



Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe

Working Paper

# **Populist Parties: Migration Policy and Discourses in the European Parliament**

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## Abstract

This working paper explores the influence of populist parties classified as radical right-wing, anti-establishment or radical left-wing by the DEMOS project on policy making on migration in the 7th legislature (2014-2019), a period that coincided with increased migratory movements constructed as a 'crisis'. Three legislative processes were selected for analysis: Regulation 2016/1624, which established the European Border and Coast Guard; the proposal for a relocation mechanism; and the European Parliament Resolution on The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration. The analytical steps taken included the analysis of a) contributions of populist MEPs in debates and explanations of voting in order to explore their discursive positioning on key aspects of migration policies b) amendments submitted to proposed legislation and resolution in order to explore their policy content and policy preferences of populist MEPs and parties c) their adoption or not at the committee and plenary stages of the parliamentary legislative process in order to assess the impact of populist parties on the decision making process. Further, these findings are compared to those related to the MEPs of parties not classified as populist.

The findings suggest that the influence of radical right-wing and anti-establishment populist parties on migration policy making is limited, as few of their amendments are adopted at committee stage, let alone by the plenary. 'Inclusive' populist parties were more successful in this respect. Further, it is difficult to discern specific radical right-wing populist positions. While the discourse and phrasing of policy proposals of such parties tend to be more extreme, core policy positions such as preserving the powers of member states and strongly supporting border controls are shared among mainstream right-wing and to an extent centrist parties and political groups. Further, populist tropes such as those invoking the people, condemning the elites and constructing the 'other' as threatening were articulated not only by MEPS of populist parties but also by those representing extreme right parties such as Jobbik and Golden Dawn.

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## List of abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| ALDE    | Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe        |
| ANO     | ANO 2011 Party                                       |
| AfD     | Alternative for Germany                              |
| CEAS    | Common European Asylum System                        |
| DF      | Danish People's Party                                |
| EBCG    | European Border and coast Guard                      |
| ECR     | European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)          |
| EFDD    | Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy               |
| ENF     | Europe of Nations and Freedom                        |
| EPP     | European People's Party                              |
| Fidesz  | Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance                    |
| GUE-NGL | European United Left–Nordic Green Left               |
| FN      | National Front                                       |
| FP      | Freedom Party  |
| LFI     | Left Front Initiative                                |
| LM      | Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania        |
| LN      | Lega Nord – National League                          |
| M5S     | Five Star Movement                                   |
| PiS     | Law and Justice Party                                |
| SAR     | Search and Rescue                                    |
| S&D     | Socialists and Democrats                             |
| SYRIZA  | Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance |
| TT      | Party of Order and Justice                           |
| UKIP    | United Kingdom Independence Party                    |

## 1 Introduction

This working paper analyses the impact of populist parties on the policy making process in the context of the European Parliament and the themes in their discourses.

The selection of parties draws partly on the classification developed in previous research by the DEMOS H2020 project, which classified parties into four groups: radical right-wing, (post-communist), radical left-wing and anti-establishment populist parties. Radical right-wing populist parties are defined as exclusionary, mostly authoritarian, nativist, using ‘conspiratory explanations of liberal democracy’ (Sotiropoulos et al 2019: 20). Radical left-wing populist parties are inclusionary, non-authoritarian, adopting a radical democratic approach to politics with ‘weak nativist appeal’. (Sotiropoulos et al 2019: 20). Anti-establishment populist parties are defined as ‘non-authoritarian with weak nativist appeal’, sometimes with radical democratic populist while it is difficult to ascertain if they are exclusionary ‘due to their lack of ideology’ (Sotiropoulos et al 2019: 20). For the purposes of this working paper, the first two categorisations have been merged, as the parties wherein are similar in that they are largely authoritarian<sup>1</sup>, exclusionary and nativist, features which have a significant impact in their positioning towards migration and migration policy.

The full list of parties selected for this working paper is provided in Table 1. Some of the parties in the original DEMOS selection (e.g., *VOX*, *Kukiz 15*) were not included either because they were not elected to the European Parliament or the country in which they are elected is not in the European Union (i.e., Bosnia Herzegovina and Turkey). Further, most MEPs of the *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) joined another party in 2015, leaving just two in the AfD.

The selected parties belong to different political groups. Fidesz was, at the time, the only member of the European People’s Party (EPP) group usually described as a centre-

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<sup>1</sup> Two of the parties in the radical right wing and radical right-wing grouping, the Danish People’s Party (DF) and Polish Law and Justice (PiS) are described as ‘non-authoritarian’ in Sotiropoulos et al (2019a). While this is more likely in the case of DF, research has argued that Law and Justice has strong authoritarian tendencies evidenced in its undermining of courts, media freedoms and gender rights (Fomina and Kucharczyk 2016; Kim 2021; Stubbs and Lendvai-Bainton 2020; Žuk, Žuk and Plucinski, 2021)

right party. Law and Justice (PiS), Danish People's Party (DF), Alternative for Germany (AfD) and OLANO were members of the European Conservatives and Reformist group (ECR), while National Front (FN), the Freedom Party (FP) and Lega Nord (LN) were a part of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group, which included a spectrum of right-wing, conservative and radical right parties.

**Table 1: Selected parties**

| <b>Party</b>   | <b>Country</b> | <b>Political Group</b>                               |
|--|----------------|--|
| <b>Radical right-wing</b>  |                |  |
| <i>Alternative für Deutschland – Alternative for Germany (AfD)</i>                                 | Germany        | European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)          |
| <i>Dansk Folkeparti - Danish People's Party (DF)</i>   | Denmark        | European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)          |
| <i>Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség - Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz)</i>                       | Hungary        | European People's Party (EPP)                        |
| <i>Partij voor de Vrijheid - Freedom Party (FP)</i>  | Netherlands    | Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)                  |
| <i>Front National – National Front (FN)</i>  | France         | Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)                  |
| <i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - Law and Justice (PiS)</i>  | Poland         | European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)          |
| <i>Lega Nord – Northern League (LN)</i>  | Italy          | Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)                  |
| <i>Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti- Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLANO)</i> | Slovakia       | European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)          |
| <i>United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)</i>  | UK             | Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)        |
| <b>Anti-Establishment</b>  |                |  |
| <i>ANO 2011 (ANO)</i>  | Czech Republic | Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) |
| <i>Lietuvos Respublikos Liberalų sąjūdis -Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LM)</i>   | Lithuania      | Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) |
| <i>Movimento 5 Stelle - Five Star Movement (M5S)</i>   | Italy          | Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)        |

|   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| <i>Tvarka ir teisingumas - Party of Order and Justice (TT).</i>   | Lithuania | Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)    |
| <b>Left wing</b>  |           |  |
| <i>Front de gauche - Left Front Initiative (LFI)</i>  | France    | European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) |
| <i>PODEMOS</i>  | Spain     | European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) |
| <i>Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς – Προοδευτική Συμμαχία - Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance (SYRIZA)</i> | Greece    | European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL) |

Three of the selected parties – UKIP, Party of Order and Justice (TT) and Five Star Movement (M5S) – belong to the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group, despite UKIP being classified by the DEMOS project as a radical right-wing populist party, while the other two are characterised as anti-establishment parties with ‘weak nativist appeal’ (Sotiropoulos et al 2019). Moreover, some MEPs of the above parties joined other political groups – either while remaining in the party (e.g. Bruno Gollnisch of FN stayed with the Non-Inscrits group when FN joined ENF) or by leaving the party and joining another political group (e.g. Janet Atkinson was expelled from UKIP and joined the ECR group). It can be observed, however, that radical right-wing and anti-establishment parties are members of four different political groups of the right-wing political space in the European Parliament. In contrast, all parties identified as radical left-wing populist – PODEMOS, SYRIZA and *Left Front Initiative (LFI)* – are in the same political group, the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). Two of the parties classified as anti-establishment – *the Lithuanian Liberal Movement (LM)* and the Czech *ANO* – are members of the political group Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

The data selection is based on purposive sampling. The selected three legislative processes reflected significant policy developments and debates in response to the migratory movements of 2015:

- a) Regulation 2016/1624, which established the European Border and Coast Guard, comprising of national forces and the EU agency Frontex

b) the proposal for a *Council Decision for Provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece*, which concerned the establishment of a relocation mechanism

c) the European Parliament Resolution on *The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration*

Three documents were selected from each process:

a) **the amendments submitted by MEPs** to the text proposed by the Commission at the Committee stage. In this, amendments can be submitted by single MEPs as well as by smaller or larger groups, from the same or different national parties or political groups (Baller 2017; Hurka 2017). This increases the possibility of smaller parties influencing the policy-making process, in contrast to the Plenary stage, where amendments must be submitted by a minimum of 40 MEPs, a political group or the Committee (Baller 2017; Hurka 2013)

b) the **debate on the proposed text**

b) the **explanation on voting**, which includes contributions by MEPs outlining why they or their party voted for or against a resolution or legislative proposal

The analysis of the amendments submitted by the MEPs of various populist and non-populist parties aimed at understanding the influence of populist parties/MEPs on the legislative policy process – if any – and how many amendments were incorporated in the final text adopted by the European Parliament. It also offered insights into what kind of policies populist and non-populist parties favoured (policy content). The analysis of the debates and the explanations of voting explored the policy positioning of populist parties and the key discourses on migration – for example, if they supported policies of control, adopted securitising narratives, or favoured less restrictive policies and emphasised access to protection. Further, the amendments and statements of the MEPs of selected populist parties were compared to those of other similar parties and to those by MEPs of other political groups so as to identify similarities and differences in proposed policies and discourses.

The documents containing the amendments were read through and analysed to locate the amendments submitted by MEPs of the selected populist parties and categorise the



proposed amendments according to the political group. The results of this analysis are presented in section 2. The documents of the debates and the explanation of voting were read through and statements by different MEPs were copied and pasted into excel sheets according to the classification of populist parties and the remaining political groups. As statements were in several languages, Google translate was used for translations into English.

## **2 Contributions to policymaking: amendments by populist party MEPs**

Table 2 presents the number of amendments submitted by radical right-wing, anti-establishment and left-inclusive populist parties, as well as by the political groups excluding the selected populist parties. A first observation is that several populist parties (AfD, DF, LM, TT, Podemos) submitted no amendments in any of the three legislative processes while FP and LFI submitted amendments with other populist parties but not on their own. A further pattern is the submission of amendments with MEPs of the political group the party belongs to: Fidesz with EPP, FN with ENF, SYRIZA and LFI with GUE/NGL. Overall, however, there were significant differences among the number of amendments submitted by the selected parties. Radical right-wing populist parties submitted few amendments with the exception of Fidesz, mainly with other EPP MEPs, while PiS and Lega Nord submitted a notable number of amendments in the Situation in the Mediterranean resolution. It is worth noting that the latter legislative process concerned a parliament resolution rather a legislative text, and a greater number of amendments were submitted by all populist parties and political groups. Among the anti-establishment parties, ANO and M5S were the most active, especially in the EBCG regulation and the Situation in the Mediterranean resolution. Nevertheless, the radical left-wing populist parties, in particular SYRIZA, are the most active in the amendment process, despite the fact that they political group they belong to had fewer MEPs (52) than ALDE (67) or ECR (70).

**Table 2: Amendments submitted by populist parties and political groups**

| <b>Party</b>  | <b>Relocation</b> | <b>EBCG</b> | <b>Situation in the Mediterranean</b> |
|---|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Radical right-wing populist parties</b>                |                   |             |                                       |
| <i>Alternative for Germany</i>                            | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>Danish People's Party</i>                              | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>Fidesz</i>   | 4                 | 10          | 0                                     |
| <i>Fidesz with other EPP MEPs</i>                         | 0                 | 53          | 52                                    |
| <i>Freedom Party</i>                                      | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>Front National with Freedom Party</i>                  | 0                 | 2           | 0                                     |
| <i>Front National with other ENF MEPs</i>                 | 0                 | 3           | 0                                     |
| <i>Front National with Lega Nord and ENF MEPs</i>         | 0                 | 4           | 0                                     |
| <i>Law and Justice</i>                                    | 2                 | 0           | 30                                    |
| <i>Lega Nord</i>  | 3                 | 0           | 23                                    |
| <i>OLANO with other ECR MEPs</i>                          | 0                 | 0           | 23                                    |
| <i>United Kingdom Independence Party</i>                  | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <b>Anti-Establishment populist parties</b>                |                   |             |                                       |
| <i>ANO 2011</i>   | 0                 | 0           | 1                                     |
| <i>ANO with other ALDE MEPs</i>                           | 0                 | 65          | 30                                    |
| <i>Five Star Movement – M5S</i>                           | 2                 | 63          | 45                                    |
| <i>Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania</i>      | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>Party of Order and Justice</i>                         | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <b>Radical left-wing parties</b>                          |                   |             |                                       |
| <i>Left Front Initiative</i>                              | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>Left Front Initiative with GUE/NGL</i>                 | 2                 | 17          | 1                                     |
| <i>PODEMOS</i>  | 0                 | 0           | 0                                     |
| <i>SYRIZA</i>   | 0                 | 4           | 0                                     |
| <i>SYRIZA with GUE/NGL MEPs</i>                           | 0                 | 95          | 57                                    |
| <i>SYRIZA with Left Front Initiative and GUE/NGL MEPs</i> | 26                | 10          | 110                                   |
| <b>Political groups excluding populist parties</b>        |                   |             |                                       |
| <i>ALDE</i>   | 4                 | 53          | 39                                    |
| <i>ECR</i>  | 33                | 66          | 147                                   |
| <i>EFDD</i>   | 0                 | 0           | 49                                    |
| <i>ENF</i>  | 0                 | 0           | 13                                    |
| <i>EPP</i>  | 34                | 188         | 266                                   |
| <i>Greens</i>   | 0                 | 211         | 94                                    |
| <i>GUE/NGL</i>  | 0                 | 30          | 99                                    |
| <i>S&amp;D</i>  | 35                | 227         | 149                                   |

## **2.1 International protection: provisional measures for the benefit of Italy and Greece 2015/0125(NLE)**

Few MEPs from the selected radical right-wing populist parties proposed amendments to the draft submitted by the Commission. K. Gál of Fidesz submitted four amendments, one suggesting an overall policy statement referring to European Council conclusions which proposed emphasis on control policies and cooperation with third countries as well as relocation<sup>2</sup>, two adding specific references to ‘unprecedented migration pressure’ in Hungary<sup>3</sup>, and one suggesting that relocations should be on a voluntary basis by member states<sup>4</sup>. M. Jurek and K. M. Ujazdowski of PiS proposed the insertion of a clause allowing receiving MS to introduce their own criteria for relocation<sup>5</sup> and reducing the number of relocated applicants<sup>6</sup>. L. Fontana of LN, in addition to a clause defining relocation<sup>7</sup>, proposed two amendments on taking into account the preferences of candidates for relocation and removing limits to relocation numbers<sup>8</sup>, contrasting the proposals of the other radical right-wing populist groups. While these two proposals appear to consider the rights and interests of refugees, they also serve the national interests of Italy, as a country of arrival that would benefit from the proposed law. Only one amendment by K. Gál, a reference to migratory pressures faced by Hungary<sup>9</sup> was partially incorporated in the text agreed by the Parliament (European Parliament [EP] 2015b; 2015c). Nevertheless, it was not included in the final text of the decision, as agreed by the Commission, the Parliament and the Council (Council of the European Union 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> Amendment [Am.] 32, European Parliament [EP] 2015a)

