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INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses the core components and elements of what Europe means in the right-wing political discourse, particularly, the right-wing groups of the European Parliament. The methodology section of this paper answers our research questions using descriptive coding and the emphasis of textual analysis will focus on how these groups perceive Europe along with the components such as whiteness, language, religion, patriotism, localism, women role in society, climate change, and other political entities/ideologies.

A scientific study *The New Face of Digital Populism* confirms that “the rise of populism in Europe can be traced through online behavior” (Bartlett, Birdwell & Littler, 2011). Europe is currently undergoing noticeable political change, in the form of the rise of right-wing populism. Even though the right-wing parties and leaders already rejected some of the radical attributes or stances in their ideologies, against homophobia and Anti-Semitism, the narrative could still be right, left and conservative at the same time (Wodak & Boukala, 2015). Helms (2007) observes how some of the right-wing populist leaders in Europe gathered a significant amount of support with populist slogans and anti-immigration discourse. Besides the far-right uses Trump and Brexit as propaganda, in order to create visibility of the rise of far-right movement (Sheehy, 2017).

The recent electoral success of the right-wing representatives such as the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), France’s the National Front party, Poland’s conservative party and many similar parties across Europe and their anti-immigration and pride of national identity discourse is concerning for many in regards for the future and the core values of European democracy (Sheets, Bos & Boomgaarden, 2016).

The sudden superiority of right-wing parties in the political scene has drawn attention in academia trying to determine the reasons for their success. (Golder, 2003). In a study

“Explaining Variation In The Success of Extreme Right-Wing Parties”, Golder (2003) says that many researchers explain the success of right-wing parties due to the rising xenophobic tension and increase of immigrants, while others correlate it to the financial crisis.

This paper will focus on European Parliament right-wing groups and their political stances, their core values and their message. More specifically in-depth analysis of their political manifesto, their populist narrative and their perspective on European Identity and National Identity. The subject of this study is manifestos of European People’s Party (EPP), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) which is sub-party of Renew Europe (RE) and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFD²) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

The analysis of the manifestos will not answer all of our questions, but rather help us grasp the current state of European democracy, as well as to get a better understanding as to why the supporters of these parties vote for them. How the right-wing parties and leaders spread the idea of national identity and national value. Another goal is to establish categories of the main focuses in the populist rhetoric. What kind of narrative do the leaders of these parties give to the public or any given platform, or on their social media networks?

This study investigates how or to what extent this right-wing populist ideology clashes the core values of the European Union. The confusion we often find ourselves in when trying to understand why these parties that heavily criticize the institution of European Parliament, they have nothing in common with, want to be part of it in the first place? The recent success of these parties in the European elections is somehow ironic, considering the fact of how their ideologies clash with the values that European Parliament advocates for.

In the next chapters, we will review the theoretical approaches of populist rhetoric and theoretical concept of European Identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Populism and 'The People'

The term of populism does not have one clear universal description. Based on Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy is 'government for people, for the people, and by the people', as in people should govern themselves (Pelinka, 2013). Most of the scholars would agree on a minimal description. There are 'the people' and 'the others' that plays certain roles in the concept of populism and it is often used as a term to describe the disappointment with the established political system (Arditi & Barros, 2005).

Müller (2017) explains that populists refer to themselves as the only representation of 'the people' and they proclaim to speak on behalf of 'the people' or the 'silent majority' (Altemeyer, 1981). These are the people whose views are underrepresented and these 'people' want to exclude 'others' or 'the corrupt elite', as described in many research papers. However, the vagueness of this concept can give a hard time to understand what exactly 'the people' mean, as in who is considered to belong to 'the people' and who is not?

Müller (2017) argues that populists are certainly anti-elitist, yet just criticizing the 'elite' is not enough to be considered as a populist. Populists do not recognize the legitimacy of their political opponents or anyone who does not support their ideology, often referring to the oppositions as the 'corrupt elite' and them not belonging to 'the people'. The insinuation is that the populists are the '100 percent' people. The author also mentions that populism threatens the concept of democracy by excluding other groups of political identity. Therefore, the key components of populism are 'the people' and 'others'.

In the case of a right-wing populist, they would consider themselves as 'the people' and 'others' or the opponents of their ideologies, their values and identity would be the 'corrupt elites'.

Oftentimes, populist parties radicalize views that were already brought up by the elites and masses. It has always been a topic of debate, whether the history of modern democracy preached about the inclusion of ‘excluded’ people, people of ‘lower class’, females and ‘former slaves’ (Pelinka 2013, 3-22).

Mueller (2017) defined that right-wing populists stand against the established system, whereas the left-populists are described as the populists that stand against ‘wealthy financial elites.

There are many examples of how populist leaders polarizing complex problems or at least making them sound simple; manipulating the mood of public and creating tension or fear.

The success of these populists is impacting the way other mainstream parties present themselves. In order, to get out of the shadow of populists, they are now borrowing the same methods in their own narrative. However, some of the right-wing populists are triggering xenophobia and anti-immigration attitude on an extreme level, which shows us a real crisis of European democracy.

In the US, populism initially was referred to the People’s Party and implied to change the legislation through referenda by claiming that political power should be given back to ‘the people’ (Gerteils, 2003). If we look at the People’s Party manifesto, populism is originated or at least there is a presence of liberal and social-political ideology, which is the opposite of nationalistic narrative that right-wing populism is currently advocating. This probably explains the reason why, when we hear or see the term populism now, we mostly associate it with something negative due to the undertone or narrative it has. Nonetheless, we have to admit that this populist rhetoric we often hear from right-wing parties or leaders are certainly doing the job, now that they are backed by the electors. They have support from ‘the people’, and evidently, some might see it as a threat to democracy, while others consider this as a challenge to the current state of our political system in general.

Betz and Johnson (2016) state that most populists in Western democracies refer to themselves as the ‘real’ democrats, and are the only ones who can publicly declare what went wrong, who is responsible and what should be done to resolve it. Most of the time, as we mentioned earlier, the ‘others’ or the elites that do not belong to the ‘people’, are held accountable for the problems in the state. Thus, the only tool available for the ‘people’ to express their concerns is namely through these populist parties and its leaders.

In the following section, some examples of right-wing populist parties will be provided. However, it should be clearly stated this paper solely focuses on the right-wing populist parties. As it is known that there are also traditional far-right parties with certain differences and oftentimes with radical stances. The term radical right populism is rather new to some scholars and according to Betz (1994) has a limited connection to the tradition radical right. But in general debate accepts the idea that there is a parallel between the traditional far-right, radical neo far-right and the newly emerged right-wing populists claims Pelinka (2013). Yet, the question of whether populism could be democratic once in power is still open to discussion. On the opposite, Müller (2016) suggests to engage with the populists and take their demands or requirements seriously without digging deeper and searching for a hidden agenda. Nonetheless, he states these populists should be criticized for being a threat to democracy and asserts “that does not necessarily mean that one should not take part with them in political debate” and that one can take these issues raised by politicians seriously, however, these political figures should consider the way they frame these issues (Müller 2016, p. 5).

Right-wing populist rhetoric

Wodak (2015) has written a thorough study by examining the form and content of right-wing populist rhetoric in his book *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*.

He addresses some of the questions that bother democrats and political scholars in the first chapter of his book. The current right-wing populists' parties across Europe use different populist rhetoric based on the differences of tradition, current issues in politics and nationalist pasts in a form of identity narrative. Some parties gain support by displaying their conflicting relationship with fascism (Austria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and France); to some political parties Islamophobia became a useful tool and narrative (Denmark, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland) to propagate their programs; parties in Hungary, Greece and the UK point out migrants as a threat to the national identity. Hence, Wodak (2015) claims that:

- “all right-wing populist parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a scapegoat for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and a threat ‘to us’, to ‘our’ nation; this phenomenon manifests itself as a ‘politics of fear’ (p. 3);
- all right-wing populist parties seem to endorse what can be recognized as the ‘arrogance of ignorance’; appeals to common-sense and anti-intellectualism mark a return to pre-modernist or pre-Enlightenment thinking” (p. 3).

The current pattern among the right-wing populist parties is that they give out simple, easy-to-understand answers to the fears of their electors and clearly denouncing the enemies or the ‘others’ as mentioned before by creating scapegoats to put all the blame for the challenges in the state. Most of the time these scapegoats are Muslims, ethnic minorities, liberal socialists, NGOs, feminists, the opposition, international organizations, the elites, and the list goes on. Wodak (2015) says ‘scapegoating’ and the ‘elitist conspiracies’ are the important ‘toolkit’ in the right-wing populist rhetoric.

