 171), which shaped the discourse included in this data. Another reason for selecting this timeframe is that during this period the discourse on migration was actually tied to debating the Union as a whole, its limits politically and geographically, touching on the essence of ‘what Europe is’ (as pointed out by Börzel and Risse 2017). Consequently, the timeframe promises sufficient insights concerning the linkage between identity patterns and *othering*, and attitudes towards the EU.

The EP was chosen as the arena for investigation since it is the only directly-elected institution of the EU and therefore indicates influences of national attitudes more directly, as the MEPs do, at least to a certain degree, speak for their national electorate. In this regard, the EP as a research subject provides for an interesting contrast, since as the MEPs work in an EU institution and discuss matters that affect the entirety of Europe, while

⁴ See European Parliament: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html#sidesForm>.

being elected by national electorates. Moreover, all four Visegrad countries are represented in the parliament, making it possible to analyse and compare contributions they made in a similar context and the same arena. To a certain degree, this controls for the various dynamics of domestic politics which would have to be considered more closely in a comparative analysis of national political discourse on this topic.

During the period from January 2015 to December 2016, 30 EP debates took place focusing on migration or related aspects such as asylum, Frontex, the Dublin Agreement, or securing the Mediterranean and external borders. Of the available data, I selected 15 debates to analyse in detail. These debates were chosen according to the activeness of the Visegrad MEPs and the relevance of the issues discussed for the analytical objective of this dissertation, as some debates primarily focused on the budget or technical aspects as a common database for the registration of migrants. Additionally, three debates were included during which the heads of state or government spoke in the EP. During the investigation period, the Polish and Slovak Prime Ministers, Beata Szydło and Robert Fico, as well as the Hungarian and Czech Presidents, Victor Orbán and Miloš Zeman⁵, spoke in the plenary. These debates are included, as Visegrad MEPs were noticeably active in those debates and more contributions were made by politicians who were typically less active in debates dedicated specifically to migration. However, only those sections of the debates that focus on the migration crisis are considered, since contributions made in a different context could provide for misinterpretation. For example, the debate with Beata Szydło primarily revolves around the rule of law in Poland and consequently, a lot of remarks of (Polish) MEPs are critical of this public disapproval of domestic Polish politics. However, this is not the context of the migration crisis and, therefore, these statements are not included in the analysis. Hence, of these additional debates, only the statements the MEPs make directly referring to the migration crisis are considered for this research to avoid misleading interpretations. Including these three supplementary debates, 17 debates are incorporated in the final analysis which provides for a data set of 166 statements made in the EP.

As anti-EU rhetoric has increasingly become a feature displayed by mainstream parties as well as niche parties (Brack & Startin, 2015), this analysis includes statements from all Visegrad MEPs, not only those made by MEPs of openly-Eurosceptic parties.

⁵ In the debate with Szydło, Fico and Orbán the migration crisis was a frequently-recurring issue. The plenary session during which Zeman spoke, on the other hand, did not provide additional insights into this topic, which is the reason for excluding this debate from the analysis.

Therefore, this thesis aims to map the MEPs' stances concerning identity patterns, a migrant *other* and their attitudes towards European integration more thoroughly. While it can be expected that the members of far-right party groups will use more emotionally-charged and assertive language in the debates on migration, it would be insufficient to only focus on these groups for several reasons. First, the allocation of members of respective national parties to the supranational party groups in the EP is not always an indicator of the MEPs' attitude towards the European project. Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party, which belongs to the Christian Democratic European People's Party (PPE) group despite heavy EU criticism of domestic Hungarian politics and repeated violations of the rule of law, is a case in point. Secondly, MEPs from the left wing also engaged in Eurosceptic rhetoric, generally claiming to protect the welfare of their own people or describing the EU as a neoliberal project that is harmful for European citizens (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, & Vasilopoulou, 2012). Consequently, the analysis will encompass all MEPs to provide for a more nuanced interpretation of the statements by different party groups and MEPs from the respective countries.

2.3 Framework for Analysis and Research Questions

After collecting and preparing the data set, I defined the analytical categories in the form of a codebook suitable for the research questions and the material for analysis, focusing on more interpretative qualitative coding while adopting some quantitative elements for verification purposes. To outline the analytical framework of this discourse analysis, I primarily drew on contributions by Crespy (2015) and Schneider (2013) regarding this topic, as well as Saldaña's (2009) manual for qualitative research to conceptualise the codebook. Because the corpus of data this analysis is based on is, in most cases, not the original spoken source but a transcript of the translation, this discourse analysis relies less on linguistic tools of analysis, but rather examines various discourse fragments of the data using the coding and analysis software QDA Miner.

To create this analytical framework, I used an inductive-deductive mixed design. In the first step, I outlined broad topic groups derived from the theoretical framework as well as concepts and ideas that were expected to be relevant. With these broad categories, I then pre-coded the collected material to complement and refine these topics and break them down in sub-categories and codes. Additionally, the data set as a whole was scanned using a word frequency count software to count how often each word was used to ensure that elements and patterns of further importance were not eclipsed. Through this process

of ‘evolutionary coding’ (Mayring 2002: 120), three main sections of the codebook emerged focusing on: the EU/European perspective of the debate, the voiced national or regional perceptions, as well as *the other* as a connecting element. More specifically, 15 sub-categories were defined and broken down into codes, which were then applied to the 166 selected statements in detail. The data set’s design provides the following variables: the MEPs’ names, their role in the EP debate, their country of origin, their party group, and the date and title of the debate. The codes from the codebook were then used with QDA Miner to analyse how the three main categories intertwine and how this might differ amongst the variables. In this context, the different coding options are crucial as they were designed to examine not only how often the MEPs talked about something, but also encapsulate the connotation and the context in which the references were made. To illustrate, it is not simply recorded *if* the MEPs talk about solidarity, but rather in which context (among member states, with refugees, etc.). After detailed coding of the data, I traced the connections among the discursive strands to identify patterns and frequency of these linkages; in other words, which strands link together and how often this occurs.

By applying this framework, this dissertation aims to uncover patterns of discourse and contextualise them with the outlined theoretical findings about European identity and Euroscepticism, as well as with the provided theoretical background. In other words, which lines of argumentation emerge? Which topics are cross-referenced by the MEPs? The main argument of this dissertation is that the migration crisis provoked a dual conflict in which (1) migrants as *other* initiated a critical evaluation of who is and can be a part of Europe and (2) EU measures, such as the relocation mechanism, touched on the very essence of nation-state competences. This put the extent to which Europe is wanted or needed up for negotiation. Consequently, the aim of this dissertation is to answer the following research questions:

1. *How do the MEPs describe ‘the other’ in the context of the migration crisis?*

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2. *How do the politicians, as objects of this study, make use of this, or rather, what conclusions do they draw from this for European integration?*

Sub-Questions: Does a ‘counter-narrative’ against the EU emerge? Which visions for Europe do the MEPs presuppose?

Along with these research questions this dissertation aims to investigate emerging patterns of identity in the context of the migrant *other* and Euroscepticism in the discourse on migration. Moreover, it will be discussed if there are significant differences among the Visegrad MEPs and the respective party groups.

2.4 Limitations of the Study

Commencing this study, several limitations of manifold nature regarding the scope of the research project as well as quality of the data set itself must be accounted for.

First, the debate contributions under investigation are not the originally-spoken content of the MEPs since the EP no longer provides English transcripts of the debates. Currently, the statements made in the EP are translated by interpreters and a voice recording of these translations is published online along with a video of the debate. Hence, the material was transcribed in accordance with these translations before the analysis and while the key meaning and most important wordings most likely stayed intact. It is undeniable that the quality of the data is compromised to a certain extent, as the available translations are of varying quality as the interpreters change and, naturally, some debate contributions are easier to translate than others.

Secondly, MEP statements in the parliament are very short. Mostly speakers do not have more than a minute on their behalf when addressing the plenary, which means that not all contributions allow for detailed tracking of narratives as well as a thoroughly-prepared speech would. On the other hand, this spur-of-the-moment character of such debate contributions might be more revealing in terms of identity patterns than longer and better-planned statements, thus, this could be an advantage as well.

Another aspect to consider in this regard is that not all MEPs participated in debates to the same extent. This may be because certain MEPs are members of working groups which directly relate to the issues of migration, asylum and border control and accordingly, have a higher interest in the plenary discussion. Nonetheless, it leads to certain MEPs who are particularly vocal on these matters repeating their arguments, which evidently could influence the analysis. In the case of Slovakia, this is of particular relevance

since the country sends only 13 representatives to the EP⁶, which means that only a few very active MEPs shape how the Slovak position is perceived.

Finally, this analysis comprises a limited number of debates during a restricted timeframe and consequently, any conclusions must be considered with this in mind. This dissertation provides a brief snapshot into a very specific discursive context about migration and borders, in which discourse fragments about identity, othering and the boundaries of Europe are certain to mix. Hence, narratives are likely to shift in other circumstances. Consequently, results from this analysis must be taken with this in mind.

⁶ To illustrate, Poland is represented by 51 MEPs, and Czechia and Hungary by 21 MEPs respectively (see Chapter 4.3).

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Literature Review: Euroscepticism in the Scholarly Debate

The term ‘Eurosceptic’ emerged in the mid-1980s and was mostly used in the UK. In its original and elementary meaning, it referred to a party or person opposing the power of the EU (Brack & Startin, 2015: 239). While the term and the phenomenon can be traced back some decades, Euroscepticism was originally perceived as a marginal issue or as Cécile Leconte calls it, a “phenomenon of the [...] periphery” (2015: 250). Apart from a few exceptions (e.g. Zellentin, 1967), little research was devoted to the topic. Since then, a vast amount of academic literature has approached various aspects of Euroscepticism, which must be seen in the context of EU integration.

Sofia Vasilopoulou (2013: 158-162) distinguishes three main phases of Euroscepticism: (1) the early period of integration to the late 1980s, (2) from the Maastricht Treaty to the Lisbon Treaty, and (3) the most recent developments which were dominated by the financial crisis and referenda. Focusing on the ‘time factor’ in this field of study, she elaborates that in the first stage, Euro-scepticism was primarily elite-driven, nation-specific and not perceived as a lasting phenomenon, whereas the second phase revealed the ubiquitous character of Euroscepticism. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 indicated a shift from a mainly economic to a political union, with an increasing transfer of competences from the national to the supranational level (ibid: 159). At this juncture, scholars refocused on the political legitimacy of the European project, popular backlash in form of referenda, and especially, the EU’s ‘democratic deficits’ (Featherstone, 1994; Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Majone, 1998; Moravcsik, 2002). Finally, the third phase Vasilopoulou outlines sets in after the failing of the EU constitution and the troublesome process of passing the Lisbon Treaty with the outbreak of the financial crisis and a new negotiation process regarding European solidarity amongst member states. This last stage can be extended to include the 2014 EP elections in which Eurosceptic parties received more mandates than ever before, the UK Brexit referendum in 2016, and the struggle during the European migration crisis to find a common answer, as these developments illustrate the pervasive nature of Euroscepticism as a phenomenon.

This exemplifies one of the main challenges of research on Euroscepticism which is that due to the constantly-changing functioning of the EU and the composition of actors involved within its polity, Eurosceptics are ‘chasing something of a moving target’

(Usherwood & Startin, 2013). In other words, institutional changes, new member states or political crises impact the nature and motivation of the opposition towards the European project. Consequently, academic discourse on this topic has been similarly diverse, especially given the comparatively brief time of its existence.

Nevertheless, certain sub-categories can be identified in existing research, which I will outline in the following. One strand of literature examines the nature and the roots of Euroscepticism, focusing primarily on mapping typologies and analysing possible sources of the issue. Secondly, a wide range of publications investigates the fields of political parties and public opinion, while more recent contributions focus on political crises linked to globalisation and a rather discursive approach to Euroscepticism. I focus on the latter approach in this dissertation and indicate the reason for doing so in this section. This review also briefly discusses research conducted in national and supranational policy arenas. There are admittedly more sub-fields of research and I do not claim this overview to be complete; however, these are the most tangible categories emerging from the literature.

3.1.1 What and Why? - Negotiating Typologies and Sources of Euroscepticism

The most-cited definition for Euroscepticism remains the one outlined by Paul Taggart's 'A Touchstone of Dissent' article in which he describes the phenomenon as 'contingent and conditional opposition to European integration as well as total and unconditional opposition to it' (1998: 364). This broad definition which evidently comprises various forms of Euroscepticism has since then been renegotiated by several scholars. Building on this initial attempt at definition, Szczerbiak's and Taggart's work (2002) differentiates between 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism, with the former being a principled opposition to the EU and the integration process, whereas the latter refers to a partial opposition, e.g. to certain EU policies or the current path of the EU.

Another approach is put forward by Kopecky and Mudde, who criticize Szczerbiak/Taggart's subdivision of Euroscepticism as too broad, and critique 'soft' Euroscepticism as an excessively inclusive category, which could be applied to even minor disagreements with EU policies (2002: 300). As a novel approach, they suggest a distinction orientated across two dimensions: support for the EU and support for European integration; resulting in four ideal-type categories: Euroenthusiasts, Europragmatists, Eurosceptics, and Eurorejects (ibid: 303).

Building on Szczerbiak/Taggart and Kopecky/Mudde, Conti (2003) examines parties' attitudes towards European integration in Italy and conceptualises a four-field typology similar to the latter. In this conceptualisation, he distinguishes between positive and negative attitudes towards integration and the principled or contingent character of the party's stance. Similarly, Vasilopoulou (2011) differentiates between 'rejecting', 'compromising', and 'conditional' opposition patterns of radical right parties, and Flood and Usherwood (2007) conceptualise a six-point continuum of party positioning towards different aspects of European integration.

While these groupings and categorisations contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon Euroscepticism in multiple manners, it must be questioned whether this approach of organising Euroscepticism into distinct categories is still useful for further research. The criticism Kopecky/Mudde and other scholars voiced towards Szczerbiak/Taggart's initial distinction can easily be applied to the other typologies as well. More concretely, it is hardly possible to identify categories that are neither too broad nor too specific. Of course, the aforementioned scholars do not claim that their approaches are impeccable, but rather emphasise that these typologies serve as analytical frames that should be developed further. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how to proceed with these classifications once they are established. Amandine Crespy and Nicolas Verschuere (2009) even argue that this need to define Euroscepticism as a contemporary phenomenon leads to 'analytical deadlocks' and suggest replacing the stiff concept of Euroscepticism with the more dynamic notion of 'resistances to Europe'.