<sup>3</sup> Am. 44, 52, EP 2015a

<sup>4</sup> Am. 124

<sup>5</sup> Am. 68

<sup>6</sup> Am. 76

<sup>7</sup> Am. 116

<sup>8</sup> Am. 101, 102

<sup>9</sup> Am. 44

**Table 3: Success of amendment - Relocation Council Decision**

|   | Amendments submitted | Adopted at Committee level & plenary | Accepted in final adopted version |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Radical right-wing populist parties</b>                |                      |                                      |                                   |
| <i>Fidezs</i>   | 4                    | 1                                    | 0                                 |
| <i>Lega Nord</i>  | 3                    | 0                                    | 0                                 |
| <i>PIS</i>  | 2                    | 0                                    | 0                                 |
| <b>Anti-establishment populist parties</b>                |                      |                                      |                                   |
| <i>M5S</i>  | 2                    | 0                                    | 0                                 |
| <b>Radical left-wing populist parties</b>                 |                      |                                      |                                   |
| <i>Left Front Initiative with GUE/NGL</i>                 | 2                    | 0                                    | 0                                 |
| <i>SYRIZA with Left Front Initiative and GUE/NGL MEPs</i> | 26                   | 14                                   | 2                                 |
| <b>Political groups excluding populist parties</b>        |                      |                                      |                                   |
| <i>ALDE</i>   | 4                    | 1                                    | 1                                 |
| <i>ECR</i>  | 22                   | 2                                    | 0                                 |
| <i>EPP</i>  | 34                   | 17                                   | 7                                 |
| <i>S&amp;D</i>  | 35                   | 19                                   | 4                                 |
| <i>Jointly submitted amendments</i>                       | 7                    | 6                                    | 1                                 |

MEPs of parties in the ECR group which can be described as radical right-wing populist or nationalist conservative, such as the *True Finns*, *New Flemish Alliance* and the *UK Conservative Party*, submitted similar amendments. These rejected the proposed Council Decision as a whole<sup>10</sup> and supported the position that relocation should take place on a voluntary and temporary basis for Member states and controlled to a greater extent by them<sup>11</sup>. They also opposed the consideration of applicants' preferences and their right to choose where they are relocated<sup>12</sup>, criteria proposed by the Commission

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<sup>10</sup> Am. 20

<sup>11</sup> Am. 30, 61, 127, 110, 130, 144

<sup>12</sup> Am. 143

such as language, educational qualifications and vulnerability<sup>13</sup>, and the imposition of obligations and penalties on Italy and Greece<sup>14</sup>. Other amendments doubted that people crossing EU borders to seek protection,<sup>15</sup> stating instead that they pose threats to security,<sup>16</sup> in a similar manner to discourses and justifications adopted in the debate and explanations of voting (EP 2015d, 2015e). Only two out of the 22 amendments submitted by parties in the ECR group, one inserting a reference to Directive 2011/95/EU in the definition of ‘applicant’ for relocation and one adding the transmission of applicants’ fingerprints as a condition for relocation - were incorporated in the text adopted by the Parliament but did not feature in the final text of the Council Decision (Council of the European Union 2015; EP 2015b; 2015c).

Contrary to the amendments proposed by K. Gál of Fidezs, other EPP MEPs supported the idea of a binding permanent relocation mechanism for emergency situations<sup>17</sup>. However, this position was not unanimous: for example, P. Csáky of the *Slovakian Party of the Hungarian Community*, A. Pabriks of the Latvian *Unity* party and T. Zdechovský of the *Czech Christian and Democratic Union* also supported the idea of voluntary relocation affording greater discretion to member states,<sup>18</sup> suggesting a divide between EPP MEPs of Eastern European countries and those from other member states. EPP MEPs also referenced the idea of the relocation mechanism enhancing solidarity and shared responsibility among member states<sup>19</sup> while other amendments proposed that member states’ specific situations – such as migration histories, numbers of migrants and humanitarian visas issued - needed to be taken into account<sup>20</sup> as well as citing increased migratory pressures<sup>21</sup>. Similar to the ERC group, MEPs of the EPP group did not support the right of candidates to reject relocation offers or chose their destination, although they allowed for some consideration of the candidates’ preferences, as well as skills, languages and family, especially since they serve the labour market needs of member states and integration<sup>22</sup>. Amendments

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<sup>13</sup> Am. 89

<sup>14</sup> Am. 119, 158

<sup>15</sup> Am. 30, 53

<sup>16</sup> Am. 82

<sup>17</sup> Am. 34, 72, 111, 112, 123

<sup>18</sup> Am. 117, 135

<sup>19</sup> Am 35, 36, 75

<sup>20</sup> Am. 72, 78

<sup>21</sup> Am. 60

<sup>22</sup> Am. 90, 92, 96, 97, 104, 107, 150

submitted by EPP MEPs as well as joint ones between EPP and the Socialists & Democrats group (S&D) sought to enhance the protection of children<sup>23</sup> and prevent discrimination during the relocation process<sup>24</sup>. At the same time, EPP MEPs also sought to incorporate references to EU control policies such as return,<sup>25</sup> suggesting an attempt to securitise a legislative proposal aimed at creating a solidarity instrument. 17 out of 34 of these amendments - on binding permanent emergency relocation mechanism, on skills, qualifications, family ties and preferences, safeguarding children, citing return and reception, participation of EU agencies, proposing the regular review of relocation places depending on migratory movements, proposing an evaluation mechanism and the transmission of fingerprints<sup>26</sup> - were incorporated in the text agreed by the Parliament, and 7 - two concerning children, two on skills, qualifications, and family ties, and one each on citing return and reception, EU agencies and fingerprint transmission - in the final text adopted by the Commission and Council (EP2015c). This was the highest number of amendments present in the final text of the decision among all political groups. However, the Council decision did not adopt the EPP position on a binding, permanent mechanism, illustrating the influence of this body Council in the legislative process.

K. Chysochonos of SYRIZA and C. Vergiat of LFI were involved in a total of 29 amendments – 2 submitted by C. Vergiat with other MEPs of the GUE/NLG group, and 26 with SYRIZA as well (Table 3). In addition, they submitted two amendments jointly with MEPs from the ALDE and Green groups. The amendments focused in their majority on strengthening compliance to human rights, including to rights and needs of children and vulnerable refugees were respected in line with international and EU law,<sup>27</sup> that the preferences of candidates for relocation, as well as their family and social ties to MS were respected as much as possible and, if that was not feasible, their consent was explicitly sought<sup>28</sup>. Some were explicitly critical of the failures of EU responses and laws such as the Dublin regulation<sup>29</sup>, while others sought to reinforce the point that

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<sup>23</sup> Am. 45, 84, 86, 91

<sup>24</sup> Am. 100, 118

<sup>25</sup> Am. 36, 62, 152

<sup>26</sup> Am, 34,36,72,84, 86, 90, 92, 100, 107, 111, 112, 123, 133, 135, 138, 159, 165

<sup>27</sup> Am. 55, 85, 88 [with ALDE and the Greens], 103, 140, 148

<sup>28</sup> Am. 88, 95 [with ALDE and Greens], 98, 99, 109 [with ALDE, S&D and the Greens], 137

<sup>29</sup> Am. 29, 40, 106

potential candidates for relocation were likely recipients of international protection<sup>30</sup> and belonging to vulnerable groups including children and unaccompanied minors<sup>31</sup>. Other amendments suggested stronger solidarity towards Greece and Italy, for example through revising relocation numbers,<sup>32</sup> increasing the number of overall relocation places,<sup>33</sup> and avoiding punitive clauses<sup>34</sup> and using the term ‘responsibility’ rather than ‘burden’<sup>35</sup>. Fifteen of these amendments,<sup>36</sup> - two each on citing criticisms of Dublin, the review of relocation arrangements due to changes in migratory movements, the preferences, needs and qualifications of applicants, replacing the term ‘burden’ into ‘responsibility’ and others on instability in neighbouring areas and increased displacements of Syrian and safeguarding human rights- were fully or partially incorporated in the text of the legislative proposal adopted by the Parliament (EP 2015c). However, only 2 – on regional instability and the needs and qualifications of applicants - were adopted in the final text of the Decision (Council of the European Union 2015). Four joint amendments with the Greens and ALDE, three concerning children and unaccompanied minors and one the consent of applicants for relocation, were adopted at Committee level, but none in the final text (EP 2015c; Council of the European Union 2015).

L. Ferrara of the M5S submitted two amendments, one suggesting an automating relocation mechanism if member states failed to indicate relocation places<sup>37</sup> and the second proposing the periodic reporting on member states’ reception facilities for relocated refugees<sup>38</sup>. None of which were incorporated in the text agreed by the Committee. The remaining selected parties, including those belonging to the ALDE group, submitted no amendments. The ALDE group submitted only four amendments<sup>39</sup> one proposing a reference to the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the recitals,<sup>40</sup> two

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<sup>30</sup> Am. 51

<sup>31</sup> Am. 47, with ALDE & Greens)

<sup>32</sup> Am. 69, 120.

<sup>33</sup> Am. 73, 125

<sup>34</sup> Am. 64, 153

<sup>35</sup> Am. 74, 80

<sup>36</sup> Am. 33, 40, 51, 59, 64, 69, 74, 80, 85, 94, 98, 103, 120, 162

<sup>37</sup> Am. 136

<sup>38</sup> Am. 163

<sup>39</sup> Am. 27, 131, 164

<sup>40</sup> Am. 27

on the cooperation between member states and EU agencies,<sup>41</sup> and one the evaluation of compliance with fundamental right at EU borders<sup>42</sup>. Only the first of these was adopted in the text agreed by the Parliament and subsequently the final text (EP2015c; Council of the European Union 2015). The S&D group, apart from joint amendments mentioned above, submitted amendments referring to EU law instruments<sup>43</sup>, supporting solidarity,<sup>44</sup> a ‘holistic’ policy combining both controls and legal routes<sup>45</sup>, supporting a permanent mechanism<sup>46</sup> taking into account applicants’ preferences, family ties and skills<sup>47</sup> and the rights of stateless persons and children<sup>48</sup> and increasing relocation places<sup>49</sup>. A Bulgarian and a Greek MEP submitted amendments referencing migratory pressures<sup>50</sup> faced in particular by south-eastern states<sup>51</sup>, supported territory and reception capacity as criteria for relocation<sup>52</sup>, financial support for member states,<sup>53</sup> the involvement of law enforcement agencies and security measures such as identification<sup>54</sup> and taking into account the interests of host states in the relocation process and its review<sup>55</sup>. These suggest that national interests play a part in the amendments process, as well as that the S&D group is likely to support both stronger controls as well as policies safeguarding human rights (Lapotin 2015, Frid Nielsen 2018). 19 of these amendments, including on migratory pressures, a holistic approach, a permanent mechanism, rights, solidarity, financial support, taking into account territory, reception capacity and family ties, EU legal instruments, identification, the interests of Italy and Greece were fully or partially successful (EP 2015b; 2015c). Yet just four – on migratory pressures, cultural and family ties, screening and allowing Italy and Greece to present their views in case of not meeting their targets - were incorporated in the final text of the Council Decision (Council of the European Union 2015)

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<sup>41</sup> Am. 131, 164

<sup>42</sup> Am. 166

<sup>43</sup> Am. 28, 31, 57, 71

<sup>44</sup> Am. 54

<sup>45</sup> Am. 63

<sup>46</sup> Am. 65

<sup>47</sup> Am. 93, 102

<sup>48</sup> Am. 46, 87, 113, 115, 129, 132

<sup>49</sup> Am. 126

<sup>50</sup> Am. 42, 43

<sup>51</sup> Am. 37, 39, 50

<sup>52</sup> Am. 79, 134

<sup>53</sup> Am. 81,151

<sup>54</sup> Am. 83, 149 (EP 2015a)

<sup>55</sup> Am. 146, 157, 161 (EP 2015a)



## 2.2 European Border and Coast Guard regulation

The selected radical right-wing populist parties on the right submitted few amendments on the Commission proposal on the European Border and Coast Guard (Table 4). There were two groups submitting amendments which included MEPs from the radical right populist parties selected. The first included M. Le Pen and G. Lebreton of FN with either L. Fontana of LN, V. Maeijer of FP (although in just one amendment) or other MEPs of the ENF group. The second included K. Gál of Fidesz with other MEPs of the EPP group.

The first group submitted amendments which overall aimed at curtailing Europeanised powers for border management or any reference to this effect from proposed text and reassert national powers for border control and the significance of national borders<sup>56</sup>. For instance, one such amendment stated that ‘the only effective way to meet these objectives [of maintaining free movement and security within the EU], however, is to re-establish national borders’<sup>57</sup> (even though national borders were never abolished - the Schengen instruments removed internal border controls). Another proposed the deletion of the statement that ‘European integrated border management is central to improving migration management and ensuring a high level of internal security within the Union’<sup>58</sup>.

**Table 4: Success of amendment – European Border and Coast Guard Regulation**

|   | <b>Amendments submitted</b> | <b>Amendments accepted at committee level</b> | <b>Amendments accepted by plenary/final text<sup>59</sup></b> |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b><i>Radical right-wing populist parties</i></b> |                             |   |   |
| <i>Fidesz with EPP MEPs</i>                       | 10                          | 10  | 7   |
| <i>Front National with Freedom Party</i>          | 2                           | 0   | 0   |

<sup>56</sup> Am. 109, 112, 145 (EP 2016a); 466, 532 (EP 2016b)

<sup>57</sup> Am 109 (EP 2016a)

<sup>58</sup> Am. 112 (EP 2016a)

<sup>59</sup> The text adopted the parliament was consequently adopted by the Council without changes.

|   |     |    |    |
|---|-----|----|----|
| <i>Front National with Lega Nord and ENF</i>              | 4   | 0  | 0  |
| <i>Front National with ENF</i>                            | 3   | 0  | 0  |
| <b><i>Anti-establishment populist parties</i></b>         |     |    |    |
| <i>ANO with ALDE MEPs</i>                                 | 53  | 19 | 15 |
| <i>M5S</i>  | 63  | 14 | 9  |
| <b><i>Radical left-wing populist parties</i></b>          |     |    |    |
| <i>Left Front Initiative with GUE/NGL</i>                 | 17  | 0  | 0  |
| <i>SYRIZA with Left Front Initiative and GUE/NGL MEPs</i> | 10  | 2  | 1  |
| <i>SYRIZA with and GUE/NGL MEPs</i>                       | 95  | 27 | 18 |
| <b><i>Political groups excluding populist parties</i></b> |     |    |    |
| <i>ALDE</i>   | 65  | 19 | 15 |
| <i>ECR</i>  | 66  | 3  | 1  |
| <i>EPP</i>  | 189 | 48 | 40 |
| <i>Greens</i>   | 212 | 77 | 58 |
| <i>GUE/NGL</i>  | 30  | 3  | 2  |
| <i>S&amp;D</i>  | 227 | 93 | 58 |
| <i>Jointly submitted amendments</i>                       | 24  | 14 | 11 |

Other amendments concerned a supervisory role for member states over the Agency,<sup>60</sup> the power to reject liaison officers appointed by the Agency<sup>61</sup> and removing the binding effect of proposals by the executive director on member states<sup>62</sup>. Another referred to ‘intense migratory pressures at the EU’s external borders’,<sup>63</sup> reinforcing securitarian

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<sup>60</sup> Am. 143 (EP 2016a)

<sup>61</sup> Am. 466 (EP 2016b)

<sup>62</sup> Am. 532 (EP 2016b)

<sup>63</sup> Am. 244 (EP 2016a)

constructions of migratory movements. None of these amendments were included in the regulation text adopted at the committee stage (European Parliament 2016c).