According to Pelinka (2013), nowadays the contemporary form of populism is directed against the (perceived) enemy from abroad, those who are allegedly responsible for Europeanization

and globalization, and as well as against the ‘elites’ who welcomed the foreign influence and the foreigners.

What we are currently witnessing among right-wing populists is how they are using fear, or creating fear among people, for example by using terrorist attacks rhetoric as a way to gain support. Altheide (2002) in his book *Creating Fear* argues how fear emerged as a framework to develop identities. Both liberals and conservatives express fear, obviously, they differ, but oftentimes they blame one another as the main source of their fear. Right-wing populist parties create fear in order to authorize their legislative proposals, usually in regards to immigration restrictions (Wodak and Boukala; 2014; 2015).

Postelnicescu (2016) states in her book *Europe’s New Identity: The Refugee Crisis and the Rise of Nationalism* that the rise of populism and extremism is based on the ideology of fear. In the case of the US, the great example of right-wing populist - Donald Trump, whose topic of rage is usually either Mexican immigrants or Muslims; in Europe, it is the refugees; and in the Middle East is the Western lifestyle and religion. Postelnicescu (2016) suggests to call it as the ideology of fear, as it contains other ideologies such as fascism, Islamism, anti-Semitism. The emotional factor plays a significant role in triggering emotions in people during the crisis, so in this case, fear is a political tool actively used by populists.

Exclusion in right-wing populism

The discourse of right-wing populism is plain simple and the focus is on: national values, national identity, national borders, and national interests, says Postelnicescu (2016). Viktor Orban built a wall against the refugees in Hungary (Dunai, 2017), Miro Cerar accepts only Christians in his country – Slovenia, Norbert Hofer promised to protect the borders of Austria from refugees (Postelnicescu, 2016). These populist leaders have all one thing in common –

they are against the refugees. Wodak (2015) states that the core element of right-wing populism is the exclusion of 'strangers'. An exclusion means 'border politics', and focuses on the criteria of 'belongingness'. In the exclusionary rhetoric, language is used in order to distinguish the similarities and differences; to clearly state the boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them'. It should be noted that 'Us' and 'Them' is not only peculiar to right-wing parties, but anyone can see it in the papers proposed to EU commission on security issues after the occurrence of 9/11, according to Wodak (2015).

Krzyzanowski and Oberhuber (2007) in the study of mainstream voices, describes how European Parliament members or the European elites define 'Europeanness' by creating positive – Self and negative- Other narratives. Basically, portraying themselves in a positive way, and creating a negative image to the 'other' or usually called as the 'enemies'.

Wodak (2015) adds about the importance of identifying two other aspects of right-wing populism: the influence of 'banal nationalism' to the revisionism; and the main fuel of right-wing populist parties' success – the EU skepticism. These elements are significant in the identity of right-wing populism.

We now might observe, how nationalism returned with full force. Once was an outdated concept, today has supporters and movements across the world. It is important to note, that the idea of nation implies inclusiveness and solidarity. Yet, at the same time belonging to a nation is often defined through ethnic categories, which excludes those who do not possess the characteristics, also referred to as the 'others' or outsiders (Wodak, 2015).

When it comes to the language, it serves as a 'gate-keeping device' in many European countries. Many states have certain linguistics skill requirements when obtaining permanent residency, citizenship or sometimes entry visa according to the Common European Framework (Little, 2008). Even though, European legislation (2010) claims that these language requirements and testing is part of the integration process, it seems to have an undertone of a

formal legislative obstacle to migration, which according to de Cillia and Dorostkar (2013) seems to determine who should and should not belong to the EU.

The part of national identity - 'Border politics' in the fourth chapter of his book, and explains how the elements of it, such as the national language, ethnicity, and culture is surpassing the political borders of the nation-state (Wodak, 2015).

European Identity

European Union promotes the concept of European Identity through different instruments and actions (Hansen, 2000; Fossum, 2001; Challand, 2009; Kaelble, 2009). According to the EU's motto: "...via the EU, Europeans are united in working together for peace and prosperity, and that the many different cultures, traditions, and languages in Europe are a positive asset for the continent" (United in Diversity, 2000).

The Policy Review of *Development of European Identity/Identities: Unfinished Business* (2012) has identified four theoretical concepts of European Identity:

- *European identity* or *Identification* - an identity fits both components of individual and collective ability to choose which helps an individual to relate themselves either to one or more groups or collectivity. However, this collectivity might have multiple layers within itself and hence it depends on the context. So, if an individual has a main identity as European, the identity might be notable only in a certain context.
- *Europeanisation* is hypothesized trend of any activity or prospect of national institutions being displaced by European institutions. The concept is equally questionable because in reality, it may be the minor issue of globalization.

- *Transnationalism* is a concept compared to the lasting migration and a person of ‘cross-border’ who is able to keep a social existence both in the residing country and homeland thanks to the advanced infrastructure.
- *Cosmopolitanism* – a concept of searching for a contact and valuable relation with different cultures, which matches with the way European values are perceived, the values of tolerance and equality.

In addition, according to Bardeli’s (2016) definition on European Identity – it is social construction and it has two levels of identity that are ‘national’ and ‘the European’, which offers its citizens the sense patriotic belonging, European cooperation and communality. Furthermore, Colliver (2015) claims that Europe has reached the crisis point in defining the European Identity and peace or prosperity that used to define what European meant to be is now changing (Bardeli, 2016). However, Bardeli (2016) also adds that European Identity is a powerful commitment to every individual, social cohesion and solidarity and the concept that is based on rule of law, tolerance and respect of human rights (p. 145).

In Fligstein’s (2009) definition of Collective Identities, he refers to the idea that group of individuals that accept fundamental sameness which makes them feel solidarity among themselves and those key elements of identity include gender, nationality, religion, social class, ethnicity, and age.

Many other studies on national identity incline to differentiate two kinds of nationalism – civic and ethnic (Kohn, 2017; Brubaker, 2000; Eisenstadt and Geisen, 1995; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010). Civic type of nationality refers to anyone who wants to obtain citizenship within a legal framework and also accepts a legal, political and social system of a country of interest (Reskens & Hooghe, 2010). Meanwhile, ethnic nationalism is being bonded to a certain national culture by being born into it and that the presence of common religion, traditions and language are the foundation of national membership (Fligstein, Polyakova & Sandholtz, 2011). Two of the

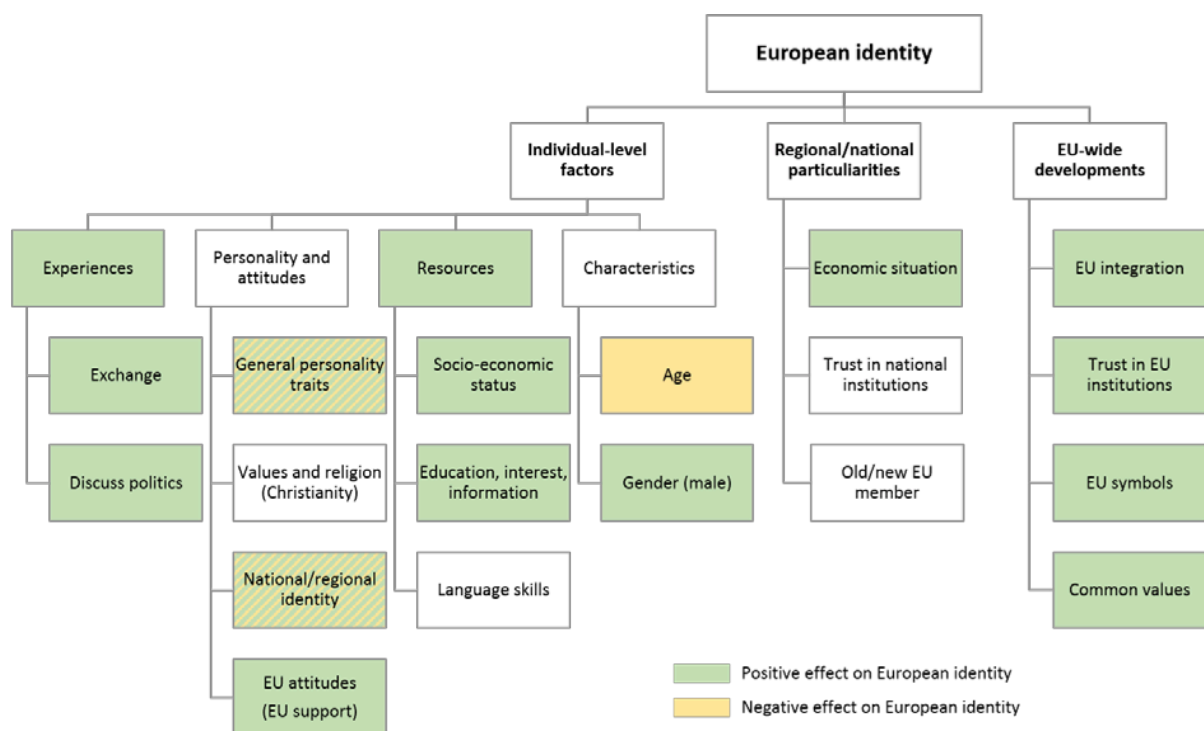
studies show that those who identify with the civic nationalism are more educated and likely to be from a higher social and economic class (Sides and Citrin, 2007; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010). Individuals that identify themselves as Europeans stand for values like peace, tolerance, democracy, and cultural diversity, and according to Risse (2015), these people tend to adhere to the civic concept of nationalism.