In a comparable manner, several scholars focus on the sources and drivers of Euroscepticism in different fields. These contributions focus on economic, identity, and political-historic aspects and apply these mainly to fields of research on public opinion and political parties (e.g. Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2007; Marks & Wilson, 2000). The following section provides a brief overview of this research.

3.1.2 Party-Based Euroscepticism

A variety of Euroscepticism research focuses on (national) party dynamics and positions, including contributions on comparative party research (see Kopeck & Mudde, 2002; Marks, Wilson, & Ray, 2002; Sitter & Batory, 2008; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002a) as well as case studies on various European countries (see Batory, 2008; Conti, 2003;

Startin, 2005; Szczerbiak, 2008)⁷. Along similar lines, Mudde (2012) differentiates between the Sussex and the North Carolina ‘schools’ of Euroscepticism studies, with the former concentrating on country-based case studies and strategic concerns of parties, and the latter being devoted to cross-national research.

However, the dominant focus on party-based Euroscepticism prompts a negligence of further-connected fields of research. As rightfully criticised by Usherwood and Startin (2013: 5-6), Euroscepticism became a relevant issue beyond the national party level, especially post-Maastricht. They emphasise that ‘Euroscepticism has become an increasingly transnational and pan-European phenomenon’ (ibid.), which occurs on several other levels, including in non-party groups or in the context of supranational elections and institutions. In other words, the predominant focus on dividing lines among national parties deflects the academic attention from dimensions of research that go beyond the national and party levels.

Another issue is that Euroscepticism is frequently made out to be a phenomenon of the fringes of the party landscape. Scholars focusing on parties opposing the European project tend to either concentrate their research on strategies of the radical right (Vasilopoulou, 2011) or the left wing (Halikiopoulou, et.al., 2012; L. Hooghe, et.al., 2002) of the party spectrum. In a similar vein, authors such as Sitter (2001) or Topaloff (2012) specifically studying party strategy in the context of Euroscepticism conceptualise it as an approach used by protest or single-issue parties, whereas mainstream parties are described as significantly less Eurosceptic. To illustrate, Sitter’s model of government-opposition dynamics investigating Scandinavian parties concludes that Euroscepticism mostly hinders the pursuit of office and consequently must be understood as ‘politics of opposition’ (2001: 36-37).

Nevertheless, Euroscepticism has increasingly established itself beyond these peripheries of the political spectrum. As pointed out by Ray, Euroscepticism might not be encountered in the European political mainstream as often as in its fringes, but ‘mainstream Euroscepticism may exist in enough strategically-important locations to influence the trajectory of the European Union’ (2007: 154). The conservative parties in Britain and France are referred to as two main exceptions. Similarly, Usherwood and Startin (2013:

⁷ Most of the outlined typologies (e.g. by Szczerbiak and Taggart) focus on a party-based understanding of Euroscepticism as well.

6) observe that mainstream parties from the centre increasingly embrace ‘soft Eurosceptic’ stances and rhetoric regarding issues such as further enlargement or the EU budget and note that the successful establishment of the ECR group in the EP indicates that Euroscepticism has become embedded in European politics.

This illustrates that further research is needed going beyond categorising parties according to the notion of Euroscepticism they employ, and not solely focusing on the fringes of the party systems, but rather a more comprehensive approach including mainstream parties as well as niche parties.

3.1.3 Public Opinion – Rebellion Against the ‘Permissive Consensus’

The policymaking of mainstream pro-European elites all across the EU without taking into account the opinions of their citizens has been widely referred to as a ‘permissive consensus’ (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970). An extensive amount of literature focuses on public opinion towards European integration, especially addressing the increasingly negative attitudes post-Maastricht.

Empirically, most researchers in this field refer to the Eurobarometer data. Considering the attitudinal questions in the surveys, scholars have analysed the decreasing public support for the European project (C. Anderson, 1998; Brinegar & Jolly, 2005; Gabel, 2000), concluding that public Euroscepticism intensified even in traditionally pro-European countries such as Germany, emphasising the impact of domestic factors. Similar to the research conducted on party-based Euroscepticism, scholars such as Sørensen (2008) and Van Klingeren et al. (2013) focus on what drives public opposition.

On the note of political participation, holding national referendums about matters related to European politics most visibly epitomises the growing popular opposition. The increasing number of referendums in the 2000s illustrates this, with the Brexit referendum in the UK and the Dutch vote on the Association Agreement with Ukraine in 2016 being recent examples. In this context, Hooghe and Marks (2006) discuss the consequences of rejecting the European constitution in respective referendums for further European integration.

However, Leconte (2015: 252) criticises that the study of public opinion in a European context often leads to a reinforcement of perceived ‘typical’ stances of countries, e.g. British or Nordic citizens opposing Europe. According to Leconte, this leads to a flawed understanding of Euroscepticism as a phenomenon of the European peripheries, while it is actually a more pervasive feature.

3.1.4 Euroscepticism on the National and Supranational Levels

Besides the focus on how causes and dynamics of Euroscepticism are approached in scholarly debate, another crucial aspect is the sphere of governance in which this research is conducted. As outlined above, there is an extensive and growing body of literature focusing on opposition to the European project on a national level, whereas the dynamics of Euroscepticism in the supranational political arena have been far less explored.

This lack of research partially stems from the depiction of EU institutions as intrinsically Europhile or pro-European. However, given the increased number of Eurosceptic MEPs in the 2014 elections, which led to the formation of three – to varying degrees – Eurosceptic party groups and made the ECR group the third-largest group in parliament, this assumption ought to be called into question. Furthermore, various studies, such as one conducted by Dehousse and Thompson (2012), focusing on attitudes of European Commission officials found that a considerable number of interviewees were closer to the stances of intergovernmentalism, which emphasises the preservation of the member states' power over an enhanced role of the Commission. This indicates that in fact not all officials and politicians working in the supranational sphere are purely pro-EU and that Euroscepticism on this level of governance needs further investigation.

Recent research has focused on Euroscepticism in the EP, either devoted to the attitudes of MEPs or the strategising of Eurosceptics after being elected as representatives to an institution they claim to oppose (see Benedetto, 2008; Brack and Costa, 2012; Whitaker and Lynch, 2014; Brack, 2015). While these contributions are a step in the right direction, they remain in stark contrast to the considerably larger amount of research conducted on a national level.

3.1.5 Euroscepticism as a Discourse, not a Category

The discursive analysis of the phenomenon of Euroscepticism builds primarily on the notion of constructivism in European Studies, which focuses on a discursive approach to examine issues such as European identity or Europeanisation (the impact of integration) (see Christiansen, Jorgensen and Wiener, 1999).

In a similar manner, drawing on the study of populism and the works of Laclau (2005) and Canova (1999), Leconte points out that Eurosceptic attitudes are reinforced by (1) open resistance against the mainstream political parties, and (2) the belief that people are put at a disadvantage by the processes of Europeanisation and globalisation (2015: 255-257). She links the issue of legitimacy of the EU with the notion of identity, alluding

to the frequently-referred to ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU and the recent financial crisis. Leconte suggests that the disempowerment of national parliaments in the process of Europeanisation but also during the crisis with its redistributive policies blurred the lines between domestic and European politics even further. Leconte finds that Euroscepticism ought to be conceptualised as a discourse instead of as an ideology of some sort (ibid.: 257-259). The EU public space and institutions in this setting become a ‘discursive battleground’ (Diez 2001) in which Euroscepticism functions as a ‘counter-narrative’ aiming to put forward its own concepts of collective identities, an alternative story of the crisis and its own logic of blame attribution to oppose official pro-EU narratives (Trenz and De Wilde, 2009:7-8).

Börzel and Risse (2017) discuss the backlash against Europe in the context of the two most recent crises (financial and migration) and make a significant distinction between the discourses surrounding each respective crisis. The political discussion during the euro crisis revolved around the subjects of solidarity and community, leading to a deepening of European integration in the financial sector with the creation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and a banking union. During the migration crisis, on the other hand, the discourse focused rather on the essential questions about ‘the other’, ‘who belongs to us as Europeans’, borders, and a transfer of power to supranational institutions and a deepening of policy commitment that failed to be achieved (ibid.). This notion of ‘the other’ against which ‘Europe’ is constructed as a pivotal point for Eurosceptic discourse ties in with the aforementioned discursive approach in European Studies by Diez, Weaver, and Wiener.

All in all, this dissertation follows more recent tendencies in Euroscepticism research reconceptualising it in a discursive context rather than approaching the subject with a set of categories. Consequently, this research does not solely focus on evidently Eurosceptic niche-party factions such as the ECR, but includes all party groups in the discourse analysis. Drawing on literature on the discursive approach to European Studies, the next section will elaborate further on these notions of European identity and processes of ‘othering’, linking them to Euroscepticism and the migration crisis. Moreover, this dissertation specifically focuses on the EP as the only directly-elected supranational political arena, to contribute to the existing literature and shed light on the dynamics of opposing Europe ‘from within’. Examining the engagement of MEPs from all Visegrad countries in direct debate on EU politics and policies makes it easier to compare their

positions along party-group and national lines as opposed to analysing different national discourses.

3.2 Main Theories: European Identity, ‘the Other’ and Euroscepticism

This dissertation builds on a working definition of Euroscepticism proposed by Trezn and De Wilde, who apply a rather open concept of it as a resistance not against particular policies but against the polity itself, its competences and institutional settlements (2009: 3). They state that the EU must be understood as an issue of political contestation through Europe, which entails the question of what we understand as Europe and who is part of it. As Börzel and Risse (2017) identified, the discourse during the migration crisis centred on precisely these fundamental questions; consequently, this is where this chapter picks up. This theoretical section is divided into three pillars, with the first one outlining approaches to the construction of collective identities regarding the nation and ‘Europe’. The second section focuses on notions of *the other* and *othering* processes, which serve as significant analytical tools for this dissertation. Drawing on Hooghe and Marks’s (2008) postfunctionalism as well as other European integration scholars, the third section contextualises these concepts in Euroscepticism and the migration crisis, outlining key elements the following analysis builds on.

3.2.1 Constructing ‘Europe’ Discursively

Collective Identities on a National and European Level

Before discussing different concepts of European identity, it is crucial to consider the construction of collective identities in general, which have been approached by various scholars (B. Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1964; A. D. Smith, 1992). A group of people share a ‘collective identity’ if they are connected by a feeling of belonging based on essential similarities, which creates a sense of solidarity amongst the members (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). These collective identities link individuals to ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1991) such as nation-states in which the individual does not know all members of the community but ‘imagines’ being bound together by certain traditions or characteristics. Hence, this feeling of belonging and collective identities are socially constructed as a result of social interactions, which can occur intentionally as well as unintentionally (Barth, 1969). In terms of collective identity, the notion of national identity is still the most dominant construct in Europe (Fligstein, 2009).

National identity refers to a feeling of belonging to a nation, which is shared by a group of people. Smith describes national identity as ‘a multidimensional concept, [...] extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism’ (A. Smith, 1991: vii). The nation therefore constitutes the link between the individual and the collective self (Triandafyllidou, 1998: 595). Reconsidering history and the creation of nations, Smith outlines an oft-cited concept of the nation and the state. He defines the nation as inward-looking, focusing on a firm level of commonality within this group, which is bound together by a set of common characteristics. These characteristics include a historic territory, shared myths and memories, a mutual public culture and shared laws and customs (1991: 14-16). In contrast to the nation, which provides the aforementioned ideological framework that the nation’s population identifies with, Smith defines the state as the public institutional structure in which the nation functions, and which gives set boundaries to the nation. Smith distinguishes further between civic and ethnic nations, which identify their community as either being bound together as a legal-political community by a common territory and *civic* culture, or as an *ethnic* community united by a common cultural heritage and as ‘the people’ who always shaped this nation (ibid: 11-15). For a nation-state, this form of imagined belonging is crucial, as it legitimises the monopolisation of power, making acceptable the claim of who is allowed to represent the members of the community (Diez, 2004: 322).

However, the defining of an inside group, which fulfils certain characteristics and which identifies with one nation, presupposes the existence of groups outside of these communities that do not belong to or identify with this nation (Brubaker, 1994: 46). In other words, the existence of an externally defined *other*, which is inextricably linked to the notion of national identity. Brubaker interprets this in-/out-dichotomy positively, stating that it is to a certain degree understandable that nations keep their communities closed to maintain the ‘essence of the nation’ (ibid). Similarly, this process of *othering* is also a key element of Gellner’s outline of nationalism, proposing that the understanding of a shared nationality is to a great extent based on a negative distinction, namely, the exclusion of others from the nation (1964: 167-171).

While the patterns of belonging to a nation (-state) are a multifaceted matter already, conceptualising the borders or in-groups of Europe or even a European identity proves more challenging. As pointed out by Diez (2004: 320), ‘the very notion of “Europe” is contested’. The concept of ‘Europe’ is split by several dividing lines along cultural aspects such as religion (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox traditions), or geography

(the question of Russia or Turkey belonging to Europe) and clearly, our perception of 'Europe' does not coincide with EU membership (see also Walker, 2000: 17). This ambiguity about what 'Europe' comprises means that, in Gallie's (1956) words, it should be described as an 'essentially contested concept'. An all-encompassing 'Europe' or 'European identity' can never be completed or found, as it is rather a continuous social construction.