The amendments submitted by Fidezs, mostly with other EPP MEPs (mainly A. Pabriks, M. Hohlmeier and J. Lenaers), aimed at increasing the powers of the Council – hence the of member states and limiting those of the Commission<sup>64</sup>. One amendment aimed at ensuring member states entered data into EU databases<sup>65</sup> -while others proposed more responsibilities for the Agency – for example on compensation for damage or harm caused by the Agency’s actions and omissions, including of members of national forces<sup>66</sup>, a definition for the terms ‘third parties’<sup>67</sup>, ensuring the compatibility of equipment<sup>68</sup> and deciding on the selection of border guards for rapid response operations<sup>69</sup>. All ten amendments submitted by the group of MEPs including K. Gál of Fidesz were accepted at committee stage (EP 2016c). Seven of them – on strengthening council powers and limiting those of the commission, data entry and equipment compatibility - were incorporated in the text of the resolution agreed by the plenary (EP 2016f). In contrast to the relocation decision, the position adopted with Fidesz was aligned with the majority of the EPP group in that it supported the creation of a European Border and Coast Guard, as it enhanced border control capacities, but with national powers being preserved to a greater extent than in the Commission proposal.

Amendments proposed by MEPs of parties of the ECR groups not included in the DEMOS populist - by G. Van Orden of the UK *Conservative Party*, on his own or with a group of MEPs including T. Kirkhope of the same party, S. Stevens of the *New Flemish Alliance*, A. Dzhambazki of *Bulgaria without Censorship*, J. Halla-aho of the *Finn’s Party*, and M. Macovei of *MIO* - were similar in content with those of the selected populist parties. They also sought to preserve state powers,<sup>70</sup> although with some exceptions for members states with external borders, in the case of the proposed

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<sup>64</sup> Am. 178, 226, 332, 652, 658, 1165 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>65</sup> Am. 332 (EP 2016a)

<sup>66</sup> Am. 888 (EP 2016d)

<sup>67</sup> Am. 261 (EP 2016b)

<sup>68</sup> Am. 867 (EP 2016d)

<sup>69</sup> Am. 690 (EP 2016d)

<sup>70</sup> Am. 150, 159, 164, 184, 237, 265, 268, 302, 316 325, 329, 409, 475, 527, 534, 618, 657, 692, 707, 870, 921, 955, 980, 992, 1021, 1045 (EP 2015a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

vulnerability assessment - undermine human rights safeguards<sup>71</sup>, assert the importance of migration and border controls and strengthening such measures, including internal border controls<sup>72</sup>. Three amendments – preserving national powers and penalising states with external borders were incorporated in the text agreed at Committee level, but only one – limiting the role of Frontex to assistance in screening procedures – was adopted in the text agreed by the plenary (EP 2016f).

Many amendments proposed by other MEPs of the EPP party (e.g. A.M.C. Bildt, R. Dati and B. Hortefuex, M. Gabriel, E. Radev) were in the same vein with those submitted by the group including K. Gál in that they supported protecting the powers of member states<sup>73</sup>, while others were geared towards increasing the capacities of the agency and the Commission and cooperation with other European agencies<sup>74</sup>, obligations of MS with external borders<sup>75</sup> and even creating stronger sanctions for member states<sup>76</sup>. Two amendments concerned preserving free movement<sup>77</sup>. EPP MEPs also submitted amendments geared towards safeguarding children and vulnerable groups and humanitarian issues such as search and rescue, often with other political groups, such as ALDE, S&D, ECR and the Greens<sup>78</sup>. However, EPP MEPs also proposed amendments referring to security threats and using securitarian language<sup>79</sup> (e.g. ‘hybrid threats’), proposed reinforced control functions<sup>80</sup> and limiting humanitarian and human rights obligations<sup>81</sup>. Such amendments were submitted by MEPs to parties often identified as centre right such as the Greek New Democracy or the French UMP., 48 out of 189 amendments by the EPP group, excluding those

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<sup>71</sup> Am. 593, 622, 643, 698 714, 729, 748, 804, 810, 815, 826, 829 831 834 838, 843 1096, 1107, 1112, 1153, 1172 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>72</sup> Am. 106, 193, 288, 587, 684, 739, 906, 927 (EP2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>73</sup> Am. 120, 121, 136, 138. 142. 156, 162, 169. 173, 179, 187, 190, 267, 332, 323, 398, 406, 486, 487, 497, 519, 520, 524, 528, 530, 549, 552, 646, 650, 663, 667, 676, 688, 711, 755, 957, 961, 1022 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>74</sup> Am. 116, 122, 131, 227, 277, 438, 441, 430, 437, 576, 653, 943 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d)

<sup>75</sup> Am, 320, 331 (EP 2016a)

<sup>76</sup> Am. 181 (EP 2016a)

<sup>77</sup> Am. 126, joined with S&D, 518 (EP 2016b)

<sup>78</sup> AM. 171, 199, 359 373, 609, 624, 728, 806, 818, 827, 832, 1151 (cross party) (EP 2015a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>79</sup> Am. 147, 176, 331, 283, 350, 355, 420, 496, 512, 651 (EP 2016a, 2016b)

<sup>80</sup> Am. 122, 204, 207, 281, 317, 360, 382, 393, 418, 422, 444, 575, 588, 651, 683, 730. 733 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d)

<sup>81</sup> Am 361, 372, 1119 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016e)

submitted with the participation of Fidesz were incorporated in the text adopted by the Committee, and 40 in the text agreed by the plenary (EP 2016c; 2016f).

P. Jezek of the Czech party ANO submitted 65 amendments as part of a larger team of MEPs belonging to the ALDE group. These were on the whole geared towards strengthening supranational arrangements although in a manner preserving the powers of member states<sup>82</sup> but also strengthening humanitarian and human rights obligations,<sup>83</sup> including with the incorporation of search and rescue in the Agency's tasks, and accountability<sup>84</sup>. It is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding ANO as a 'centrist' populist party other than that their representative was not named in some amendments supported by the wider ALDE group<sup>85</sup> strengthening supranational arrangements and limiting the powers of member states<sup>86</sup> –for example related to the role of the Frontex Management Board, where state ministries and police bodies are represented - as well as supporting stronger fundamental rights and procedural safeguards<sup>87</sup>. Out of 65 amendments he was involved in, 19 – on SAR, child protection, the roles of member states and EU bodies, and others on the functioning of Frontex mechanisms -were fully or partially adopted in the Committee text (EP 2016c). 15 – apart from one concerning human rights and three proposing different names for Frontex mechanisms – were incorporated in the text agreed by the plenary (EP 2016f).

Two MEPs from SYRIZA and LFI, K. Chrysogonos and M.C. Vergiat, were involved in the amendments process. They submitted in total 126 amendments mostly with other members of the GUE/NGL group, suggesting that left inclusive populist parties were more heavily involved in the process than radical right-wing ones (Table 3). These

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<sup>82</sup> Am. 123, 188, 266, 277, 352, 353, 379, 424, 429, 431, 433, 440,451, 452,495, 511, 516, 521, 535, 537, 568. 570, 599, 603, 604, 614, 641, 640 674 680 682, 695, 710 720, 721 738 742 1018, 1024, 1042, 1051, 1065 (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>83</sup> Am. 133, 182, 293, , 366, 558, 609, 624, 634, 717, 766, 772, , 817, 818 and in joint amendments (EP 2016a, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>84</sup> Am 533, 1024 1029 1040, 1041, 1088, 1075, 1083, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1105, 1134 (EP 2016b; EP 2016e)

<sup>85</sup> Other ALDE amendments were submitted by a single MEP, F. Hyusmenova, and concerned matters around the internal security of the Schengen Area.

<sup>86</sup> Am. 172, 175, 234, 289, 674, 1003, 1024, 1046, 1048, 1051, 1060, 1054, 1061, 1063, 1064, 1068, 1071, 1073, 1075 (EP 2016a, 2016d, 2016e)

<sup>87</sup> Am. 158, 224, 275, 315, 717, 743, 766, 799, 809, 1006, 1083, 1092-5, 1101, 1105, 1109, 1125, 1134

proposed reinforcing the role of compliance to fundamental rights and asylum law<sup>88</sup>, strengthening sea rescue<sup>89</sup>, enhancing accountability<sup>90</sup> and acknowledged the need for specific protections for groups with specific vulnerabilities and needs<sup>91</sup>. Others aimed at curtailing the powers proposed for the EBCGA<sup>92</sup>, such as in the field of return and cooperation with third countries<sup>93</sup>, but also to increase participation and oversight by the Commission and Parliament<sup>94</sup>. 31 amendments, mainly on human rights and accountability were accepted at committee level and 21 in the final text, suggesting a degree of influence in the legislative process, given the relatively small size of the GUE/NGL group (EP 2016c; 2016f). Interestingly, some of the amendments that were not adopted in the final text concerned the strengthening of human rights accountability mechanisms of Frontex, which has since proven one of the most significant weaknesses in the operation of the Agency (Karamanidou and Kasperek 2020; Frontex Scrutiny Working Group 2021). There are few other amendments<sup>95</sup> by the GUE/NGL group that do not involve K. Chrysogonos or M.C. Vergiat.

Amendments submitted by M5S were similar to those of the GUE/NGL group in that they aimed at strengthening human rights safeguards<sup>96</sup> including strengthening provisions for vulnerable groups<sup>97</sup> and supported sea rescue capacities<sup>98</sup>, accountability<sup>99</sup> and limiting the powers of the agency<sup>100</sup>. Despite belonging to a small political group like other populist parties, 13 of their amendments,<sup>101</sup> mainly on human

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<sup>88</sup> Am. 125, 140 189, 222, 260, 271, 282, 296, 313, 338, 340 701 702 901 118 213 347, 403, 439, 550, 581, 586, 592, 601, 607, 612, 617, 627, 640, 723, 807, 833, 882, 900, 920, 923, 936, 999, 1076, 1108 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d)

<sup>89</sup> Am. 292, 590, 936 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d)

<sup>90</sup> Am. 223, 236, 342, 348, 415, 432, 448, 596, 723, 890, 895, 941, 976, 997, 1008, 1010, 1020, 1023, 1050, 1079, 1084, 1087. 1090, 1102, 1110, 1114, 1120, 1124, 1128, 1135, 1136, 1143, 1146, 1149, 1155 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d; 2016e)

<sup>91</sup> Am. 125, 699, 700 (EP 2016a;2016d)

<sup>92</sup> Am. 327, 328, 412, 425, 525, 474, 482, 605, 615, 640, 655, 860, 924, 928, 929, 984(EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d; 2016e)

<sup>93</sup> Am. 299, 307, 385, 386, 349, 376. 665 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d)

<sup>94</sup> Am. 1008, 1010, 1020, 1023, 1050. 1102 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d; 2016e)

<sup>95</sup> Am. 161, 390, 396, 410, 727, 767, 875, 901, 943, 1011, 1013, 1034, 1082, 1100, 1166 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d)

<sup>96</sup> Am. 240, 273, 311, 388, 402, 443, 456, 501, 506, 556, 585, 591, 610, 620, 625, 630, 631, 632, 719, 725, 746. 802 812 874 878 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016d)

<sup>97</sup> Am 125, 631, 632 (EP 2016a; 2016d)

<sup>98</sup> Am 298 EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d)

<sup>99</sup> Am339, 365, 436, 719, 768, 821, 825 (EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016c)

<sup>100</sup> Am 284, 530, 539, 752. 763(EP 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d)

<sup>101</sup> E.g. Am. 240, 273, 284, 298, 303, 708, 719

rights, were incorporated in the text agreed at committee level, and 9 in the final text. Again, the difference might be that their amendments were better aligned to those of other party groups.

### 2.3 The Situation in the Mediterranean resolution

Unlike the other two legislative processes, the *Situation in the Mediterranean* was a resolution, a text recounting the collective position of the parliament and making policy proposals to other EU institutions (Oğuz 2020) and not an agreed position on proposed new legislation. Therefore, the amendments and debates covered a wider range of migration policy issues than the other two texts. While more amendments were submitted than in the other two processes, far fewer were adopted (Table 5). To a large extent, the text of the committee already included a range of positions that reflected the policy preferences of mainstream political groups, such as support for stronger measures for guarding the external borders and Europeanised policies of asylum and relocation.

**Table 5: Success of amendments – the Situation in the Mediterranean resolution**

| Party   | Amendments submitted | Amendments adopted <sup>102</sup> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b><i>Radical right-wing populist parties</i></b> |                      |                                   |
| <i>Fidesz with EPP MEPs</i>                       | 45                   | 1                                 |
| <i>Fidesz with EPP and ECR MEPs</i>               | 8                    | 0                                 |
| <i>Law and Justice</i>                            | 30                   | 0                                 |
| <i>Lega Nord</i>                                  | 23                   | 0                                 |
| <i>OLANO with ECR MEPs</i>                        | 23                   | 0                                 |
| <b><i>Anti-establishment populist parties</i></b> |                      |                                   |
| ANO   | 1                    | 0                                 |
| ANO with ALDE MEPs                                | 30                   | 7                                 |

<sup>102</sup> Unlike in the previous two legislative processes, the text adopted at the Committee level was the same as the final text.

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| M5S   | 45  | 1  |
| <b>Radical left-wing populist parties</b>                 |     |    |
| <i>Left Front Initiative with GUE/NGL</i>                 | 1   | 0  |
| <i>SYRIZA with Left Front Initiative and GUE/NGL MEPs</i> | 110 | 8  |
| <i>SYRIZA with GUE/NGL MEPs</i>                           | 57  | 2  |
| <b>Political groups</b>                                   |     |    |
| ALDE  | 39  | 3  |
| ECR   | 147 | 0  |
| EFDD  | 49  | 0  |
| ENF   | 13  | 0  |
| EPP   | 266 | 12 |
| Greens  | 94  | 6  |
| GUE/NGL   | 56  | 2  |
| S&D   | 150 | 8  |
| Jointly submitted amendments                              | 16  | 8  |

Furthermore, amendments on children and unaccompanied minors submitted jointly by political groups were by far the most successful, with half of them being incorporated in the resolution text (Table 5).

Four of the selected radical right-wing parties submitted amendments: PiS, OLANO with other MEPs of the ECR group, LN and Fidesz. Amendments proposed by PiS, OLANO and LN opposed harmonised policies and solidarity measures<sup>103</sup>, including relocation and resettlement,<sup>104</sup> rejected calls in the initial text of the resolution to reform the Dublin regulation<sup>105</sup> and pushed for member states to retain control of migration

<sup>103</sup> Am, 87, 511, 613, 841, 944 (EP 2016g; EP2015h; EP 2016i)

<sup>104</sup> Am. 347, 356, 365, 381, 406, 419 455, 465, 490, 563, 944, 1236 (EP 2016g; EP2015h; EP 2016i; EP 2016j)

<sup>105</sup> Am, 206, 589, 591 (EP 2016g; 2016h)



policies<sup>106</sup>. Some amendments call for solidarity to be linked to responsibility and for sanctions for member states that fail to implement adequate controls.<sup>107</sup> However, LN amendments refer to failures of relocation and solidarity<sup>108</sup> and do not oppose relocation or Dublin reform as a measure,<sup>109</sup> suggesting differences in the perception of national interests in Eastern European countries and Italy. A PiS MEP, K. M. Ujazdowski, similarly submitted an amendment referring to an increase of refugees from Ukraine,<sup>110</sup> an issue specific to Poland.