On the contrary, Holmes (2009) believes the current situation with right-wing political parties in Europe spreading an idea that Europeans are Christian with a common history does not include foreigners and immigrants, and he views individuals with European Identity as also people being very much secure with being identified with the concept of ethnic nationalism. These individuals who identify themselves with all the factors of ethnic nationalism consider that these factors like common history, culture, ethnical traditions, religion, language, moral norms are what make up the concept of European Identity in general (Bruter, 2003). This also means that ethnic-based Europeans exclude certain groups from what they perceive as 'Europeanness'; they determine who belongs in their community and who does not (Fligstein, Polyakova & Sandholtz, 2011). Interestingly enough, not only these 'non-European' excluded groups are immigrants, but the indigenous minorities from CEE region happen to be thrown into the 'excluded' and 'non-European' group as well (Sides & Citrin, 2007). The standard non-European scapegoats, 'special enemies' or a threat to the national and European Identity are most likely to be the non-white immigrant Muslim, Jew and native Roma (Muddle, 2007:78).

Muddle (2007) claims that those who position their identities and political preferences toward nationalism tend to align with the far right-wing political parties, whose rhetoric is based on the ethnic conception of national identity. Oftentimes their anti-immigrant and xenophobic ideologies act out on the vagueness between national and European Identity (Fligstein, Polyakova & Sandholtz, 2011).

The determinants of European Identity in Figure 6 (Ciaglia, Fuest & Heinemann, 2018, p. 28) shows that impact of various factors on European Identity. For instance, on an individual-level – EU support has a positive effect on European Identity, while in the ‘Characteristics’ section, we see that ‘Age’ has a negative effect on European Identity. We also notice that in the ‘Personality and attitudes’ sections – ‘National/regional Identity’ somehow has a mixed effect of both positive and negative on European Identity. If we look at the ‘EU-wide developments’ section, we see that ‘EU integration’ and ‘Common values’ have a positive impact on European Identity, which shows people’s trust and satisfaction with democracy.

Figure 6: Determinants of European identity.



European Identity will remain to have the basis of European values which includes respecting human rights, supporting economic and political integration, and promoting education (Bardeli, 2016). Asgarli (2019) says that specifically, these factors like common work, a

political and economic affiliation for over 70 years are what brought the European Union to the current well-integrated state. Having said that, many scholars are having various discussions over whether European Identity needs to keep persisting to move on to the next phase of integration or not (Asgarli, 2019).

Nevertheless, Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz (2011) observed that it is mostly young and educated people who experience the benefits of integration and consider themselves as cosmopolitan Europeans, whereas those who associate themselves with the national groups have never benefited from integration. The authors believe that it is possible to keep up with the level of economic integration without deeply focusing on European Identity.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the elements and the components of European Parliament's right-wing political groups' manifesto in the pre-election campaign as of 2019?
- What makes up the European Identity in the right-wing populist discourse?

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

In this study chapter, we discuss how data was collected and how it was examined. This study is exploratory as it aims to give us an understanding of Europe in right-wing populists rhetoric. In this paper, the design is a qualitative document and content analysis. The study involves the collection of pre-election manifestos of right-wing populist parties. The goal is to identify the presence of following components and the elements such as whiteness, (native) language, religion, patriotism, localism, the role of women in society, which would help us to interpret what makes up Europe from their perspective, obviously based on their content. Latest pre-election party manifestos of current members of European Parliament specifically the right-

wing groups such as ENF, ALDE, EPP, ECR and EFD will be obtained through the official party websites and examined afterward.

The data collection of party manifestos of this year and publicly shared documents by these parties will be examined. However, they will be considered only if these documents include or mention Europe or European Identity. The approximate timeframe of analyzing texts or the manifestos will be between six to eight weeks.

The present qualitative analysis follows the steps of descriptive coding and sub coding (Saldaña, 2013).

In the first phase of coding, the methodology of descriptive coding will be used, wherein collected excerpts will be summarized in words or short phrases (Saldaña, 2013). According to Saldaña (2013), descriptive coding is particularly advantageous at the beginning of the coding process. During this phase, excerpts will be coded into components discussed in the paper paragraphs through the identification of possible categories.

Descriptive coding will be followed by sub coding, which is a second-order tag to be assigned after the codes identified during descriptive coding, which, according to Saldaña (2013) is particularly appropriate for content analysis. In cases where the coding scheme used as a result of descriptive coding is too broad, sub coding will be performed to classify the existing codes into hierarchy, whereas main topics emerged through descriptive coding will serve as “parent” nodes, complemented with respective “children” nodes classified during sub coding. (Saldaña, 2013)

After the collection of the manifestos at hand, the texts are imported to NVivo 12, and the respective excerpts are imported into the operationalized nodes. After the first screening of textual content, the collected node elements are re-evaluated in terms of their themes. The final excerpts will be interpreted in the “Results” section, grouped into the respective topics, which will serve as a basis of comparison for the analyzed political groups in the end of each section.

The emphasis of textual analysis will focus on how these parties perceive Europe along these components:

- Whiteness;
- Language;
- Religion;
- Patriotism;
- Localism;
- Women role in society
- climate change
- other political entities/ideologies

Forms of Exclusion (identity who are they)

After examining the elements, the next would be the analysis and juxtaposition of values with the following categories:

- Diversity (what forms of diversity are legitimate, what forms are not)
- Solidarity (what forms; towards whom; in which condition)
- Unity (what do they mean “we” want to be united, who are the “we”?)

RESULTS

The present chapter serves as a discussion of the hereby performed textual analyses, which include the manifestos of four political groups, namely the EPP, ALDE, EFDD, and ECR. Sections of this chapter represent the main components of the present thesis aimed to analyze. Each section summarizes the respective themes emerging in each analyzed manifesto, closing with a graphical representation and summary of the coded categories and their corresponding subcategories.

Localism

In the component “localism,” the thesis sought information about which areas the respective political groups consider cooperating with the Member States. The EPP manifesto was in this regard detailed and comprehensive. Among the proposals were issues related to migration; a migration management chain proposal that would help Member States prevent “asylum shopping,” a Common European Asylum System with the task of reducing discrepancies arising from Member States’ respective legislation while suggesting communication among Member States in terms of integration policy practices. Citizen-focused motions were related to life-long learning programs, family law handled by the Member States, the development of smart cities and villages, telemedicine for the rural communities, the improvement of digital literacy and digital competences, and the support of communal engagement in terms of local projects. Concentrating on regional development, the EPP manifesto suggests that national and regional parliaments should improve their involvement in both law-making and oversight, a firm cohesion policy, a Common Agricultural Policy, the improvement of regional competitiveness, and the completion of road and rail infrastructure. The manifesto furthermore stresses more involvement from Member States in terms of fighting tax evasion, the elimination of tax havens and shared European rule-enforcement on the public finances of Member States. ALDE stressed the importance of Member States in building sustainable welfare systems to benefit from globalization. According to ALDE’s manifesto, protectionism is a reason why developing nations are locked out from more profitable markets, which is among the causes of nations’ impoverishment. Investment in education and working towards a digital Europe, enhanced with a fully-integrated digital services market and a life-long learning program would empower EU citizens. The knowledge economy, which, according to ALDE, is a key for the long-term success of the EU, is to be supported through minimizing the generational digital

skills gap, the promotion of critical and interdisciplinary thinking, soft skills and entrepreneurial mindset, so that EU citizens become adjusted to contemporary phenomena, such as increased job- and career-changing, and the current needs of the labor market. The ALDE manifesto thereby suggests investments in research and innovation through 3% of the EU GDP by 2020. Furthermore, joint qualification recognition by all Member States and joint degree initiatives to enhance labor mobility. The manifesto sees opportunities in reducing research application process time and grant funding to strengthen “home-grown” scientific research in the Member States as well.

