"TO PROTECT NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY FROM THE EU?" THE 2019 EP ELECTIONS AND POPULISTS PARTIES IN V4 COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

This article analyses the 2019 European Parliament (EP) election manifestos of populist parties in V4 countries as a contribution to the contemporary discussion on political populism. The aim of the study is to analyze the election campaign programs which populist parties operating in individual V4 countries presented for EP elections in 2019, using a qualitative content analysis of the official election programs of relevant populist parties and other sources of their communication. It tries to identify topics that have been framed as a problem or risk by Central European populists and how these topics have been interpreted in their programs. The so-called "immigration crisis" and the contemporary state of the European Union are seen as the most problematic topics by a majority of the populists. On the other hand, the majority of these parties do not want some Central European version of Brexit. Their rhetorical goal is rather the reform the Union.

Keywords: Populist parties, EP Elections, Central Europe, V4

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Resumen:

En este artículo se analizan los manifiestos electorales para el Parlamento Europeo (PE) de 2019 de los partidos populistas de los países del grupo de Visegrado (V4) como una contribución al debate contemporáneo sobre el populismo político. El objetivo del estudio es analizar los programas de campaña electoral que los partidos populistas que operan en los distintos países V4 presentaron para las elecciones al PE en 2019, utilizando un análisis de contenido cualitativo de los programas electorales oficiales de los partidos populistas relevantes y otras fuentes de su comunicación. El artículo trata de identificar los temas que han sido enmarcados como un problema o riesgo por los populistas centroeuropeos y cómo estos temas han sido interpretados en sus programas. La llamada "crisis de la inmigración" y el estado actual de la Unión Europea son vistos como los temas más problemáticos por la mayoría de los populistas. Por otro lado, la mayoría de estos partidos no quieren una versión centroeuropea de Brexit. Su objetivo retórico es más bien la reforma de la Unión.

Palabras Clave: *Partidos populistas, elecciones al Parlamento Europeo, Europa Central, V4*

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1. Introduction

This article presents the analysis of the 2019 EP election manifestos of populist parties in V4 countries. Furthermore, the article can contribute to the contemporary discussion on political populism that has become one of the most important debates within both political theory and comparative political science. Academics from many countries increasingly use the concept of populism to characterize numerous phenomena in modern politics.[5] Populism is studied in connection to specific politicians,[6] political parties[7] or whole political regimes, which have adopted a populist rhetoric, style and method of governing.[8]

This study moreover focuses on populist parties in V4 countries, i.e. in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Central Europe is a region which in recent years has been deeply touched by a trend known also in other Western European countries, i.e. the growing strength of populist parties which are entering to a large degree into government in Central Europe. One of the basic principles of populism is anti-elitism (see below). If a populist politician becomes a part of the ruling power, anti-elitist rhetoric very often shifts to a supranational level – such a politician is less capable of criticizing the national elite, of which he is a member, and therefore focuses on topics such as "Brussels", which represents a certain metaphor of an "evil supranational elite which must be combatted." This is also one of the reasons that populism is linked with Euroscepticism.[9]

The elections held for the EP in 2019 allow for an interesting comparative view of populist parties in the context of the V4. Elections to the EP are so-called second-order elections,[10] and according to a score of authors[11] these are the elections where right and left extremist groups could be more successful. These parties apparently include populist parties, which often tend to be Eurosceptic.[12] Paradoxically, these Eurosceptic parties often tend to be successful in the European elections.[13]

The goal of this article is to analyze the election programs which populist parties operating in individual V4 countries presented for EP elections in 2019. We also attempt to identify topics that have been framed as a problem or risk on the part of Central European populists and the method in which these topics have been interpreted in their programs. We are interested in the similarities and differences not only among individual parties, but countries as well. The text should provide a complex view of what and how Central European populists

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[5] See Mudde, Cas and Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal: "Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 51, nº. 13 (2018), pp. 1667–1693.

[6] Hawkins, Kirk A.: "Is Chávez Populist? Measuring Populist Discourse in Comparative perspective", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 30, nº. 4 (2009), pp. 1040–1067.

[7] Havlík, Vlastimil and Voda, Petr: "Cleavages, Protest or Voting for Hope? The Rise of Centrist Populist Parties in the Czech Republic", *Swiss Political Science Review*, vol. 24, nº. 2 (2018), pp. 161–168.

[8] Antal, Atilla: "The Political Theories, Preconditions and Dangers of the Governing Populism in Hungary", *Czech Political Science Review*, vol. 24, nº. 1 (2017), pp. 5–20.

[9] See Kaniok, Petr and Havlík, Vlastimil: "Populism and Euroscepticism in the Czech Republic: Meeting Friends or Passing By?", *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, vol. 16, nº. 2 (2016), pp. 20–35. Or Guderjan Marius and Wilding, Adrian: "Brexit Populism: The Thick (and Thin) of It", *Czech Political Science Review*, vol. 25, nº. 1 (2018), pp. 64–81.

[10] See Reif, Karlheinz and Schmitt, Hermann: "Nine second-order national elections – A conceptual framework for the analysis of European elections results", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 8, nº. 1 (1980), pp. 3–44.

[11] Hix, Simon and Marsh, Michael: "Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections", *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 69, nº. 2 (2007), pp. 495–510.

[12] Kaniok and Havlík, *op. cit.*

[13] See Kaniok, Petr: "Free Citizens´ Party – from Brussels to Prague?", *East European Politics*, vol. 33, nº. 4 (2017), pp. 443–449.

understand a threat to the people or the nation and the sovereignty of individual states. At the same time, political programs are a frequent subject of analysis in the study of populism,[14] and we can also build upon the tradition of the research of political programs for EP elections – these research works often focus on themes that are dealt with in our text, for example anti-immigration stances.[15]

2. Populism and its state in V4 countries

Populism belongs to the most frequent issues in political science recently. However, there is no clear consensus on what the essence of populism is. Various authors present populism as a 'thin-centered' ideology,[16] a style,[17] or a discourse.[18] These attitudes toward populism can be combined.[19] Since the aim of this text is not to contribute to the relevant conceptual discussion, it is sufficient to note that in most cases, the essence of populism lies in creating the manichaeist division into 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite', claiming the sovereignty of people and applying the common will, for example through institutions of direct democracy.[20] The content of the term 'people' is often not clearly explained and serves as a classic empty signifier.[21] In terms of right-wing populism, the people are identified with the nation; in left-wing populism they are linked to class, while centrist populists do not specify the category of the people in great detail.[22] The next important point of populism is "the others", the enemies of the people, who in the eyes of populists work in favor of the elite (and thus to the detriment of the people). Recently, populist othering has been associated mainly with the matter of Islam and immigration to Europe, which is related to a phenomenon called new xenophobia[23] that is clearly directed to Muslims. In other cases, 'the others' are not understood in an ethnic sense – they simply contain anyone who is not, for different reasons, perceived as the member of 'the people' (populists' concept of the people is highly exclusive) – this may include homosexuals, non-profit organizations, or in another way defined enemies of the people (e.g. the trans-national elite). Populism simply needs to define the enemy – the 'them-and-us' mentality[24] is after all one of the key principles of populism.

These definitions of populism, headed by the attempt to define 'enemies of the people', manifest themselves also in the region of Central Europe, which is the subject of this paper's interest. One specific element of the region is the presence of populists in government in all four examined countries. The form, strength, position and development of populist parties, however, differ in individual cases. The degree to which elements of liberal democracy are weakened also differs; we can observe this weakening throughout the whole region[25] and can

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[14] Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *op. cit.*, p. 1791.

[15] Krotký, Jan: "When Migration Unites Political Parties: The Securitisation of Migration in Czech Party Manifestos", *Czech Journal of Political Science*, vol. 26, nº. 3 (2019), pp. 181–199.

[16] Mudde, Cas: "The Populist Zeitgeist", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 39, nº. 4 (2004), pp. 541–543.

[17] Moffitt, Benjamin and Tormey, Simon: "Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style", *Political Studies*, vol. 62, nº. 2 (2014): pp. 381–397.

[18] Stravakakis, Yannis and Katsambekis, Giorgies: "Left-wing populism in the European periphery: The case of SYRIZA", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 19, nº. 2 (2015), pp. 119–142.

[19] Buštíková, Lenka and Guasti, Petra: "The State as a Firm: Understanding the Autocratic Roots of Technocratic Populism", *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, vol. 33, nº. 2 (2019), pp. 302–330.

[20] Mudde, The Populist Zeitgeist, *op. cit*.

[21] See Laclau, Ernesto (2005): *On Populist Reason*, London, Verso.

[22] Havlík and Voda, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

[23] See Khair, Tabish (2016): *The New Xenophobia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

[24] See Knight, Alan: "Populism and Neo-populism in Latin America, Especially Mexico", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 30, nº. 2 (1998), pp. 223–248.

[25] See Buštíková, Lenka and Guasti, Petra: "The Illiberal Turn or Swerve in Central Europe?", *Politics and Governance*, vol. 5, nº. 4 (2017), pp. 166–176

put it into a direct context with the operation of populist parties.[26] Liberal democracy, which is facing significant regression in the region, is the natural enemy of populism.[27]

In the case of Czech Republic, if we dismiss the success of the extreme right in the first half of the nineties, the entrance of populist parties is linked to the parliamentary elections of 2010, which caused an election upset and significantly transformed the traditional structure of the party system.[28] Thanks to these elections, the Public Affairs party, a centrist populist party, made it to the parliament and the government.[29] Successes were noted by populists (although now in the form of other parties) in elections in 2013 and 2017[30], and the key sources of their success seem to have been anti-corruption and anti-immigration rhetoric. [31] The clearly dominant party of the present party system and at the same time strongest government entity is the ANO2011 movement (ANO), led by billionaire (and present prime minister) Andrej Babiš, which is a "textbook" example of a centrist populist party.[32] Despite his dubious business activities and problems with corruption, Babiš has managed to gain roughly one third of voters primarily thanks to his rhetoric, which deems the established political parties as corrupt.[33] The second relevant populist party in the Czech system is Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) led by Czech-Japanese entrepreneur Tomio Okamura. This opposition party, which bases its rhetoric primarily on anti-immigration[34] and anti-European positions is a representative of right-wing populism. Both of these parties were successful in elections to the EP in 2019. Although this article deals with populist parties, it is necessary for the image of the present state of populism in the Czech Republic to mention president Miloš Zeman, who is an exemplary populist[35] and has a link to both aforementioned political parties.

In the first decade of the independent existence, Slovakia was associated with "nationalistic populism" linked to Vladimír Mečiar.[36] Strong presence of populism led scholars

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[26] See Hanley, Seán and Vachudova, Milada Anna: "Understanding the illiberal turn: democratic backsliding in the Czech Republic", *East European Politics*, vol. 34, nº. 3 (2018), pp. 276–296

[27] Havlík, Vlastimil: "Technocratic Populism and Political Illiberalism in Central Europe", *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 66, nº. 6 (2019), pp. 369–384.

[28] See Hanley, Seán: "Dynamics of new party formation in the Czech Republic 1996–2010: looking for the origins of a 'political eartquake'", *East European Politics*, vol. 28, nº. 2 (2012), pp. 119–143.

[29] See Havlík, Vlastimil and Hloušek, Vít: "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde: The Story of the Populist Public Affairs Party in the Czech Republic", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 15, nº. 4 (2014), pp. 552–570

[30] See Maškarinec, Pavel: "The rise of new populist political parties in Czech parliamentary elections between 2010 and 2017: the geography of party replacement", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, vol. 60, nº. 5 (2019): 511–547.