Amendments submitted by the PiS, OLANO and LN MEPs also expressed support for reinforced border controls,<sup>111</sup> and in particular combatting smuggling and trafficking,<sup>112</sup> return<sup>113</sup> as well as externalised policies intended to prevent migratory movements to Europe<sup>114</sup>. Such proposals are accompanied by amendments which depict migratory phenomena as linked to crime and terrorism<sup>115</sup> and threatening to the economy and demography of European countries.<sup>116</sup> Amendments submitted by PiS also touched on the persecution and insecurity of Christian populations, reinforcing in this manner the emphasis on religion as a point of difference from migrant populations<sup>117</sup>. Other amendments oppose strengthening access to asylum, human rights safeguards, and refugee rights<sup>118</sup> and oppose sea rescue<sup>119</sup> and evoke ‘undeservingness’, claiming that refugees are in fact economic migrants and willing participants to criminal activities such as smuggling<sup>120</sup>. None of these amendments were adopted (EP 2016k; 2016l).

Amendments by other ECR, ENF & EFDD MEPs are by and large in a similar vein to those submitted by MEPs of the selected parties, calling for stricter and expanded

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<sup>106</sup> Am, 488, 502, 834 (EP 2016h; 2016i),

<sup>107</sup> Am. 214, 395, 629(EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i),

<sup>108</sup> Am, 213, 351, 367(EP 2016g; 2016h),

<sup>109</sup> Am. 403, 543 (EP 2016h),

<sup>110</sup> Am. 67 (EP 2016g),

<sup>111</sup> Am. 136, 200, 858 (EP 2016h; 2016i),

<sup>112</sup> Am. 115, 270, 296; 306, 322, 346 (EP 2016g; 2016h),

<sup>113</sup> Am. 388, 738 (EP 2016h; 2016i),

<sup>114</sup> Am. 657, 993, 1021, 1047, 1081, 1131, (EP 2016h; 2016i; 2016j),

<sup>115</sup> Am. 702, 971, 1074 (EP 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>116</sup> Am. 1155,1158,1152 (EP 2016g; 2016j)

<sup>117</sup> Am. 31, 203, 204, 205, 1230 (EP 2016g; 2016j)

<sup>118</sup> Am. 736 (EP 2016i)

<sup>119</sup> Am. 263, 311, 862 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>120</sup> Am. 957(EP 2016g; 2016j)

control policies<sup>121</sup>, opposing common policies and privileging the national level<sup>122</sup> - although also penalising member states for control failures,<sup>123</sup> combatting smuggling,<sup>124</sup> opposing relocation and solidarity,<sup>125</sup> constructing migration and migrants as threatening to the security and economic wellbeing of European societies<sup>126</sup>, undeserving of protection and complicit to smuggling,<sup>127</sup> opposing the expansion of asylum and refugee rights<sup>128</sup> and sea rescue,<sup>129</sup> to the point of asking for the criminalisation of Search and Rescue [SAR] NGOs,<sup>130</sup> a policy criminalising solidarity that was implemented by several governments across Europe in the following years (Casumano and Villa 2021; Dadusc and Mudu 2020; P. Schack and Witcher 2021). Some of these amendments employ extreme language (e.g. ‘jihadists’<sup>131</sup>) or propose measures that would violate EU law, such as pushbacks and returns without due process.<sup>132</sup> As with the selected populist parties, none of these amendments were incorporated into the final text of the resolution (EP 2016k; 2016l).

Fidezs, represented by K. Gál, submitted amendments with a wider group of EPP MEPs from predominantly Eastern European parties, which submitted 45 amendments and a further 8 which included an ECR MEP. In contrast to the other selected radical right-wing parties, their amendments betray less hostility to relocation and resettlement although these measures are accepted only as a temporary and voluntary, with member states retaining control.<sup>133</sup> They supported an expanded notion of solidarity involving a range of measures in addition to relocation,<sup>134</sup> but exclude SAR as an expression of solidarity, sought to de-link it from solidarity, link it to border controls and weaken

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<sup>121</sup> Am. 33, 41, 99, 111, 121, 122, 159, 461, 452, 457, 496, 526, 582, 588, 715, 739, 741, 755, 770, 784, 801, 832, 876 877, 873, 883 1006, 1046, 1191, 1183, 1201, 1233, 1236, 1238 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>122</sup> Am. 189, 218 368 416 471, 483, 489, 498,512,521, 611, 626, 781, 813, 1133, 1136,1145 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>123</sup> Am. 392 545, 552, 557, 587,544, 585, 599, 888, 897, 897,1132, (EP 2016h; 2016j; 2016j)

<sup>124</sup> 99, 101 231; 275; 282; 284, 300, 304, 331, 974, 985 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>125</sup> Am. 82 84, 86; 215; 221 357, 361, 363, 375, 378, 385, 402, 411, 421, 427, 436, 444, 459, 461, 472, 483, 568, 570, 580, 647, 685, 852 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>126</sup> Am. 42-3; 60, 177, 690, 180; 184; 1167, (EP 2016g; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>127</sup> Am. 61, 64, 68, 114; 135, 144, 455, 588, 637, 1083, 1051 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016j)

<sup>128</sup> Am. 422, 690, 671, 637, 639, 649, 658, 672, 703, 704, 707(EP 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>129</sup> Am. 80, 245; 253 255, 229, 249, 309, 312, 314, 479(EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>130</sup> Am. 262 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>131</sup> Am 883 (EP 2016i)

<sup>132</sup> Am 782, 784, 877. (EP 2016i)

<sup>133</sup> Am. 349, 370, 383, 412, 433, 443, 456, 468, 473, 567, 1480 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>134</sup> Am. 85 (EP 2016g)

provisions for permanent, proactive mechanisms.<sup>135</sup> Similarly to other parties discussed previously, they also oppose the reform of the Dublin regulation, designating its implementation as the key problem<sup>136</sup> and a weaker role for EU institutions in asylum and migration policies<sup>137</sup>, also illustrated by amendments to remove references to a range of EP working documents on shared EU policies on asylum smuggling, Frontex, resettlement and gender equality<sup>138</sup>. Like ECR/EFDD/ENF, they support intensified border controls, including further militarisation, and deportations, including Europeanised ones not least as a way to maintain public support,<sup>139</sup> and limiting access to asylum and human rights<sup>140</sup>, as well as stressing the responsibilities of asylum seekers<sup>141</sup>. While they avoid the overt criminalisation and securitisation present in the amendments of the selected populist parties and right-wing political groups, they also designate migration as a threat, in particular to the economy, while dismissing clauses invoking the contribution of migration in these domains.<sup>142</sup> Just one of these amendments<sup>143</sup>, referring to the obligations of refugees, was partially incorporated in the final text.

Amendments submitted by other EPP MEPs sometimes reflected contradictory positions. For example, some saw SAR as an obligation<sup>144</sup> and noted EU failures in this area<sup>145</sup> while others, like the group of MEPs Fidesz was involved in, disengage it from definitions of solidarity<sup>146</sup>. Some support that MS retain powers and oppose the further Europeanisation of policies and capacities, for example in border controls, humanitarian admission and labour migration<sup>147</sup> although others support cooperation with EU agencies and Europeanised controls<sup>148</sup> regret insufficient implementation of common policies (837, 842) as well as the penalisation of MS (usually with external

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<sup>135</sup> Am 81, 233 (EP 2016g)

<sup>136</sup> Am. 549, 590 (EP 2016h)

<sup>137</sup> Am. 36, 188, 195, 517, 584, 614, 713, 1180 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>138</sup> Am. 49-55 (EP 2016g)

<sup>139</sup> Am. 124, 233, 317, 335, 875, 901, 742, 748, 745 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>140</sup> Am. 131, 964, 1080 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>141</sup> Am. 641, 652 (EP 2016i)

<sup>142</sup> Am. 63, 688, 1154, 1161, 1190 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>143</sup> Am. 641 (EP 2016i)

<sup>144</sup> Am. 238, 259 (EP 2016g)

<sup>145</sup> Am. 857 (EP 2016i)

<sup>146</sup> Am. 237, 244, 256 (EP 2016g)

<sup>147</sup> Am. 185, 156, 486, 614, 616, 713, 818, 865, 692, 1170, 1184, 1206, 1233 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>148</sup> Am. 286, 340, 343, 344, 848, 893, 895, 928 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

borders) which do not fully implement common policies<sup>149</sup>. Likewise, EPP MEPs from Bulgaria called for the overhaul of the Dublin system<sup>150</sup>, while others do not, even if there's some acknowledgement of its failures<sup>151</sup>. Further, while proposed amendments, predominantly joint with other political groups, stress the right of children and women<sup>152</sup>, others limit access to asylum and human rights<sup>153</sup> even calling for the revision of the Geneva convention<sup>154</sup>. One of them goes as far as requesting the suspension of asylum applications in emergency circumstances of high arrivals<sup>155</sup>. Other amendments are similar to those Fidesz was involved. For example, they also supported relocation and resettlement as voluntary and temporary measures, taking into account the preferences of member states (but not of asylum seekers)<sup>156</sup>, although some oppose it more strongly<sup>157</sup>. Solidarity is similarly perceived as voluntary and extended to encompass shared responsibilities in border control<sup>158</sup>. EPP MEPs are strongly in favour of reinforcing border controls<sup>159</sup> which they prioritise over sea rescue<sup>160</sup> combatting smuggling<sup>161</sup>, the hotspot approach<sup>162</sup> returns<sup>163</sup>, and externalised control measures, including keeping refugees close to their countries of origin and outside the EU<sup>164</sup>. While not overtly hostile to migration, they also highlight security threats<sup>165</sup> and the 'deservingness' of migrants<sup>166</sup>. Some amendments are close to the policy positions of the selected and other parties in the ECR/EFDD/ENF groups, highlighting threats to

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<sup>149</sup> Am. 1039 (EP 2016j)

<sup>150</sup> Am 561 (EP 2016h)

<sup>151</sup> Am. 209 (EP 2016g)

<sup>152</sup> Am. 28, 32, 37, 70, 105, 153, 280, 281, 259, 279, 291, 431, 705, 722 – 727, 769, 773, 1030 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>153</sup> Am. 39, 187, 648 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>154</sup> 510 (EP 2016h)

<sup>155</sup> Am. 397 (EP 2016h)

<sup>156</sup> Am. 354, 359, 367, 377, 408, 413, 435,450, 458, 469, 498,470, 495, 560, 572, 955 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>157</sup> Am. 364, 417 (EP 2016h)

<sup>158</sup> Am. 88, 217, 219, 220, 870 (EP 2016g; 2016j)

<sup>159</sup> Am. 127, 128, 292, 342, 479, 526, 786, 792, 806, 864, 902, 921, 922, 965, 950, 951 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>160</sup> Am. 310 (EP 2016g)

<sup>161</sup> Am. 286, 290, 303, 323, 324, 340, 344 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>162</sup> Am. 946, 956, 965 (EP 2016i)

<sup>163</sup> Am. 89, 740, 743, 744, 747, 749, 763, 758, 766, 770. 775, 789 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016j)

<sup>164</sup> Am 149, 165, 212, 452, 474, 500, 576, 775, 967, 1020, 1036, 1038, 1040, 1055, 1076 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>165</sup> Am. 58, 62, 100, 106, 172, 277, 303 (EP 2016g)

<sup>166</sup> Am. 575, 757, 760, 766 (EP 2016h; 2016i)

EU identities and values and demand migrants' respect and compliance with them<sup>167</sup>. Therefore, as in the case of the other two legislative processes, the positions of EPP MEPs vary in terms of how restrictive and Europeanised policies should be. 12 amendments by EPP MEPs,<sup>168</sup> four concerning the re-ordering of citations and other on conditions in countries of origin, deaths in the Mediterranean, slow relocation processes, provisions for children and vulnerable people, integration and hotspots, were incorporated partly or fully into the final text (EP2016l).

Just one MEP from the populist parties in the ALDE group, P. Jezek from ANO, participated in the amendments process. He submitted one amendment on his own, on the commission considering activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, which was not adopted.<sup>169</sup> The rest of the amendments in which he is named were submitted by the wider ALDE group. Some of them were geared towards supporting Europeanised control measures – border controls,<sup>170</sup> including the participation of non-Schengen states,<sup>171</sup> combatting smuggling,<sup>172</sup> return<sup>173</sup> and externalised controls<sup>174</sup> to prevent departures to Europe. Several amendments concern facilitating integration<sup>175</sup> while others aim at safeguarding human rights<sup>176</sup> and enhancing budgetary oversight<sup>177</sup>. 7 out of 23 amendments, one each on children's rights, return, Schengen states' participation, budgetary oversight and three on integration, were fully or partially adopted. In addition, several amendments by the ALDE core group excluding P. Jezek concerned strengthening human rights safeguards and accountability,<sup>178</sup> opposed the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance in the Facilitation Directive<sup>179</sup> and called for ensuring legal routes<sup>180</sup>. Three amendments, on the non-criminalisation of humanitarian assistance and Europeanised responses to returns and the shortcomings of

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<sup>167</sup> Am 267, 640, 651, 691, 699 (EP 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>168</sup> Am. 20, 23, 37, 38, 66, 69, 93, 400, 507, 648, 950, 951 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>169</sup> Am. 635 (EP 2016h)

<sup>170</sup> Am. 885, 931, 934, 941, 1120 (EP 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>171</sup> Am. 871

<sup>172</sup> Am. 294 (EP 2016g)

<sup>173</sup> Am. 746, 762 (EP 2016i)

<sup>174</sup> Am. 762, 1073, 1106, 1110 (EP 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>175</sup> Am. 659 - 663

<sup>176</sup> Am. 278, 780, 962 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>177</sup> Am. 1120, 1121, 1134, 1135 (EP 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>178</sup> Am. 774, 874 (EP 2016i)

<sup>179</sup> Am. 102, 1094 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>180</sup> Am. 113, 504 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

the Dublin Regulation, were successful (EP 2016k). They are in favour of strengthening EU level responses<sup>181</sup>, although they acknowledge pressures on external member states and within the Dublin System<sup>182</sup>, and adopt a concept of solidarity that involves regional and local levels of governance<sup>183</sup>. Amendments submitted by other ALDE MEPs – such as P. Nart of the Spanish *Citizens – Party of the Citizenry* and a group of MEPs of the *Finnish Centre Party* – were closer to EPP or even ECR/EFDD/ENF proposals, for example preventing entry by keeping refugees in countries of origin and transit,<sup>184</sup> citing their obligations,<sup>185</sup> solidarity and relocation being voluntary,<sup>186</sup> MS maintaining powers in border control over Frontex,<sup>187</sup> opposing the revision of the Facilitation Directive<sup>188</sup> and a common system for asylum applications,<sup>189</sup> and screening and refusal of entry at the external borders.<sup>190</sup> None of these amendments were adopted.