Under the flag of digitalization, ALDE proposes to annul mobile phone roaming charges and geo-blocking to ensure that EU citizens have access to the same information throughout the EU. The political group furthermore stresses the importance of providing a secure digital identity for EU citizens and enhance their protection through addressing issues such as privacy, data protection, and cybersecurity, highlighting the importance of Member States and their responsibility in this process. To meet these challenges, ALDE suggests the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting in such issues, cooperation with NATO and solidarity between the Member States in collective defense. The political group sees the strengthening of Europol as a crucial factor in security as well, to effectively counteract cyber espionage and -attacks.

To overcome regional disparities, ALDE highlights the importance of the EU’s cohesion policy, which, according to the political group, should be hand-in-hand with the Paris Agreement, and linked to the European Semester as well.

The manifesto of ALDE stresses the cruciality of monitoring the spending of EU funds, focusing on the quality of programs and projects aiming for development, which need focused coordination between the EU and its Member States, while the transparency and efficiency of spending are the most important factors according to the political group. In this regard, ALDE proposes the re-negotiation and re-evaluation of competences between the EU and its Member

States, changing the systematics of fund-spending. ALDE suggests the reconstruction of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as well, to strengthen financial stability and ensure the economic growth of Member States. The political group sees transparency, sustainability, and reduced bureaucracy in the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy as well, noting that ALDE stands against the re-nationalization of agricultural policy. The ALDE manifesto furthermore opposes the reintroduction of border control between the Schengen Member States, stressing the importance of free movement for EU citizens. Opposed to the previously analyzed EPP manifesto, ALDE concentrated on violations of fundamental rights within the EU as well, emphasizing the importance of sanction-enforcement in cases of rights-violations, which they plan to achieve through the establishment of a mechanism outside the TEU's Article 7.

One of the core topics of the EFDD manifesto is localism. EFDD favored transparent cooperation among Member states and rejected the bureaucratization of the EU, condemning a "centralized European superstrate." EFDD voiced its concerns against integration based on European diversity, calling for new treaties and the modification of existing ones through direct voting of EU citizens; the sovereignty of Member States, direct referendums and votes constituted the basis of the political group's manifesto. As a concrete proposal, EFDD suggested the termination of Euro and the re-installment of national currencies for future economic growth.

The ECR manifesto focuses on the role of Member States within the EU, emphasizing their individual interests. In this regard, ECR suggests a "flexible integration" mechanism, wherein Member States can choose individually, which elements of EU integration they intend to pursue, to avoid the "one-size-fits-all" policy of the EU. The adoption of the Euro as common currency is suggested to be decided by the Member States themselves as well. The ECR proposes that a third of the national parliaments would have the right to stop an EU legislative

process, called as the “red-card procedure”, furthermore, the same ratio of Member States would have the right to jointly remove existing EU legislation as well, which the ECR terms as the “return-ticket procedure”. The political group suggests a FRONTEX Agency for the assistance in border protection, coordinated with the Member States, while stressing the importance of NATO in EU’s defense as well. Although the ECR manifesto notes that the common market is beneficial for all Member States and supports the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, it suggests not to be developed in the direction of harmonizing taxes, social and healthcare systems.

As the summary visualization (Figure 1) depicts, the most diverse topics were coded in the category of “citizens”, wherein digitalization proposals were emphasized in most detail., followed by the jurisdiction of Member States. EPP and ALDE addressed the majority of the coded categories and subcategories, appearing in all major categories of “Localism”, while the proposals of EFDD and ECR were marginal.

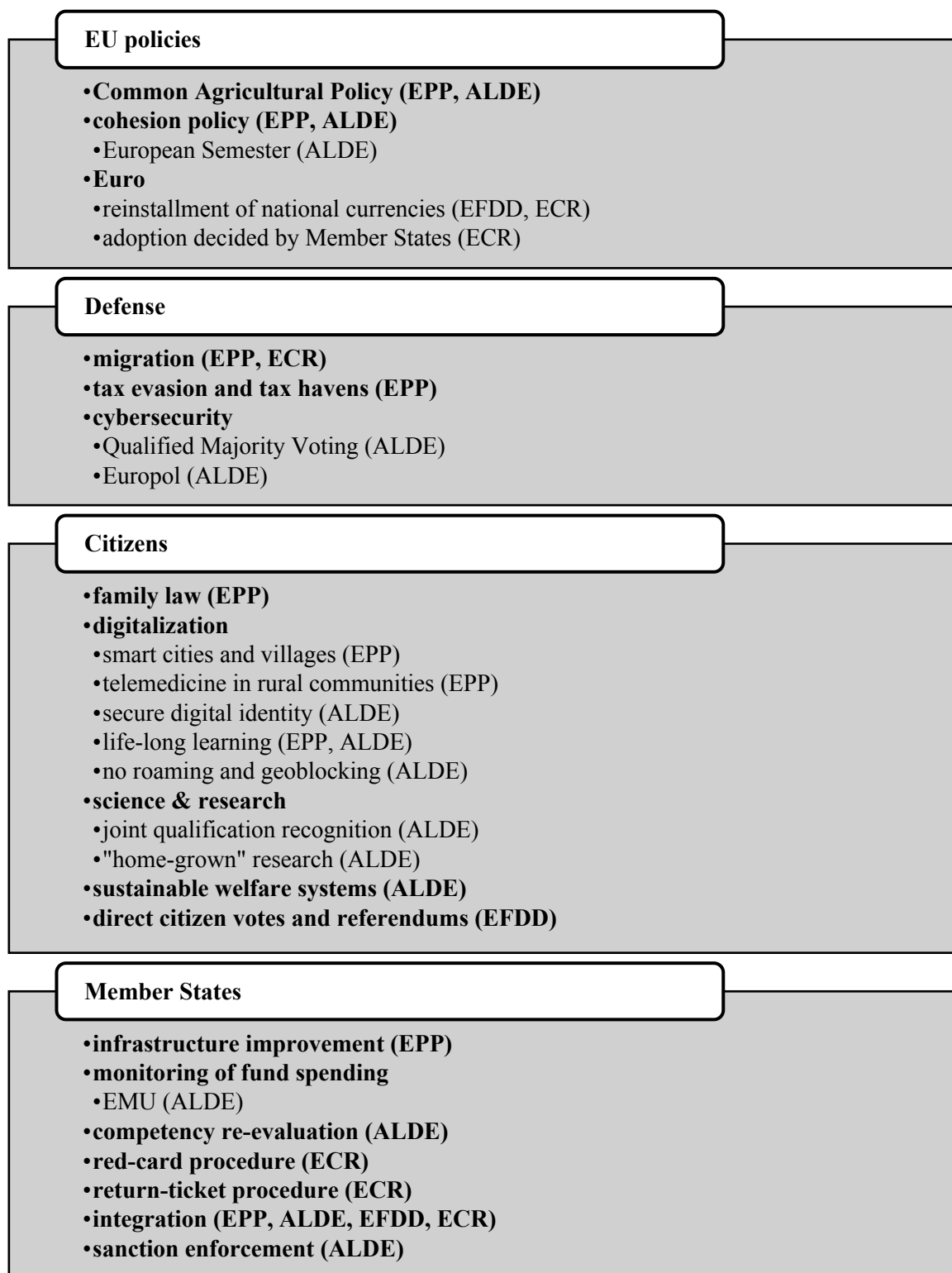


Figure 1.: Coded categories and subcategories in the component "Localism".