Precisely because identity construction is an ongoing and dynamic process, several scholars have suggested approaches to conceptualise the idea of European identity as one among multiple identities to enhance our understanding of how these identities are negotiated and interconnected. Regarding multiple identities, four concepts repeatedly occur in the literature. Risse (Risse, 2010: 36) summarises these identity layers as either completely separate, cross-cutting, nested inside each other, or intertwined. Identities are separate if no other person in the same community also identifies with the second group, there is no overlap in terms of group membership. However, this is not valid in a national and European identity context. Cross-cutting identity patterns mean that not all members of one group are also members of another identity group at the same time. In the nested identity concept ('Russian Matruska doll model'), which Diez Medrano and Gutierrez (2001) proposed, one layer of identity surrounds another; for example, a person could identify regionally with Małopolska, on a national identity level with Poland and then, in a best-case scenario, with Europe or the EU on an outer level. Finally, the intertwined identity model ('marble-cake model') suggests the merging of multiple identity layers. Furthermore, Risse emphasises that identity development is not a zero-sum game, meaning that an increase of European identity does not go hand-in-hand with a decrease of national identity (Risse, 2004: 248). To summarise, these concepts assume that it is possible to identify with multiple groups and, besides the separate identities model, that these identities are interconnected in one way or another.

Expanding Smith's *civic* and *ethnic* approach to a nation further, Bruter (2004) emphasises that this distinction is also valid in the context of European identity and sheds light on the difference it makes whether European identity is defined in civic or ethnic terms. The former centres on an identification with the EU as a political institution, where people identify as European citizens who identify with *civic* and political aspects of European integration. On the other hand, the *ethnic* concept sees Europe primarily as a cultural community, which is defined through a shared heritage (ibid: 196). Depending on the identification this can lead to different visions for Europe and mean that, for example,

people relating to a civic European identity tend to be more inclusive towards out-groups, whereas a more ethnic identity construction would stand for an exclusive European identity which defends the common heritage by shutting out strangers (Risse 2010: 30).

In an EU context, this is underpinned by research based on the European Council's Eurobarometer data⁸. Fligstein's analysis illustrates that merely 12.7 per cent of Europeans would identify themselves as exclusively or primarily European (Fligstein, 2009: 141-142). However, an additional 43.3 per cent described themselves as nationals who also identified as Europeans, leaving 44 per cent to identify in exclusively national terms (ibid.). Considering the same data set for 2013, Risse (2014: 1209) refers to this partial self-identification as 'European identity light'. However, research by Citrin and Sides (Sides & Citrin, 2007: 179-184) proposes that even a limited sense of European identity coincides with strong levels of support for the EU and the integration process as opposed to people identifying solely with 'their nation'.

EU Enlargement and Central European National Identities

The rapid EU East Enlargement in 2004 and 2007 added a supplementary layer to the construction of a European identity, further contributing to its complexity. While the long-awaited 'return to Europe' was expected to lead to the new EU citizens and governments to adopt the previously-defined norms of what the EU as Europe encompasses, it was also contrasted by specific characteristics of defining identity in Central Europe (Blokker, 2008: 258). The post-Soviet satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) had recently regained their independence as states with the demise of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Consequently, the need to rekindle the belonging to Europe in the form of joining the EU, which could be read as a decision in favour of identification, was also accompanied by an endeavour to preserve their own national independence. The low turnout in Central European referendums about the EU membership can perhaps serve as an example of this. In connection to the 'civic' vs 'ethnic' divide of national identity this implies a prioritisation of the latter.

Furthermore, the historical experiences of these countries were crucially different from dominant Western European narratives focusing primarily on the Holocaust and fascism as negative defining moments for the future of Europe. Of course, both aspects were relevant for the CEE countries as well; however, the totalitarian dominance of the

⁸The Eurobarometer question 'In the near future, will you think of yourself as a...?' allows the answer options: only European, European and nationality, nationality and European, only nationality.

Soviet Union and the recurring loss of national independence were more recent and additionally salient in these states. As stated by Blokker (2008: 268), Europe had ‘to confront the similar-but-different historical pathways of its various constituent parts’.

Regarding European identity, Fligstein et al. (2012: 113-114) state that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eastern member states were no longer perceived as a threat or an *other* against which Western Europe was constructed, especially after their accession to the EU. The religious and ethnic homogeneity of these countries further contributed to perceiving a threat to Europe rather from immigrants and Muslims (ibid.). Hence, this outgroup became more salient as an *other*. Drawing on concepts of *othering* from various academic disciplines, the following sub-section discusses the notion of ‘the other’ in a European context.

3.2.2 ‘The Self’ and ‘The Other’ as Points of Reference

Evaluating the migration crisis in the context of European integration, Börzel and Risse claim that ‘the refugee flows and the resulting Schengen crisis were about “the other” and “who belongs to us?”’ (2017: 3). In the following, I use literature from several academic disciplines to outline the notion of *the other*, as this concept is used in the study of sociology, history, politics and international relations. I then relate this notion to European integration and migration specifically.

As previously mentioned, the defining of a self or an ingroup, which shares a feeling of belonging to, for example, a nation, always presupposes the existence of other groups against which the ingroup can define itself, since there are clear distinctions between the ingroup and the other groups of people. In the words of Malinova, it is ‘the out-group in dialogical (co)relation of which the identity of the self is constructed’ (Malinova, 2016). She emphasises that images of the *other* are used in diverse manners in a foreign policy arena and in a domestic context to justify or challenge policies (ibid: 5-6). In other words, concepts of the *other* are not just unknowingly constructed, but also used to explain certain policies or other political actions.

Focussing on the *others* of Europe during the formative years of the EU, Weaver (1998: 90) emphasises the importance of the ‘temporal *other*’ rather than the geographical one, meaning the construction of an identity against the community’s own past. Concretely, he refers to Europe’s past of war, genocide and destruction as the most important ‘other’ for European integration following the Second World War. In this context, this

form of othering is more essential for the construction of the EU than any external enemy images such as, for example, ‘the Russians’ (ibid).

While agreeing with this line of argument in general, Diez (2004: 320-326; 2005) calls attention to the increased importance of cultural and geopolitical *othering* in the discourse on European identity since the 1990s. As argued by Diez (2004), the question of what it means to be European became more urgent after the end of the Cold War, and the enlargements of NATO and the EU, with 9/11 in the US as well as several terrorist attacks in Europe contributing to the notion of creating a secure ‘European territory’ to defend from illegal migration and ‘Islamism’. While this discourse of securitisation was more dominant in the US case, migration has also increasingly been viewed in Europe through the prism of security (see Rorty 2004). The paradigm shift in EU migration policy throughout the different versions of the Dublin agreement is an illustrative example of this (Angenendt et al., 2016). Also, it is important to note that this discourse of security and migration is often accompanied by the *othering* of Islam (Diez 2004: 331).

Against the background of a European normative power approach to international politics, Diez (2005: 628-629) identifies four main strategies of constructing the *self* as well as the *other*, namely as: (1) an existential threat, (2) inferior, (3) violating universal principles, or (4) simply as different. The first strategy constructs the other as an existential threat to the security of the community, which can be used to legitimise extraordinary measures⁹. Secondly, the *other* can be constructed as inferior and looked-down-upon for not being able to maintain the same standards as the *self*. The third option grants moral high ground to the *self* whose standards enjoy universal validity and consequently should be met by the *other*. Finally, the fourth option refrains from any form of value-judgement, but only identifies the *other* as different.

In the context of the *other* of Islam, Turkey is the main discursive site, especially in the context of EU enlargement (Diez, 2004: 328, 2007; Katzenstein, 2006). Turkey’s belonging or not belonging to Europe had to be unavoidably approached when the country applied for EU membership in 1987 since, according to Article 49 of the EU treaty, only ‘European states’ can become members of the Union. This sparked a discussion about whether Turkey fulfilled this criteria with several high-ranking politicians as the chairman of the Christian Democrat faction in German parliament, Wolfgang Schäuble, stating that

⁹ In a traditional international relations context, this could be war or other drastic measures against another country or group.

Turkey could not be granted membership since it was not part of the Christian-Occidental tradition (in Diez 2004: 329). This statement illustrates that the discourse on possibly including Turkey in the EU encircled not just economic, but especially cultural identity aspects, a line of argumentation which strongly regained salience during the migration crisis.

Regarding migrant groups as *other*, Triandafyllidou (1998) states that these groups entering the nation (or attempting to do so) would be perceived as *other*, since in most scenarios they do not share the common characteristics of the nation's population. They do not share a common history to refer to, often do not speak the same language, and lack the mutual understanding of the nation's culture. Furthermore, migrants physically cross over into the territory claimed by another community, thereby becoming internal *others* (Triandafyllidou, 2006: 1).

The process of *othering* migrants impacts the development of the country's national identity and the formation or consolidation of national cohesion, as the nation might aim to confirm or redefine its identity contrasting to the new *other* (ibid: 2). This highlights the new importance of migrants as (perceived) *others* for a group's identity. Furthermore, Triandafyllidou emphasises that the perceived threatening presence of the 'other' in the form of migrants becomes salient during periods of instability and crisis, providing politicians with an incentive to use migrants as scapegoats (1998: 603). She explains that in times of economic and social-political difficulties the identity of the nation is questioned. In this context, the *other* is a welcome distraction, since by positively accentuating 'unique' and 'different' features of the nation's population it 'unites the people in front of a common enemy' (ibid). Considering the EU migration crisis, it could hence be assumed that the debate about the migrant *other* additionally gained salience, as the EU already faced crises beforehand, especially in light of the preceding financial crisis.

3.2.3 Identity construction and Euroscepticism relating to the Migration Crisis

Both the concept of varying layers of identities as well as the notion of the *other*, which is closely linked to the construction of these identities, are crucial in understanding the underlying dynamics of Euroscepticism in the context of the migration crisis.

As previously mentioned, the very notions of Europe¹⁰, the European community and, consequently, European identity are contested and open-ended. In a comparable

¹⁰ As mentioned above, 'Europe' does not necessarily equate with the EU. However, as this dissertation focuses on the polity of the EU specifically to refer to a EU-European discourse during the migration crisis, I do use both terms in the following.

manner, this is also true for the European integration process and the European polity as such, which constitutes a prerequisite for Euroscepticism. As stated by De Wilde and Trez (2009b: 6), ‘Euroscepticism is referring to a kind of contestation that is only possible in absence of polity consensus’. In other words, the ongoing creation of a European polity, implying that there still are multiple ‘ways forward’, enables ‘polity-scepticism’ (Mair, 2007) since the future of the project is negotiable and contestable in a manner that a national polity legally never would be. It is therefore imperative to include the unfinished character of this polity design in any analysis of Euroscepticism.

Linking European identity issues of the public to Euroscepticism in the political sphere, De Vries and Edwards (2009) argue that European elites to an increasing extent politicise these doubts about the future development of the integration project among the various national publics; they mobilise Euroscepticism. In this context, they specifically focus on how economic anxiety and national identity are framed by left- and right-wing parties and suggest that the make-up of Eurosceptic discourse is comparable to the one of the public (ibid: 8, 14). In other words, political elites pick up on uncertainties the public is concerned about and mobilise them to be supported which provokes further contestation.

Concerning the migration crisis, Börzel and Risse claim that the high influx of people brought identity politics to the forefront of the political debate, which was framed as an ‘us’ vs ‘them’ narrative favouring an exclusive Europe (2017: 20). They argue that the ‘politicisation of identification patterns regarding community membership by [...] political parties largely accounts for how the constraining dissensus has prevented a common European response’ (Börzel/Risse 2017: 5), meaning that during the crisis different components or concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ to Europe or the EU were mobilised by political actors, who reacted to the growing public discontent and concerns.

Following the euro and the migration crises, several scholars of European integration revisited major theoretical approaches (liberal intergovernmentalism, neofunctionalism and postfunctionalism) explaining when further integration happens and when it does not. While policy outcomes, as analysed by Schimmelfennig (2014, 2017) and Börzel and Risse (2017), are not the focus of this dissertation, the explanatory power of postfunctionalism, as explored by these authors, does provide connecting lines to Euroscepticism.

In contrast to liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism¹¹, postfunctionalism prioritises the notion of identity and considers a potential backlash against European integration instead of presupposing a steady further transfer of competences.

In their oft-cited paper on postfunctionalist theory of European integration, Hooghe and Marks (2008) pick up on the salience of identity in the debate on Europe. Instead of focusing on the explanatory power of economic preferences (as in liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism), postfunctionalism emphasises that since European integration emerged as a key political issue, identity politics have become increasingly more important. Hooghe and Marks explain that any form of governance is not only responsible for organising human activity, but always expresses a sense of community, since people take an interest in knowing who has the power to shape their life. Therefore, they propose investigating how identity is mobilised and acknowledge that political conflict always engages identity in order to understand the dynamics underlying the course and contestation of Europe beyond economic interests (ibid: 2-5).

Reconsidering the integration process, Hooghe and Marks explain that with the increasing salience of European politics, the ‘constraining dissensus’ gradually replaced the times of the ‘permissive consensus’ during which elites could advance integration without paying close attention to public opinion. Hence, political elites in contemporary Europe must be aware of the attention and demands of the public and engage in identity politics to relate to their citizens, as the discourse on integration ‘has become a field of strategic interaction among party elites in their contest for political power’ (ibid: 9). While Hooghe and Marks think of this mobilisation of identities primarily in the context of national politics, the same assumption can be expanded to European institutions as well, since European and national politics are more interconnected than ever. The role of political actors in their line of argument is significant, as individuals do not rely on their own lived experiences when associating concerns for cultural or economic instabilities and an increasing shift of authority towards the EU with identity, but rely on a construction from the outside (e.g. media or the political space) (ibid: 13).

¹¹Liberal intergovernmentalism sees the national governments of the member states as main actors driving the European integration project further by bargaining with other member states. The agendas and preferences of these governments shape European integration as they negotiate and agree on solutions with other governments, whereas supranational institutions are of minor importance (see Moravcsik, 1998). In contrast, neofunctionalism assumes for European integration to be a self-sustaining process eventually leading to an increasingly-integrated and stable European polity. In this scenario, economic and political interest groups (eg. parties) on the supranational level push for further integration in certain areas, which leads to a spillover effect, rendering integration necessary in additional areas. Supranational actors are particularly important in pushing for further integration (see Haas, 1958).

Drawing on previous European identity and integration research, the Hooghe and Marks highlight that identities do not rely on a single component, such as the nation, but are completed by the feeling of belonging to, for example, a certain region of Europe (as previously outlined in multiple identity approaches). Therefore, they explain that it is more important whether national identity patterns are constructed as exclusive or inclusive of other identities. In this context, Euroscepticism in the form of opposition to the European polity and integration would be particularly strong when accompanied by an exclusive form of national identity aligned with a feeling of threat (ibid). Along similar lines, McLaren (2007) shows that this is particularly true regarding attitudes towards migrants or foreigners in general, which are more hostile in correlation with exclusive nationalist identities.