Radical left-wing populist parties were again heavily involved in the legislative process. While the LFI representative, C.M. Vergiat submitted only one amendment with other GUE/NGL MEPs, she and K. Chrysogonos of SYRIZA together with other members of the group submitted 110, and SYRIZA with GUE/NGL a further 57. Their amendments focused predominantly on strengthening human rights provisions and safeguards, including in externalised policies and in the labour market<sup>191</sup>. They included references to international and EU law, EU policy papers, but also to reports, recommendations and studies by human rights bodies such as FRA and OHCHR<sup>192</sup> (this is also evident in amendments submitted by the Greens group).<sup>193</sup> While they supported common standards aiming at improving access to protection<sup>194</sup>, they were critical of

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<sup>181</sup> Am. 90,211, 519 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>182</sup> Am. 90, 519, 555, 547, 594 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>183</sup> Am. 91 (EP 2016g)

<sup>184</sup> Am. 150 (EP 2016g)

<sup>185</sup> Am. 126 (EP 2016g)

<sup>186</sup> Am. 83, 350, 360 (EP 2016g)

<sup>187</sup> Am 872 (EP 2016i)

<sup>188</sup> Am. 978 (EP 2016i)

<sup>189</sup> Am. 586 (EP 2016h)

<sup>190</sup> Am. 733, 734 (EP 2016i)

<sup>191</sup> Am. 65, 77, 119,123, 227, 228, 325,326, 362, 380, 536-538,577, 604-607, 621, 708, 712, 765, 799, 808,809, 827, 881, 882, 911, 932, 937, 939, 945, 976, 911, 932, 937, 939, 945, 976, 991, 1002, 1008, 1034, 1041, 1042, 1123, 1194, 1121, 1224, 1125 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>192</sup> Am. 5, 6, 7,8, 9, 10 11, 17, 74, 94-96, 173, 1000 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>193</sup> Am. 27, 29,30, 47, 57 (EP 2016g)

<sup>194</sup> Am. 123, 375, 514, 533, 539, 665, 847, 1002, 1019 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

common policies on controls that limit access to asylum, return, detention and the hotspot approach<sup>195</sup>, as well as of the Dublin Regulation, acknowledging burdens posed on member states with external borders.<sup>196</sup> They also called for strengthening SAR provisions, highlighting the failures of Frontex and opposing the role of military navy,<sup>197</sup> and ensuring legal routes into the EU as a way to combat smuggling and border deaths.<sup>198</sup> In contrast to other political groups, GUE/NGL amendments proposed an understanding of solidarity as centred on asylum seekers rather than states, taking into account their preferences in relocation and resettlement and safeguarding their rights in the process<sup>199</sup>. They also support the greater involvement of civil society in all aspects of policy<sup>200</sup> and opposed the criminalisation of NGOs for SAR activities.<sup>201</sup> Equally, they ask for greater transparency<sup>202</sup> and acknowledge the labour demographic needs for migration.<sup>203</sup> Despite the high number of amendments, just 8 of those submitted by the LFI, SYRIZA, and GUE/NGL MEPs were adopted, including three proposals to introduce citations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a Commission document on External Action and an IOM project, one each on climate change and budgetary accountability, and three on human rights safeguards<sup>204</sup>. A further two amendments submitted by SYRIZA and GUE/NGL MEPs, one on inserting a legal definition of children and a reference to burdens placed on states with external borders, were also successful.<sup>205</sup> Excluding the selected populist parties, GUE/NGL MEPs submitted a further 99 amendments. While many were similar to those submitted by the ‘core’ GUE/NGL in which SYRIZA and LFI participated<sup>206</sup> and one of these, on unaccompanied minors, was successful<sup>207</sup> others were more critical of EU police and made more radical proposals. Amendments submitted by Spanish MP J. Pimenta Lopes were more critical of failures of solidarity, such as in relation to relocation as well as

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<sup>195</sup> Am. 529, 597, 737, 751, 887, 913, 919, 944, 999, 1024, 1057, (EP 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>196</sup> Am. 395, 550, 569 (EP 2016h)

<sup>197</sup> Am. 94, 95, 96, 239, 297, 246, 261, 305, 318, 857 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>198</sup> Am. 143, 246, 306, 493, 501, 907 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>199</sup> Am. 92, 379, 380, 418, 426, 427, 438, 439, 482, 578, 603, 608, 907 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>200</sup> Am. 97, 193, 345, 850, 1061, 1103, 1148, 1160 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>201</sup> Am. 264, 984, (EP 2016g; 2016j)

<sup>202</sup> Am. 366, 1042, 1105, 1119, 1122, 1123, 1129 (EP 2016g; 2016j)

<sup>203</sup> Am. 868, 898 (EP 2016i)

<sup>204</sup> Am 8, 12, 17, 534, 538, 809, 1068, 1139 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>205</sup> Am. 77, 358 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>206</sup> Am. 166, 287, 423, 720, 721 (EP2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>207</sup> Am. 720

resettlement policies,<sup>208</sup> calling for unconditional granting of protection instead,<sup>209</sup> the abolition rather than reform of the Dublin system<sup>210</sup>, and rejected policies of control, and in particular the militarisation of border controls<sup>211</sup> and at the same time common European policies<sup>212</sup>. None of these amendments were successful.

To an extent, the amendments submitted by the M5S MEPs also supported that MS states maintain powers in some aspects of asylum police such as separate safe third country lists<sup>213</sup> but also supported harmonisation of Common European Asylum System [CEAS]<sup>214</sup> and a binding, permanent relocation mechanism<sup>215</sup> and criticised the Dublin system<sup>216</sup>. Other amendments are similar to those submitted by the GUE/NGL group, supporting human rights<sup>217</sup>, search and rescue<sup>218</sup> and legal routes<sup>219</sup> and opposing the criminalisation and militarisation of SAR activities<sup>220</sup>. Several amendments addressed root causes through development aid aimed at improving socioeconomic conditions and asylum systems in countries of origin<sup>221</sup>. Just one of these,<sup>222</sup> supporting the revision of the Dublin system, was adopted.

Amendments submitted by the S&D group are similar to those of the GUE/NGL group in that they also safeguarding human rights<sup>223</sup>, support legal routes<sup>224</sup> SAR<sup>225</sup> and facilitating integration<sup>226</sup>. They are however more supportive of Europeanised asylum and control policies, including return and hotspots<sup>227</sup>, and unlike GUE/NGL they do

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<sup>208</sup> Am.353, 366, 382, 407, 454, 562 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>209</sup> AM. 225, 466, 494

<sup>210</sup> Am. 542, 588, 716 (EP 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>211</sup> Am. 236, 528, 556, 794, 796, 811, 820, 886, 896, 908, 929 (EP 2016h; 2016)

<sup>212</sup> Am. 863, 840, 843, 856, 867, 912 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>213</sup> Am. 810, 911 (EP 2016i)

<sup>214</sup> Am. 338,523, 892 (EP 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>215</sup> Am. 371, 409 (EP 2016h)

<sup>216</sup> Am. 513, 600 (EP 2016h)

<sup>217</sup> Am 369, 428, 722, 825, 861, 869, 899 (EP 2016h; 2016i)

<sup>218</sup> Am 250 (EP 2016g)

<sup>219</sup> Am 145, 503 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>220</sup> Am. 265, 298 (EP 2016g)

<sup>221</sup> Am. 998, 1005,1011, 1085, 1101, 1107, 1224 (EP 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>222</sup> Am. 513

<sup>223</sup> Am. 44, 125, 148, 151, 154, 167, 201, 230, 387, 440, 441, 719, 771, 788, 790, 800, 822, 817, 821, 917, 935, 977, 1089, 1216 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>224</sup> Am. 104, 152, 230, 241, 293, 332, 478, 487 (EP 2016g; 2016h)

<sup>225</sup> Am. 147, 252, 260, 320, 266, 983 (EP 2016g; 2016i)

<sup>226</sup> Am. 644, 646, 655, 656, 667, 668, 669, 673, 681, 683, 687, 695, 697 (EP 2016i)

<sup>227</sup> Am. 158, 334, 337, 515, 531, 759, 767, 771, 595, 942, 952 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i)



not object to SAR operations involving military actors<sup>228</sup>. Safeguarding asylum and human rights and sea rescue is also the focus of amendments submitted by the Greens<sup>229</sup>, who similarly to the GEU/NGL and S&D groups are critical of the absence of legal routes, the effects of prioritising controls on access to protection, the Dublin system<sup>230</sup> and supportive of legal routes, strong integration policies, civil society engagement, and of solidarity and permanent relocation mechanisms that acknowledge the preferences of asylum seekers<sup>231</sup>. 8 amendments by the S&D group<sup>232</sup>, including references to the European Migrant Smuggling Centre of Europol and the Union Civil protection mechanism, humanitarian visas, the Dublin system, solidarity, integration, Frontex accountability and tackling labour exploitation, were fully or partially adopted in the final text. The Greens had 6 amendments, a proposal to include a citation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, references to climate change and UNHCR resettlement data, humanitarian admission, integration and safeguards on detention, that were fully or partially adopted.

### **3 Discourses and policy preferences**

One commonality among all political groups is that narratives of ‘crisis’ are largely shared both by actors classified as populist, including the selected parties and by seen as mainstream (2015d; 2015e; 2016m; 2016n;2016o;2016n). The narrative of a migration or refugee ‘crisis’, a dominant one across the EU since 2015 (Jeandesboz and Pallister-Wilkins 2016) is a context within which the debates on the three proposals take place. Beyond this general frame, the selected populist parties employ a range of constructions and policy preferences.

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<sup>228</sup> Am. 247, 302 (EP 2016g)

<sup>229</sup> Am. 110, 254, 269, 288, 301, 319, 532, 642, 706, 714, 729, 731, 745, 824, 838, 910, 940 1015 1121, 1222 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>230</sup> Am. 138, 139, 208, 592, 619, 753, 761, 779, 785, 816, 829, 969, 989, 1022, 1044, 1045 (EP 2016g; 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>231</sup> Am. 425, 434, 451, 484, 492, 508, 509, 546, 601, 653, 654, 689, 855, 970, 1118(EP 2016h; 2016i; 2016j)

<sup>232</sup> Am, 35,260, 398,505, 551, 650, 864, 1218

### 3.1 Radical right-wing populist parties

Support for controlling migration and borders is a dominant discursive theme among the MEPs of the selected radical right-wing populist parties in all three legislative processes (e.g. K. Gál, K. M. Ujazdowski, PiS EP 2016m; L.Aliot, FN, T.Aker, UKIP, A. Bocskor, Fidesz, EP 2016n; N. Bay, FN, B. Škripek, OLANO, K. M. Ujazdowski, PiS, K. Gál, Fidesz, G. Batten, UKIP EP 2016o; J. Girling EP 2016p; B. von Storch AfD, B. Gollnisch FN 2015d M. Troszczynski, M. Le Pen, S. Goddyn FN, J. Wiśniewska PiS EP 2015e;).

Parliament should clearly define to whom Europe's doors are open, that is, firstly, to refugees in danger of their lives from areas of fighting and, secondly, to ensure, in cooperation with all Member States, that external borders are controlled. (B. Škripek, EP2016o)

We need to strengthen and protect our external borders. That is why I consider it important that, after several months of inactivity, decisive action has been taken to alleviate the pressure on immigrants on the Western Balkans route. We need to stop the uncontrolled entry of hundreds of thousands into the territory of the Union, as we have all seen recently how serious the security risks are (K.Gal 2016o)

Even if some MEPs adopt humanitarian narratives, expressing concern for legislation encouraging ‘perilous journeys’, these need to be addressed through control policies, including combatting smuggling and trafficking (e.g. B.Skripek, M. D’Ornano, EP 2016o; N. Bay, F. Philippot, FN, J. Arnott, UKIP, EP 2016p; J. Arnott, J. Carver, UKIP, S. Goddyn, 2015e; B Etheridge, UKIP 2015e). Beyond controls at the external border, one policy preference that emerges from the *Situation in the Mediterranean* debate is keeping refugees outside the European Union (K. Gál EP 2016o; M. Borghezio, LN, B. von Storch 2015e), showing support for externalised migration policies. Further, some FN members specifically ask for an ‘Australian solution’ - which involves refusal of entry and extraterritorial detention and processing - of preventing all unauthorised migration into the EU (S. Goddyn, J.-F. Jalkh, M. Le Pen, F. Philippot 2016n; S. Woolfe UKIP, EP 2016p). While there is consensus on controlling the migration and borders as a policy priority, FN and UKIP in particular are also opposed to the abolition of internal border controls in the Schengen area of free movement, in particular among MEPs of FN and UKIP who consider it responsible for secondary movements within

the European Union (e.g. L.Aliot, M-C. Arnautu, M. Le Pen, FN EP 2016m; N. Bay, FN 2016o; S. Woolfe, G. Batten, J. Seymour UKIP, EP 2016p).

Radical right-wing populist parties on the whole reject EU policies on migration. One key argument is that EU policies fail to control migration (e.g. K. Gál EP 2016m; N. Bay, EP 2016o; E. Czesak, K. Złotowski, PiS, B. Škripek, OLANO, R. Paksas, TT, EP 2016p;) opting for overtly ‘open’ migration policy (V. Maeijer, FP, B. Škripek, OLANO, EP 2015d B. Etheridge, Steven Woolfe, UKIP EP 2015e; N. Bay, FN, G. Batten, UKIP, M. Jurek, PiS 2016o) and thus endanger the security of European countries:

All you are proposing is to create more opportunities to come to the European Union. Holistic, in the sense of all-encompassing, you are taking it very literally by inviting the whole world to come here. Not a single proposal to end asylum inflation, nothing about IS terrorists travelling with asylum seekers to cause death and destruction (V. Maeijer, FP, EP 2016o).

The above quotation exemplifies two discursive themes employed by radical right-wing parties. EU migration policy has been long predicated in various forms of control of movement at the borders of Europe and beyond and within its territory (De Genova 2017; Karamanidou, Kasperek and Hess 2020; Mezzandra and Neilson 2013). Yet, radical right-wing parties depict such policies as failed, invoking the intensity of movement and perceptions of threat. Similarly, relocation is opposed because would act as a ‘pull factor’, encouraging more people to enter EU countries in an unauthorised manner (S. Woolfe, J. Arnott, UKIP, S. Goddyn EP 2015e). Such views are shared among the wider ECR, ENF and EFDD (with the exception of M5S) political groups (e.g. H. Stevens, 2016o; D. Dalton, J. Girling EP 2016p; G. Mayer, 2016n; U. Trebesius, R. Sulik 2015e). In a similar vein, it was argued that relocation would encourage movement to MS with better social provisions, as refugees would not wish to stay in MS they did not chose (Fidesz 2015e). For similar reasons, MEPs from the selected populist parties opposed proposals in the Situation in the Mediterranean resolution which expressed support for more liberal family reunification policies (e.g. N. Bay EP 2016o).