Other political entities/ideologies

Other political entities or ideologies were referenced in comparison in the EPP's agenda, representing the "us vs. them," as discussed by Wodak (2015) during the literature review of the present thesis. The manifesto contained multiple mentions of Russia (hybrid warfare, authoritarianism) and China (e.g., military ambitions, communism), suggesting that the latter (along with the USA) lacks common values, political stability, and a social market economy as well. In terms of authoritarianism, the manifesto mentions Turkey as well, noting the intention to stop the accession negotiations with the country as well.

Regarding the USA, the manifesto highlights economic independence through the European Stability Mechanism instead of reliance on the US and furthermore criticizes Donald Trump's remarks on the transatlantic partnership. The US market economy (termed as "American-style capitalism" is deemed as a bad example, not to be followed by the EU.

The prevention of authoritarian influence on the EU's neighbor countries, specifically on the Western Balkan is in the agenda of the EPP as well, defining states with possible authoritarian influence such as "Russia, the Gulf States, Turkey, and China."

The stance of the EPP regarding the Brexit is made clear in the manifesto, through the reduction of UK's future rights to a state that is lower than the rights of the Member States and the prohibition of "cherry-picking."

As threats without a precise geographical specification, radical Islam, terrorism, fake news spurring on Facebook and reckless foreign policies causing economic crises were mentioned in the EPP's manifesto.

The manifesto of ALDE contained topics regarding growing authoritarianism and nationalism, precise countries such as China, the US, Russia, Iran, and the UK and regions, such as the

Western Balkan. Furthermore, ALDE also emphasized resistance of unspecified EU Member states and their authoritarian tendencies.

The stance of ALDE against nationalism and authoritarianism is highlighted multiple times in their manifesto. The political group communicated its will to gain a seat in the UN Security Council with the desire to achieve multilateral treaties against unilateralism and nationalism. According to ALDE, these forces threaten stability, individual freedom, and prosperity, while populism, which is eroding tolerance and pluralism, is leading to cultural conflicts. ALDE emphasized the protectionism of Asian economies and opposed the rejection of market economy principles by China. The manifesto also expressed concerns regarding the drawback of the US in terms of the transatlantic amity and voiced its support to the Iran nuclear deal.

The phenomenon of Russia undermining multilateralism is concertized; furthermore, ALDE expressed its opposition against the occupation of the Crimea and Russia's aggression against East Ukraine, calling for the fulfillment of the Minsk Agreement.

ALDE expressed its concerns regarding the Brexit, causing imbalances within the EU, concertizing their stance with citizens' rights of Northern Ireland for EU citizenship based on the Belfast Agreement. In terms of EU's long-term prospects, ALDE also expressed its support for the future accession of the Western Balkans, advocating greater strategic engagement in the region.

The political group voiced unease regarding authoritarian, nationalist, and populist emergence within the EU, without specifying Member States. According to ALDE, judicial independence and freedom of the press are endangered in particular Member States, which weakens the collective ability of the EU for reforms and reaching compromises within, which the political group sees as a significant concern.

The manifesto of the EFDD focused on the EU in terms of critics, mentioning its bureaucratization, centralization, negotiations with Turkey's membership, opposing its

integrational efforts, emphasized its opposition within the European Parliament, stressing that other political groups “routinely vote ‘yes’”, while their officials were not elected directly by EU citizens. Furthermore, the EFDD criticized the common currency of the EU, noting that it was the cause of recession in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Ireland.

The manifesto of ECR is mainly concerned with the EU from numerous aspects; there are merely two mentions of another political entity in its manifesto, namely Russia, voicing its concern regarding the “increasingly assertive” nature of the state and the energy dependence of the EU on it. The ECR proposes multiple areas on which the EU should be improved, according to their aspect of view. The funding of EU agencies is suggested to be revised with the possibility of funding them from sources that are outside the EU budget, although the ECR does not offer other suggestions. The political group declares that the existing agencies and treaties are not fit to face today’s challenges and call for their improvement, terming this as the “Great Review.” Concentrating on trade agreements, the ECR suggests that the EU seeks opportunities with Asia, Africa, and Latin America, emphasizing that according to their view, ten new free trade agreements could be achieved by 2024. Furthermore, the political group declared the yellow-card procedure established in the Lisbon Treaty as “ineffective” and proposed the implementation of red-card and return-ticket procedures, discussed in the previous section.

As the summary of hereby coded categories and subcategories (Figure 2) shows, the most diverse mentions were to be found in “countries & regions”, where both EPP and ALDE raised attention on numerous political phenomena. The manifestos of the EFDD and ECR, on the other hand, stressed issues with the EU itself exclusively.

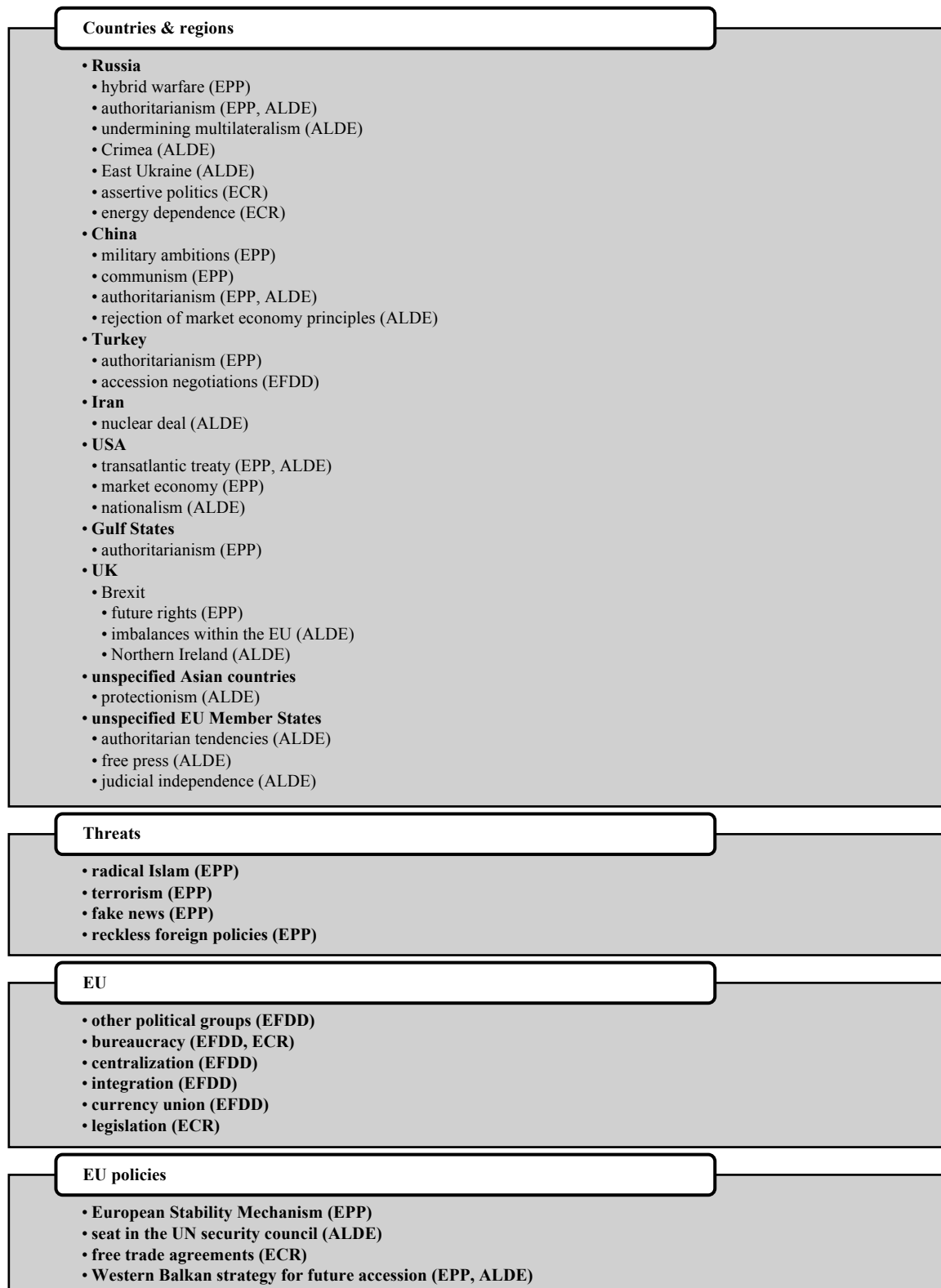


Figure 2.: Coded categories and subcategories in the component “Other political entities/ideologies”.