[31] We can mention also the success of the Pirate Party in 2017 national elections. The program of this party is based on the anti-corrupt and anti-establishment rhetoric. On the other hand, we can't speak about the party as about strictly populist. For more information see Šárovec, Daniel: "Assured Newcomers on a Squally Sea? The Czech Pirate Party before and after the 2017 Elections", *Acta Fakulty filozofické Západočeské Univerzity v Plzni*, vol. 11, nº. 2 (2019), pp. 1–21.

[32] See Havlík and Voda, *op. cit*. Hanley and Vachudova, *op. cit*. Bustikova and Guasti, *op. cit.*, etc.

[33] See Naxera, Vladimír: "The Never-ending Story: Czech Governments, Corruption and Populist Anti-Corruption Rhetoric (2010–2018)", *Politics in Central Europe*, vol. 14, nº. 3 (2018), pp. 31–54.

[34] See Stulík, Ondřej: "Do we have all the necessary data? The challenge of measuring populism through metaphors", *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*, vol. 53, nº. 5 (2019), pp. 2653–2670.

[35] See Naxera, Vladimír and Krčál, Petr: ""This is a Controlled Invasion": The Czech President Miloš Zeman's Populist Perception of Islam and Immigration as Security Threats", *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics*, vol. 12, nº. 2 (2018), pp. 192–215; Naxera, Vladimír and Krčál, Petr: ""You can't corrupt eight million voters": corruption as a topic in Miloš Zeman's populist strategy", *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2019), pp. 3–18; Naxera, Vladimír and Krčál, Petr: ""Ostrovy deviace" v populistické rétorice Miloše Zemana," *Soiológia*, vol. 52, nº. 1 (2020), pp. 82–99.

[36] Spáč, Peter: "Populism in Slovakia", in Havlík, Vlastimil and Pinková, Aneta (eds.) (2012): *Populist Political Parties in East Central Europe*, Brno, Munipress, pp. 227–258.

as Michael Carpenter to write about a specific "nationalist-populist" culture.[37] Mečiar's rule is very important for the development of nationalistic populism in Slovak politics still seen today, and it has contributed to the integrative shift in Slovakian party politics.[38] Grigorij Mesežnikov and Oľga Gyárfášová mentioned three original actors who are carriers of the nationalist populism. These include Mečiar's HZDS (The People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), SNS (The Slovak National Party) and Smer-SD (Direction-Social Democracy). All mentioned parties were to various degrees developing aspects of nationalistic populism including:

1) Ethno-national etatism, state paternalism and patriotism – instead of civic principle, liberal-democratic elements and multi-culturalism;[39]

2) Interpretation of national history involving mythologization and ethnicity emphasizing interpretation;

3) Cautious or negative relationship to national minorities and its rights, especially in relation to Hungarian and Roma minority,

4) Hungarians´attitude regarding Hungary as a "motherland" in relation to the issue of reconciliation.[40]

Some of the aspects are still present in the Slovak politics and other emerged or slightly changed. Contemporary wave of populism has been strengthened by the "migration crisis" of 2015/2016 which helped to create the new "them". The traditional threat of Hungarian minority become accommodated by the moderate Hungarian representation in the parliament where Most-Híd (The Bridge) entered into coalition with SNP, which blunted mutual animosities. The migration crisis shifted the attention from the Roman minority to Muslim immigrants and contributed to the rise of far-right extremism as a reaction to liberalism and threat of multiculturalism with the aim to defend traditional conservative values. Probably the most visible populist opposition towards the contemporary elites is presented by the neofascist anti-system party Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS; *Kotleba – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko)* which entered the Slovakian Parliament after 2016.[41] Another party, which may be labelled as populist is OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA a nezávislé osobnosti (OĽaNO; ORDINARY PEOPLE and independent personalities) which has been present in the parliament since 2012 under the leadership of Igor Matovič.[42] Next to the Smer, Kotleba-ĽSNS and OĽaNO, populism is associated also with SME RODINA – Boris Kollár (WE ARE FAMILY – Boris Kollár) which entered parliament in 2016. The situation after the 2016 general election was that out of 150 seats in parliament in total, 93 were related to parties associated to populism. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the nature of populism in Slovakia changed in contrast to 1990s nationalist populism and has incorporated new elements. Despite previous attempts of analysis[43], there is

[37] Carpenter, Michael: "Slovakia and the triumph of nationalist populism", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 30, nº. 2 (1997), pp. 205–219.

[38] Bardovič, Jakub: "Politické strany – pragmatický aktér v procese tvorby politiky?", *Slovak Journal of Public Policy and Public Administration*, vol. 3, nº. 2 (2016), p. 106.

[39] See also Deegan-Krause, Kevin: "Populism, democracy, andnationalism in Slovakia", in Mudde, Cas and Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal (eds.) (2012): *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* New York, Cambridge University Press, pp. 182–204.

[40] Mesežnikov, Grigorij and Gyárfášová, Oľga (2008): *Národný populizmus na Slovensku. Pracovné zošity*, Bratislava, Inštitút pre verejné otázky, p. 12.

[41] Walter, Aaron T.: "The Politics of Hate: Islamophobic populism in Slovak media and political discourse", *Reliģiski-filozofiski raksti* (Religious-Philosophical Articles), vol. 24 (2018), pp. 43.

[42] Just several days after publication of candidate lists Igor Matovič resigned on the possible future mandate. As a result, Peter Pollák, first Slovak member of the European Parliament with Roma nationality, was elected.

[43] Deegan-Krause, Kevin and Haughton, Tim: "Towards a More Useful Conceptualization of Populism: Types and Degrees of Populist Appeals in the Case of Slovakia", *Politics & Policy*, vol. 37, nº. 4 (2009), pp. 821–841; Rybář,

no consensus about which contemporary Slovak parties are populist, as populism in Slovakia becomes a pejorative label with an increasingly shallow meaning.[44]

Poland, like other European countries, has experienced the emergence of populist political parties on the political scene. Initially, they were groups that took advantage of society's exhaustion and disappointment by the sacrifices of the transformation period.[45] In the first years of the new century, they celebrated their triumphs, getting into parliament for the first time in 2001 and in the following years by participating in the government coalition (since 2006). These include, first and foremost, extreme-left Self-Defense (Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, SO, Self-Defense) and the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR) representing right-wing populism. The founder and leader of Self-Defense was a farmer and trade unionist, Andrzej Lepper. These were the parties that were built from scratch, not associated with any grouping from the past. In 2005, four years after the emergence of the new groups on the political scene in Poland – like the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) and the liberal-conservative Civic Platform (PO), the political scene was dominated by a new social division between the choices of a "socio-solidarist" or "liberal" vision of Poland.[46] It replaced the dominant dichotomy of political divisions into post-communists and post-solidarity. At that time, PiS moved sharply towards the populist rhetoric of repairing the state, restoring proper order, tracking down and eliminating corrupt practices, and opposing the current elite, which revived in the slogans of this grouping after losing power in 2007. This aspect of populist discourse, in particular anti-elitism, had its roots in Poland after 1918, before the World War II. [47] It was a division into "them" – ruling, decisive, law-making- and "us" – subordinate and injured by "them". Self-Defense stressed that it speaks on behalf of all people,[48] its goal is to defend ordinary, honest and entrepreneurial citizens, deprived of prospects by the economic system,[49] and did not abandon this rhetoric, even after entering parliament.[50] It was referred to in 2015 by the new political force – the anti-establishment association Kukiz'15,[51] whose leader and founder is Paweł Kukiz, singer and leader of a Polish rock band. What united both the

Marek: "Old Parties and New: Changing Patterns of Party Politics in Slovakia", in Jungerstam-Mulders, Susanne (ed.) (2006): *Post-Communist EU Member States: Parties and Party Systems*, Aldershot, UK, Ashgate, pp. 147–176; Or Rupnik, Jacques: "From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 18, nº. 4 (2007), pp. 17–25.

[44] Mihálik, Jaroslav: "Politický extrémizmus: kontext, koncepcie a jeho vymedzenie v Českej a Slovenskej republike", in Mihálik, Jaroslav (ed.) (2019): *Storočie českej a slovenskej krajnej pravice 1918–2018*, Bratislava, IRIS.

[45] Antoszewski, Andrzej (2009): *Parties and Party Systems in the EU Member States at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries,* Toruń, Adam Marszałek, pp. 256–257.

[46] See Szczerbiak, Alex: "'Social Poland' Defeats 'Liberal Poland'? The September–October 2005 Polish Parliamentary and Presidential Elections", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 23, nº. 2 (2007), pp. 203–223; Markowski, Radosław: "The Polish Elections of 2005: Pure Chaos or a Restructuring of Party System", *West European Politics,* vol. 29 (2006), pp. 814–832.

[47] Stanley, Ben and Mikołaj Cześnik: "Populism in Poland," in Stockemer, Saniel (ed.) (2019): *Populism around the World. A Comparative Perspective*, New York, Springer International Publishing, p. 68.

[48] Stępińska, Agnieszka; Lipiński, Artur; Hess, Agnieszka and Piątek, Dorota: "Poland. A Fourth Wave of Populism?" in Aalberg, Toril; Esser, Frank; Reinemann, Carsten; Stromback, Jesper and De Vreese, Claes H. (eds.) (2017): *Populistic Political Communication in Europe*, New York and Abingdon, Routledge.

[49]See Kucharczyk, Jacek and Wysocka, Olga: "Poland", in Masaznikov G.; Gyarfasova O. and Smolov D. (eds.) (2008): *Populist politics and liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*, Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs, pp. 69–88. See also: van Kessel, Stijn (2005): *Populist Parties in Europe: Agents of Discontent?* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 121–143.

[50] See Jasiewicz, Krzysztof: "The New Populism in Poland: The Usual Suspects?", *Problems of Post-Communism*, vol. 55, nº. 3 (2008), pp. 7–25.

[51] See Kosowska-Gąstoł, Beata and Sobolewska-Myślik, Katarzyna: "New parties in the Polish party system 2011–2018: The Palikot Movement, Kukiz'15 and the Modern Party of Ryszard Petru as genuinely new parties?", *Central European Journal of Politics*, vol. 5, nº. 1 (2019), pp. 6–29.

longtime leader of Self-Defense and Paweł Kukiz was the rhetoric of breaking with the current corrupt political elites and cutting off from the political elite detached from citizens for the benefit of real representatives of society. Kukiz'15 emphasizes the detachment of politicians from reality. The solution and remedy to these problems would be, according to him, the introduction of the universal direct decision-making of citizens in many laws by means of referendums, a clear responsibility of politicians elected by majority in single-member constituencies. The new grouping focused very much on media presence, from the very beginning attached less importance to organizational structures, what is quite typical for Western European populist parties.[52] It seems that after three waves of populism[53] we are facing in Poland a fourth wave of this phenomenon.[54] With that in mind, it is very likely the populist slogans in the Polish politics will be revived in the coming years.

Similar phenomena can be seen in Hungary as well. After a protracting political, moral and economic crisis, the national conservative Alliance of Young Democrats and Christian Democrats (Fidesz-KDNP) won a landslide victory in the 2010 elections and began to systematically rearrange the country.[55] The former leading power, the Socialist-Liberal alliance in the midst of the vicious circle of corruption scandals and failed development projects was unable to provide a real political alternative. The bipolar party system based on bipartisan logic has disrupted, the left-wing bloc has crumbled and the government started to transform economic and social subsystems without opposition.[56] Due to the rapid, in many cases inconsiderate reforms and unfavorable decisions affecting many workers' future in different sectors resulted in a general disappointment in right-wing coalition, but these people did not have real alternative political options. The elections in 2014 were again won with a two-third majority by Fidesz-KDNP, but by fall the extremely populist governmental communication "got tired", the coalition's popularity had decreased and in parallel the far-right, radical Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) has risen. This party used a very populist rhetoric also focusing on corruption and punishment mostly.[57] Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, after the proclamation of the National Cooperation System for the pragmatic governance and national issues in 2010, and the announcement of the idea of the illiberal democracy in 2014 he found the topic that dominates the public discourse in Hungary since then. This communication which focuses on uncontrolled migration, illegal migrants and the NGOs that help them, brought a victory to Fidesz-KDNP in 2018 as well. Orbán's statement consists of everything what they wanted to say about this new direction: "We want to keep Hungary as Hungary".