The emphasis placed on controlling migration is underpinned by constructions of migration as a threat. Migration is depicted as a problem (M. D’Ornano, N. Bay, FN, EP 2016o; L. Aliot, S. Briois, FN EP 2016p) and even as an ‘evil’:

Since immigration comes from an evil, which are often wars or poverty, it is clear that good cannot come from evil (L Fontana, EP 2016o)

More specifically, the securitisation of migration relies on perceptions of it as an economic, cultural and security threat. Constructions of economic threat depict migration and migrants as affecting the employment and economic wellbeing of citizens (e.g. I. Gáll-Pelcz, Fidezs, D. Bilde, M. D'Ornano FN, EP 2015e; 2016p; D. James, UKIP, L. Fontana, LN, 2015e; S. Briois, FN, EP 2016p):

These new arrivals, most often motivated by economic reasons, will enter into direct competition with the Europeans that are the most disadvantaged in the field of access to work, to health and to housing. (S Goddyn, FN, 2015e)

The people who will see their wages reduced, their jobs displaced, the poor, the homeless and the people who have no voice in Europe will be the ones who suffer because of the arrogance of people in this Chamber. (S Woolfe, UKIP 2015e)

Radical right-wing populist MEPs invoke threats to European identity (M. D'Ornano, FN, M. Jurek, PiS, 2016o; M. Borghezio, LN 2015e), including to the Christian character of Europe (B. Skripek, OLANO, 2015e; 2016o) and bringing 'social decomposition' (M. Jurek 2016o; also M. D'Ornano 2016p). Muslim populations are constructed as a dangerous Other who are 'are clearly incompatible with our liberal western democracies', explicitly referencing nativist concerns of European populations being 'replaced' (e.g. L. Fontana, LN, 2016o; also V. Maeijer, FP, EP 2016o; S. Goddyn EP 2016p). Elsewhere, cultural threats, associated with Muslim populations, are merged with security ones.

when these people arrive here, a period of integration is needed. I saw that it says that it is a two-way process, no, it is a one-way process, they are the ones who have to integrate with us because otherwise cases like Molenbeek happen. (L. Fontana, LN, 2016o)

That it might be one of the 4,000 terrorists of the Islamic State who came in with those illegal immigrants, is not mentioned and critical questions are out of the question. (V. Maeijer, FP EP 2015e).

Threats to security, especially linked to terrorism – alluded above through the reference to Molenbeek – are specifically cited by several MEPs (e.g. D. James, UKIP, V. Maeijer, FP; B. Škripek OLANO 2015e; J. Carver, 2015e; V. Maeijer EP 2016o; K. Złotowski, PiS, all UKIP MEPs EP 2016p; B. Gosiewska PiS, n. Morano, FN EP

2016n; J. Carver UKIP, EP 2015e). Perceptions of threat are increased through the use of language depicting migration as a natural phenomenon, such as ‘influx’ (all Fidezs) and ‘flow’ (J. Wiśniewska, PiS, D. Bilde, P. Loiseau FN; B. Gosiewska K. M. Ujazdowski, PiS, B. Škripek OLANO EP 2016n; K. M. Ujazdowski, Marek Jurek EP 2016m), and in one extreme instance ‘tsunami’ (N. Bay FN 2015e). A further construction put forward by right wing populist MEPs evolves around deservingness. UKIP MEPs for example claimed that people on the move are not ‘genuinely seeking asylum’ (B Etheridge) or ‘genuine refugees’ (S. Woolfe, B. Etheridge, UKIP L. Fontana LN 2015e) but ‘migrants who have entered European countries illegally’ (D. James, 2015e; also V. Maeijer FP 2015e) or are considered economic migrants (M. Bizzotto LN 2015d). K. Gál of Fidezs similarly stated that ‘only a fraction of the masses heading for Europe are real refugees’ (EP 2016o). MEPs of FN also evoke illegality through the use of the label ‘clandestins’ (‘illegals’) (D. Bilde, S. Briois, M. D’Ornano, S. Goddyn, D. Martin 2015e).

Another key theme in the discourse and policy preferences of radical right parties concerns the tensions between Europeanised policies and national sovereignty. Relocation measures were seen as ‘taking away sovereignty from the nation states’ (B. Etheridge, UKIP) limiting their ability to decide on migration policy at the national level, for example by undermining ‘the right to choose which refugees to accept’ (B. Škripek, OLANO, EP 2015d; also B. Etheridge; S. Woolfe UKIP; M. D’Ornano, E. Ferrand, M. Le Pen FN; B. von Storch, AfD; B. Škripek, OLANO, all Fidesz MEPs J. Wiśniewska, PiS, EP 2015e; B. Etheridge, U. Primdahl Vistisen, EP 2015d).

For radical right-wing populist parties, the participation of member states in relocation should not be mandatory and should take into account specific interests and needs of member states or their citizens (K.M. Ujazdowski, EP 2016o; D James, V. Maeijer 2015e; B. Škripek, S. Briois, EP 2015e). Opposition to measures associated by solidarity and responsibility sharing among MS is evident in other policy areas, such as the Dublin system and the tendency to request penalties for the failures of states with external borders (e.g. K. M. Ujazdowski, M. Jurek PiS, 2016o; L. Aliot, M. Le Pen, FN E. Czesak, K. Złotowski, PiS, B. Škripek, OLANO, S. Woolfe, UKIP, B. von Storch, AfD, EP 2016p).

For similar reasons, some of the selected parties in the EFDD and ENF groups - UKIP, AfD, FN and LN voted against the EBCG regulation because they believed it undermined national sovereignty and the capacity of states to control national borders (EP 2016n).

UKIP principally supports the right for sovereign nations to control their own borders (T. Aker, UKIP EP 2016n)

[...] only sovereign nations are able to manage their borders and that there is no freedom, security or democracy without them (D. Bilde, FN, EP 2016n)

The only smart borders are national borders. (M. D'Ornano, EP 2016o)

The current Frontex is to be replaced by a European Border and Coast Guard. I reject the resulting loss of sovereignty in a core issue, namely the responsibility for securing the borders. (B. von Storch, AfD EP 2016n)

Yet, it should be noted that not all radical right-wing populist parties voted against the EBCG regulation. PiS, Fidezs, and OLANO voted in favour of the EBCG regulation and supported the expansion of Frontex, believing it would contribute to border protection, which is constructed as the unconditional basis for other solidarity efforts (EP 2016m; 2016n).

The extension of Frontex's tasks, powers and mandate will create a European Border and Coast Guard to protect the EU's external borders, whether it be migratory pressures or other unforeseen security threats to international crime. (A. Bocskor EP 2016n)

I support the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard, because I am in favour of rational decisions [...] I completely disagree with those voices on the left and on the left of the European Parliament who say: "they say, 'let us not attach any importance to the protection of external borders, let us open our doors wide to immigration'. I want to say very clearly: only a Europe that is secure can truly show solidarity. If Europe is not capable of security, it will not be able to show solidarity. (K. M. Ujazdowski, PiS, EP 2016m).

Rather than seeing the creation of EBCG a threat to national sovereignty, PiS and Fidesz regard it as a move that 'is not intended to replace the efforts of sovereign states, but to assist them' (K. Ujazdowski, PiS, EP 2016m). A similar consideration of national interests appears to underpin the support of LN for relocation, in contrast to the rest of the selected radical right-wing populist parties.

Two key features of populism can be seen in the discourse of the selected radical right-wing populist parties. First, the articulation of threats reflects the juxtaposition of people - in the form of citizens of their country (e.g. V. Maeijer, 2015e; 2016o), European citizens (B. Škripek, D. James 2015e; S. Woolfe, M. D'Ornano 2015e) or in the case of UKIP, 'taxpayers' (e.g. T. Aker, M. Parker, UKIP, EP 2016n) - and the Other. The interests of citizens, their security, wellbeing migrants and access to social protections and benefits are threatened by the presence of the migrant Other in Europe. In the context of migration, populist MEPs claim the policy preferences of the people they represent – whether nationals or Europeans – are at odds with the policies adopted by the European Union, because European elites are too distant from the 'people':

[...] the majority of the Dutch [...] want to close the border and against taking in more refugees (V. Maeijer, FP, 2015e)

Do you not realise that this is completely against the views of many – certainly of my constituents, but maybe even of yours? The people of the EU are not united behind you on this and you are enforcing something that nobody really wants (B. Etheridge UKIP 2016o).

Another argument is that European elites are more likely to defend the rights of the migrant Other rather than the 'people':

the European institutions are once again showing that they are not acting in the interests of the member states, but in that of illegal immigrants, reclassified as "refugees". This text is obviously harmful for France, whose interests remain my priority (S. Briois, FN, EP2015e).

These are a lot of parliamentarians who supposedly represent the inhabitants of the European Union and who have wasted a lot of time and money on this in recent months. Because the only thing you are proposing is to create more opportunities to come to the European Union. (V. Maeijer, FP, 2016o)

Therefore, the discourses on migration adopted by radical right-wing populist parties on migration in the European Parliament reflect both the use of populist tropes but also key themes also present in national contexts, such as constructions of threat, hostility to migrants and an emphasis on controlling migration (Borriello and Brack 2019; Stojarová, 2018).

### 3.2 Other populist and right-wing populist parties

The discourses on migration and migration policy of parties classified by DEMOS as radical right-wing populist are also to a large extent shared. Constructions of border control (e.g. P. Mach, H. Vilimsky, EP 2016m; H. Stevens, T. Kirkhope, EP 2016n; E. Theocharous, EP 2016p), national sovereignty (e.g. H. Stevens, EP 2016o; J. Girling, J. Starbatty, R. Sulík, J. Žitňanská, R. Zile, P. Mach, EP 2016p), security, socio-economic and cultural threats (K. Winberg, G. von Orden 2015e; H. Stevens R. Tomašić 2016n; J. Halla-aho 2016o A. Gericke EP 2016p) and negative representations of migrants (J. Halla-aho, G. von Orden 2015e; K. Winberg 2016o;) are shared among the ECR, ENF and EFDD groups. They also oppose Europeanised responses based on the principle of solidarity.

I did not support the proposal because I fundamentally do not agree that the current problems with migrants should be addressed by mandatory quotas for their redistribution in the Member States. Quotas only exacerbate the problem of migrants. For a real solution, the EU's southern and eastern external borders need to be thoroughly sealed and central camps in North Africa and the Balkans need to be set up, where all migrants' asylum applications will be assessed individually. (Richard Sulík, ECR, EP 2015e)

In Europe, there can only be room for real refugees, with a maximum ceiling. The reinforced agency will also deal with terrorism detection and prevention. This is important because 17 fighters from the terrorist organization Islamic State entered Europe under the guise of refugees - as we read in the newspaper this week - two of whom blew up in Paris. (H. Stevens, ECR, 2016m)

Some of these parties are classified as radical right-wing or radical right populist elsewhere, such as the True Finns and the Austrian Freedom Party (Heinisch and Hauser 2016; Jungar 2016; Wahlbeck, 2016). Others are seen as mainstream rather than populist, such as the UK Conservative Party (T. Kirkhope, EP 2016n; EP 2016p).

While the majority of the EPP group supported the proposed laws and resolution, their narratives are rather similar to the selected radical right/populist parties. They also prioritise border controls, in particular at the external borders so as to preserve European security and free movement within Schengen, believing, for example, that 'better controls of the external borders are necessary in order to increase internal security' (e.g. P Arimont, EP 2016n; also S. D. Pogliese, A. Cadec, M. Zver, M.



Hohlmeier, B. Matera, T. Zdechovský 2016m; P. Csáky, N. Morano, C. Monteiro de Aguiar, E. Paunova Polčák, P. Rangel, E. Vozenberg-Vrionidi A. Záborská, EP 2016n; A. Pabriks, M. Boni, 2016o; L. Adaktusson, M. Gabriel, F. Gambús, K. Kariņš, M-J. Marinescu, D. Šuica EP 2016p). Therefore, unlike ECR/EFDD/ENF groups, parties within the EPP group support free movement within Schengen. Further the policy preferences and narratives of the EPP group reflect more closely the ‘managing migration’ paradigm (Geiger and Pecoud 2010) which relies both security measures and allowing legal routes and some access to asylum (B. Kudrika, M. Boni, R. Metsola 2016o; B. Collin-Langen, G. La Via, S. Ribeiro, EP 2016p).

Overall, most MEPs of the EPP group support Europeanised border control and asylum policies, including a mandatory relocation system, both as more effective in managing migration, as well as as an expression of both solidarity and common responsibility:

The recent migratory flow has posed several problems for Member States, namely in terms of security and border management. The creation of a Coast and Border Guard tries to respond to this problem, ensuring a rigorous and shared management of the European Union's external borders. (C. Monteiro, EPP, EP2016n).

Further, some MEPs described the EBCG proposal and the *Situation in the Mediterranean* resolution as a response to Euroscepticism and re-nationalisation (E. Panova, F. Ruas, EP 2016n; E. Morin-Chartier, EP 2016p), showing a degree of responsiveness to the policy preferences and discourses of the more Eurosceptic and nationalist groups of ECR, ENF and EFDD (Cristoforetti and Querton 2019). However, other EPP MEPs, mainly from eastern European countries oppose further Europeanisation. Several opposed the relocation proposal, claiming it went beyond ‘the joint agreement of the Member States on a one-off measure’ (M. Šojdrová, EP 2015e) and that relocation measures should be decided by member states rather than at EU level (I Štefanec, P. Svoboda, I. Winkler J. Pospíšil, A. Delahaye, EP 2015e; D. Buda, P. Csáky, K. Kariņš, A. Kozłowska-Rajewicz, L. Niedermayer, A. Pabriks, EP 2016p). In a similar manner another MEP argued that further Europeanising asylum policy was ‘contrary to the principles of the sovereignty of individual nation-states’ and would damage ‘the credibility of European integration in the eyes of the Czech public’, views shared by several EPP MEPs (J. Pospíšil, 2016p; also S. Polčák, B. Hortefeux, A. Pabriks 2016p). Thus, there is less uniformity among the EPP group that suggested in

some research (Cristoforetti and Quenton 2019) but also greater proximity to the positions of populist parties in the more right-wing and Eurosceptic ECR, EFDD and ENF groups.

EPP MEPs also emphasise perceived security threats, including terrorism (S. Polčák, L. Andrikiènè, D. Casa, M. Dantin, C. Monteiro de Aguiar, EP 2016n; M. Zver, H. K. Becker, D. Šuica A. M. Corazza Bildt EP 2016m; A. Cadec, N. Morano, A. Kozłowska-Rajewicz, M. Šojdrová, F. Bogovič, EP 2016p). For example, one MEP referred to ‘the infiltration of terrorists between refugees and migrants’ (M. Zver, EP 2016o). They also use language designating migration akin to a natural disaster (e.g. A. Mussolini 2015e; C. Coelho, B. Collin-Langen, A. Plenković EP 2016p). Constructions of cultural threat are also present and are expressed in relation to policies that are seen as engendering demographic change (e.g. A. Kozłowska-Rajewicz, M.-J. Marinescu, M. Zver EP 2016p).