Regarding political parties, Hooghe and Marks argue that in the second half of the 20th century politics mainly focused on nation states and issues of redistribution and was organised around a partisan left/right divide, with increasing European integration and following the politicisation of the issue, the focus shifted to the boundaries of the political community ('who is one of us' instead of 'who gets what'). Consequently, the authors suggest a non-economic dimension distinguishing between green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) to traditionalism/authority/nationalism (TAN). In this context, the link between TAN and Euroscepticism is particularly strong, as further European integration would be interpreted as an interference with the sovereignty of the nation (Hooghe and Marks 2008: 27). In other words, the dividing lines focusing on cultural and identity factors gained salience, whereas material cleavages became less important. Referring to Hooghe and Marks, Börzel and Risse find that right-wing parties in particular have been deliberately using identity politics to mobilise European citizens with exclusively national identities along this TAN/GAL cultural dividing line (2017: 15).

Remarkably, various contributions to the scholarship of the Europeanisation of European identity in the face of further integration come to similar conclusions about this key division in the European political landscape. Instead of a 'GAL vs. TAN' cleavage, Grande and Kriesi refer to it as 'cosmopolitan vs. nationalist' (in Risse 2014: 1212-1213), or 'civic vs. ethno-nationalist' (Fligstein et.al. 2012: 113). They all link identity to politics and point to the right-wing parties drawing on the nation-focused side of the spectrum, warning of the potential strengthening of Euroscepticism across the party spectrum and the danger of a nationalist backlash. As emphasised by Börzel and Risse (2017: 17-18):

‘The main conflict line in the debate about refugees and migrants is not about national priorities and the like, but about visions of Europe’.

All in all, it can be stated that identity is not self-explanatory in most political contexts and must be politically constructed. With an increasingly integrated EU, the focus of political discourse has shifted from a redistribution to an identity narrative, which is linked to more fundamental questions of ‘who are we the Europeans?’ and ‘who does (not) belong to us?’. Hence, identity has gained salience in the political debate and the migration crisis forced ‘othering’ into the political discourse in a manner that made it inevitable for the entirety of politicians to address the topic.

The postfunctionalist theory goes beyond discussing the notion of identity to include party strategy and the interconnectedness of the public and political elites to explain patterns of integration. This, however, is outside the scope of this dissertation, as the focus will be to examine the discourse construction of Euroscepticism in the context of identity during the migration crisis which is in a way the step before contextualising this issue on a broader level.

However, it can be assumed from the outlined literature that a more exclusive conception of (national) identity correlates with Eurosceptic tendencies, calling for stronger member states, maintaining the status quo or dismantling the union. More inclusive identity patterns along the civic/GAL/cosmopolitan line could on the other hand be expected to call for further integration and tolerance.

This leads to the question of how identity patterns are discursively constructed by MEPs in a national inclusive or exclusive manner, especially when referring to the *other*. Secondly, it ought to be considered how these constructions interact with Euroscepticism. In other words, the conclusions the MEPs draw from the crisis for the future of the European project – their visions for Europe – must be analysed. The following chapter provides an overview of the European migration crisis, the domestic context in the Visegrad countries against the background of which the crisis unfolded, and the representation of the Visegrad states in the EP.

Chapter 4 **Thematic Background**

4.1 The EU Migration Crisis and the Role of the Visegrad Group

The issue of migrants entering the territory of the EU across the Mediterranean Sea did not abruptly emerge, but was present in European politics before the ‘migration crisis of 2015’ occurred. According to the UN Refugee Agency approximately 2,600 people lost their lives between 2011 and 2013, with the sinking of two boats within one week in 2012 gaining broad media coverage (UNHCR, 2014). Similarly, two boats carrying hundreds of migrants sunk in April 2015, resulting in the deaths of over 1,200 people (Dennison & Janning, 2016). Moreover, southern member states such as Greece and Italy had reiterated the need for a change in migration policy for years, since the EU Dublin Regulation only permits people to apply for asylum in the member state of arrival, consequently placing a disproportionate share of responsibility on countries located along the external borders of the EU (Hampshire, 2015: 8). By mid-2015, the number of people crossing into EU territory by foot via the Balkans to enter the EU through the Serbian-Hungarian border, or by boat via the Mediterranean Sea forced politicians all over the EU to react.

On 12 August, Germany announced it would take in 800,000 migrants by the end of 2015. However, this announcement was revised by 24 August, when German Chancellor Merkel declared Germany would grant asylum to all migrants from Syria, thereby, de facto suspending the Dublin System (Heisbourg, 2015: 11-12). However, with an increasing number of people arriving on EU territory or attempting to do so, the countries affected by this high influx of migrants called for a united European solution to the crisis (Hampshire, 2015: 10).

To distribute the burdens of the crisis more evenly, the EU member states agreed on 22 September to relocate 120,000 migrants from Italy, Greece, and Hungary across the Union within the next two years. All four members of the Visegrad Group initially rejected the relocation mechanism. However, the Polish government rescinded this oppositional stance shortly prior to the official vote on this issue in the Council, thereby allowing the scheme to pass with a qualified majority (Hampshire 2015: 10).

According to Eurostat, most migrants aiming at reaching Europe arrived from countries affected by civil war and the destruction caused by the Islamic State. In 2015, a total

of 1,255,600 people applied for first-time asylum in the EU¹², which was more than twice as many than in the previous year. Of these, 29 per cent came from Syria, 14 per cent from Afghanistan, and 11 per cent from Iraq, with 35 per cent of all first-time applicants seeking asylum in Germany, followed by Hungary (14 per cent) and Sweden (12 per cent) (Eurostat, 2016).

With the increasing influx of people, political tension grew as member states became increasingly concerned about the overall situation, leading to a temporary suspension of Schengen in Germany, France, Denmark, Austria, Norway and Sweden as the culminating point of the crisis. Another crucial factor in this respect were the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, which added to the sentiment of distrust towards the predominantly Muslim refugees and calls for stricter regulations (Livingstone & Cerulus, 2016). Consequently, the EU introduced a variety of external measures such as the installation of a European Border and Coast Guard in October 2016, which could even override national authorities, and an increased cooperation with Turkey (European Commission, 2017). The latter was contingent on the conditions of EU financial support and visa liberations for Turkey, as well as the revitalisation of Turkey's accession process to the EU by negotiating further chapters (Paul, 2017). Additionally, a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was initiated by the European Commission to harmonise minimum standards for asylum seekers and applications in all member states, with the results still pending (European Council, 2017).

During the crisis, the members of the Visegrad Group came together multiple times, most notably during summits on 4 September 2015 and on 15 February 2016, to discuss and agree on common goals and strategies ahead of EU summits. However, compared to Hungary, the three other V4 members (Poland, Slovakia and Czechia) faced a minimal number of asylum applications. To illustrate, while Hungary was confronted with 14 per cent (174,435) of first-time asylum requests out of the total EU applications in 2015, only a paltry 0.8 per cent (10,255) were filed in Poland and even less in Czechia (0.1 per cent; 1,235) and Slovakia (0.0 per cent; 320). These numbers stand out even more significantly when compared in terms of numbers of applicants per million inhabitants. From this perspective, Hungary received 17,699 applications per one million inhabitants, as opposed to Poland with only 270 (Eurostat 2016). However, it is worth noting that most of these

¹² This only refers to people actually applying for asylum; the actual number of people entering the EU is expected to be much higher.

asylum seekers were merely registered in Hungary, to then moved on to other member states (Frelak, 2017: 84-85).

In June 2017, the European Commission set in motion an infringement proceeding against Poland, Hungary and Czechia, due to the countries' refusal to participate in the relocation scheme. Slovakia was deliberately left out as its government assured to contribute more in the future. In total, only 28 migrants out of the combined Visegrad quota of 11,069 were relocated, 16 of them to Slovakia (Barigazzi, 2017). However, further action was taken by Hungary and Slovakia, which unitedly challenged the mandatory relocation mechanism at the European Court of Justice in 2015 (Kanter, 2017). On 6 September 2017, the Court dismissed these complaints and declared the European Council acted lawfully when introducing the measure. The decision generated strong criticism by Visegrad politicians. However, in contrast to Hungary, which declared to challenge the decision, Slovak Prime Minister Fico stated he would respect the verdict (Rankin, 2017).

4.2 Domestic Stances towards the Migration Crisis

In the light of a possible introduction of mandatory quotas during the migration crisis in September 2015, the Visegrad Group mostly demonstrated unity in the European political debate regarding this topic. Yet, in order to take into consideration the domestic background the respective MEPs are confronted with, this section briefly highlights the country-specific political and public tendencies in the context of the migration crisis.

In Czechia, one of the strongest voices during the migration crisis was the president elect Miloš Zeman, who had been in office since 2013. He polarised the political debate by comparing the migration crisis to 'an invasion organised by the Muslim Brotherhood' and suggesting using the military to limit the influx of people (in Jurečková, 2016) – sentiments also supported by the anti-migrant initiative 'We Don't Want Islam in the Czech Republic' (IvČRn) and the Party of Direct Democracy (ibid.; Frelak, 2017: 90). The Czech Prime Minister Sobótka, on the contrary, declared himself in favour of cooperation amongst member states and stated that his country would host 1,100 migrants. However, he likewise voiced concerns about mandatory quotas. The political discussion in Czechia focused on securing the southern borders and increasing police presence at train stations. In this context, the Eurosceptic oppositional Civic Democratic Party (ODS) demanded the closing of borders entirely and the minister of finance, Babiš, even proposed the protection of borders by NATO troops (Kačan, 2015: 1-2).

Similar to the Czech conflict between Zeman and Sobótka, Slovak Prime Minister Fico and the President Kiska also expressed divergent opinions during the migration crisis. Slovakia held parliamentary elections in March 2016 and despite the effectively low arrival numbers of migrants, the influx of people became a major campaign topic. Fico repeatedly linked migration and terrorism, and merely agreed that his country could accept 200 Christian refugees (Kałan, 2015: 2). In the run-up to the election, Fico's centre-left party Direction Social Democracy (SMER-SD) had been losing popularity, hence, employing anti-migrant rhetoric was interpreted as a strategy to gain voter support. In general, most parties opposed mandatory quotas and refrained from speaking out in favour of accepting migrants. In the election, the SMER-SD remained the most successful party, but faced significant losses to competing far-right parties as the Slovak National Party (SNS) and People's Party Our Slovakia (LSNS) (Cunningham, 2016). However, Fico's stance became more moderate after the elections and before it was Slovakia's turn to assume the presidency of the European Council in July 2016 (Nič, 2016: 288). In contrast, the more liberal President Kiska emphasised the 'moral duty' Europe had to fulfil, though he also questioned the necessity of quotas (Kałan, 2015: 2).

In Poland, the escalation of the migration crisis coincided with the outset of the parliamentary electoral campaign, a combination that to a certain degree functioned as a catalyst for xenophobia. The national-conservative Law and Justice party (PiS) most frequently exploited the migration topic along with other radical-right parties such as Kukiz'15. Prime Minister Kopacz of the ruling party Civic Platform (PO) had supported the EU resettlement mechanism in September after initial doubts and hesitantly offered that Poland would accept 12,000 migrants. Thereby, she voted against the common stance of the Visegrad group. During the election campaign, Kopacz as well as the representatives from other parties such as the Polish People's Party (PSL) and Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) mostly avoided the topic (Vetter, 2015: 4). PiS chairman Kaczyński was particularly vocal claiming that migrants carried 'various types of parasites' (Kaczynski in Heisbourg, 2015: 11) and warning of the danger of Sharia law subjugating Poland (Vetter 2015: 4). Additionally, Polish President Duda, also affiliated with PiS, and the party's candidate for Prime Minister, Szydło, criticised the EU migration policy and publicly rejected any form of quotas (Baczyński-Sielaczek, 2015: 10; Vetter, 2015: 6). PiS won the elections in October with significant gains in its vote-share. After winning the election, designated Prime Minister Szydło announced Poland's intention to maintain the

commitment made by the former government to cooperate with the relocation mechanism. However, following the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016 she drew back from that stance announcing that Poland would no longer participate (Frelak 2017: 88).

In contrast to the other three members of the Visegrad group, Hungary was a direct transit country for migrants attempting to enter the EU via the Balkan route and across the Serbian-Hungarian land-border. The government of Orbán's Fidesz Party strictly maintained the Dublin regulations during the migration crisis, often forcefully registering migrants, who entered Hungarian territory. To restrict this border crossing the government installed a fence at the Serbian-Hungarian border, which sparked criticism across the EU (Thorpe, 2015). Throughout the crisis, Prime Minister Orbán strongly criticised the EU migration policy, referred to the influx of people as an 'invasion', claiming that 12 million more could follow, and commissioned public campaigns to communicate this message to the public. The anti-migrant roadside billboards displaying messages such as 'If you come to Hungary, you have to follow our laws' were a case in point, especially, since these statements were exclusively written in Hungarian (Seres, 2015: 47-49). In October 2016, the government held a referendum about accepting migrants in Hungary to legitimise its rejection of the relocation mechanism. However, the 98 per cent rate of supporters of an anti-admission policy was undermined by the insufficient turn-out of less than 50 per cent of the electorate, rendering the procedure void (Kingsley, 2016). The Fidesz party's main opponent in Hungarian politics is the radical-nationalist and Euro-sceptic Jobbik party, which as well employed a strong anti-migrant language, leaving hardly any room in the political debate for other parties such as Together or the Hungarian Socialist Party (Kałan 2015: 2).