In these paragraphs we can see the real state and power of populist actors in the Central European region. The fact that significant differences can be found (i.e. power of parties, their position on right-left axis, development of principles of populism in individual counties, etc.) notwithstanding, there is one fundamental similarity – in the time of writing of this paper,

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[52] Poguntke, Thomas: "Party Organizational Linkage: Parties Without Firm Social Roots?", in Luther, Kurt Richard and Mueller-Rommel, Ferdinand (eds.) (2005): *Political Parties in the New Europe. Political and Analytical Challenges*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 58–62.

[53] See Przyłęcki, Paweł (2012): *Populizm w polskej polityce. Analiza dyskursu polityki [Populism in Polish politics. Analysis of policy discourse]*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe.

[54] See Stępińska, Lipiński, Hess and Piątek, *op. cit*.

[55] See Kovacs, Zoltan and Vida, György: "Geography of the new electoral system and changing voting patterns in Hungary", *Acta Geobalcanica*, vol. 1, nº. 2 (2015), pp. 55–64.

[56] See Glied, Viktor: "From the Green movement to a party", *Politeja*, vol. 2, nº. 28 (2014), pp. 31–61.

[57] See Mareš, Miroslav and Havlík, Vratislav: "Jobbik's successes. An analysis of its success in the comparative context of the V4 countries", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 49, nº. 4 (2016), pp. 1–35.

populist parties are a key element of governments (Czech Republic, Slovakia) or are able to rule with no coalition partners (Hungary,[58] Poland) in each country in the region.

3. The 2019 EP elections – An analysis of manifestos

3.1. Data and methodology

In the following sections, we will present the topics that populist parties have framed in their programs for the EP 2019 elections as a problem or risk in the sense of evoking moral panic[59] or securitization[60]; we do not, however, differentiate analytically between them. The paper is conceived as a qualitative content analysis, and the data corpuses are made up of the official election programs of relevant populist parties and other sources of communication of these political subjects (any exceptions will be mentioned in the individual chapters). Each code corresponds to one problem or risk (e.g. migration, EU, etc.). For each code identified in such a manner, we present a structure of sub-codes contained in the programs of individual parties. The aim is to point out that although parties often label a phenomenon as a threat, the individual sub-codes that form the logic of their argumentation and are linked e.g. to causes, manifestations, consequences of a given problem or its solution differ significantly. Individual entities will be illustrated using representative statements from their election programs. The statements and direct quotes that we have listed in the text do not capture the uniqueness of their occurrence, but represent the overall logic of portraying problems in the programs. If not stated otherwise, all verbatim quotes have been taken from the programs of a given party. The conclusion of each section succinctly summarizes the difference or similarity of the argumentation (i.e. the structure of codes and sub-codes identified in programs) of individual parties.

3.2. Czech Republic

The 2019 EP elections took place in the Czech Republic at a time of minority government rule by Babiš's ANO movement and the social democrats, supported by the communists. The ANO movement won in the EP elections with more than 21% of votes (it gained six of the total of 21 mandates[61]), which is, however, 10% less than the voter preference that has long been attributed to the party. The second party that is the subject of interest in this text is the right-wing populist SPD, which gained over 9% (in this case as well it is a smaller gain than the long-term preferences for the party), which made up two mandates. As we will point out below, both parties primarily defined the European Union and migration (which has become the number one political topic in the Czech Republic despite no realistic presence of migrants) as problems for the Czech Republic within their programs.[62]

As was already stated, despite the fact that ANO and SPD clearly correspond to the definition of populism (primarily in regard to their appeal to the "good people" and their negative stance against the "bad elite"), we find significant differences among parties both in their programs and positions in the party system, as well as the parties' internal operation. ANO

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[58] Basically Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz) is the dominant driving power in this pseudo coalition. As a member of the Fidesz Association the Christian Democrats (KDNP) passed an agreement with Fidesz on the launch of a joint list for the 2006 elections. Since 2006 these parties have been operating in symbiosis.

[59] Cohen, Stanley (2011): *Folk Devils and Moral Panics. The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, Oxon, Routledge.

[60] Balzacq, Thierry: "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context", *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 11, nº. 2 (2005), pp. 171–201.

[61] *2019 European elections results*, at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/national-results/czechia/2019-2024/.

[62] Naxera, Vladimír: ""Islamophobia without Muslims": Anti-Muslim and anti-Arab Attitudes in Czech Society (Introductory Remarks)," in Gardocki, Sylwester; Ożarowski, Rafał and Ulatowski, Rafał (eds.) (2019): *The Islamic World in International Relations*, Berlin, Peter Lang, pp. 251–267.

is a typical representative of a centrist populist party;[63] at the same time it is a typical example of a business-firm party[64] with Babiš in an unshakable position at its head.[65] The party was created based on the operation of Agrofert holding in order to link political and economic interests (primarily the flow of state and European grants) in favor of its chairman Babiš, who in his own words intends to manage the state (and party) as he would a company. ANO was created shortly before the 2013 elections, after which it became a part of the coalition government led by the social democrats. Successful government engagement and a sophisticated PR scheme led ANO to victory in the 2017 elections, after which Babiš became prime minister. ANO's politics show various tendencies towards limiting liberal democratic procedures typical for populist parties.[66] ANO's centrality, which stems from the absence of a host ideology that is often nationalism or socialism in other cases,[67] manifests itself in the method in which it understands the category of the people – it does not address a specific social group that is defined socially (on the contrary, it repeatedly claims – "we have a program for everyone") or (as in the case of right-wing populists in the Czech Republic or Europe) in an ethnic sense. This, by the way, is not highly feasible, as Babiš himself is ethnically Slovak, not Czech. The "common people" towards whom ANO directs its populist rhetoric are those that "live and work honestly in the Czech Republic" without pointing to a specific class or ethnic Czechs (as ANO writes in its program for the EP elections: "We must do everything we can for our citizens to protect what we have and what we've achieved together. We must do everything possible for our people to make full use of their potential and creativity."). On the other hand, ANO is a proponent of economic nationalism[68] and in its rhetoric often deals with economic protectionism towards Czech companies (many of which Babiš himself owns). This protectionism has been linked to the fact that the EU does not plan to pay out subsidies to companies owned by Babiš, who is – in the words of the European Commission – in a conflict of interest (as the prime minister and owner of companies collecting subsidies). Babiš has framed this strategy by the EU not as its attempt to enforce the law, but as an effort of the supranational elite to harm Czech entrepreneurship. Here his argumentation is exemplary in its populism, although we observe it only from the second half of 2019 in such an extreme form, i.e. several months after the completion of elections to the European Parliament. In addition to the economic protectionism, the party's rhetoric points to immigration as a problem, although in a qualitatively and quantitatively different manner than SPD.

SPD is a party that is significantly different and is a typical representative of right-wing populism, making it similar to a score of Western European parties[69] with which it cooperates – Matteo Salvini and Marine Le Pen were depicted on SPD's billboards before EP elections together with Tomio Okamura, the party's leader. Okamura (identically to Babiš) is a typical political entrepreneur[70], although his rhetoric differs from the rhetoric of ANO. He frames the people in an ethnic sense and his primary enemies are variously defined groups of "the others", who tend to be vaguely defined, primarily as Muslims or immigrants. In addition to his Czech roots, Okamura himself is also of Korean and Japanese origin; however, he always emphasizes

[63] See Havlík and Voda, *op. cit*. Hanley and Vachudova, *op. cit*. Bustikova and Guasti, *op. cit.*, etc.

[64] Kopeček, Lubomír: ""I'm Paying, So I Decide": Czech ANO as an Extreme Form of a Business-Firm Party", *European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, vol. 30, nº. 4 (2016), pp. 725–749.

[65] Kubát, Michal and Hartliński, Maciej: "Party leaders in the Czech Populist Parties and Movements", *Polish Political Science Review*, vol. 7, nº. 1 (2019), pp. 107–119.

[66] Hanley and Vachudova, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

[67] Havlík and Voda, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[68] Hanley and Vachudova, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

[69] See Mudde, Cas (2007): *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

[70] Svačinová, Petra: "Poučení z chyb Úsvitu: Svoboda a přímá demokracie," in Hloušek, Vít; Chytilek, Roman; Kopeček, Lubomír and Svačinová, Petra (2018): *Já platím, já rozhoduji! Političtí podnikatelé a jejich strany*, Brno, Barrister&Principal, pp. 177–218.

his Czech roots and rhetorically attacks not all foreigners, but those whom he associates with Islam – realistically this includes all incoming foreigners in the "migration crisis" that has been taking place for several years (without concern for whether they are Muslims or not). This influx of members of a different culture is understood as a process controlled by the supranational elite, the goal of which is the "Islamization of Europe".

SPD and ANO's programs for the 2019 EP elections are in many specific areas similar (for example, the parties agree on refusing the Euro or the need to limit the sale of foodstuffs of varying quality in various European countries) and concur in two primary problems – migration and the present operation of the European Union. However, the overall wording of their programs and their offered solutions are different, not only in the ANO program's larger thematic spectrum and its generally more moderate tone, but primarily in the framing of the aforementioned problems that the Czech Republic faces.

First, we will begin with the view of the European Union. ANO does not see the EU as a problem as such, but rather its present method of operation – the EU must thus be transformed: "It is clear that the European Union is an excellent project. It has brought peace, security and prosperity to our continent. We want to be and will be a part of it – there is no doubt about that. But as you have surely noticed recently, the Union is sometimes short-winded and the European Commission sometimes behaves incomprehensibly and illogically. Yes, some things that come from the EU lack common sense. Yes, they are things that are not correct or favorable for us." The EU should be less bureaucratic and regulative and should focus on the operation of a unified market and allow individual states to enforce greater influence on the operation of the Union.

SPD's view has been diametrically different from the very beginning of their program: "The European Union cannot be reformed and must end. We support the end of the European Union […] We are running in these elections to stop the dictation of the neo-Marxist globalists controlling the present European Union. We're not alone! In cooperation with strong patriotic allies from our European parliamentary fraction Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) headed by Marine Le Pen, Matteo Salvini and Geert Wilders, we are prepared to build a new form of cooperation among Europe's nation states. A cooperation which will respect and protect our sovereignty, freedom, culture and traditional social values. We will shake up Brussels. If you don't want to be ruled by people like Juncker, Macron, Merkel or Soros, please vote for SPD!" In SPD's case, nationalism clearly serves as a host ideology for populism. The introductory statement from the program is exemplary in its populism – the Czech people are endangered by the transnational elite. As the program goes on to state, the EU stands on the principle of "*non-democratic rule of unelected dictators in Brussels.*" The general will should then decide whether or not to remain under this rule via direct democracy: "We are protecting the clear right of citizens to a referendum on exiting the European Union." The EU is a problem for a number of reasons; nonetheless, the extreme-right basis of SPD's argumentation is evident: "The European Union has let millions of inadaptable immigrants into Europe who murder, rape, steal and commit terrorist attacks. And so citizens are not able to defend themselves, they want to take away their weapons for personal protection. Not only firearms, but even certain types of knives." Or: "The European Union uses our money to subsidize many non-profit organizations that support the ideology of neo-Marxism, gender and multiculturalism."