In a similar manner to radical right-wing populist parties, securitarian narratives co-exist with humanitarian ones. For example, EPP MEPs take into account the preferences and qualifications of asylum seekers and the needs of vulnerable groups (A. M. Corazza Bildt, M. Gabriel, S. Ribeiro EP 2016p). The objective of ‘saving lives’ is sometimes seen as an imperative (e.g. R. Metsola, EP 2016o; M. Petir, T. Saïfi, D. Ivo Stier EP 2016p) that nevertheless coexists with a preference for migration controls and narratives of securitisation. In one extreme case the ‘securitisation/humanitarianism nexus’ is exemplified by the statement of one MEP who argued that

Avoiding the loss of human lives due to the sinking of boats in the Mediterranean Sea is achieved most simply and efficiently by blocking them at gunpoint (Marian-Jean Marinescu EP 2016p)

Statements by EPP MEPS also suggest that they prioritise the security and interests of Europeans over the rights of people crossing borders (G. Mato, N. Melo EP 2016p). Unlike radical right-wing populist parties, however, EPP also acknowledge that human rights and the right to asylum need to be respected (e.g. T. Comodini Cachia, F. Ruas EP 2016n; A. Díaz de Mera García Consuegra, A. Mussolini, T. Zdechovský, EP 2016m; E. Morin-Chartier, F. Gambús, M. Mikolášik, S. Ribeiro, Adam Szejnfel, EP 2016p). However, the deservingness of asylum seekers is also doubted, and it is argued that only ‘genuine’ refugees should be protected (e.g. P. Csáky, K. Kariņš EP 2016p).

However, while there is some overlap with the policy preferences and narratives of the predominantly centre-right EPP group, discursive tropes of radical right-wing populist parties are equally shared by parties such as the Hungarian Jobbik, the Greek Golden Dawn, and the German National Democratic Party which are often characterised as extreme right, neo-Nazi or neofascist (Koronaïou and Sakellariou 2013; Molier and Rijpkema, 2018; Pirro and Róna 2019). Such parties also employ discourses of border control, national sovereignty, and threats to European societies (e.g. K. Morvai, B. Kovács, Jobbik, L. Foundoulis, G. Epitidios, GD, EP 2016n; G.Epitidios GD, U. Voigt, NPD, EP 2016m; N. Synadinos, GD, EP 2016o; U. Voigt B. Kovács, N. Synadinos EP 2016p; Krisztina Morvai, EP 2015e; K. Morvai, L. Foundoulis 2015e).

The policy of mass migration [...] leads to the alteration of the population, the dissolution of social cohesion, and unfortunately islamification, with the consequent creation of jihadi terrorist groups (N. Foundoulis, GD, 2016p)

Migration must be prevented (not "managed"), and the primary focus of a European border regime must be to prevent further immigration (Udo Voigt, National Democratic Party, EP 2016p)

Moreover, some of the tropes associated strongly with populist discourses, such as invoking the will of the people, the juxtaposition of 'the people' with elites and blaming them for migration policies that extreme right parties do not support, demonising the other and juxtaposing with citizens, emerge strongly in the statements of MEPs of these parties:

[...] the intention for Member States to dismantle their own border guards is unacceptable. They should even give up their decision-making competencies. Brexit shows that the majority of EU citizens hardly want to go in this direction. Moreover, fewer and fewer people agree that the influx of unrestrained, predominantly economic refugees should be attracted to and received in Europe (B. Kovács, Jobbik, 2016n).

Your [MEPs] life will not change in any way, no matter how many migrants come to your country (K. Morvai, Jobbik, 2015e).

### 3.3 Anti-establishment parties

The four parties classified as ‘centrist’ populist’ by DEMOS provide interesting cases for the exploration of populist parties typologies and migration.

Two of them (ANO 2011 and LM) belong to the ALDE group, which supports the Europeanisation of migration policies, including in controls of EU external borders, return, common asylum policies and externalised controls (e.g. J. Arthuis; G. Deprez, M. Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, L. Wierinck EP 2016n; C. Wikström A. Mlinar, I. Jakovčić EP 2016m; P. De Backer F. Hyusmenova, Y. Toom EP 2016p). They support policies of control, but also stronger fundamental rights protections, strengthened sea rescue capacities and accountability (A. Mlinar EP 2015e; U. Paet EP 2016n; I. Jakovčić N. Nicolai D. Riquet EP 2016p). To this extend, the ALDE group adopts the humanitarian/securitarian frame, for example linking Frontex operations with search and rescue (I. Bilbao Barandica, R. Tremosa i Balcells, U. Paet EP 2016n; N. Griesbeck, N. Nicolai EP 2016p).

In what concerns border control and security, the policy preferences and discourses of three of the selected anti-establishment populist parties – ANO, LM and TT – are quite similar to those of radical right-wing parties. They supported strengthening controls at the external borders of the EU, which they see as a shared responsibility, as well as other control policies such as returns (D. Charanzová, P. Ježek P. Telička; ANO, P. Auštrevičius, A. Guoga, LM, EP 2016n; P. Auštrevičius, EP 2016o; M. Dlabajová, P. Ježek EP 2016p).

The common external border of the EU should be strengthened and managed effectively and inside the EU the Schengen rules must be obeyed (P. Auštrevičius, LM, EP 2016o).

We should focus on the consistent protection of Schengen's external borders and the systematic collection of information on incoming immigrants (M. Dlabajová, ANO, EP 2016p).

The reference to ‘collection of information on immigrants’ alludes to perceptions of threats posed by migration, both in terms of uncontrolled movements and security, as articulated in the quotes below:

Europe is facing not only the migration crisis and enormous flow of people, but also threats of terrorism and potential hybrid attacks. As these are not burdens of singular states but of the European Union as a whole, we have to respond in the same manner. Also, it is our common responsibility to protect human rights and prevent people from losing their lives in the Mediterranean Sea (D. Charanzová, ANO, EP 2016n).

The EU needs a real common border and coast guard system for our common European borders, otherwise Schengen will remain under pressure. The refugee crisis needs common European solutions and common border management is a key element to put a stop to the chaos at our borders (A. Guoga, LM EP 2016n).

Similar to radical right-wing parties such as Fidesz and PiS, ANO, LM and TT supported a Europeanised response to border control, in the form of the European Border and Coast Guard (D. Charanzová, P. Ježek, P. Telička, ANO, P. Auštrevičius, A. Guoga, LM, R. Paksas, TT, EP 2016n). D. Charanzová's statement also suggests a belief that the humanitarian aim of 'saving lives' should be addressed primarily through border controls, a trope also present in the discourses of radical right-wing populist parties. R. Paksas of TT supported a strengthened European Border and Coast Guard, although he raised concerns regarding the consent of member states and national sovereignty (EP 2016n).

However, the positions of ANO and TT MEPs are rather different on Europeanised policies on other domains. Similarly to radical-right wing parties, they opposed relocation and other proposals for Europeanised policies as infringing on the sovereignty of the member states:

Although this report contained some very sensible measures to tackle the refugee crisis in Europe, I could not support it, as it mentions two fundamental issues that I consider to be completely out of the question on this subject. One of them is the recurring theme of compulsory redistribution of refugees, asylum seekers. I do not consider this measure to be functional. The second point is the proposal for a centrally managed asylum handling point from Brussels [...] I believe that the responsibility for both parts should lie primarily with the Member States (D. Charanzová, EP 2016p)

I do not believe that another permanent Union-wide resettlement program for the EU [...] quotas must be abolished as a failed solution (R. Paksas, EP 2016p)

The reasoning behind the rejection of relocation and other Europeanised policies by ANO and TT is the same as that of most of the radical right-wing parties discussed in

the previous section: the perception that migration policy is a matter of national sovereignty and Europeanised policies infringe on this principle. Further, R. Paksas' reasons for voting against the Situation in the Mediterranean resolution similarly cite failures of EU policies and the prioritisation of border controls:

The European Union does not know what to do with refugees, but the Community's borders remain open to illegal migrants and there is a lack of political will to take decisive action. Instead of preventing this, the EU institutions are only looking for new asylum opportunities. [...] In particular, the EU's external borders need to be closed, there must be no more illegal movements of migrants between the EU's internal borders (EP 2016p).

Advocating for entirely closed borders and opposing the entry of refugees to EU by invoking numbers is at odds with classifying this party as 'weak nativist' since such policy positions are usually linked to seeing migrants as a threat to be stopped at the border, regardless of their claims to protection. In contrast, the two LM MEPs voted in favour of relocation measures as an expression of solidarity and responsibility (EP 2015e; 2016n), aligning themselves with the majority of the ALDE MEPs (e.g. M. Harkin, J.-M. Cavada, L. Michel, EP 2015e; C. Wikström G. Deprez 2015e; R. Tremosa i Balcells EP 2016p).

The positions of M5S MEPs on migration are rather different from the other anti-establishment parties. On the one hand, M5S MEPs voted against the EBCGA proposal because they considered it to undermine the sovereignty of member states (I. Adinolfi, F. Massimo Castaldo, E. Evi, L. Ferrara EP 2016n; I Corrao, EP 2016n).

The old Frontex Agency, now renamed "European Border and Coast Guard Agency", acquires new powers, instrumental to integrated border management to prevent crisis situations. The changes made, however, depict a strategy that strongly undermines the sovereignty of the Member States, almost emptied of their control powers and subject, in the event of failure to implement the recommendations, to a series of sanctions. (I. Adinolfi, M5S, EP 2016n)

M5S MEPs also raised concerns that the proposed regulation, in conjunction with other EU policies such as the Dublin system, would affect countries with external borders turning them into 'a large refugee camp' (I. Corrao, EP 2016m L. Ferrara, EP 2016n), which reflects the experiences of Italy as a country with external borders. Such policy preferences and arguments are in line with the Euroscepticism of the EFDD as a political group and the prioritisation of national interests. The support of M5S for the

relocation proposal could also be interpreted through the lens of prioritisation of national interests. However, M5S MEPs but it is also regarded it as a measure of solidarity (E. Evi, FM Castaldo, M. Zanni, EP 2015e; L. Ferrara 2015d). In the debate on the *Situation in the Mediterranean* resolution, M5S MEPs were highly critical of the lack of solidarity and ‘selfishness’ among MS, as well as of human rights violations engendered by EU policies (I. Corrao, EP 2016p), and were in favour of proposals for the reform of Dublin and strengthening solidarity (I. Adolfini, F. M. Castaldo, L. Ferrara EP 2016p).

Unlike other selected anti-establishment parties, the MEPs of M5S explicitly reference weak human rights and protection-related concerns:

The proposal for a regulation for the establishment of a European border and coast guard has several problematic aspects. These include the excessive interference in the sovereignty of the Member States and the lack of identification of new legal avenues or humanitarian corridors to give the possibility to those who would have the right to arrive safely on the territory of the EU. (F. Castaldo, M5S, EP 2016n; also E.Evi, M5S, EP 2016n;)

Human rights are violated everywhere and, last but not least, this agreement with Turkey (I. Corrao, EP 2016o)

M5S preoccupation with safeguarding refugee protection and human rights, also reflected in the amendments they submitted, differentiates them from other parties in the EFDD group which display a much greater hostility to migration.

### **3.4 Left-wing populist parties**

The positions and discourses of MEPs of the selected three radical left-wing populist parties (LFI, Podemos and SYRIZA) are very different than those classified as radical right-wing or anti-establishment. Their discourses are largely shared among the GUE/NGL group, although there are differences in terms of how they positioned themselves and voted in specific proposals.

MEPs from the selected parties were critical of border and migration control policies. LFI, SYRIZA and Podemos opposed the emphasis on controlling migration inherent in EU policies of border management, return, detention, as well as externalised asylum

and border control policies, (e.g. M. Urbán Crespo, T. González Peñas Martínez, PODEMOS; M.-C. Vergiat, J.-L. Mélenchon, LFI, 2016n; S.Kouloglou, SYRIZA EP 2016m; S. Sakorafa 2016o; X. Benito Ziluaga, L. Sánchez Caldentey PODEMOS, J.-L. Mélenchon, Y. Omarjee, LFI EP 2016o). EU policies are opposed because they prevent access to protection and fail to safeguard the lives and rights of migrants at Europe's borders (e.g. M. Urbán Crespo, L. Sánchez Caldentey, PODEMOS, M.-C. Vergiat Jean-Luc Mélenchon, LFI 2016n; S.Kouloglou, S. Sakorafa, SYRIZA, EP 2016m; X. Benito Ziluaga, PODEMOS, Le Hyaric, Jean-Luc Mélenchon LFI, EP 2016p). All parties referred to such justifications in their rejection of the EBCG regulation:

The EBCG is the multiplication of Frontex, in capacity and autonomy, to prevent the entry of migrants fleeing war and poverty [...] To the extent that it goes in the opposite direction to the values that identify us, such as the defence of the right to a dignified life of all people regardless of their origin or condition, I vote against the Pabriks report. (all PODEMOS MEPs, EP 2016n)

More than 3,700 people died last year in the Mediterranean and at least 3,000 people lost their lives there this year. Yet carrying out rescue operations is not the EU's priority. (M.-C. Vergiat, LFI, EP 2016n).

On the positive side is the deletion of Frontex operating returns from third country to third country, there is compliance with fundamental rights and a mention of search and rescue. Despite, the positive points, I have abstained as Frontex is not an agency aiming at saving lives. (S. Kouloglou, SYRIZA, EP 2016n).

Further, some MEPs mentioned the need to address the broader causes of forced migration, including military interventions (J-L. Melencon, LFI, 2015e; K. Chrysogonos, 2015e; S. Sakorafa SYRIZA, 2016p).

Instead of turning to a foreign policy that tirelessly seeks stability and respect for human rights in the areas of origin of these desperate migratory movements, combined with a reception policy worthy of the essential values of this Union, what is proposed it is, once again, a refusal policy (all PODEMOS MEPs, EP 2016n)

Obviously, stopping the European interventions that sowed regional Syrian chaos and forced these populations into exile is by no means part of the reflection on the causes of these massive waves of immigration. (J.-L. Mélenchon, LFI, EP 2016n)



Similarly, opposition to the EU-Turkey deal as an instrument which prevents access to Europe and refugee protection was the reason PODEMOS and LFI voted against or abstained the *Situation in the Mediterranean resolution* (e.g. T. González Peñas, E. Torres Martinez, PODEMOS, Y. Omarjee M.-C. Vergiat, LFI, EP 2016p). These policy positions and narratives, consistently with the content of the amendments submitted by SYRIZA and LFI, focused support, human rights provisions, safe routes into Europe, stronger integration policies and taking into account the preferences of refugees (L. Sánchez Caldentey, M. Urbán Crespo, PODEMOS, S. Kouloglou, SYRIZA, M-C. Vergiat, LFI, EP 2015e; M. Urbán Crespo, L. Sánchez Caldentey, PODEMOS, M.-C. Vergiat, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, LFI 2016n; S.Kouloglou, S. Sakorafa, SYRIZA, EP 2016m; X. Benito Ziluaga, PODEMOS, Le Hyaric, Jean-Luc Mélenchon LFI, EP 2016p).

While all three parties oppose the expansion of border and migration controls, they support Europeanised policies. Relocation was seen as a measure of solidarity towards the most affected members of the EU, Italy and Greece, and believed the mechanism should compulsory and permanent (e.g. L. Sánchez Caldentey, PODEMOS, S. Kouloglou, SYRIZA, Y. Omarjee, LFI, EP 2015e; P. Iglesias, PODEMOS, K. Chrysogonos SYRIZA, 2015e; 2016o). For the same reason, while they oppose the Dublin system as a mechanism that undermines solidarity among member states (J. Couso Permuy, EP 2016p), they supported Europeanised responses to migration based on solidarity that would strengthen access to asylum (S. Sakorafa, SYRIZA, EP 2016o; K. Chrysogonos, S. Kouloglou, SYRIZA, Y. Omarjee, M-C. Vergiat, LFI, EP 2016p). These positions do not suggest a strongly Eurosceptic approach to migration policy.