This overall sceptical stance towards migrants and cooperation with Brussels regarding the acceptance of refugees in the Visegrad group countries was mirrored by the public attitude towards migrants. Investigating the public opinion towards migrants in the four Visegrad countries, research reports by the Warsaw-based Public Opinion Research Centre CBOS from 2015 found that stereotypes and xenophobia predominated public opinion in this regard. Accordingly, many respondents were concerned that increased immigration would threaten their way of life (Poland 57 per cent, Hungary 77 per cent, Czechia 84 per cent, Slovakia 79 per cent) and that migrants would spread atypical diseases (Poland 46, Hungary 79, Czechia 73, Slovakia 68 per cent). When asked about whether their government should accept migrants fleeing armed conflict zones the responses were predictably cautious. While in Poland 48, in Czechia 40, in Slovakia 31 and

in Hungary 58 per cent of interviewees spoke out in favour of granting temporary asylum until the conflicts had resolved, the amount of people in favour of allowing migrants to settle permanently did not exceed 8 per cent in any of the Visegrad countries (CBOS, 2015a, 2015b). Notably, Hungarians, who were significantly more directly confronted by the influx of migrants than their fellow Visegrad citizen, were more supportive of offering asylum. All in all, these studies illustrate the societal background the political discourse on migration tried to react to or influence. Especially in an electoral campaign context as in Poland and Slovakia, these results also explain why this issue was perceived as a promising topic for far-right and even moderate parties to focus on, leading to a ‘scapegoating of ghosts’ (Frelak 2017: 90).

4.3 The Visegrad Countries’ Representation in the EP

After joining the EU in the Eastern Enlargement of 2004, Visegrad politicians were elected into Parliament for the first time in the European elections of the same year. One main impact of the Eastern Enlargement on the dynamics of the European Parliament was that the political orientation of the chamber shifted significantly to the right (Burns, Carter, & Worsfold, 2012: 56). The allocation of CEE country MEPs to the parliamentary groups in the EP illustrates this most unequivocally: nearly 50 per cent of the new MS deputies joined the Christian democratic group of the European People’s Party (PPE), 8.9 per cent the group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and 7 per cent the nationalist UEN, amounting to a total of almost 66 per cent. More progressive-leaning parties such as the social democratic Party of European Socialists (PES)¹³, the group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Verts/ALE) and the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), on the contrary, only faced a growth of 22 per cent of the MEPs from CEE, leaving 18.4 per cent without a party group affiliation (Thomassen & Schmitt, 2009: 28-29).

¹³ Later renamed to group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

Table 1: Visegrad MEPs' Representation in EP Party Groups during the 2014-2019 Parliamentary Term

	Poland	Hungary	Czechia	Slovakia	Total	MEPs from all MS
PPE	22	12	7	6	47	215
ECR*	19	0	2	3	24	73
EFDD	1	0	1	0	2	42
ENF	2	0	0	0	2	40
ALDE	0	0	4	0	4	68
S&D	5	4	4	4	17	189
Verts/ALE	0	2	0	0	2	51
GUE/NGL	0	0	3	0	3	52
NI	2	3	0	0	5	18
Total	51	21	21	13	106	748

Source: Table created by author with information from the EP website: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/hemicycle.html>.

*Abbreviations overview of not previously mentioned in text:

ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group

EFDD: Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group

ENF: Europe of Nations and Freedom Group

S&D: Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats

NI: Non-attached Members

In the current parliamentary term from 2014 to 2019, a total of 106 MEPs represent the Visegrad group in the European plenary, amounting to 14 per cent of the total 748 members of the parliament. With 51 MEPs in the European Parliament, Poland contributes the largest share of deputies, followed by Czechia and Hungary with 21 representatives each and Slovakia with 13 (see Table 1). The four countries' MEPs operate in eight

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different party groups in the EP, with five non-attached members without party-group belonging. While the Visegrad representatives are scattered across the party spectrum, it is notable that alignment with conservative factions dominates, as identified by Thomasen and Schmitt for the first post-enlargement chamber.

All in all, this Chapter provided background information concerning the events of the crisis, the domestic discourse regarding this issue, as well as the representation of the Visegrad four in the EP. On the basis of this overview, the following Chapter 5 addresses the findings of the analysis.

Chapter 5 Case Study Findings: Description, Analysis and Synthesis

This chapter reveals the results of the case study described in Chapter 2. Below, Table 2 lists all the debates that were included in the following analysis with the debate titles and the dates of when they took place. The table illustrates the exact timeframe the following analysis is built on and indicates which general topics the debates were intended to address. Of the 166 statements in these 17 debates, 62 contributions were made by Polish, 46 by Hungarian, 40 by Czech and 18 by Slovak MEPs, which reflects the aforementioned distribution of seats in the chamber, and ought to be kept in mind for the subsequent analysis.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the analysis sets out to explore how the MEPs describe the migrant *other* and which conclusions they draw from these debates for the future of the EU and Europe in general. In the following, the previously outlined research questions are approached with different sets of codes from the codebook¹⁴. These codes are applied to the data set to uncover patterns of discourse and then compare, how the various categories among the sets of codes correlate. I do so by retrieving coding frequencies and cooccurrences with QDA Miner, and illustrate the findings with graphs and quotations from the data set.

Table 2: Selected Debate Material

Date	Title of Debate
11.02.2015	Way forward for Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office
29.04.2015	Report of the extraordinary European Council meeting (23 April 2015) - The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies
30.04.2015	Report of the extraordinary European Council meeting (23 April 2015) - The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies II
20.05.2015	European Agenda on Migration
07.06.2015	State of play of the external aspects of the European migration agenda: towards a new 'Migration Compact'
09.09.2015	Migration and Refugees in Europe
10.09.2015	Migration and refugees in Europe II
16.09.2015	Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on migration
02.12.2015	Special report of the European Ombudsman in own-initiative inquiry concerning Frontex

¹⁴ For an overview of the codes applied to the data set: see Appendix.

15.12.2015	Decision adopted on the European border and coast guard package
19.01.2016	Situation in Poland
02.02.2016	Refugee emergency, external borders control and future of Schengen - Respect for the international principle of nonrefoulement - Financing refugee facility for Turkey - Increased racist hatred and violence against refugees and migrants across Europe
08.03.2016	Communication on implementing the European agenda on migration
12.04.2016	The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration
11.05.2016	Decision adopted on the Common European Asylum System reform
05.07.2016	European Border and Coast Guard
06.07.2016	Programme of activities of the Slovak Presidency

Source: Table was set up with information from the EP data base on debates. See: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html#sidesForm>

In this chapter, the first section of the analysis focuses on how the migrant *other* is described and in which context the MEPs refer to them. The second section then focuses on discursive patterns regarding politics and policies during the migration crisis and highlights the conflict between the national and European dimension. I outline the findings of these analyses along the lines of the research questions and subsequently link these findings to the previously-outlined theoretical framework.

5.1 Report of Findings

5.1.1 Describing the Other and National Approaches to the Crisis

The first set of analyses examines how the MEPs describe the migrant *other* in the context of the crisis and against which background these references occur. Five coding categories of the codebook were designed to assess how often and in which manner the MEPs talk about the migrant *other*, which frames of reference are connected to these remarks, and to what extent the crisis is perceived as a national or European matter.

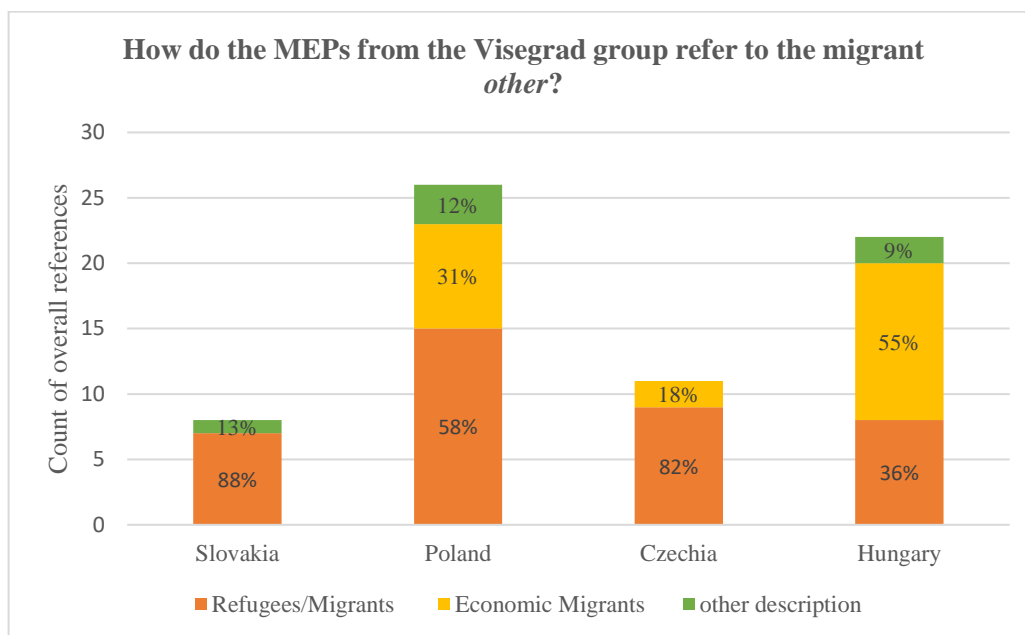
A first screening of the coded segments examines how often ‘migrants’ were directly mentioned or referred to in the debates, showing that this was the case in almost 30 per cent of the statements. At first sight, this might not seem to be a significantly high percentage. However, considering that most of the discussions were held concerning concrete policy measures or action plans (which is considered in the second section of this evaluation) and not explicitly discussing the fate of migrants, this figure is quite high.

Referring to the migrants directly, one of the first patterns that emerges is the differentiation between ‘real’ refugees and economic or illegal migrants – a distinction going beyond mere legal definitions about who is entitled to claim asylum under the Geneva Convention. In political debates, this labelling is frequently conflated by national or actor based interests to possibly oppose accepting migrants because they are supposedly economic migrants and not refugees (Geddes & Scholten, 2016: 6-7; Zetter, 2007). This pattern of differentiating reoccurred throughout the dataset, as the following quote by MEP Kinga Gál (Hungary, PPE) exemplifies:

‘Only a few of them are real asylum seekers, most of them are not refugees according to international law. They are just illegal economic migrants, who seek a better life, better employment. That’s why they put their own lives at risk and their children’s lives at risk and we don’t have to accept all of them.’¹⁵

Figure 1 below illustrates this distinction among the Visegrad countries’ MEPs. The y-axis indicates the overall amount of references the MEPs made in the debates and the four pillars refer to the percentage distribution indicating how often this labelling was used by the respective Visegrad representatives. The third category encompasses classifications that did not fit the former two, as for example more extreme remarks about violent criminals or terrorists. It can be seen from the graph that Hungarian MEPs made by far the most statements referring to economic or illegal migrants. Considering the development of the migration crisis, as outlined in Chapter 4.1, and the fact that, among the Visegrad Four, Hungary was evidently the most affected country, it seems plausible that this differentiation is made more often in this context. However, considering the overall division, it can be stated that the migrants were most often referred to as refugees in need of protection.

¹⁵ Kinga Gál, European Parliament Debate on ‘Communication on implementing the European agenda on migration’ (08.03.2016)

Figure 1: Labelling Migrants¹⁶

Another pattern that can be identified complementing this initial distinction concerns how the MEPs frame the threat perception towards the migrant *other*. This category was adapted in a modified way following Diez's distinctions about different forms of *othering* (2005: 628-629) and enables a more detailed assessment of how the MEPs refer to the migrant *other*. A distinction is made between migration as (1) a threat to European culture, (2) a threat to European security and stability, (3) overwhelming, in the sense that it is practically impossible to welcome large numbers of people, or (4) as something positive, such as a useful asset for Europe's future. Figure 2 indicates how often MEPs from the respective countries mention migrants in a way that is captured in these categories. Evidently, the references to the migrant *other* as a threat to security and stability outnumber the other sections significantly. In this context, the MEPs emphasise that 'the threat of terrorism'¹⁷ changes the frame of reference for discussing migration, and use evocative language referring to an 'unprecedented flood of migrants'¹⁸ or migrants, who 'roam through Europe'¹⁹. In contrast, the second largest group of references in which the migrant *other* is perceived as overwhelming refers to more practical issues, with MEPs

¹⁶ All figures in this chapter were designed by the author and are based on the data set of the EP debates.

¹⁷ Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Hungary, PPE Group in the debate on 'Way forward for Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office' (11.02.2015).

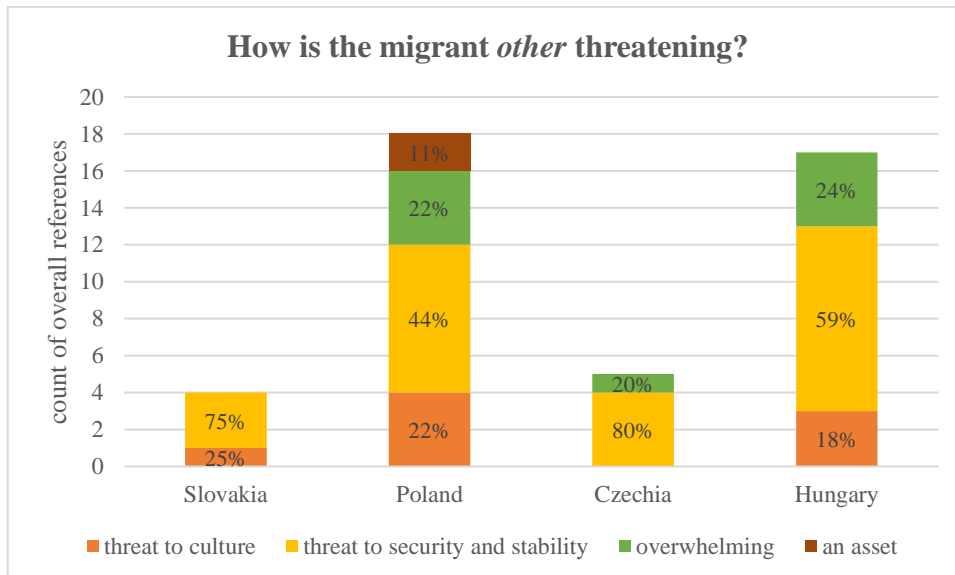
¹⁸ Danuta Jazłowiecka, Poland, PPE Group in the debate on 'Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on migration' (16.09.2015).

¹⁹ Jiří Pospíšil, Czechia, PPE Group in the debate on 'Migration and refugees in Europe II' (10.09.2015).

claiming that ‘Europe is not capable of absorbing thousands or tens of thousands more refugees’²⁰.