Whiteness

The EPP's manifesto contained three main categories into which the mentioned issues could be grouped. Countries and geographic regions were marked causing illegal migration (Africa) and instability (neighboring countries), while the EU-Turkey agreement was deemed as a good example for the prevention of illegal migration based on statistical data specified in the EPP manifesto indicating that the "illegal arrivals to Greece [lowered] by 96%".

Future invests in terms of external infrastructure development are suggested, such as the border protection agreements with North-African countries, the External Investment Plan and the New Alliance for Africa. However, most mentions include policy plans for the future, such as the Marshall Plan for Africa, with the intention that citizens of African states "should no longer feel the need to leave their own countries." Further policies mentioned are integration-related, paired with an "effective return policy," manifesting in the Common European Asylum System, the European Return Warrant System, and the Asylum and Migration Fund. The EPP manifesto briefly mentions a "pact against antisemitism" as well, however, it is more focused on issues relating to the prevention of illegal migration and the effective selection of applying foreigners for asylum and the future integrational process, stressing the importance of the European Return Warrant System as well, in cases of unsuccessful candidates.

ALDE in this regard voiced its opinion in terms of the existing migration management and asylum system, its stand with the Common European Asylum System and the European Border and Coast Guard, its commitment to integration and the establishment of the EU blue card.

The political group suggests a more coherent migration management and common European law in matters of both migration and asylum, since according to ALDE, the EU's current system is no longer equipped to face the present challenges. In this regard, ALDE proposes an effective Common European Asylum System for those, who are qualified for asylum and the

enhancement of the European Border and Coast Guard to ensure its effectivity. Furthermore, ALDE is committed to integration and suggests agreements with safe countries in both the Middle East and North Africa, where the EU would provide financial support for hosting refugees, furthering their resettlement, safe return and ensure that refugees receive shelter there, instead of risking their lives by attempting to cross the sea in unsafe boats. ALDE recognizes the commitment of the Geneva Refugee Convention, declaring that refugees of war and political oppression have a right for asylum. By acknowledging the EU's future demographic challenges, ALDE proposes an EU blue card for those, who wish to work, study or invest in the EU's economies, based on transparent criteria.

The manifesto of the EFDD emphasized border protection to preserve historical, religious, traditional and cultural values of Member States while rejecting xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination. According to the EFDD, borders can ensure that “our different civilizations [can] live together peacefully.”

The stance of the ECR is that the introduced relocation mechanism did not solve the issues related to migration; according to their point of view, Member States that did not fulfill their obligations, were not held to account equally. The manifesto furthermore suggests the assistance of a FRONTEX Agency in assisting border states of the EU in protection, for which they wish to allocate funds that were made available as a result of the “Great Review”, discussed in the previous section.

As the graphical representation of coded categories and their subcategories (Figure 3) represents, there were markedly distinct differences among the manifestos in this regard. Refugee protection only appeared in the manifesto of ALDE, while integration occurred exclusively in the ALDE and EPP manifestos. EFDD concentrated solely on the strengthening of the EU's borders, while, ECR, which also stressed the latter issue, suggested the introduction

of a FRONTEX Agency in this regard as well, while discussing the cruciality of a relocation mechanism as well.

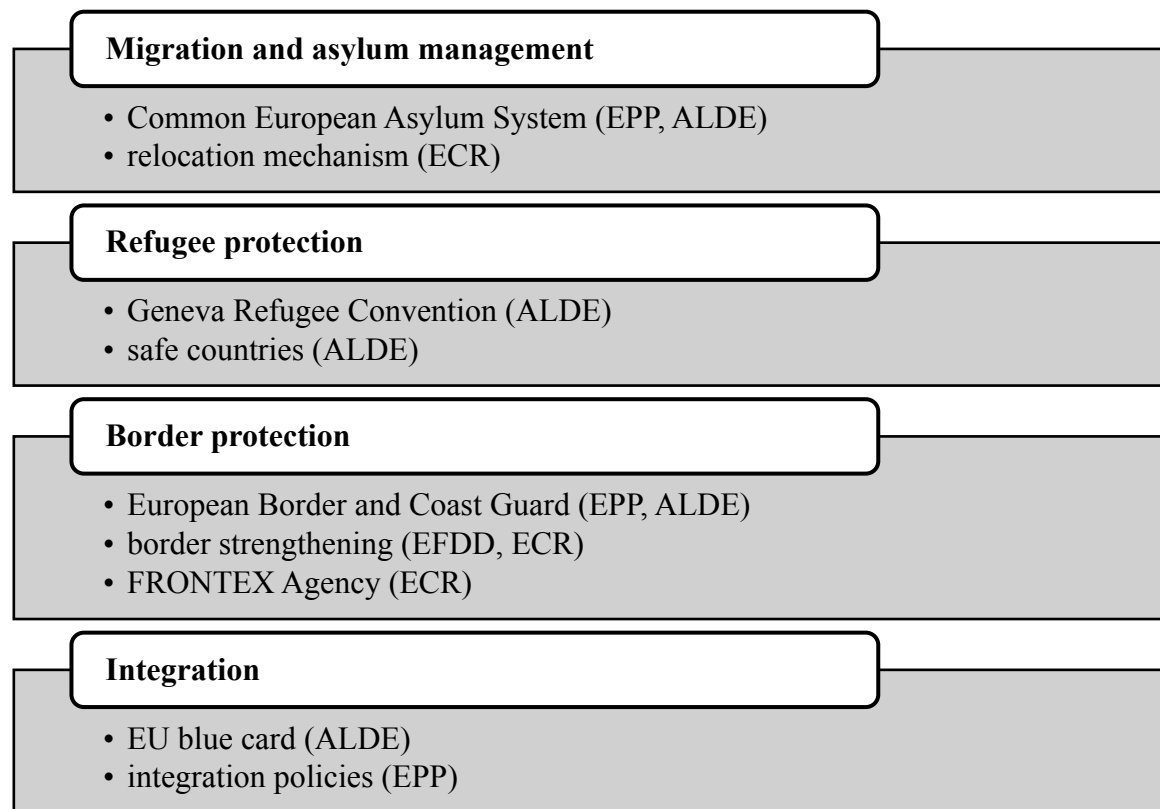


Figure 3.: Coded categories and subcategories in the component “Whiteness”.

Patriotism

The basis of patriotism in the manifesto of the EPP consists of entities, groups, and past achievements, about which the political group states that it is proud. These include the Founding Fathers ensuring the EU’s historical accomplishments, farmers producing quality food (mentioned two times, indicating that EU’s food quality is better than any other continent), traditions and standards, regions and countries and general and lastly, market-related actors, such as SMEs and innovative start-ups.

The basis of patriotism in the manifesto of ALDE is cooperation, shared decision-making, democracy, peace, and prosperity, which the EU has reached and is a “tremendous

achievement,” according to ALDE. The political group praises the free movement of people, capital, goods and services, pointing out that these benefits are the sources of the EU’s global destination attractiveness.

In the manifesto of the EFDD, patriotism manifests itself through the declaration of Europe as glorious and genius, which lies in the diversity of its citizens both culturally and linguistically.

The ECR-manifesto, on the other hand, emphasizes that European civilization is one of the most dynamic and wealthiest one globally.

As the following category summary depicts (Figure 4), numerous sources of patriotism were mentioned in the hereby analyzed manifesto, wherein solely the EU’s past achievements was a common one between the EPP and ALDE, which two political groups mentioned most reasons, why they are proud for the European Union. The ECR manifesto furthermore discussed the European wealth and dynamism, while the EFDD acknowledged diversity.