Despite the largely shared policy preferences and discourses, the selected left-wing populist parties sometimes differed in the position on the three legislative documents analysed here. With the exception of J.-L. Mélenchon who abstained from the vote on the Relocation decision as it did ‘not solve any of the causes of these forced departures’ (EP 2015e), other LFI, PODEMOS and SYRIZA MEPs voted in favour. While PODEMOS and LFI parties voted against the EBCG regulation, SYRIZA abstained citing concerns over the re-establishment of border controls within Schengen and alluding to Greek-Turkish tensions over borders (K. Chrysogonos, S. Kouloglou, EP 2016n). Similarly, SYRIZA MEPs voted for *Situation in the Mediterranean* resolution,

while PODEMOS and LFI abstained because of the resolution's support for migration control measures and insufficient emphasis on protection and human rights, with the exception of J.-L. Mélenchon who voted against for the same reasons (K. Chrysogonos, S. Kouloglou, SYRIZA, J.-L. Mélenchon, P.Le Hyaric, LFI, X. Benito Ziluaga, J. Couso Permuy, PODEMOS, EP 2016p).

Other MEPs within the GUE/NGL group largely share the policy positions and discourses of the three selected populist parties (e.g. M. Albiol Guzmán, M. Björk, J. Pimenta Lopes, 2016m; M. L. Senra Rodríguez, Á. Vallina, M. Anderson, L. Boylan, L. Ní Riada, J. Ferreira, EP 2016n; M. Albiol Guzmán, B. Spinelli 2016o; T. Hadjigeorgiou, A.-M. Mineu D. de Jong, N. Sylikiotis, M. Viegas, EP 2016p). Overall, there is little differentiation between the policy positions and discourses of the parties within the GUE/NGL group classified as populist by the DEMOS project and other that are not. Some MEPs from the United Left–Initiative for Catalonia Greens were additionally more explicit in objecting to securitarian policies such as fingerprinting (P. López Bermejo, L. Senra Rodríguez 2016n). Significantly different positions seem to come from MEPs of the Czech Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia who opposed relocation arguing that solidarity should be voluntary, aligning with the position of the Czech government, and against the EBGC regulation because of sovereignty rather than human rights concerns (K. Konečná, J. Maštálka, EP 2015e; EP 2016n).

Although there are no selected populist parties on the Socialists & Democrats and Green groups, it is worth summarising their discursive constructions and positions on migration for comparative purposes. S&D MEPs strongly support Europeanised policies, solidarity among member states – for example relocation - greater support for member states with external borders (e.g. C. Tapardel, I. Thomas 2016n; C. Chinnici K. Fleckenstein, T. Szanyi I. Iotova, EP 2016o; F. Assis, V. Blinkevičiūtė, C. Schaldemose, G. Willmott, EP 2016p)<sup>233</sup>. They are highly critical of member states that obstruct such efforts (e.g. A. Gomes, S. Post, E. Schlein, EP 2016o; F. Assis, I. Thomas, EP 2016p). They also support strengthening the protection of external borders, including through the expansion of Frontex capabilities, as a matter of common EU

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<sup>233</sup> Slovak MEP Monika Smolková was the only one dissenting from the support for relocation (EP 2016p)

policy, externalised control policies such as the EU-Turkey deal and cooperation with third countries to prevent departure (e.g. E. Andrieu, C. Moraes, EP 2016n; S. Cabezón Ruiz, C. Sorin, I. Ujhelyi EP 2016p; J. Weidenholzer, S. Guillaume, C. Kshetu Kyenge, I. Yotova, EP 2016o). Narratives of European security, preventing crime and terrorist threats are also present and underpin the emphasis placed on border control and combatting smuggling (S. Bonafè, M. Dalli, V. Maňka, EP 2016n; M. Flašíková Beňová, J. Zemk, EP 2016m; A. Mamikins, C. Molnár, EP 2016p).

At the same time, S&D MEPs they emphasise the importance of adhering to human rights and refugee protection law, as well as preventing loss of lives, establishing legal routes, and are critical of states that do not adhere to human rights norms— such as Greece and Visegrad states (J. Geier, P. Toia, E. Schlein, EP 2016o; Z. Balčytis, J. F. López Aguilar, M. Dalli, I. García Pérez, G. Willmott, EP 2016p). However, in contrast to the GUE/NGL groups, S&D MEPs found the provisions on SAR and fundamental rights in the parliament's agreed text on the EBCGA regulation satisfactory and tend to conflate security and humanitarian objectives (E. Andrieu, I. Thomas, J. Ward; EP 2016p; C. Revault D'Allonnes Bonnefoy, J. Weidenholzer, EP 2016o). Hence, the positioning of S&D reflects, on one hand the humanitarian/securitisation nexus and a migration management approach rather than one purely based on control and deterrence.

Most Green MEPs opposed, similarly to the GUE/NGL group, the expansion of Frontex's powers and the curtailment of access to asylum and human rights, and supported Europeanised asylum policies enhancing solidarity, creating legal routes and strengthening sea rescue (M. Andersson, D. Škrlec, EP 2016n; S. Keller, B. Valero, EP 2016m; B. Ropè, EP2016p; S. Keller, B. Valero, EP 2016o). Yet two MEPs from Eastern European countries positioned themselves in favour of the EBCGA proposal, supporting enhanced border protection and other control measures, highlighting yet again the impact of national positions and geographical divisions (B. Ropè of the Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union, I. Šoltes, Verjamem, Slovenia, EP 2016m; EP 2016p).

## 4 Conclusion

The analysis of the amendments process suggests that the selected radical right-wing populist parties, with the exception of Fidesz discussed below, have very little impact on formal policy making processes in the European Parliament. As this analysis have highlighted, no amendments by Front National, Lega Nord, Freedom Party, OLANO or PiS were incorporated in texts adopted by the parliament. One explanation is that the political groups these parties belong to – ECR, EFDD and ENF – do not have enough MEPs for their amendments to be successful at the level of the Committee responsible for the legislative text to be agreed by the Parliament. Moreover, none of the selected parties participated in amendments sponsored by multiple political groups which were often successful. Radical right-wing populist parties tend not to co-sponsor amendments with other party groups – co-sponsorship is limited to MEPs of the same political group, and even within the same party in the case of PiS. A further explanation is that the submitted amendments often proposed policies that are hard-line in policy preferences and content (Hurka 2013) and thus failed to garner support from other groups. In addition, proposed amendments sometimes reflected narrow national interests, which rendered them unlikely to be supported in the context of legislation that reflect European law-making (Baller 2018; Hurka 2013). The findings overall reflect existing research which has highlighted the significance of consensus on policy across political groups for policies to be adopted by the European Parliament (Baller 2018; Hurka 2013; Lopatin 2015).

In contrast, the findings suggest that Fidesz benefited to an extent from belonging to the EPP political group, the largest in the European Parliament. However, their amendments were successful only in one of the three legislative processes, on the EBCG regulation. In this case, the policy preferences in favour of the proposed regulation aligned with the majority of the EPP group. In contrast, amendments proposed by Fidezs independently in the *Relocation* decision, where the position of Fidesz opposed that of EPP, were unsuccessful. The same lack of success can be observed in the *Situation in the Mediterranean* resolution, although it is difficult to offer a conclusive explanation for this, given that the overall rate of success of amendments by any political group was low.

Submitting amendments with the other MEPs of the same political group appears to be an important factor for other selected populist parties. ANO's successful amendments were submitted with other ALDE MEPs, suggesting yet again that alignment with the core policy positions of a political group is a significant factor. Similarly, two of the three selected radical left-wing populist parties were particularly active in submitting amendments compared to both radical right-wing and anti-establishment populist parties (Table 2). While amendments submitted by LFI with other MEPs of the GUE/NGL group had limited success, the grouping of SYRIZA with GUE/NGL MEPs was the most successful among all selected populist parties in having amendments adopted in the Committee stage, although less so in the final texts produced by the three processes. A further explanation is that the content of the amendments proposed by left-wing populist parties overlaps with those submitted by other political groups. For example, an amendment (Am 94, EP 2015a) to the *Relocation* decision included references to family ties, qualifications and skills and integration were also proposed by MEPs of the S&D and EPP groups. Given the Parliament's emphasis on consensus and the rapporteur's tendency to seek compromise (Hurka 2013), this might have made the amendments proposed by populist left-wing parties, and more broadly GUE/NGL, more likely to be adopted.

It should also be noted that populist left-wing and some anti-establishment parties were far more active in submitting amendments. While left-wing populist parties are often characterised as Eurosceptic (Ivaldi 2018; Sotiropoulos et al 2020), they are far more actively involved in parliamentary policy making than radical right-wing populist parties. Further, SYRIZA played a central role within the GUE/NGL, as they were involved in the majority of successful amendments. M5S, while also described as a Eurosceptic party also submitted many amendments to the EBCG and *Situation in the Mediterranean* proposals. While less successful overall than the radical-left populist parties, the adoption of some of their amendments in the EBCG legislative process might reflect that they were aligned in content with those of other political groups.

In what concerns policy preferences and discourses, many commonalities can be observed across populist parties and political groups. The selected radical right-wing populist parties are strongly in favour of policies predicated on controlling migration such as strengthening the external borders of the EU, detention, deportation and

externalising asylum and migration controls. Yet, such policies are also supported across political groups of the centre-right, centre and centre-left such as EPP, ALDE and S&D, suggesting a convergence among centrist political groups around prioritising border control (Frid-Nielsen 2018; Lopatin 2013). Similarly, criminalising and securitised constructions of migrants, representing them as a threat to the security and economic wellbeing of European societies, and othering discourses – focusing for example on the juxtaposition of Islam and Christianity – are more pronounced among the selected radical right-wing parties but are also present in the discourses of mainstream parties in the EPP group, as well as by a minority of MEPs in the ALDE and S&D groups. Conversely, support for policies that strengthen human rights provisions and institutional accountability is shared not only among the radical left-wing populist parties but also among the wider GUE/NGL group as well as the S&D, Greens and ALDE groups.

A stronger feature of radical-right parties seems to be their overt hostility to human rights regimes and the inclusion of migrants. Radical right-wing parties are more likely to support policies that undermine human rights and access to protection and oppose policies related to integration, which would blunt inequalities between citizens and migrant populations. Yet, while policy proposals by MEPs of other political groups tend to comply with existing legal norms, exemplifying another area of convergence (Frid-Nielsen 2018; Lopatin 2013), there are exceptions. MEPs of ‘mainstream’ parties within the ECR group, such as the UK Conservative Party and of parties in the EPP group, proposed policies that are contrary to EU and international law, such as the suspension of access to asylum, the toleration of pushbacks or the erosion of access to legal assistance and information. Given that such proposals relate to the concept of authoritarianism as a central analytical dimension in populism – since they in essence undermine liberal democratic norms – the field of migration policy highlights authoritarian tendencies that are not limited to parties classified as populist.

Findings related to another key policy dimension – the preference for either national or Europeanised migration policies – suggest a degree of divergence among radical right-wing parties. Overall, they oppose the erosion of national powers in the field of migration, in line with the characterisation of such parties as Eurosceptic (Borriello and Brack 2019). However, the analysis showed that they tend to adopt different positions

depending on the policy domain of the proposals, national policy preferences and national interests. Hence, Fidezs, OLANO and PiS supported the EBG regulation, since they regarded border controls, especially at the external borders, as necessary for preventing the entry to Europe of populations which they regard as threatening. This reflects Eastern European national politics and discourses on migration since 2015 (Karamanidou, Hess and Kasperek 2020; Witold 2017). However, FN and UKIP did not follow suit, instead showing a stronger opposition to Europeanised controls. Similarly, Lega Nord supported relocation measures as they were seen as beneficial for the national interests of Italy, while most radical right-wing populist parties opposed relocation as a measure, seeing it as an option that would erode national sovereignty. The same divergence can be seen in parties classified as anti-establishment populist. ANO, TT and LM supported the establishment of EBCG as a measure that enhanced border control, while M5S opposed it on the grounds that it would threaten national sovereignty (also Borriello and Brack 2019). While ANO and TT were against the creation of a relocation mechanism, M5S saw it as an expression of solidarity among member states, although its position could reflect considerations of national politics, as Italy is a state with EU external border. Equally mainstream parties in other political groups were more likely to support Europeanised policies, but this differs among political groups and the policies in question.

To sum up, the analysis found significant commonalities in policy preferences and discourses among populist parties – in particular among the selected radical right-wing and anti-establishment ones – as well as across populist and non-populist parties across political groups. This might be suggestive of populism as a ‘thin’ ideology (Mudde 2004; 2007) which allows for diverse policy preferences and discourses shaped by political ideologies, national contexts and the dynamics of European Union policy making. Yet, the divergence of policy preferences and discourses among populist and non-populist parties renders classificatory schema of parties as populist problematic in providing insights into EU migration policy making, at least in the context of the European parliament. For example, while parties such as SYRIZA or LFI have been labelled as ‘radical’ by the DEMOS project (Sotiropoulos et al 2019; Sotiropoulos et al 2020) and others (for example, Halikiopoulou et al 2019; Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2018), there is little evidence of this in terms of their migration policy preferences. Rejecting the further reinforcement of external border controls or the expansion of

Frontex capabilities cannot be seen as a radical position in itself – compared to, for example, border abolition or abolishing Frontex. Likewise, supporting policies aimed at strengthening human rights protections can hardly be described as radical, since they reflect core values of the European Union, embedded in its legislative texts (European Parliament 2021).

However, the analysis also raises questions regarding the absence or presence of conceptual features of populism in discourses on migration in the European Parliament. Populist tropes such as those invoking the people, condemning the elites and constructing the ‘other’ as threatening are present in the discourses of the selected radical right-wing populist parties but also in parties classified as extreme right, such as Jobbik and Golden Dawn and mainstream political parties in other political groups. Further, the findings of this analysis suggest that nativism, associated in particular with radical right-wing parties, is strongly present in the discourses of three of the selected anti-establishment parties – ANO, TT and LM – each classified as ‘weak nativist’. The support of these parties for stronger migration controls, adoption of securitising narratives and – with the exception of LM – opposition to relocation is similar to the policy positions and discourses of radical right-wing parties. Rather than ‘weak nativism’, that suggests hostility to migration and exclusionary tendencies. In the case of ANO, existing research has evidenced such tendencies at the domestic level (Strapáčová and Hloušek 2018; Čulík, 2017; Hanley and Vachudova 2018). It is also worth noting that P. Jezek, one of the MEPs heavily involved in some of the legislative processes, appears to be an advocate of the overtly racist and white supremacist ‘replacement’ theory (Davey and Ebner 2019). While TT has been previously characterised as non-xenophobic (Ramonaitė and Ratkevičiūtė 2013), R. Paksas’ – albeit limited – contributions to the three legislative processes analysed here also signify support for control policies and exclusion of migrants from Europe (EP 2016n; 2016p). While considering such parties ‘weak nativist’ might be informed by broader considerations of their history and political positioning as anti-establishment populist parties, it seems to underplay nationalist and xenophobic policy preferences and discourses.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Sotiropoulos et al (2019:18) claim, for example, that ANO’s nativism ‘represents a mere political marketing’ despite evidence of nativism in their discourse.



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