Both parties corresponded in their mention of immigration as a significant problem. In this regard, however, ANO's program is significantly more moderate. It sees illegal immigration as a fundamental security problem (puts it into the context of terrorist attacks in Europe). It is necessary to provide security, but ANO also warns against the evocation of xenophobic sentiment. The problem of migration should be dealt with together on an EU level – protection of external borders, cooperation of the security forces of individual states and an active approach from which immigrants are arriving. However, the party does not support the

distribution of refugees within the EU: "Thanks to us, compulsory quotas were refused in June 2018, and things will stay that way. We also insist that national bodies make decisions on legal economic migration, for example in connection with the needs of the national economy."

SPD accepts a wholly different rhetoric and problem-solving methods: "In its official documents, the European Union talks of the necessity to support mass immigration and sees immigration to be a positive phenomenon. It is thus no surprise that millions of illegal immigrants have entered Europe. We clearly say no to quotas on immigrants, no to the shared EU immigration policy, and no to mass immigration. […] The large cities of Western Europe have already been Islamized and Islamic ghettos and no-go zones are popping up everywhere there. We cannot let this happen in our country! Patriotism and the traditional values of our civilization are taboos for the EU. Together with European patriots we will defend ourselves against Islamization. […] Western Europe will continue to be Islamized. If the states of Western Europe cannot be saved and they would be Muslim, we must at least protect the area of Central Europe! This cooperation is also a barrier against the hegemony of Germany, France and other superpowers." Contrary to ANO, it is clear from SPD's argumentation that there is not only a physical threat, but also a threat to identity[71] – immigration controlled by the European Union destroys our culture and traditions, as culturally different newcomers cannot be assimilated. This is a typical manifestation of the nativist extreme right.[72] Thus, dealing with migration does not lie in European cooperation but in the activity of nation states or "natural alliances" of V4 countries, which according to SPD share values and also take an active part in the fight against Islamic terrorism.[73]

Both representatives of these populist parties in the Czech Republic cite problems with the EU and migration as their primary topics, albeit each in a fundamentally different way. The structure of both parties' argumentation is shown in the table below. The method in which SPD deals with migration and the EU in its program is thus a good example of right-wing populism. On the other hand, elements of populism (in the sense of evident people-centrism and anti-elitism) are not explicitly evident in ANO's program; however, there is no doubt that ANO is an exemplary populist party.[74] This fact is evident after taking a brief look at the social networks of the party and party leader Babiš's speeches. The absence of populist rhetoric within the election program thus points to the possible limitations of research due to limited data on the election program. However, knowledge that populist rhetoric is subdued in the program is in itself analytically relevant and can be explained by the effort to target mainstream voters.

Table 1. Code structure (Czech parties)

Party	Code (=problem)	Sub-codes (structure of party argumentation)
SPD	*EU*	Cannot be reformed
		Threatens the people
		Transnational unelected elite
		Supports migration

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[71] Czajka, Agnes: "Migration in the Age of Nation-State: Migrants, Refugees, and the National Order of Things", *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol. 39, nº. 3 (2014), pp. 151–163.

[72] Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *op. cit.*

[73] N. Hlaváčková, Hana: "The fight against terrorism is not optional: cases of V4 states and their participation in the fight against IS", *Politics in Central Europe*, vol. 15, nº. 2 (2019): pp. 309–331. Or N. Hlaváčková, Hana: "EU Small States and Their Fight against IS", in in Gardocki, Sylwester; Ożarowski, Rafał and Ulatowski, Rafał (eds.) (2019): *The Islamic World in International Relations*, Berlin, Peter Lang, pp. 129–141.

[74] See Havlík and Voda, *op. cit.* Hanley and Vachudova, *op. cit.* Bustikova and Guasti, *op. cit.*, etc.

		Allows for a hegemony of superpowers
		Ideological evil ("neo-Marxism")
	Migration	Physical threat (terrorism)
		Cultural threat
		Supported by the EU
		Solution on the level of nation states
ANO	*EU*	Must be reformed
		Economic protectionism (support of Czech companies in the EU)
	Migration	Physical threat (terrorism)
		Solution on the EU level
		Economic protectionism (controlled work migration in favor of individual states)

3.3. Slovakia

The 2019 Elections to the European Parliament in Slovakia took place at the turbulent times. While immigration crisis was slowly leaving medial space, citizens were closely watching investigation of Ján Kuciak murder – the assassination of the journalist who wrote about links between the state and the mafia. This affair was damaging mainly Smer-SD which was for about 10 years in the government and thus perceived as responsible for the situation in the country. Moreover, elections to the National Council in 2016 contributed to legitimization of the neo-fascist Kotleba-ĽSNS which enjoyed increasing popularity with the aim to win 2020 elections. For this reason, elections to the European Parliament in 2019 had only limited importance and served as a litmus test of Slovakian politics. In total, seven political parties in Slovakia succeeded (two were in electoral coalition). Next to the coalition of Progressive Slovakia and Spolu (Together) with 20.11 % of popular vote and 4 seats was Smer-SD with 3 seats (15.72 % of votes), Kotleba-ĽSNS with 2 seats (12.07 % of votes), the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) with 2 seats (9.69 % of votes), Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) with 2 seats (9.62 % of votes) and OĽaNO with one seat and 5.25 % of popular vote. Out of the seven successful parties three of them are associated with populism: Smer, ĽSNS and OĽaNO. In total, 6 out of the 13 Slovakian seats in the European Parliament belong to parties associated with populist politics.[75]

To define populism in the case of Slovakia is increasingly problematic issue. Instead of being associated with programmatic topics, populism is merely associated with wry communication style emphasizing attacking and acerbic statements or comments appreciated by tabloid media. Another issue is its association with the "pandering politics" towards older voters who are significant proportion of the electorate. A good example of such attitude is the "social packages" of the Smer government aimed at seniors (free lunches, free train transportation etc.). In this sense Smer-SD has a similar strategy to win the votes of seniors as other populist parties or movements do (e. g. the ANO Movement in the Czech Republic or HZDS during the rule of Mečiar). As a result, Smer-SD is having relatively stable core of older voters who helps to keep the party in politics. The party may be considered well established in

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[75] *Results by national party: 2019-2024*, at https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/national-results/slovakia/2019-2024/.

the Slovakian politics and in the last decade has ruled the country. This has several implications for populism. First, party members are as the "elite" and are part of the establishment. For this reason, party anti-establishment rhetoric (typical for populism) is slightly changed. It is a paradox that for example for 2020 elections party changed its image to "new Smer" and is declaring that "only Smer can bring real change into politics". Second, from the program perspective party is depleted. Probably, this is the reason why party did not adopt special program for the elections into the European parliament and for 2020 elections to National Council has set up only three program points. Party leaders, including Robert Fico often reacted on actual developments rather than created long term vision. Ruling without a formal program has given them advantage for maneuvering and gives the party advantage of communicating most important points. Third, party leaders took the role of protectors. Under the notion "*We protect Slovakia*" refused EU migration quotas and strongly criticized threat of migration.[76]

The party Kotleba-ĽSNS may be labelled as neo-fascist, extremist, anti-system party with the specific view on modern political history of Slovakia.[77] The program of the party is both politically and economically radical. For example ĽSNS is in favor of "restoring agricultural, economic and energetic self-sufficiency of the Slovak Republic".[78] However, there are other EU related implications of the program as one of the features is economic radicalism with negative implications for the common market.[79] This implies the exit from the EU because restoring economic self-sufficiency would require imposing protective measures which are inconsistent with a common market. However, much more serious seems to be the party links to Nazism and Slovak fascism, or the open racism in the program as the party wants "to build social policy on a principle of quality and stop preferential treatment of all social parasites, including gypsy parasites".[80] Results of the 2016 elections to the National Council, where ĽSNS received 8.04 % of votes and 14 mandates, contributed to hot debate about rise of extremism in the country and failure to historical reflection. In April 2019 Supreme Court of Slovakia decided not to ban the party, what was immediately used by ĽSNS to miscommunicate that Court did not find party extremist or radical.[81]

The third assessed part in Slovakia associated with populism is OĽaNO. The party was created by successful candidates after the 2010 elections to the National Council. The party presents itself as the anti-establishment[82] alternative of experts with conservative thinking and Christian-democratic values. OĽaNO having a role of platform formed of independent people gathered around party president Igor Matovič – a former businessman in media. Despite being considered as centrist-right, party is very weakly linked to some specific ideology or values. Due to providing space for variety of people party program and campaign is being hardly predictable and may change from election to election. The character of the party is simply imprinted by the personalities. Moreover, it is even hard to evaluate party trend in populism whether is increasing or not. Recent activities show that party is very original and tries to

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[76] Práznovská, Monika: "Media, election campaign and migration crisis", in Kusá, Alena; Zaušková, Anna and Bučková, Zuzana (eds.) (2019): *Offline is the new online. Marketing Identity 2019*, Trnava, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, pp. 267–281.

[77] Naxera, Vladimír and Krčál, Petr: "The Slovak National Uprising as a national treasure? Interpretation and legacy of the SNU in Slovak political discourse and national mythology", *Annual of Language & Politics and Politics of Identity*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2016), pp. 83–102.

[78] ĽSNS: *Our program - Ten Commandments of our Party*, at http://www.naseslovensko.net/en/our-program/.

[79] Filipec, Ondřej: "People's Party – Our Slovakia: An Anti-system Party?", in Horváth, Peter (ed.) (2017): *Current Trends and Public Administration*, Uherské Hradiště, FSV UCM, pp. 21–30.

[80] *Ibid*.

[81] See for example: *Noviny Ľudovej strany Naše Slovensko, Vol. 2, No. 2 (May 2019)*, at http://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/noviny-lsns-2019-05.pdf.

[82] Gyárfášová, Oľga: "The fourth generation: from anti-establishment to anti-system parties in Slovakia", *New Perspectives*, vol. 26, nº. 1 (2018), pp. 109–133.

promote populism on a different level. A good example is the on-line survey where people may vote about party priorities.[83] It might be well expected that the party will later promote these points and present the as the will of the people.

All three Slovak parties are very different in the form and extent of the programs. Instead of a formal program, Smer-SD prepared a two-page long propositions for its members entitled "Na čo sa chceme v Európe sústrediť" (On what we want to focus in Europe) about three priorities Smer wants to communicate in the European Parliament. From a retrospective analysis we know, that some local organizational units of Smer communicated these propositions on social networks. Despite ĽSNS's claimed that they will publish official program for the 2019 elections, to the knowledge of authors it was not done and same conclusion is reached also by Zuzana Gabrižová, Radovan Geist and Marián Koreň.[84] Most complex program with official form was prepared by OĽaNO. The party presented a well-prepared complex program entitled "Slovensko v prosperujúcej a bezpečnej Európe" (Slovakia in a prosperous and safe Europe) with eight priorities. It is possible, that the program to the EP was created or advised by some of the OĽaNO's members in the European parliament.[85] What all three parties have in common is some reflection of migration and the attitude towards the EU. The tone is ranging from moderate criticism (OĽaNO) to more critical tone highlighting social issues (Smer-SD) and to open hostility towards the EU later calmed down by cold pragmatism of some leaders (ĽSNS').