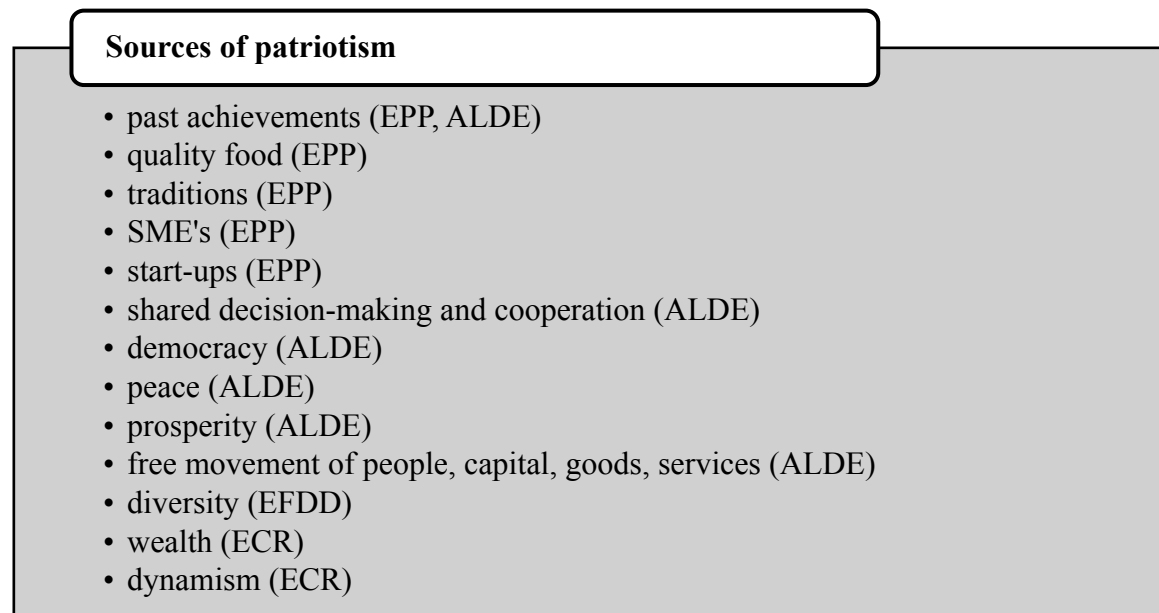


Figure 4.: Coded categories in the component “Patriotism”.

Religion

Reading the manifesto of the EPP, it is clear that Christianity is put into conjunction with the EU, shared values, fundamental principles, and democracy as well. It mentions Judaism only once in the text, regarding “our common Judeo-Christian roots.” While the manifesto names religions in only five times, it does not recognize its European diversity or the existence of any other religion apart from the above-mentioned ones.

In the EFDD manifesto, religion is a matter of protection, to be ensured by strengthening the borders of the EU. Furthermore, the political group rejects past negotiations with Turkey’s membership, based on – among other aspects, such as history, political values, and humanist roots – religious differences.

Religion did not appear in any context in the manifestos of ALDE and ECR. The EPP stressed that that Christianity is a common European value and part of fundamental European principles, while EFDD discussed that Christianity needs to be protected through border strengthening and emphasized that it is one of the main bases of difference between the EU and Turkey, hence they condemned past accession negotiations with the country.

Climate change

The EPP manifesto recognized climate change as a current, significant issue that demands focused attention, threatening the prosperity of humankind, defending the statement of the Paris Climate agreement, recognizing the scientific evidence of the phenomenon. On the one hand, the political group mentions a future-oriented economic policy to ensure clean technologies, suggesting the EU to be a global leader in achieving a cleaner world, while on the other hand, they name concrete actions as well. Industrial emission reduction, low-carbon mobility and

innovations in transportation through self-driving vehicles and connected mobility to further reduce transport emissions, e-mobility, and an Energy Union as a cost-effective expansion through renewable energies are among their proposals to climate change. Furthermore, the modernization of the Common Agricultural Policy to achieve more sustainability both from environmental and social aspects, as well as recycling, take place in the EPP manifesto.

ALDE proposes multiple future-oriented plans in the areas of energy efficiency, decarbonization, emission reduction, clean energy production, and innovations in transportation as well. The political group proposed a resource-efficient circular economy for the commitment to the Paris Agreement, urging for international cooperation. Research in development in the areas of low emission technologies and infrastructure, as well as clean energy production and the completion of the Energy Union is needed, according to ALDE, to meet the targets of both the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well. The reduction of greenhouse emissions through strengthening the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) is a part of ALDE's proposals as well, for which the manifesto proposes a concrete emission reduction by 55% by 2030, compared to the 1990 levels. The future goal of the EU is a carbon-free economy, according to ALDE, which also requires investments in terms of research and innovation. The political group emphasizes the necessity of future innovations in transport, such as concrete infrastructure projects (Trans-European Network), the introduction of high-speed trains and railroad enhancements, straighter flight routes for sustainable aviation, inland waterway improvements and investments in intermodal hubs. Furthermore, ALDE stresses that EU cohesion funds cannot further support such programs that are not in conjunction with the Paris Agreement and the manifesto urges the modification of the Chicago Convention to counteract the fuel tax exemptions for international aviation.

While climate change did not appear in the manifestos of the EFDD and ECR, it was discussed at length in the manifestos of the EPP and ALDE (Figure 5). While both political groups proposed numerous future-oriented policies, ALDE was the sole political group acknowledging already existing problems related to climate change. Although both EPP and ALDE highlighted the cruciality of the Paris Climate Agreement and its goals, ALDE highlighted the Sustainable Development Goals, the Chicago Convention and the EU ETS as well.

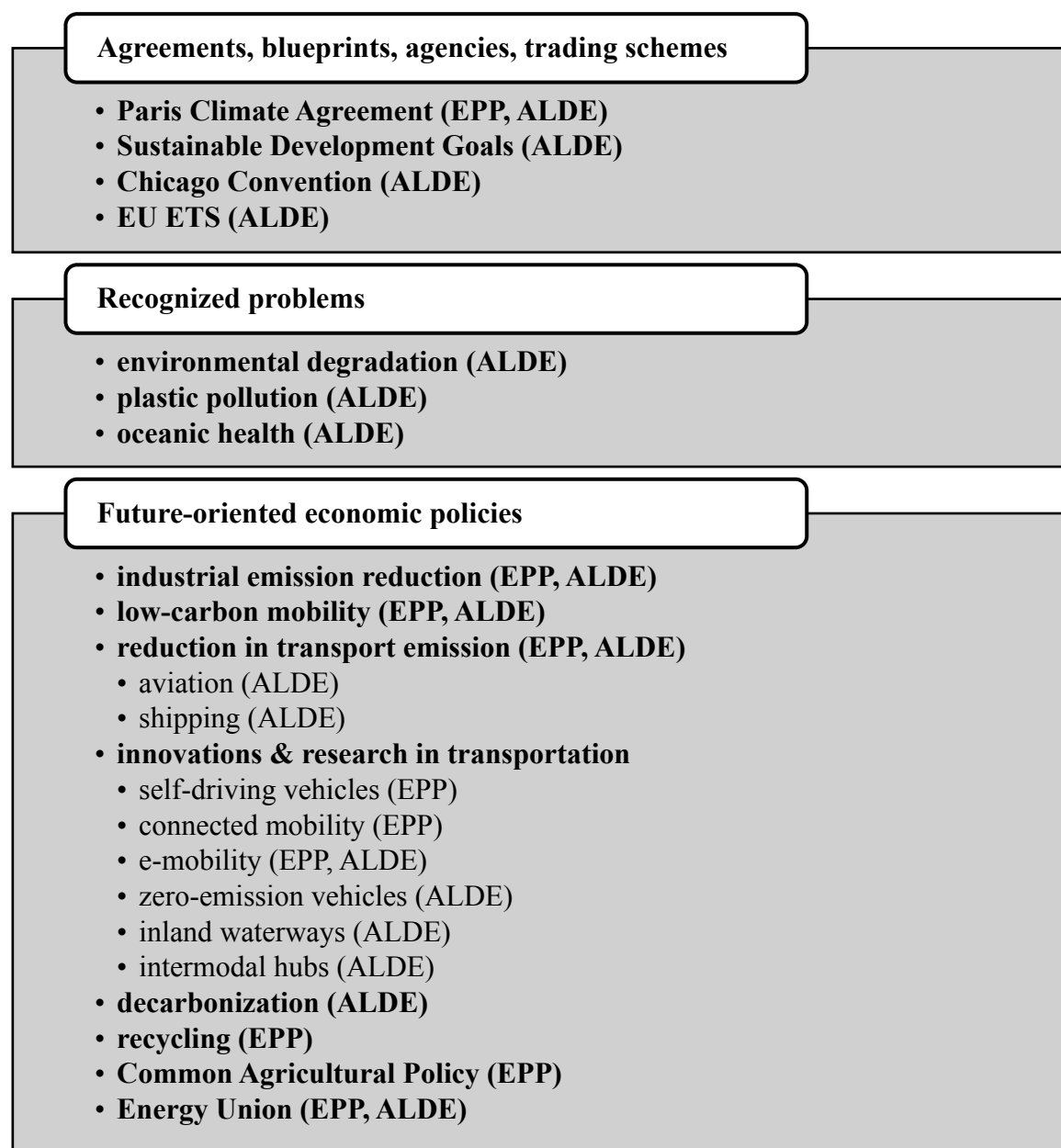


Figure 5.: Coded categories and subcategories in the component “Climate change”.