Moreover, it is noticeable that Hungarian and Polish MEPs generally reference the ‘threat’ of migrants significantly more often than their counterparts from the other two countries (see Figure 2). However, this can be explained by the fact that Slovakia has significantly fewer MEPs in the EP (as discussed in Chapter 4.3) and Hungary was more affected by the crisis than the others, which possibly explains the activity of Hungarian MEPs. In this context, the emphasis on the security and stability threat by Hungarian MEPs also fits this pattern.

Figure 2: Threat Perception Towards the Migrant Other

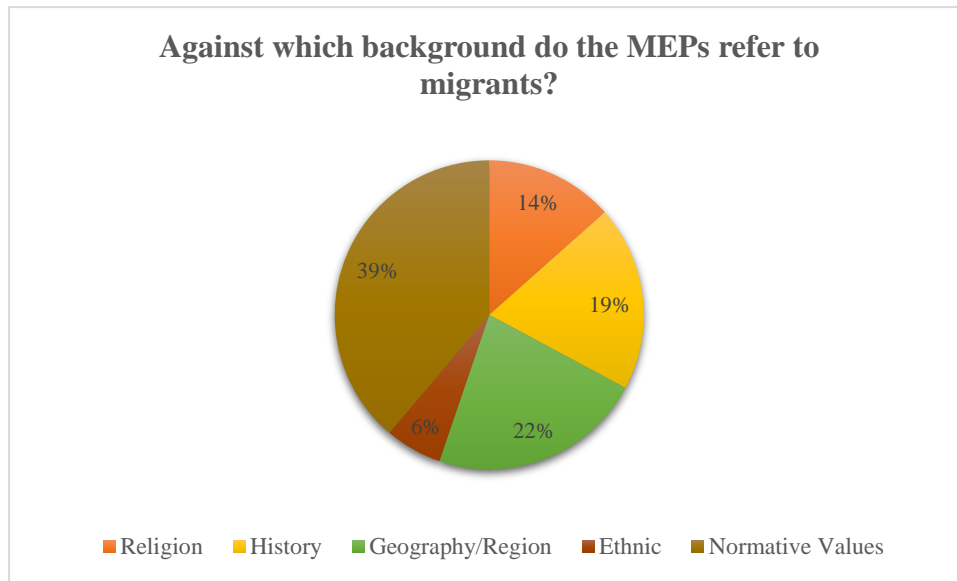


While Figures 1 and 2 suggest a certain degree of correspondence, the analysis of code co-occurrences with QDA Miner of the two categories, examining how often certain components occur in the same segment, allows for some distinctions. While it seems logical that the reference to economic migrants would coincide with the mentioning of threats to security and stability because of the migrant *other*, it is rather surprising that the same holds true for those MEPs labelling migrants as refugees or asylum seekers. Admittedly, in proportion to the overall references to refugees and economic migrants, the latter co-

²⁰ Jan Zahradil, Czechia, ECR group in the debate on ‘Report of the extraordinary European Council meeting’ (30.04.2015).

incides significantly more often with references to security. However, the proximity plotting of QDA Miner does suggest that MEPs who refer to migrants as refugees or asylum seeker do so as well. This indicates that an acknowledgement of the migrants' status might be merely rhetorical and cannot necessarily be understood as a reference to the migrant *other* in a positive manner in general. In that respect, these two categories are useful supplements to each other to underscore the complexity of these references to the migrant *other*.

Focusing more on the contextual framework in which these statements were made, another category examines the background against which the discussion about migrants and migration took place or, to an extent, which identity components were mobilised during the debates. In other words, what experiences and concepts do the MEPs refer to when explaining their view of the crisis? As shown in Figure 3 below, five coding options were provided in this context: (1) religion, (2) history, (3) geography, (4) ethnic and (5) normative values. The first option includes any reference to religion in the context of refugees or the resolution of the crisis, most importantly, references to Christianity. History was for example coded when allusions to communist history or other key events were made. Geography encompasses the region of Central or Eastern Europe, and ethnicity captured references to 'Poles', 'Hungarians' and similar wordings. The last coding option focusing on normative values refers to a rather humanitarian dimension in which helping those in need was mentioned as inevitable. In this context, it is crucial that the coding of these references of identity components does not account for the positive or negative connotation of these statements, but rather focused on the number of occurrences. For example, an MEP might refer to religion and compassion as a justification in support of welcoming migrants to Europe, while another MEP might reference religion to support the opposing argument and point out that most migrants are non-Christians. It is apparent from the figure below that the reference to the normative values was, at 39 per cent, decidedly the most dominant component. The references to history as well as geography focus mostly, but not exclusively, on the region of CEE.

Figure 3: Context of the Debate on Migration

Considering the overall crisis in the EU and the aforementioned depiction of the migrant *other* as a threat to either security or culture, it is striking that the clear majority of MEPs referred to the crisis as a European issue that requires a common European solution. This is surprising as it could also be assumed that with an increased threat perception the demands for a solely national solution would grow stronger at the expense of overall support for a European solution. Of course, some MEPs do refer to the countries on the external border of the EU as primarily responsible or claim solely MS should be in charge of migration policy. However more frequently, statements about the crisis emphasise a European dimension: ‘European matter’²¹, ‘real solution at EU level’²², ‘an issue for Europe as a whole’²³, and ‘the discussion about refugees is a discussion about us, about Europeans’²⁴. This does not entail that the MEPs implicitly agree with the measures proposed or taken by the EU, but rather that they did not specifically claim that the crisis should be solved by the individual MS. Possibly, the arena of investigation being the EP partially contributed to this outcome, as the MEPs work in a European institution, whereas politicians might frame this issue differently in domestic politics.

²¹ Péter Niedermüller, Hungary, S&D Group in the debate on ‘European Border and Coast Guard’ (05.07.2016).

²² Monika Flašíková Beňová, Slovakia, S&D Group in the debate on ‘Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on migration’ (16.09.2015).

²³ Tomáš Zdechovský, Czechia, EPP Group in the debate on ‘The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies’ (30.04.2015).

²⁴ Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Poland, EPP Group in the debate on ‘Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on migration’ (16.09.2015).

All in all, the evaluation of these different descriptions and frames of reference demonstrates the ambiguity of the issue under discussion. While during the debates, the MEPs refer to the migrant *other* mostly as people in need of help, this labelling is accompanied by a narrative of threat concerning security, cultural and practical issues. What does this indicate? It shows that it is too simplistic to merely identify these labels that are given to the migrant *other*, but that it is imperative to further explore underlying patterns that emerged in the migration debate, which might give a deeper meaning to this first examination. In other words, this illustrates the need to contextualise this notion of *othering* and identity with the overall debate about the migration crisis itself and visions of Europe that are made subjects of discussion. The following section includes precisely these issues in the analysis.

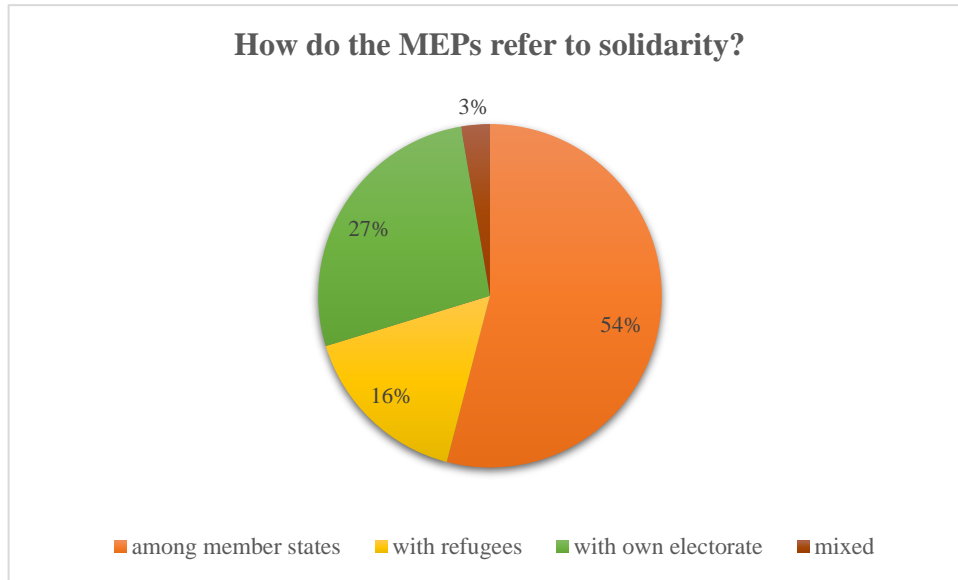
5.1.2 Negotiating Pathways for Europe

This section outlines the results of the second set of analyses, which focuses on the contestation of national and European interests as well as future visions for Europe. More concretely, I outline how scepticism towards the EU surfaces in the debates on solving the crisis, while also taking into account how the MEPs refer to their own nations' reaction concerning this issue. For the investigation, ten coding categories were applied to the data set to analyse several notions of the debate. The themes of solidarity, conflicting interests between the national and the European level, possible solutions to the crisis and more general visions for Europe reoccur throughout the data set and are summarised in the following.

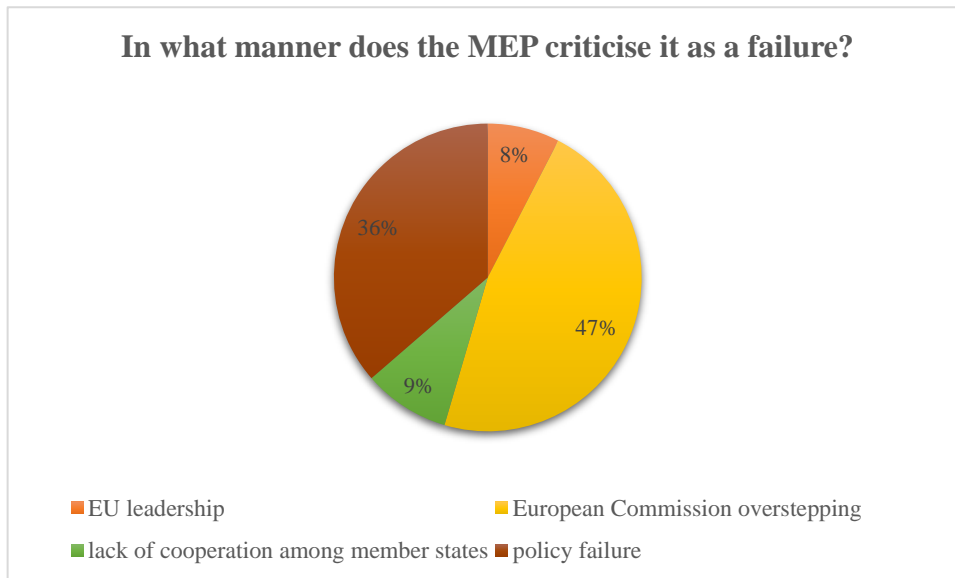
The idea of solidarity itself and the discussion about whom this solidarity should be directed towards repeatedly surfaces in the debates. The main pattern that arises in this context is a distinction between solidarity that is granted (1) internally among member states in situations of crisis, (2) externally with refugees in need of humanitarian support, or (3) solidarity that should be reserved for the own electorate (in the sense of following the wishes of 'the people'). Figure 4 below illustrates that more than half of the references made in this context are directed towards the first option of these three. However, remarks about showing solidarity with the own electorate, either European or national, are also essentially directed towards the internal dimension. In comparison, the section about the

importance of showing solidarity with refugees therefore appears even smaller, which underlines that the overall discourse was actually more about the EU and Europe itself.

Figure 4: Solidarity in Times of Crisis



Considering the assessment of the crisis by the MEPs, references to the success or failure of the EU's actions during the crisis were retained in 40 per cent of the debate contribution. In the entirety of these contributions merely 11 per cent assessed the EU as successful or partially successful. However, it must be noted that the analysis focuses on the main timeframe of the crisis during which the debates revolved mostly around the flaws of existing policy and action plans. Hence, a rather critical assessment matches the overall situation. For the 89 per cent that stated that the EU was failing, the nature of this failure was broken down into four different concepts of malfunctioning. The failure of (1) EU leadership, (2) cooperation among member states, (3) policy, and (4) the EU overstepping its mandate, thereby undermining the MS sovereignty. Figure 5 provides the results obtained from the analysis, which illustrate that the two groupings that stand out the most are the ones criticising the immediate migration policy or the increasing dominance of the European Commission, which is perceived as a danger to the nation-states in the EU.

Figure 5: Notions of Failure in the Context of EU Migration Policy

While the area of policy failure in the statements varied and referred to the failing protection of the EU borders as well as to the incoherent asylum system itself, the remarks about the Commission interfering with the competences and sovereignty of the MS are more coherent. In this context, comments centred on the Commission ‘going too far’²⁵ or claiming it ‘[...] dreamed up a new power’²⁶, emphasising the ‘massive intervention into the sovereignty of member states’²⁷ or the importance of looking ‘carefully on issues like the sovereignty of member states’²⁸.

Following this line of focusing on the national dimension in the context of the EU migration crisis politics, a number of issues can be identified in the MEPs’ direct references to the Visegrad region and its role during the crisis. Recurring themes in these remarks are the stressing of the MS efforts as well as justifications for the limited willingness of the Visegrad countries to cooperate within the framework of the EU measures. Figure 6 summarises which contributions of their nation states the MEPs from the respective Visegrad countries mention most often. Comparing the results of the four countries, it is noticeable that references to Eastern Europe and the receiving of refugees from

²⁵ Marek Jurek, Poland, ECR in the debate on ‘European Agenda on Migration’ (20.05.2015).