Similarly, as in the previous part dedicated to the Czech Republic first issue is overall attitude towards the EU. However, in the case of Smer-SD the attitude is mentioned in the propositions only indirectly. Party only mentioned the priority to fight for social equality in Europe: equal rewarding of men and women for same job and party stressed also, that "Slovaks shall not be cheap working force abroad".[86] Smer-SD promised that it will connect instead of dividing: Slovakia wants to be a "bridge" between West and East. At the same time Russia is mentioned as an important partner, not a threat. Under this point it is also mentioned that members of the EP are ready to renew the dialogue between East and West.[87] In other words, some complex vision on Europe is missing and might be derived from the up-to-date approach. As mentioned before, Smer-SD ruled Slovakia for the last 10 years. It is a time long enough to adopt constructive policy with pragmatic approach as demonstrated during the Slovak presidency where government did as much as possible to get rid of quotas or during debates on the future of Europe, during which Robert Fico claimed that Slovakia wants to be at the core of the EU.[88]

In its original program of 2016, Kotleba ĽSNS had appealed to leaving the EU: using the motto "with courage against the system" ĽSNS was strongly critical towards the EU. In one of the "ten commandments" of the party dedicated to the EU, ĽSNS stressed: "We put Slovak interests above the dictats of Brussels and therefore we refuse to restrict the sovereignty of member states of the European Union. We will never support any form of state aid to irresponsible private banks or foreign governments. We will strengthen the control of illegal

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[83] Survey is available here: https://rozhodni.obycajniludia.sk/

[84] Gabrižová, Zuzana; Geist, Radovan and Koreň, Marián (2019): *Slovensko a Eurovolby 2019. EÚ v programech a pozíciách slovenských politických strán před volbami do Európskeho parlamentu*, Bratislava, Euractiv, p. 7–8.

[85] For this point we are thankful to political scientist Dr. Marek Hrušovský.

[86] Smer SD: *Na čo sa chceme v Európe sústrediť, posted on Facebook, 19. 5. 2019*, at https://www.facebook.com/359895461548541/photos/na-čo-sa-chceme-v-európe-sústrediť-bojujeme-za-sociálnu-rovnosť-v-európerovnosť-/364060944465326/.

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] Měšťánková, Petra and Filipec, Ondřej: "Debates on the Future of the EU: Between Expectations and Reality", in Šišková, Naděžda (ed.) (2019): *The European Union – What is Next? A Legal Analysis and the Political Visions on the Future of the Union*, Köln, Wolters Kluwer, pp. 263–295.

employment of foreigners, immigration and visa policy. We will re-establish the Slovak national currency – Slovak crown."[89] Strong criticism is present also in the pre-electoral magazine for the elections to the European parliament. Brussels and its elites are presented as hostile towards Europe and Slovakia in particular (dictats, forced migration, destruction of traditional families, promotion of LGBT rights and homosexuality, is a source of decadency, political censorship etc.). According to ĽSNS, European integration changed to a purely political project where EU is deciding how much of what we (Slovakia) can produce and what economic rules to respect.[90] However, before the 2019 elections to the European Parliament there is a qualitative shift: ĽSNS does not anymore push for exit from the EU, but for a comprehensive EU reform. The party is expecting to work with other critical parties with the aim to create "Europe of free nations" based on unanimous voting. This attitude presented by some party leaders is in sharp contrast with strong rhetoric against the EU. For example, Milan Uhrík, who jumped from the 14th place of the candidate list to the top due to preferential votes, said: "…we are not against the idea of the European Union as a such. Media informed about the opposite for the purpose, they made scarecrow of us. We are not against mutual economic cooperation, on the opposite. If Slovakia and the EU want to compete with superpowers as USA, China or Japan, then there must be some economic cooperation."[91] This statement is not fully compatible with the above mentioned reservations based on neither misinterpretations nor the conduct of the party which in 2017 attempted to initiate a referendum on the exit from the EU and openly called for leaving. Nonetheless, based on ĽSNS's communication it is visible that Uhrík in the European Parliament profiled himself by criticizing migration policy and the aggressive foreign policy of the USA.[92] Certainly, ĽSNS' is in favor of Europe becoming friendlier to Russia, and some members put good relations with Russia on a billboard as the priority. For example, on billboards of Milan Mazurek or Jozef Mihalčin, there was a slogan "For cooperation with Russia, against sanctions". Moreover, LSNS is for anti-liberal Europe where "schools are supported by the EU to promote gender ideology" or "encourage Slovak children to dress as the opposite sex and participate on the rainbow marches".[93]

OĽaNO is at the EU level part of the European Conservatives and Reformists group. In its program for the European parliament entitled "*Slovakia and the prosperous and secure Europe*" OĽaNO claimed to be a "Eurorealist" party. EU is seen as the "guarantee for survival and development of Slovakia in the globalized world" which implies positive attitude towards the EU. As mentioned in the program OĽaNO is against both extremes: leaving the EU or deeper and more genuine integration. In many aspects OĽaNO is trying to maintain or slightly improve the status quo. As noted in the analysis by Euractiv, there is visible shift from critical and Eurosceptic rhetoric present before the 2014 elections to the European parliament.[94] Moreover, the call for more direct democracy and call for direct elections of the "European president" disappeared which implies softening of populist elements. There are several priorities presented by the party. In relation to the EU as such party is in favor of fight against bureaucracy and even enhancing cooperation where proven necessary.[95]

The topic of migration in the propositions sent by SMER to its members might be linked to the last of three priorities dealt with. It is mentioned that "*Europe shall not forget about its*

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[89] ĽSNS: *Our program, op. cit.*

[90] *Noviny Ľudovej strany Naše Slovensko, op. cit.*

[91] TA3: "Noví slovenskí poslanci v Európskom parlamente*." TA3,* 27 May 2019, at https://www.ta3.com/clanok/1156037/novi-slovenski-poslanci-v-europskom-parlamente.html.

[92] ĽSNS: *Európsky parlament*, at http://www.naseslovensko.net/kategoria/europsky-parlament/.

[93] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[94] Gabrižováet et al. *op. cit*., pp. 8.

[95] "Slovensko v prosperujúcej a bezpečnej Európe. OĽaNO, 2019", *ObycajniLudia*, at https://www.obycajniludia.sk/volby-do-EP-2019/program.

traditions, values, origins and history".[96] Implicitly, Smer is highlighting the issue of mass migration of people with different cultural and religious background who might change the nature of European societies. Although the threat is not explicitly mentioned, the very general statement has clear narrative. Also, under this priority Smer-SD is stressing the issue of "*not giving up the identity: that the definition of marriage, family and other cultural and ethical issues shall be solved at the national level.*"[97] This proclamation might be interpreted as the attempt to catch more conservative voters. Generally, reference to migration is not as direct as in the case of Kotleba-ĽSNS.

As anticipated, in the case of Kotleba-ĽSNS migration presented as the threat plays a central role in the program. Mixed with other issues or standing alone migration is mentioned in four out of ten key messages of the magazine, which may substitute the program. For example Kotleba-ĽSNS claims, that the Members of the European parliament betrayed us and are flooding us with millions of migrants; They behave towards us like to a colony: they secretly vote in favor of LGBT laws, migration quotas and conclusions to increase number of Africans in Europe; Current EU policy is destroying Slovakia and Europe; or that Brussels is forcing us to accept migrants, promotes homosexuality, decadency and introduces political censorship.[98] Selected parts are presented emotively. As put by Miroslav Urban: "*For my children, family and whole nation I would like to keep Slovakia national and Christian! I want our towns and villages being sounded with beautiful bells of churches, not screaming from mosques*".[99] Next to the apparent focus on fear and emotions, there is possible clearly distinguish "we" and "them" apart from some obvious misinterpretations and false assumptions.

In the area of migration, OĽaNO is in favor of keeping Schengen and free movement of persons. At the same time is in favor of strengthening of Frontex. According to OĽaNO, the migration crisis was wrongly communicated and was a source for the rise of populism. OĽaNO is for distinguishing between refugees and migrants, not connecting both groups and scaring people.[100] It does not appear that party is using migration crisis as the topic to mobilize people, on the opposite: migration is communicated in very rational and moderate way and so are other presented threats and challenges. The main topics they seem to be fight against are tax frauds and the stop of North Stream 2. The rise of populism and hybrid warfare are seen as main dangers for Europe.[101] Among the three mentioned parties OĽaNO is most critical towards Russia.

Among three assessed Slovak parties only OĽaNO presented formal program providing more complex picture about key points: 1) Renewing trust in the European project; 2) cooperation in fight against corruption and tax frauds; 3) Retaining free movement of goods and persons and strict control of migration flows to Europe; 4) higher standard of living also thanks to fairer Euro funds; 5) support of family, health and education as the pillars of prosperity; 6) successful future of common currency; 7) foreign policy based on freedom, democracy and Christian culture; 8) Secure and Defensible Europe.[102] As noted by observers OĽaNO positively communicated European integration project[103] and expressed a negative position of Brexit: "Brexit is a showcase where a country might be led by irresponsible

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[96] Smer SD, *op. cit.*

[97] Smer SD, *op. cit.*

[98] *Noviny Ľudovej strany Naše Slovensko, op. cit.*

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[100] OĽaNO: *Slovensko v prosperujúcej, op. cit.*

[101] Euractiv.sk: "Dvojka OĽaNO: Záujmy Slovenska v EÚ? Schengen, daňové úniky a stopka pre-Nord Stream 2", *Euractiv.sk*, 9 May 2019, at https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/interview/dvojka-olano-zaujmy-slovenska-v-eu-schengen-danove-uniky-a-stopka-pre-nord-stream-ii/.

[102] "Slovensko v prosperujúcej, *op. cit.*

[103] See Mesežnikov, *op. cit*. p. 77.

politicians and populists, who lies to the people".[104] From the presented parties OĽaNO is the least populistic, so it is a certain paradox that a party associated with populism is criticizing populists despite observable departure from some populist points present prior 2014 elections to the EP.

To sum up, two Slovak parties associated with populism were hesitant to provide a clear program which allows them space for maneuvering. From the three parties ĽSNS is most critical in its rhetoric and positions of the party are based on serious misinterpretations. It seems that the party in pre-2019 elections abandoned its hardline position to leave the EU and opted for EU reform in the direction of European national and unanimous voting. Scaring people with migration and EU dictate associated with attack on traditional values played an important role in the party communication. Open pro-Russian and pro-Slavic rhetoric in the case of ĽSNS is changing into "bridge" politics of the Smer-SD. Similar were also calls for "*defense of Slovak identity*". Contrary to ĽSNS, Smer-SD is less programmatically bounded which was demonstrated by just three program priorities. On the contrary OĽaNO has offered the most complex program with a constructive pro-European attitude, supportive to current trends of European integration e. g. strengthening of Frontex and limiting migration flows to Europe. Despite OĽaNO is generally associated with populism its program for the 2019 elections to the EP is absenting populist features. It is mainly political style of people associated with OĽaNO what lends the party label of being populist. As mentioned earlier, OĽaNO is weakly ideologically or value anchored, which may strengthen populist tendencies in the future as again observable before the 2020 elections to the National Council.

Table 2. Code structure (Slovak parties)

Party	Code (=problem)	Sub-codes (structure of party argumentation)
Smer-SD	EU	Social equality in Europe
		Slovaks shall not be cheap working force abroad
		Slovakia as a "bridge" between West and East + renewing dialogue
		Russia as a partner
	Migration	Not giving up identity: that definition of marriage, family and other cultural and ethical issues shall be solved at the national level
		Europe shall not forget about its traditions, values, origins and history
Kotleba- ĽSNS	EU	Superiority of EU law over national law (EU dictate)
		EU elites betrayed Slovakia
		Having plan on how to reform EU (Europe of nations + unanimous voting)

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[104] "Stanovisko hnutia OĽANO k mimoriadnemu samitu o Brexite", *ObycajniLudia,* at http://www.obycajniludia.sk/aktualita/stanovisko-hnutia-olano-k-mimoriadnemu-samitu-o-brexite/?fbclid=IwAR1730P_AnR6mryJABa43JwfpuwYw_uXT3FGdKH_ULZxnOtvao8Ss0wb_L8.

		Slovakia is like colony: cheap labor for foreign factories
		EU forcing LGBT ideology and promotes homosexuality
		Current EU policy is destroying Slovakia and Europe
		EU project is paid (on expense of) Slovak families + EU is trying to destroy traditional family
		We will prevent war with Russian Federation (against the will of the "lords of the power" in Brussels)
		EU dictates production quotas and economic rules
		EU is a political project led by globalists and introduces political censorship
	Migration	Result of betrayal by EU elites
		EU dictates to accept migrants
		Slovak Members of the EP voted for more Africans in Europe
		EU push that states of the EU shall financially compensate Africans for 500 years of slavery
		Schools and multicultural institutions shall introduce "Week of black history" forcing children to learn of positive African examples
		EU push that share of Africans in the politics and media shall increase
		EU shall create billions in eurofunds to support living of Africans in Europe
		EU proposes that member states shall build-up new legal ways of migration from Africa to Europe
OĽaNO	EU	Repairing instead of destroying "European house" + Renewing trust in the project
		Cooperation against corruption and tax fraud
		Higher standards of living + fairer Eurofunds
		Support of family, health and education for prosperity
		In favor of the Euro

		Foreign policy based on freedom, democracy and Christian culture
		Secure and Defensible Europe
	Migration	Retaining free movement of goods and persons
		Distinction between migrants and refugees + against scaring people with migration
		Enhancing Frontex + controlling migration flows to Europe

3.4. Poland

The 2019 elections to the European Parliament in Poland were the second in a series of four elections held within a short period of time. This ballot, after the local elections that took place in autumn 2018, was the second significant test of popularity of the ruling Eurosceptic and populist political party – the Law and Justice (PiS). The turnout in the European Parliament was unusually high, as 45.68% of those entitled to vote exercised their right. It is worth noting that five years earlier, only 23.83% of citizens took part in the 2014 European elections in Poland. It was the result of a great mobilization of Poles, both supporters of the government and the electorate of the opposition united by the broad European Coalition. This wide electoral alliance was established by the following political parties: The Civic Platform (PO), the Polish People's Party (PSL), the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the Modern (N), and the Greens. In 2019, the best election result was achieved by the ruling party, the Law and Justice, which received 6,192,780 votes (45.38%). This victory gave it 27 seats. The European Coalition was supported by 5,249,935 votes (38.47%). The coalition won 22 seats. There were also three other triumphant candidates representing the new political group formed at the beginning of February 2019 – Robert Biedroń's Spring with him as its leader. This grouping received 826 985 votes (6.06%). The candidates representing the right-wing KORWiN Confederation, Liroy, and the Nationalists received the support of 4.55% of the voters. The fifth place was taken by the populist Kukiz'15 with 3.69% of votes and the leftist party – Left with a score of 1.24%. None of these groups exceeded the required electoral threshold and did not receive seats.[105] For Kukiz'15 it was the third election in which this grouping took part.

Law and Justice is one of the most influential Polish political parties today. Established in 2001, in 2005 took the helm of the Polish government for two years. After shortening the term of office and the snap parliamentary elections in 2007, it joined the opposition. The Party won far and wide the parliamentary elections in 2015 by obtaining an absolute majority of seats, and has been ruling in Poland since then. It somehow managed to overcome the strategy of "scaring the PiS back into power", which had been used by the Civic Platform party after taking over power in 2007.[106] The strong polarization of power between PiS and PO on the Polish party scene was clearly confirmed, as in 2007 and 2011.[107] The second consecutive victory in the Sejm (the lower house of the parliament) elections in 2019 allowed PiS to continue its rule. However, this year it lost its majority in the Senate (the upper house of the parliament) where most of the seats were won by the opposition parties. The very good result in the elections to

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[105] *Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza (PKW), Wyniki wyborow do Parlamentu Europejskiego 2019, (oficjalna strona PKW) [National Electoral Commission, Results of elections to the European Parliament 2019 (official website of National Electoral Commission],* at https://pe2019.pkw.gov.pl/pe2019/pl/wyniki/pl.
[106] See Szczerbiak, Alex: "An anti-establishment backlash that shook up the party system? The October 2015 Polish parliamentary election", *European Politics and Society & Culture*s, vol. 18, nº. 4 (2018), pp. 404–427.
[107] See Jasiewicz, *op. cit.*

the European Parliament in June 2019, preceding the parliamentary elections in Poland, confirmed the Party's dominant position. PiS, in addition to the Samoobrona party (which co-governed with PiS in 2006–2007 but no longer exists in the Polish political party system), and the insignificant League of Polish Families (right-wing populism), since 2005 has been classified among the populist parties.[108]

Kukiz'15, according to the Political Party Act 1997 is not formally a political party, but it is an association. Its political aspirations were clear from the very beginning. This political group was created in July 2015 just before the parliamentary elections held in the same year, and immediately after an extraordinary result obtained in the presidential elections by its leader, the rock singer Paweł Kukiz. It was an unprecedented outcome of the first round of presidential elections giving a musician as much as 21% of votes.[109] This political potential was transformed into building a political power; however, Mr. Kukiz declared his opposition to party structures and the existing nomenclature. Debuting in the 2015 parliamentary election, Kukiz'15 received 8.81% of the votes and as many as 15 seats. After subsequent elections to the Sejm, which took place in autumn 2019, this movement secured 5 seats in the lower chamber of the Polish parliament. Kukiz'15 candidates were presented on the lists of the Polish People's Party as part of the Polish Coalition formed by PSL. This grouping currently has no representation in the Senate – the Upper House of the Polish Parliament. Kukiz'15 initially described itself as a nonideological movement (despite its creation mainly by people with strongly right-wing views). However, it later identified itself as a socially conservative group, and in terms of the economy - liberal. The main postulate of the grouping is to bring about political changes in Poland by introducing primarily: a semi-presidential system, FPTP system in single-mandate constituencies in elections to the Sejm, and referenda without the required validity thresholds. It is also significantly different from PiS and is a typical representative of right-wing populism. It is not only populist in its program, but also in the statements of its members, especially the leader.[110]

It should be emphasized that both groups benefit from the use of the division 'we versus they'. As Ben Stanley and Mikołaj Cześnik rightly admit, comparing PiS and Kukiz'15 in terms of the nature of populism, which they postulate, indicate that these movements "represent respectively two separate streams of populism in post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe: radical anti-liberal criticism of the political status quo and ideologically amorphous anti-establishment appeal, based primarily on the rejection of the moral legitimacy of existing elites"[111].

Law and Justice at its European election convention presented the "European Declaration. Poland – the heart of Europe." Interestingly, during the European Parliament (EP) election campaign the most important PiS proposal, and the one that was given a lot of attention, was a social project for Polish citizens included in the five tasks of the party's politicians called "The New Five". It assumed the introduction of the so-called 500 Plus, which is a monthly allowance for each child in the family, the so-called the thirteenth, additional annual bonus payment for pensioners, income tax exemption for persons under 26, reduction of income tax for citizens, and further development of the highways network. This clearly indicates the orientation of this group's political project on the Polish market, even during the European

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[108] See van Kessel, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

[109] Rydliński, Bartosz: "Polen," in Fislage, F. and Grabow, K. (eds.) (2019): *Bewegungen als Herausforderung für politische Parteien?*, 2nd Ed., Berlin, Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung, p. 18.

[110] See Wrześniewska-Pietrzak, Marta and Kołodziejczak, Małgorzata: "Jak rozwalić system – – populistyczny dyskurs polityczny na przykładzie wypowiedzi Pawła Kukiza [Knocking down the system. Populism in Paweł Kukiz's political discourse]", *Etnolingwistyka*, vol. 29 (2017), pp. 225–244.

[111] See Stanley and Cześnik, *op. cit*., pp. 67–87.

elections. In the EU affairs, PiS presented the need for a fundamental reform of the foundations and the way the community functions. According to this party, the operational mode of the European Union should be changed, to allow the member states and their governments to play the key role. PiS also wanted to build other European agreements within the Union. The party declared its desire to relax the EU's climate policy and announced that it would not lead the introduction of Poland's Eurozone membership.

Kukiz'15 started the European elections in 2019 with the slogan "Poland in Europe, Europe for Poland". In its program "Strategy of Change for Europe", the grouping proposed five chapters with the propositions of changing EU that were intended to be implemented after the 2019 EP election[112]. The leader of the grouping at the election convention which took place on April 28th, 2019 emphasized that the idea of equality was included in his group's slogan. He clearly pointed out that there should be equal opportunities and equal rights for all countries in Europe, "it is unacceptable that the European Commission has a hold over Europe, and effectively serves only the interests of two countries, such a peculiar marriage of Macron and Angela Merkel. The fight for equal rights for all citizens of the European Union unites us all"[113]. Paweł Kukiz, dissociating himself from denying the existence of the EU, emphasized that "we do not want to destroy the Union, but we want to defend it against old parties that are destroying the Union in front of our eyes." The members of Kukiz'15 repeatedly stated that "the EU is a body that is very useful, but not democratic enough"[114]. The Kukiz'15 candidates were against the introduction of the euro in Poland, they also spoke negatively about European reforms regarding environmental protection, e.g. in the area of resignation from coal energy. These politicians criticized the relations between some of the states of the European Union. According to Kukiz'15 some Community states are too dominant and this should be changed, e.g. by introducing direct democracy. Even before the election, there were several meetings of this political group with the European populist parties. Even before the EP elections, Kukiz'15 formed an alliance with the Italian Five Star Movement and the Croatian Living Wall (whose leaders, respectively, Italian Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio and Ivan Vilibor Sinčić, hosted the group's electoral convention. Other representatives of the alliance from Greek AKKEL party and the Finnish Now movement, as well as a new coalition member in the alliance - the Estonian party 'The Wealth of Life:' together with its leader Artur Talvik did not attend the convention Kukiz'15).

It should be remembered that Poland in 2015 did not accept immigrants coming to the European Union. Little space was devoted to the problem of migration in the PiS European Declaration. The party referred to this issue only in its twelfth point of the electoral program, entitled "STOP illegal immigration", proclaiming in the program that "We want Europe to help in places of conflict. We oppose illegal immigration". During the party's convention, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki emphasized that Europe is strong in its diversity, and Poland is able to give a lot to the EU. In addition, he added that "We are sending a strong representation to the EP that will defend the Polish raison d'état. We want to influence the fate of Europe. Together with V4, we have already managed to change the migration policy. I believe that the spirit that is within us will allow us to realize our ambitions for a better life for Polish

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[112] *Program Kukiz'15 "Strategia zmiany dla Europy",* oficjalna strona Kukiz'15*, [The Kukiz'15 program "Strategy of Change for Europe",* (official website of Kukiz'15)*]*, at http://kukiz15.org/program/europejski.

[113] "Kukiz ogłosił hasło na wybory, mówił o "małżeństwie" Macrona i Merkel [Kukiz announced the slogan for the election, talked about the "marriage" of Macron and Merkel]*", TVN24,* 28 April 2019, at https://tvn24.pl/polska/kukiz-przedstawil-haslo-kukiz15-na-wybory-do-europarlamentu-ra931228-2302644.