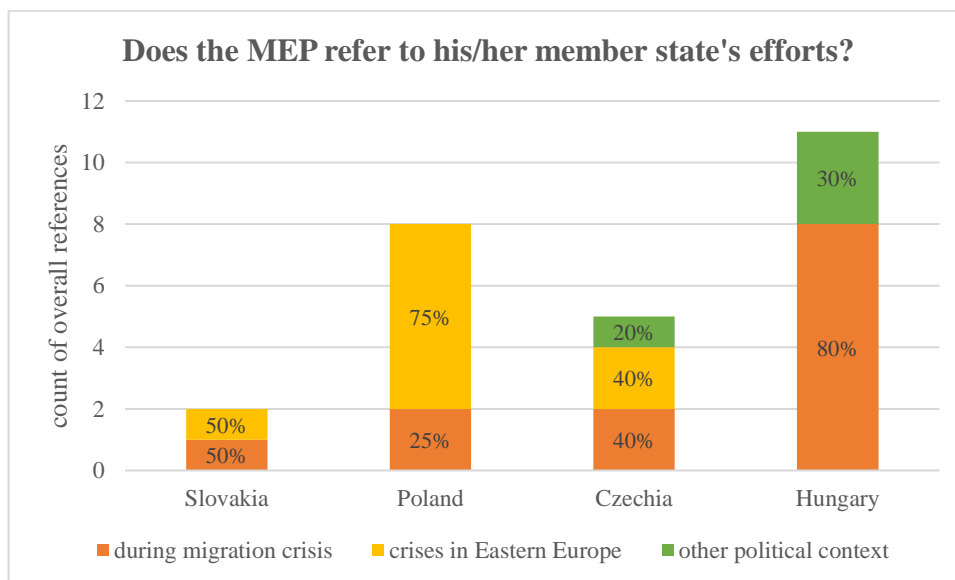
²⁶ Petr Mach, Czechia, EFDD in the debate on ‘European Agenda on Migration’ (20.05.2015).

²⁷ Richard Sulík, Slovakia, ECR in the debate on ‘Programme of activities of the Slovak Presidency’ (06.07.2016).

²⁸ Kinga Gál, Hungary, EPP in the debate on ‘Decision adopted on the European border and coast guard package’ (15.12.2015).

Ukraine and Chechnya are particularly emphasised by MEPs from Poland, followed by Czechia. Yet, the conflicts in these two countries did not overlap with the migration crisis timewise, since the war in Ukraine began in 2013/14 and, while the conflict in Chechnya is ongoing, the Second Chechen War began in 1999 and was particularly bloody in the early 2000s. In their debate contributions, the MEPs repeatedly raise this issue stating that ‘with regard to the Eastern Neighbourhood, Poland accepted nearly one million of mostly economic migrants’²⁹ or that Czechia welcomes ‘the third highest number of refugees from Ukraine’³⁰. These claims are accompanied by words of warnings to not forget the conflicts in the East because of the migration pressure in the South of Europe.

Figure 6: Member States' Contributions



However, Eurostat data about first time asylum applicants demonstrates that, while most people applying for asylum in Poland and Czechia undeniably came from Ukraine and Russia, in total only 920 Ukrainians were seeking protection in Czechia in 2015 and 2016. Similarly, 14,420 Russian citizens and 2,170 Ukrainians applied for asylum in Poland over those two years (Eurostat, 2016, 2017). While the numbers in Poland are significantly higher than in Czechia and it is possible that people who did not apply for asylum but are currently staying in the country were not included in the statistics, the

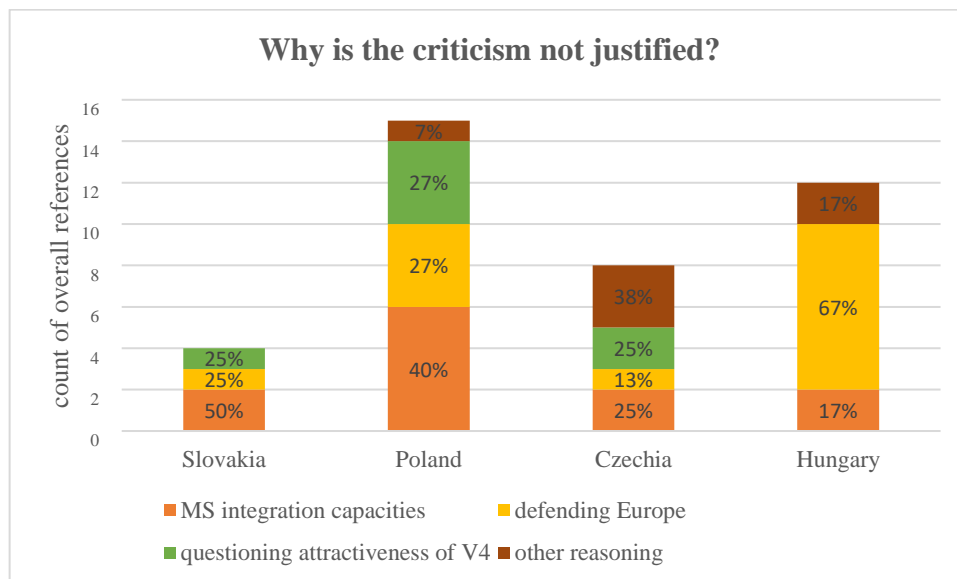
²⁹ Anna Elżbieta Fotyga, Poland, ECR in the debate on ‘Refugee emergency, external borders control and future of Schengen’ (02.02.2016).

³⁰ Tomáš Zdechovský, Czechia, EPP in the debate on ‘European Agenda on Migration’ (20.05.2015).

claim of one million appears to be an overestimate. This indicates that the repeated reference to these immigrants from Eastern Europe rather serves as a strategic rhetorical frame of reference.

As previously mentioned, the Visegrad countries' limited willingness to cooperate during the migration crisis drew a great deal of criticism from across the Union. Justification patterns for this conduct as well as objections against these allegations and threatening of sanctions are particularly apparent after the initial EU measures were passed and the oppositional stance of the respective countries became evident. In the debates, three main categories of justifications emerged: (1) the emphasis of the importance of the MSs' actions for Europe (in terms of defending Europe), (2) the reference that it was important to consider the MSs' integration capacities, and (3) the claim that the Visegrad region was not attractive for migrants themselves. Regarding the latter category, most MEPs refer either to situations when migrants moved on to other MS (such as Germany) despite being granted asylum in one of the Visegrad countries, or claimed that it was against international law to force people to live in a certain region. As Figure 7 below indicates, the first justification referring to 'defending Europe' is mostly brought forward by MEPs from Hungary, which again is unsurprising considering that the country was immediately confronted with the influx of people. In Poland, on the other hand, the mentioning of the need to respect MSs' capacities is noticeably higher.

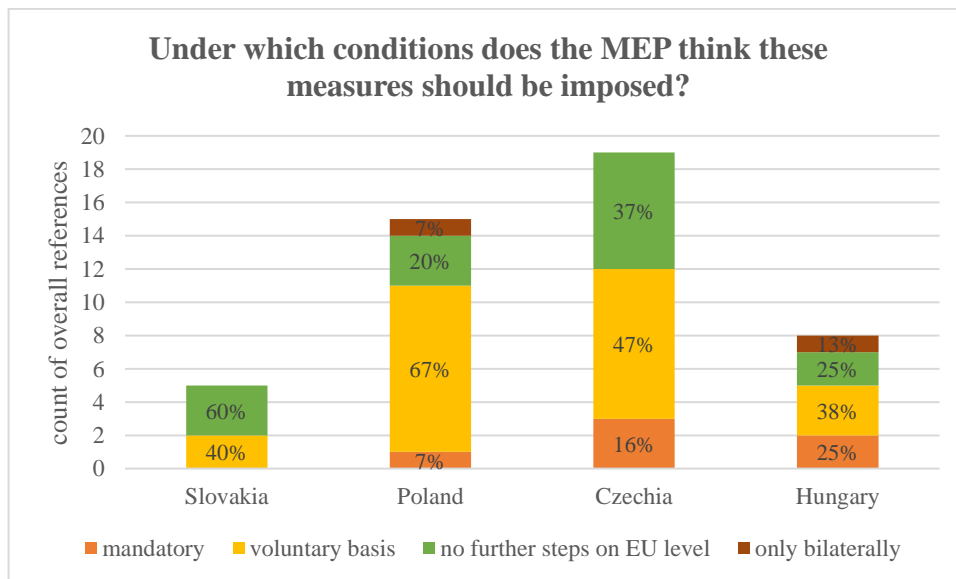
Figure 7: Justification for Limited Cooperation



Turning to the issue of solving the crisis and possible ways forward for the EU, the debates revolve around possible EU policy solutions and under what conditions these should be implemented, if external cooperation could help solve the crisis, and how the EU should function in the future.

Of the various possible measures under discussion for solving the crisis, the two most often mentioned policy steps are the relocation scheme for migrants and the strengthening of border controls at the EU’s external border. Regarding the conditions under which these measures should be imposed, a clear majority of the Visegrad MEPs emphasise the importance of voluntary cooperation (overall 51.1 per cent) as opposed to mandatory or binding policy instruments, which could be introduced without the MSs’ consent. Another substantial faction of MEPs entirely reject the proposal of deeper cooperation at the EU level. Figure 8 demonstrates the extent of the opposition against binding EU policy measures and illustrates that only a small number of MEPs spoke in favour of mandatory EU cooperation regarding this issue (12.8 per cent among all Visegrad states).

Figure 8: Conditions for Further Policy Implementation



Interestingly, these proposals of voluntary cooperation often coincide with narratives of supporting people, as illustrated in the statement of MEP Kudrycka:

‘The Mediterranean tragedy required quick action and quick action was taken [...] to save the lives of people, whose dream it was to reach Europe. [...] Mare Nostrum saved 170,000 lives there. I remember how much Europe helped Poles after martial law was introduced in 1980.

*[...] Europe needs to help refugees, but it has to do so on the basis of voluntary solidarity.*³¹

The emphasis on voluntary cooperation in this statement is accompanied by assurances of the necessary support as well as references to the own country's past. However, it seems at least questionable to what extent said help would be provided in reality.

These debates about internal EU cooperation are complemented by references to potential external solutions to the crisis of which the most discussed approaches are fighting root causes of migration and strengthening existing collaborations with Turkey or Northern African countries. In this context, the primary line of argument is: 'We know that no one wants to be an asylum seeker, no one wants to leave their home. And for that reason, we believe that crises should be solved where they emerge'³². While this suggests an overall willingness to help migrants, it simultaneously accentuates the reluctance to include them in European society and to extend relief efforts beyond financial means. Moreover, implementing external measures to solve the crisis would make further internal EU cooperation redundant as the aim is to discourage migrants from coming to Europe. Together with the results from Figure 8, this illustrates that the support for a European solution for the migration crisis, as outlined in the beginning of this section, builds on the postulated notion of voluntary action and not necessarily including the notion of welcoming migrants into the EU.

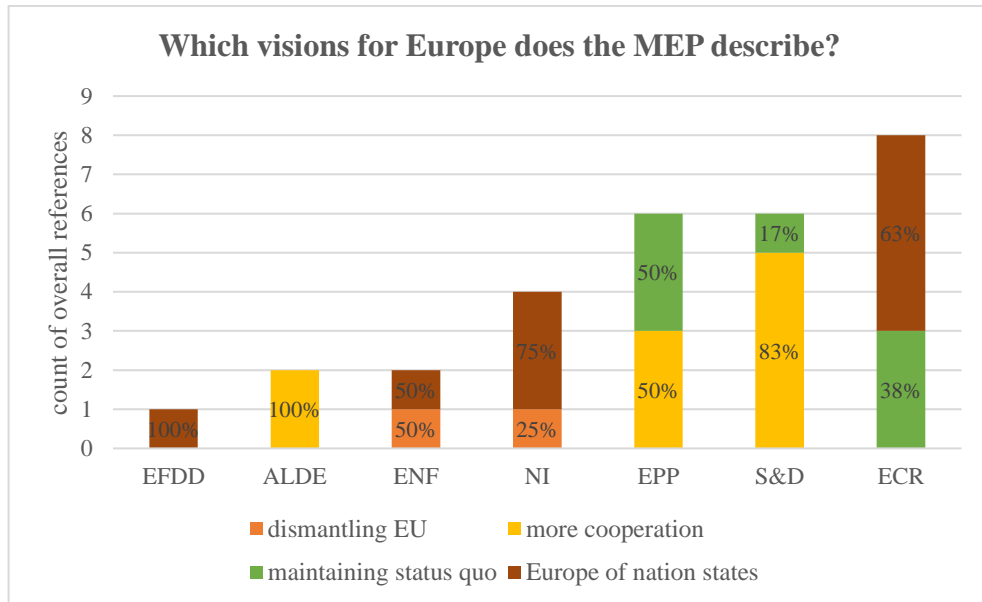
A similar pattern surfaces when the MEPs directly refer to the future of Europe. Regarding this matter, the division along EP party group lines reflects differing stances remarkably. Figure 9 illustrates that the only party groups which noticeably support further integration in the context of the migration crisis are ALDE, PPE and S&D. However, even in the case of the PPE, only half of the statements support this matter. While this group in favour of increased cooperation is still the largest group overall, it is followed by strong support for a Europe with powerful nation-states, along with statements in favour of maintaining the status-quo. It is evident from Figure 9 that the demands for stronger nation-states within the Union originate especially from statements made by MEPs from right-wing or nationalist party groups such as the ECR, EFDD or ENF. Interestingly, claims that it would be best to dismantle the Union only occur in exceptional

³¹ Barbara Kudrycka, Poland, EPP in the debate on 'Report of the extraordinary European Council meeting - The latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies' (29.04.2015).

³² Michaela Šojdrová, Czechia, EPP in debate on 'Decision adopted on the Common European Asylum System reform' (11.05.2016).

cases and are made by politicians from nationalist party groups such as the ENF or non-attached members as Janusz Korwin-Mikke from Poland. To sum up, there is broad support for cooperation within the framework of the EU in general; however, the enthusiasm for further integration in the form of common policy seems limited, whereas narratives of restricted cooperation dominate.

Figure 9: Visions for Europe



All in all, the findings in this section suggest that the debates about the migration crisis were rather debates about the EU, its members themselves and the power struggle in between. The declarations favouring internal solidarity, the recurring criticism that the Commission was overstepping its boundaries, and references to domestic contributions and motives for non-cooperation are illustrative examples of this. Moreover, the results indicate that while overall patterns of discourse among the Visegrad MEPs are comparable, there are some interesting deviations, especially in the case of Hungary. In the context of further integration measures, the overall tendency shows that the willingness to cooperate further is limited and hardly accepted beyond the area of voluntary cooperation. Likewise, the discursive patterns focussing on future visions for Europe indicate a stagnating rather than an ever-closer union.