[114] "Kukiz w Chorwacji: chcemy obronić UE przed starymi partiami, które ja niszczą" [Kukiz in Croatia: we want to defend the EU against the old parties, which are destroying it], *PAP*, 18. March 2019, at https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C422351%2Ckukiz-w-chorwacji-nie-chcemy-zniszczyc-ue-ale-obronic-przed-starymi.

families"[115]. Neither he nor the party chair expressed detailed proposals for resolving the migration crisis in the EU.

During the election campaign to the EP, the Kukiz'15 group announced that a new model for managing migration flows must be introduced, but – like PiS – without indicating specific solutions. During anti-system grouping conferences in Zagreb, Croatia on March 17, 2019, Paweł Kukiz asked rhetorical questions, indicating that "mainstream media and old party politicians call us Europhobes, populists, people who want to destroy the EU. They are afraid that the EU will break down because of us. I will ask you a few questions: have we caused the EU crisis? Are our groups responsible for the uncontrolled influx of immigrants and the migration crisis?"[116].

The European Parliament election manifesto of PiS "European Declaration" [117] contained 12 points, referring to the twelve stars on the European Union flag. All of them were strongly focused on securing Poland's interests in the European Union. Among them were announcements about actions to: strengthen Europe of values – that is, action to return to the values of the EU, which its creators proclaimed and which were to be its foundation; Family Europe – defending the rights of parents to raise their children; actively supporting the interests of Polish farmers on the EU forum; promise to negotiate a new EU budget favorable for Poland; supporting equal treatment of Polish companies on the European market. As the sixth point, PiS included effective efforts to secure and protect the external borders of the Union, as well as activities for the energy security of Poland and Europe. Then came the slogans of struggle for equal treatment and equal access to products of the same quality for all consumers across Europe, as well as the elimination of double standards in the treatment of countries within the EU. In addition, in the face of contemporary environmental challenges, PiS announced that the European climate policy would also take into account Polish interests. Strong, strengthened cohesion policy – sustainable development would become the basis for rapid and solid development of the EU. In the last point, the PIS referred to immigration problems in Europe and stopping the influx of illegal migrants. The then PiS Chief of Electoral Campaign to the EP Tomasz Poręba emphasized that there is no consent for a European Union in which the stronger will decide what the whole Union and Europe should look like[118]. In turn, the chairman of the party, Jarosław Kaczyński assured at the PiS election convention on March 9, 2019 that his party would win "among others so that no one could say that what France is allowed, Germany is allowed, Poland is not allowed". He emphasized that Poland has the same rights in the European Union as the largest states of the Community[119].

The ten proposals that Kukiz'15 presented on the basis of the five chapters of his Program "A strategy for change for Europe" were hidden under the following slogans: (1) "A Europe closer to its citizens – direct democracy and e-democracy", i.e. bringing Europe closer to its citizens and making the influence of citizens more real on what is happening in the European Union; (2) "Beyond the right and left – rejection of anachronistic artificial divisions, work for citizens"; (3) "Honest Europe – fight against corruption and organized crime"; (4) "The new future of the Europe project – cooperation while respecting national identity"; (5) "Deep reform of EU institutions – strengthening the position of the European Parliament"; (6)

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[115] *Deklaracja Europejska [European Declaration]*, at http://pis.org.pl/aktualnosci/dla-nas-europejskosc-to-lepsze-zycie-polakow.

[116] Kukiz w Chorwacji [Kukiz in Croatia], *op. cit.*

[117] Deklaracja Europejska [European Declaration], *op. cit.*

[118] "PiS zaprezentowało Deklarację Europejską. "12 punktów, tak jak 12 gwiazd na fladze UE" [PiS presented the European Declaration. "12 points, like the 12 stars on the EU flag"], *IAR PAP*, at https://polskieradio24.pl/5/1222/Artykul/2275078,PiS-zaprezentowalo-Deklaracje-Europejska-12-punktow-tak-jak-12-gwiazd-na-fladze-UE.

[119] *Ibid.*

"Improving the quality of life of citizens – public health and environmental protection"; (7) "Movement of persons and security – a new model for managing migration flows"; (8) "Fair Europe – limiting the impact of financial markets and protecting the real economy"; (9) "European quality – protection of products manufactured in Europe and development of agriculture" and (10) "Faith in our future – creation of programs for young Europeans"[120]. The group's leader Paweł Kukiz, in his speech at the April Election Convention in 2019, explained the points of his group's program. He stressed that the most important proposals, which should be implemented in the EU to talk about a Europe of equal opportunities is the introduction of democracy, which he understands as the real influence of the citizens on their region, country and Europe, is the introduction of instruments of direct democracy, for example the possibility of voting via the Internet (e-voting). Kukiz also mentioned honesty, which he understood as the fight against corruption. He requested the introduction of greater transparency in the functioning of the European institutions. Moreover, he underlined the cooperation of all EU nations while respecting national identity. He also spoke about the demands for equal co-financing for farmers from various regions of the European Union, about unequal wages in various European countries, and about the introduction of a minimum wage in Poland at the level of salaries of parliamentarians. He also pointed to the introduction of European quality of life and food in all countries of the European Union, the end of the dictates of corporations, enabling young generations to develop so that they could remain in their homeland and the end of the division into left and right in politics.

To sum up, the election campaign for the European Parliament in Poland was an important test for the ruling PiS party and an important test for the systematically losing Kukiz'15 in polls. PiS largely focused its postulates on matters related to the status and well-being of Polish families, in view of the fight for dominance in the Polish parliament, which was to take place in autumn 2019. During the campaign, Kaczyński emphasized that elections to the EP and to the national parliament, "are in fact, one election in which the future of Poles and Poland is at stake." He threatened that it would be worse for Poles if the ruling party lost the election, the situation of Poles would worsen. Kukiz'15 in its EP campaign focused on defending Poland's position within the EU. Both groups declared the need for reform and change in the EU and the need to solve the migration crisis, albeit without indicating specific actions.

Table 3. Code structure (Polish parties)

Party	Code (=problem)	Sub-codes (structure of party argumentation)
LAW AND JUSTICE (PiS)	*EU*	Must be reformed
		Return to the original values of Europe
		Equal treatment for every member of (company in) EU within EU
		Support for national (Polish) agriculture

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[120] "Kukiz od poniedziałku zacznie przedstawiać 10 postulatów działań na rzecz zmian w Europie [From Monday, Kukiz will start presenting 10 postulates of actions for change in Europe]", *WNP.PL*, 9 March 2019, at https://www.wnp.pl/parlamentarny/wydarzenia/kukiz-od-poniedzialku-zacznie-przedstawiac-10-postulatow-dzialan-na-rzecz-zmian-w-europie,37846.html.

		Solidarity in development within Europe. Strong cohesion policy
	Migration	Stop illegal immigration. Europe have to help others
		Safe borders of Europe
		Cultural threat
		Solution on the level of nation states
KUKIZ'15	*EU*	Must be reformed (deep reform of the EU institutions, including, strengthening the position of the European Parliament and e-voting)
		Strong Poland in Europe!
		Rejection of anachronistic, artificial divisions and work for citizens
		Honest Europe – fight against corruption
		Stop the hegemony of superpowers (of Germany and France) in EU
	Migration	A new model for managing migration flows
		Possible source of conflict
		Supported by EU, reasonable decisions, above all, in compliance with the law

3.5. Hungary

As expected, Fidesz-KDNP has won the 2019 European Parliament election in Hungary, held only a year after the national parliamentary elections, with a percentage of 52.56% (converted to 13 seats). The left-wing Democratic Coalition (DK) earned 16.05% (4 seats), significantly improving their percentage of 5.37% the year before, and too much surprise, the centrist/liberal Momentum Movement primarily targeting the youth earned 9.93% (2 seats). Both the socialist MSZP-P (6.61%) and the radical nationalist Jobbik (6.34%) lost support and each of them could only delegate one representative to the EP, while the Hungarian green party Politics Can be Different (LMP) failed to gain any seats.[121] The election brought about a complete reshuffling of the ranking of opposition parties, and also defined the opposition strategy for the 2019 Hungarian local elections, based on the necessity of complete alliance against the incumbent Fidesz party.

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[121] *2019 European elections result*, at https://europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/national-results/hungary/2019-2024/.

When looking for obvious signs of populism in Hungarian parties, it must be underlined that the communication of each party includes populist, strongly demagogic elements. However, since 2010 the populist national component is permanently present in the politics of two political entities, the Fidesz-KDNP alliance and Jobbik. Fidesz was founded in 1988. As the party that represented the youth generation played a significant role in the Hungarian regime change. Fidesz's primary goal was a decisive opposition to democracy. In 1993, Viktor Orbán and other leaders of Fidesz decided to change the ideological profile of the party and took steps to transform it from a liberal into a right-wing group. Later Fidesz introduced itself as a party that protests against the liberalization of the state and power being exercised by the former communist elite moreover that protects Hungarian interests and domestic economic market. Since 2010, Fidesz is known as a right-wing national-conservative-Christian party.[122] Jobbik was founded as a political party in 2003 as a new generation, radical right-wing political party. At the elections in 2010 the party reached 16.67%, not only enabling them to sit in the Parliament, but also establishing themselves as an essential factor in Hungarian politics. At the end of 2014 Jobbik took a radical turn launching a new political direction from a radical party to a moderate centrist right-wing party. After the elections in 2018 the party has lost its support gradually.[123]

Hungarian populism cleverly builds upon century-long desires of the Hungarian psyche, i.e. revolt against oppression, ideas of liberty and independence, as well as the historical aspects of scapegoating. It readily refers to unspoken issues of the period following the regime change (1989-1990), the lack of self-reflection and public disputes, as well as the impacts of foreign (alien) influence and the reinterpretation of consequences.[124] The false reality manifested in the idea of "eternal hope, followed by great disappointment".

The campaign issues and results of the 2019 European Parliament election in Hungary cannot be understood without knowing the preliminaries to the fact. Hungary has practically been experiencing a permanent election campaign since the autumn of 2006, following the leak of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's supposedly secret speech in which he had admitted continuously lying to the Hungarian people. Therefore, even less important elections had their stakes increased, enabling citizens to express their dissatisfaction or support.

EP campaigns are generally met with disinterest from voters, people cannot understand and see how and why they should interfere with European issues through an election that still features national parties and candidates.[125] While the 2009 EP election could clearly be counted as a vote of protest against the incumbent left-wing and liberal bloc, the election in 2014 and 2019 adapted the vision on the future of the European community to a national level. It has become clear that the decision made on the European Union is basically defined in terms of national policy issues. This notion is supported by the fact that while the 2014 EP election only had a 28.92% turnout, in 2019 it increased to 43.48%, mainly because of the migration crisis and the impact of the related government propaganda efforts.[126]

[122] Kubas, Sebastian and Czyż, Anna: "From a Liberal Opposition Party to a Right-Wing Party of Power. Three Decades of the Hungarian Fidesz (1988-2018)", *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Sklodowska*, vol. III, Sectio M (2018), pp. 47–65.

[123] Pap, Norbert and Glied, Viktor: "The Hungarian Border Barrier and Islam", *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 6 (2017), pp. 1–29.

[124] Ágh, Attila: "A rendszerváltás terhe: A neoliberális-autoriter hibrid Magyarországon", *Project: Declining democracy in East-Central Europe* (2019), pp. 1–26, at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331345963_A_rendszervaltas_terhe_A_neoliberalis-autoriter_hibrid_Magyarorszagon.

[125] Navracsics, Tibor: "Az első jelentős európai parlamenti válastás elé", *Magyar Szemle*, vol. 26, nº. 1–2 (2019), at http://www.magyarszemle.hu/cikk/20190222_az_elso_jelentos_europai_parlamenti_valasztas_ele.

[126] *European Parliament representatives election 2019*, at https://www.valasztas.hu/ep2019.

Since January 2015, public discourse in Hungary is dominated by the topics of mass migration, dangers of terrorism, crisis of multiculturalism, Soros-organizations supporting migration and the doings of bureaucrats in Brussels. Although the government communicates that it is protecting Hungarian people, such efforts are put into context by the fact that almost 20 000 foreign citizens purchased (permanent) residence permits in Hungary from 2013 to 2017. In the framework of the residency bond program initiated by the Orbán-cabinet, 6543 purchasing citizens of 59 countries and their more than 13300 family members got Hungarian documents, for which they paid hundreds of thousands of euros.[127] Prime Minister Viktor Orbán explains whenever he is given a chance to speak that Hungary is a key player in EU decision-making related to migration, however it should also be highlighted that the Hungarian government has repeatedly hindered and blocked decisions aiming to mitigate the pressure of migration. This happened to the treaty concluded at the EU-Africa Summit in April 2018, which would have assisted African countries in impeding migration and provided financial help to returning migrants, but the same thing happened with the treaty of the EU with the Arab League in February 2019, which was rejected by the Hungarian government, because the wording made reference to UN migration compact (then still under negotiation). Jobbik – and other parties as well – suggested that Europe should provide support to third countries issuing migrants to promote economic development and the development of social care systems, stating the following: "We have always professed that everyone must be given a change to get by in their home countries. People from the third world should be supported in their homeland, not in Europe."

The years-long dispute about compromising the rule of law and deconstructing democratic institutional framework was manifested in the report about Hungary, made by the committee coordinated by Dutch MEP Judith Sargentini. The European Parliament adopted the report on the situation in Hungary with a majority of almost 70 percent on 12 September 2018, and launched the procedure against Hungary under Article 7 to its next level.

In the following months, public discourse dominated by Fidesz-KDNP simplified the issues to the "trinity" of illegal immigration-EU-wrongdoings of George Soros and his organizations, and this theme also defined the EP election messages of the government.[128] "No diktat or accusation of the European Parliament can make the Hungarian government change its immigration policy. [...] We are talking about a pro-immigration report with the exclusive objective of breaking the Hungarian government's resistance against immigration and condemning the cabinet for protecting the borders of Europe," explained Gergely Gulyás, the Minister of the Prime Minister's Office, subscribing to the government's position. Following the adoption of the report, the government launched an "informative" campaign with the main message "You have the right to know what Brussels is planning to do". The billboards depict George Soros laughing in the background, as well as a prominent EPP politician, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker who criticized the Hungarian government and Viktor Orbán many times. According to government spokesperson Zoltán Kovács "the plans of supporting migration are still kept in 'Brussels drawers'". [...] Such plans include multiplying funding for non-governmental organizations and creating a migration fund that would make illegal immigration lawful." Following the openly anti-EU propaganda and the targeted attacks against EPP politicians, in February 2019 the European Commission reacted and labelled the statement of the campaign fake news and disinformation. On behalf of the commission, spokesperson Margaritis Schinas explained that the Hungarian campaign "beggars belief" and

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[127] Wiedemann, Tamás: "59 országból jött Magyarországra a húszezer letelepedési kötvényes", *G7.hu* (2019), at https://g7.hu/kozelet/20190116/59-orszagbol-jott-magyarorszagra-a-huszezer-letelepedesi-kotvenyes.
[128] Kacziba, Péter: "Political Sources of Hungarian Soft Power", *Politics in Central Europe*, vol. 15, nº. 1S (2020), pp. 81–111.

added that 'It is shocking that such a ludicrous conspiracy theory has reached the mainstream to the extent it has'." [129] In the end, the workaround turned out to be Fidesz voluntarily suspending membership in the European People's Party until the investigation is concluded against them. [130] This was even favorable to Fidesz, since constant "preparedness" and keeping conflicts alive are important to mobilize their supporters. Since Fidesz did not have a program for the EP-elections, the party's goals could be learnt from brochure: Do support Viktor Orbán's program and halt migration!

From its foundation in 2003 up until its so-called "popular party shift" following the 2014 elections, Jobbik has pursued strongly anti-EU, Eurosceptic politics. A remarkable example was a member of the party burning the EU flag at a rally in 2012, held against the European Commission's decisions condemning Hungary. Then-chairman of the party, Gábor Vona explained that the Commission's decision had been a declaration of war, aiming to terminate Hungary's independence and suggesting that a referendum was necessary on exiting the community. Following their defeat in the 2014 national elections, Jobbik pursued a radical turn and gave up on its radical, far-right rhetoric to begin edging closer towards the political center. Unfortunately for them, this complete shift began at the same time as the outbreak of the migration crisis, allowing Fidesz to very cleverly confiscate and communicate Jobbik's previously dominant topics. Due to constant political attacks, by 2019 the party has basically been decimated with its popular support halved in a few years.

The EP election program of Jobbik called for a New National Compromise, aiming to replace political division and repeatedly reacting to crises with Europe becoming proactive and finding answers to solve issues related to its core values (Jewish/Christian heritage), institutions (reducing the enormous bureaucratic apparatus) and social tensions (suggested wage union). Priorities of the program are:

1. Competitive Hungary and European wages

2. Joint solution against migration

3. Proper, free media

According to the position of Jobbik, each member state shall contribute to protecting the EU's external borders. Their rhetoric is very much similar to that of Fidesz: "[...] contrary to many western states, Hungary did not take part in colonization [...] so we do not intend to accept the victims of colonization en masse either."

Since Fidesz-KDNP has not issued a manifesto for the EP election, their accusations were summarized in Viktor Orbán's seven-point letter addressed to the EU in April 2019:

1. They want to introduce the mandatory resettlement quota.

2. They want to weaken the border-protection rights of member states.

3. They would foster immigration with a migrant visa.

4. They want to provide even more money to organizations supporting migration.

5. They would also assist migration with a bank card with accessible funds.

6. They would launch experimental immigration projects with countries in Africa.

[129] Benková, Lívia: "Hungary-Orbán´s project towards "illiberal democracy"", *Fokus*, nº. 2 (2019), pp. 1–4, at https://www.aies.at/download/2019/AIES-Fokus-2019-02.pdf.
[130] Meijers, Maurits J. and van der Veer, Harmen: "MEP Responses to Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Poland. An Analysis of Agenda-Setting and Voting Behaviour", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 57, nº. 4 (2019), pp. 838–856.

7. They want to reduce financial support for countries that oppose immigration.[131]

Thus, basically the communication of the government contrasted so-called economic migration (They – who are strangers; They – who are not part of our civilization) with supporting families (We, the Hungarians/Europeans). This was the most important message that voters understood furthermore most of the political debates were about the risk of migration from different perspectives since 2015, therefore Fidesz basically did not need a specific program for the EP election. Their communication contained the key message consequently: the supporters of immigration are not interested in supporting Hungarian families. Based on this way of thinking, the national government is on the "good side", while forces supporting immigration are on the other side, aiming to increase population numbers of certain countries with migrants. These forces include: Brussels, George Soros and of course their puppets, the Hungarian opposition.[132]

Table 4. Code structure (Hungarian parties)

Party	Code (=problem)	Sub-codes (structure of party argumentation)
JOBBIK	EU	Must be reformed
		Bureaucratic
		Supports migration
	Migration	Physical threat (terrorism)
		Cultural threat
FIDESZ-KDNP	EU	Must be reformed
		Freedom fight against Brussels
		Imperial endeavors to recolonize Hungary
		Led by George Soros and his network
	Migration	Physical threat (terrorism)
		Solution on the national and supranational level
		Defending the European Christian roots from Islamic threat
		Supported by some EU member states

4. Comparison and conclusions

The analysis compared the characteristics of populist parties in the V4 countries, focusing on the 2019 EP elections. In all cases, elections provide an opportunity for adequate comparisons, as parties announce programs and/or orient voters along certain principles. EP elections are special political events because they bring issues, which have been part of the political dialogue already, though generally less discussed in domestic politics, to the surface. That means populist parties can utilize the EP elections for promoting their Eurosceptic and anti-Brussels opinions without reservations, emphasizing that supranational decisions affect internal affairs too. On

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[131] Hutter, Marianna: "Íme, A Fidesz "programja": migránsozás hét pontban", *Azonnali.hu* (2019), at https://azonnali.hu/cikk/20190405_ime-a-fidesz-programja-migransozas-het-pontban.

[132] Timmer, Andria D. and Docka-Filipek, Danielle: "Enemies of the Nation: Understanding the Hungarian State's Relationship to Humanitarian NGOs", *Journal of International & Global Studies*, vol. 9, nº. 2 (2018), pp. 40–57.

the one hand, populist parties strongly criticize the operation of the European Union and Brussels' bureaucracy, saying it is slow, slothful, not in the interests of citizens, but on the other hand – according to their claim – they do not want to leave the EU (Czechxit, Hunxit). This complicated political game creates a paradoxical situation in which the Eurosceptic attitude and the criticism of EU technocrats go hand in hand. While efforts are being made to reinforce nationalist, patriotic feelings against the EU supremacy by inventing new, often fictional narratives based on half-truth, with external actors and factors threatening both the EU and the V4 countries. Such as migration, and the civil society/NGO network financed by American billionaire George Soros, as part of the global clandestine power, the deep state as well as terrorism. The goal is to have a permanent threat against the country and that citizens must be protected from.

Sometimes the "protection" is manifested in openly anti-Roma political speeches as it happened in Hungary and in Slovakia. There are states where this hate speech and campaign remained at the level of anti-corruption and anti-elite statements as in the Czech Republic and Poland, but the anti-migrant rhetoric showed up in every V4 countries. These abovementioned factors are complemented by the argument that many of these challenges are caused by the EU itself, by losing sovereignty and political self-determination of nation-states, promoting migration, which in the long run will erase European values and identity. It is very important to note that the rhetoric of populist parties in Central and Eastern Europe shows the need to reinforce social inclusion, the promise of a more responsible Europe, or the reduction of economic and regional inequalities, but meanwhile they want to strengthen the nation-state structure. This is a sharp contradiction that is difficult to explain that is why populist powers usually transform the existing or fictional threats to the arena what is less known by voters and probably these challenges are not there or hardly as much as the populist parties would like them to be.

It should also be emphasized that there are differences in the behavior of the V4 countries in a couple of cases. It is worth to mention the relationship with Russia, which seriously divides the Visegrad group, or the discourse on the future of the EU saying reforms should be executed within the community by deepening the whole political and economic cooperation, or on the contrary to strengthen the nation-state structure. It should also be noted that there are differences in terms of respect for the democratic framework, which, as we have seen, is in danger in Poland and Hungary.[133] To sum it up, constant crises can stabilize the popularity of populist parties,[134] precisely because the EU is unable to provide effective responses to the emerged challenges (or at least many people believe it). However, as quickly as populist forces have strengthened, they may weaken and disappear if they are not able to realize their ambitious statements and promises.

[133] Cianetti, Licia; Dawson, James and Hanley, Seán: "Rethinking "democratic backsliding" in Central and Eastern Europe – looking beyond Hungary and Poland," *East European Politics*, vol. 34, nº. 3 (2018), pp. 243–256.
[134] Türk, H Bahadit: "'Populism as a medium of mass mobilization': The case of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan," *International Area Studies Review*, vol. 21, nº. 2 (2018), pp. 150–168.

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