5.1.3 Summary and Cross-Comparison

Together, the results from the two sections provide important insights into the overall structure of the discourse as well as the interconnectedness of the distinct categories. In this section, I briefly highlight coding co-occurrences across the categories outlined above.

The results of the correlation analysis with QDA Miner indicate a significant code co-occurrence between those MEP statements describing the migrant *other* as a threat, emphasising the actions of member states during the crisis as crucial, and criticising the plans of the European Commission. Furthermore, this notion of threat perception occurs in proximity most often to demands to fight the root causes of migration and calls for solidarity with the own electorate. In terms of future visions for Europe, this coding category is most often linked to either maintaining the status quo or establishing a Europe of nation states. It is also notable that references to the migrant *other* while referring to the region of Central and Eastern Europe strongly correlates with the demand to respect the MSs' sovereignty and integration capacities. In general, therefore, it seems that a pattern emerges along the lines of MEPs emphasising their national political context and efforts, their perception of the migrant *other* as threatening and the willingness to commit to binding further integration measures.

On the other hand, those MEPs emphasising the need for more cooperation and the normative (or humanitarian) responsibility of the EU, tend to criticise the lack of cooperation among the MS more often and to support binding measures to solve the crisis. Admittedly, these results need to be viewed cautiously since these co-occurrences do not happen in every statement; however, the emergence of these patterns to a certain degree exists and is evident. In the following section, I briefly discuss these findings in relation to the previously outlined theoretical framework.

5.2 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Theoretical Framework

In this concluding section, I aim to link the findings of this chapter with the previously outlined theoretical framework, which focused on the connection between identity, *othering* and Euroscepticism.

An initial objective of this research project was to evaluate how the migrant *other* is referred to by the MEPs and in which context these references are made. As mentioned

in the theory section, the in-group/out-group distinction is one of the most powerful elements of identity construction, as a potential outside *other* gives the in-group something to define against (Triandafyllidou 1989; Gellner 1964). In a European context, Diez (2004) claimed that the narrative of *othering* shifted from an *othering* against Europe's own past (Waever 1989) towards an *othering* of Islam and a focus on security. To a certain degree the results of this analysis confirm this observation. Considering the results of the first categories, the dominance of the threat perception in relation to the migrant *other* as a threat to the stability and security in Europe demonstrates this tendency. Moreover, the repeated co-occurrence of references to the migrant *other* as threatening and economic/illegal migrants illustrates the negative connotation of the latter term.

Regarding Hooghe and Marks' (2008) suggestion that post-functionalism as a theory is better equipped to explain further integration or a backlash against the EU, it can be stated that including identity-related issues in explanatory models seems more promising than relying only on economic factors. The findings of this study support this approach, as financial issues are scarcely mentioned throughout the debates. A possible explanation for this might be that debates focusing on general budget issues were not at the centre of this analysis. However, the struggle for competences between member states and the EU, and what it would entail for Europe to accept migrants, appear to be more at the heart of the debates than financial matters.

In the context of this post-functionalist approach, another key element of the theoretical chapter was the distinction between a TAN and GAL cleavage, essentially suggesting that the display of exclusive and inclusive (TAN and GAL, respectively) patterns of identity relates to the attitude towards further integration. Regarding Euroscepticism, this implies a strong linkage between TAN-focused identity patterns and opposition towards the EU polity or further integration (Hooghe and Marks 2008). Considering the findings of this chapter, the co-occurrence of discourse patterns in the MEP statements focusing on the role of the Visegrad region, while at the same time rejecting further integration and voicing concerns about the threat of the migrant *other* seems to support this theoretical assumption. In other words, those MEPs emphasising the importance of protecting their own region and showing solidarity with their own electorate coincidentally also reject further mandatory cooperation and integration – a nation-focused narrative that naturally coincides with the supranational EU polity.

The fragmented visions for Europe among the party groups, but also the criticism against the Commission and the emphasis of national contributions, further illustrate the

general presupposition that the EU polity is essentially a contested concept which furthers scepticism (de Wilde and Trezz, 2009b; Mair 2007). The fact that, in the end, most of the debates revolved around the negotiation of competences and the demands for a decrease of supranational governance, demonstrates this noticeably.

Finally, the initial assessment of Börzel and Risse (2017) regarding the migration crisis is that, in contrast to the preceding financial crisis, it mostly evolved around the question of ‘who belongs to us’. As shown in the analysis, the debate contributions by the MEPs focused on migrants and their needs to a certain extent; however, the overall emphasis is rather on the internal dimension of the EU. In other words, the discursive patterns analysed here indicate that the MEPs consider solidarity among MS and with their own electorate to be significantly more relevant than external solidarity with migrants.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This study aimed to uncover patterns of discourse concerning Euroscepticism and *othering* during the EP debates throughout a selected period of the migration crisis of 2015/16. In this context, it was argued that the migration crisis provoked a double conflict about (1) who belongs to Europe as well as about (2) how much Europe is needed in terms of delegating competencies from the national to the EU level. To support this argument, this case study examined how the MEPs describe the migrant *other* in the EP debates, as well as what conclusions these politicians draw from the crisis and how this relates back to their references towards migrants. The analysis of this dichotomy intended to identify possible lines of arguments and recurring topics, as well as which differences have emerged among the four Visegrad countries and EP party groups. This conclusion chapter first summarises the findings in relation to the respective research objectives and then outlines limitations of the study as well as future avenues of research.

The investigation of references towards the migrant *other* has shown that, while a majority of Visegrad MEPs referred to migrants as ‘refugees’, labelling - such as ‘economic migrants’ - also occurred frequently. In terms of threat perception, the migrant *other* is most often described as a threat to European security and stability or in slightly fewer cases as overwhelming in the sense that it would not be possible to welcome large numbers of migrants to Europe for practical reasons. Noticeably, Hungarian MEPs referred to migrants as economic migrants or as a threat to security more often than their other Visegrad counterparts. This is most likely the case since Hungary was the only Visegrad country that was immediately affected by the high influx of people. Moreover, the emerging discursive patterns suggest that perceiving migrants as a threat to European security or culture is not exclusively linked to the claim of migrants being economic migrants. There is a visible discrepancy between MEPs referring to the migrant *other* in a normative value or humanitarian context and MEPs who simultaneously emphasise the threat that originates from accepting migrants.

Considering the contestation of national and European interests, as well as future visions of Europe and how this relates back to the migrant *other*, the discursive patterns suggest that the overall narrative was rather focused on the EU itself and the distribution of power and competencies regarding migration policy. In this context, the MEPs mostly referred to solidarity as something that should be granted among MS or towards their own

electorate. The conflict between the EU and the national level is evident in the debate contributions of the MEPs, as they repeatedly refer to their own countries' efforts either regarding the migration crisis or conflicts in Eastern Europe. This is underlined by claims that the European Commission is overstepping its boundaries by introducing new measures that directly impact on the sphere of the nation state, thereby undermining their sovereignty.

The debate about possible solutions to the crisis as well as about future visions for Europe suggest a similar notion of a more 'exclusive' attitude towards the EU. In this context, a majority of the Visegrad MEPs emphasised that new measures should, if at all, be merely introduced on a voluntary basis and stress the need for external solutions such as fighting root causes of migration. Both tendencies suggest a general refraining from solving the crisis by introducing binding EU policies. In a similar vein, MEPs' references to the overall future of the European project favoured the upholding of the status quo or the strengthening of the nation states.

Moreover, the analysis indicates that the debate contributions of the MEPs from the Visegrad countries follow similar patterns. This is the case regarding the emphasis of their countries' contributions as well as the noticeable tendency of perceiving the migrant *other* as a threat to the stability and security of Europe, for example. However, throughout the analysis, the statements of the Hungarian MEPs occasionally stand out in comparison to the other three MS for the above-mentioned reasons.

Regarding the party groups in the EP, the attitudes towards more cooperation and further integration at first glance appear to follow a predictable pattern, with MEPs from long established party groups, such as ALDE, S&D and PPE, supporting further cooperation. By contrast, party groups with more openly national priorities, such as the ENF or ECR, favour a Europe of nations. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that even among the presumably pro-EU party groups not all members spoke out in favour of enhanced cooperation.

The evidence from this study indicates the relevance of Hooghe's and Marks's proposal to take identity components into consideration when analysing pathways for further integration as well as a potential backlash against it, rather than only considering economic motives. In terms of the suggested TAN/GAL divide, this means that a more exclusive, nation state-focussed attitude towards *others* would coincide with scepticism towards further European integration, whereas, more liberal and inclusive identity patterns would favour such a development. This case study's findings suggest similar tendencies.

Returning to the original argument, these findings support the notion of a double conflict. Throughout the debate the migrant *other* was a recurring component of discourse, and while there were several references towards the humanitarian dimension of the crisis, the main narrative was dominated more by security threat perceptions and the attempts to solve the crisis externally. In other words, a narrative of rather not including the migrant *other* in European society prevailed. As previously mentioned, the focus of the debate was especially on the second dimension of this double conflict, addressing the struggle for competencies between the European and the national level of politics. Accusations that the European Commission was overstepping its competences and deliberately interfering with MSs' sovereignty, as well as the emphasis on the importance of voluntary cooperation demonstrate the salience of this discourse.

Several limitations to this case study need to be acknowledged. The case study design of this research only aimed to explore a small segment of the overall discourse on migration in a very specific context, as only the Visegrad contributions were analysed in-depth. This is especially relevant to the debate contributions of Slovak MEPs, since there were significantly fewer statements from this country. Furthermore, the selection of debates for the data set itself provides for a certain bias, since evidently not all debates could be included in the analysis and the pre-selection was made according to the research interest. Therefore, it is possible that other discursive patterns and lines of arguments could emerge in thematically related debates. Consequently, the findings outlined here ought to be considered cautiously and by no means enjoy general validity.

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insights into the linkage between patterns of identity, *othering* and Euroscepticism in a supranational arena. In addition to these findings, it can be stated that it stands to reason that evaluating the notion of Euroscepticism as a discourse rather than by categorising the phenomenon allows for a more nuanced and more dynamic analysis. Moreover, the EP has proven to be a fruitful arena of investigation, as despite its superficially pro-European narrative, in-depth analysis reveals more Euroscepticism.

More research is needed to better understand ways in which Euroscepticism functions as a discourse, as well as how identity patterns and processes of *othering* are linked to this phenomenon. Such research would benefit from examining this linkage more closely: possibly by including more MS in the analysis or by differentiating between patterns in national political discourse and discourse on the EU level. Moreover, it might be worthwhile to include the public sphere in the analysis, as a space in which collective

Chapter 6 Conclusion

identities and normative expectations are negotiated and shaped, to identify how patterns of identity and Euroscepticism differ in different arenas of investigation.

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Appendix

Code Book

The Other (and 'the people')
<p><i>Does the MEP mention international migration pressure as a cause of crisis?</i></p> <p>a) Yes, it is b) No, it isn't</p> <p><i>How are migrants framed by MEP?</i></p> <p>a) Economic migrants/ Illegal migrants b) Refugees/ Migrants c) other description</p> <p><i>How is the migrant 'other' threatening?</i></p> <p>a) threat to the European culture b) threat to the European security and stability c) overwhelming (on a practical level not possible to welcome too many people) d) not a threat, but an asset (good for the future of Europe)</p>
Regional/National Focus
<p><i>Which identity components do the MEPs mobilise?</i></p> <p>a) religion b) history c) geography d) ethnic e) normative-values f) other</p> <p><i>Does the MEP refer to her/his nation state's domestic efforts?</i></p> <p>a) efforts during migration crisis b) efforts in the context of crises in Eastern Europe (Ukraine/Chechnya) c) other</p> <p><i>How does the MEP refer to the criticism against the Visegrad countries?</i></p> <p>a) criticism justified b) criticism not justified c) partially justified</p> <p><i>Why is the criticism not justified?</i></p> <p>a) important to consider MS integration capacities b) emphasising actions of MS as important for EU/defending Europe c) questioning attractiveness of Visegrad region for migrants d) other reasoning</p>
EU/European-Lens
<p><i>The migration crisis is a challenge for:</i></p> <p>a) Europe, as a European issue b) the nation state c) other</p>

How does the MEP speak about solidarity?

- a) internally among member states
- b) externally with refugees
- c) with own electorate
- d) other

Does the MEP assess the action taken by the EU during the crisis as a failure?

- a) yes, it is a failure
- b) no, the EU is successful
- c) mixed

In what manner does the MEP criticise it as a failure?

- a) failure of the EU leadership
- b) lack of cooperation among member states
- c) European Commission overstepping its mandate thereby undermining MS sovereignty
- d) policy failure
- e) other

Does the MEP mention further concrete policy steps?

- a) Quotas for relocation mechanism
- b) Common Border control
- c) Common Asylum System Reform
- d) other

Under which conditions does the MEP think these measures should be imposed?

- a) mandatory/binding
- b) on a voluntary basis
- c) only bilaterally
- d) other

Does the MEP refer to external solutions to the crisis?

- a) fight root causes of migration instead of curing the symptoms
- b) Financial Assistance
- c) strengthening existing measures (e.g. partnerships with Libyan coast guard)
- d) mixed approach

General Vision for Europe?

- a) Dismantling the EU
- b) cooperation in more policy fields
- c) Maintaining status-quo
- d) Europe of Nation States

Thesis Authorship Statement

JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN KRAKOW CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

Name/ Student ID number:

Josephine Talena Assmus / 1140583

Title of thesis:

Euroscpticism and Othering in the EU Migration Crisis 2015/16:

Analysing Patterns of Discourse in the European Parliament

I hereby confirm that this paper is my own work and that all sources have been properly and clearly credited. I am familiar with the Centre for European Studies and Jagiellonian University's policy on plagiarism, detailed in the Student Handbook and defined as “the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own”. I understand that this practice is considered unethical and expressly prohibited, that even an unintentional failure to properly credit text, images or ideas may be considered plagiarism, and that perpetrators may be called before the Ethics Board and/or expelled from the university.

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