Role of women in society

The EPP manifesto stresses equal opportunities for women in the labor market, along with equal payment. Furthermore, parents' options as both care-givers and employees should be broadened; however, the EPP manifesto does not suggest concrete plans in this regard.

ALDE recognized gender equality in its manifesto as well, emphasizing the empowerment of women through the same rights and opportunities in their employment, including their economic participation and decision-making as well. Furthermore, the political group called for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and condemned gender-based violence and sexual harassment, advocating sexual and reproductive health care services that are accessible, and affordable. Furthermore, ALDE proposed regular assessment of workplace practices and existing public policies to ensure that the rights of women are not harmed within the EU.

While the role of women in society did not appear in the manifestos of the EFDD and ECR, both EPP and ALDE shared their opinion in this regard, although EPP solely emphasized equal payment. ALDE, however, urged the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and proposed policies in terms of health care and a continued assessment of existing policies and workplace practices as well.

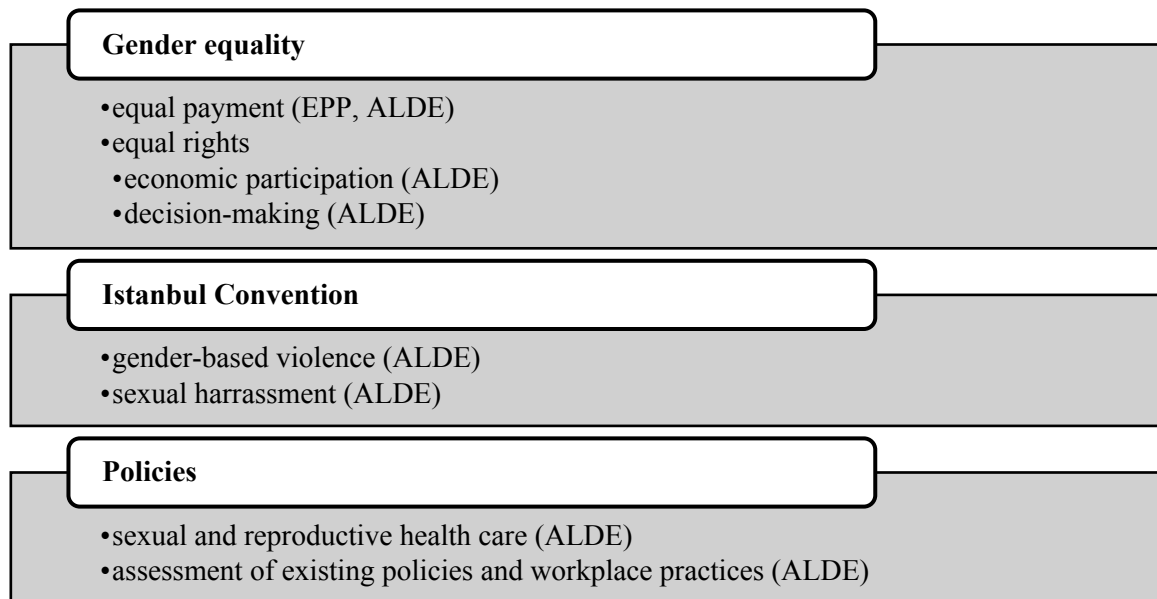


Figure 6.: Coded categories and subcategories in the component “Role of women in society”.

Language

Language and linguistical diversity of the European Union is only mentioned once in the manifesto of the EPP in historical context as a shared heritage, while it is also emphasized once in the ALDE-manifesto, as well as in the EFDD-manifesto, stressing its diversity is a strength of Europe.

Language did not appear in the ECR manifesto in any context and was solely mentioned in terms of linguistic diversity in the other analyzed manifestos as well.

CONCLUSION

Summary Of Findings

The present exploratory, qualitative analysis aimed to reveal shared and distinct elements in the manifestos of four political groups present in the European Parliament, namely EPP, ALDE, EFDD, and ECR. Core components were operationalized according to which excerpts from pre-election manifestos were collected and analyzed. The textual analysis revealed that all previously determined components were mentioned in the analyzed manifestos; however, in particular cases, not in all of them. “Religion” did not appear in any context in the manifestos of ALDE and ECR, “Climate change” and “Role of women in society” was not discussed by EFDD and ECR, while “Language” did not occur in the ECR manifesto either.

“Localism” presented a diverse set of themes, where all analyzed political groups presented numerous proposals. Citizen-centered recommendations were emphasized the most, in which digitalization received a crucial role, followed by the jurisdiction of Member States, wherein ECR and EFDD suggested plans to strengthen Member State rights, while ALDE criticized their fund spending and called for sanction enforcement in the cases of Member States with authoritarian tendencies. The EPP in this regard stood for integration and emphasized the role of Member States in infrastructure development.

In terms of “other political entities/ideologies,” all manifestos emphasized numerous countries and political actions of concern. The manifesto of the EPP was the only one, where threats in general appeared, while the EFDD and the ECR both concentrated on the European Union as a conglomerate to be urgently improved.

“Whiteness” as a main component included topics related to migration, asylum, and refugees. While migration and asylum management were a shared topic in the manifestos of EPP, ALDE and ECR and border protection appeared in all analyzed texts, integration in this regard

appeared only by the EPP and ALDE; furthermore, ALDE was the sole political group, which was concerned with refugee protection.

“Patriotism” emerged in most cases in the manifestos of the EPP and ALDE, while receiving only marginal mentions by the EFDD and ECR. “Climate change” as a component exhibited the same tendencies, although more visibly since this topic did not appear in the manifestos of EFDD and ECR at any point. However, it was discussed at length by ALDE, paired with numerous concrete proposals, whereas the EPP acknowledged its existence and proposed several policies, mainly in the area of future-oriented transportation.

“Religion,” which did not appear in the manifestos of ALDE and ECR, while the EPP solely emphasized Christianity as a shared value of the European Union and a fundamental part of European principles, while EFDD chose the path of terming religion as a basis of distinction from “others” by the example of Turkey and for the reason of emphasizing border protection. The “role of women in society” solely appeared in the manifestos of EPP and ALDE. The prior stressed the importance of equal payments, while the latter focused on numerous other issues, such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, equality in other regards, such as economic rights and decision-making, and suggested a continued policy- and workplace practice monitoring, while advocating enhancements in the healthcare of women as well.

Lastly, the component “Language” appeared with the least emphasis among the analyzed manifestos; the EPP, ALDE, and EFDD mentioned it in the context of linguistic diversity, while it did not appear in the manifesto of the ECR.

Limitations

The present thesis concentrated on analyzing political groups’ manifestos emerging before the 2019 European Parliament elections. In this regard, the texts of the EPP, ALDE, EFDD and

ECR were explored and evaluated; however, the political group of Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) was not present in the analysis, since it did not disclose a manifesto before the elections. Furthermore, the study concentrated on manifestos published before the 2019 elections.

Further Studies

The present results could be enhanced and explored in greater detail through multiple comparisons. First, the presently evaluated manifestos can be put into historical context through the analysis of previously published ones to see the ideological development of the analyzed political groups. Furthermore, the content of the evaluated texts can be compared to the member-manifestos of each political group to analyze possible commonalities and differences as well. Lastly, comparisons with the views of other political groups of the European Parliament can possibly reveal insights in terms of shared thoughts and crucial differences.

In order to develop this study further, it would be useful to analyze each party members of these four groups representing right-wing movement. This would determine the similarities and differences, as well create a more representing image of what makes up ‘Europeanness’ or European Identity from their perspective.

Discussions

Climate change was not initially included in the main components of this study, due to the concern whether it can be part of the European Identity rhetoric, also considering the fact most of the right-wing populist parties deny the existence of climate change. However, in the process

of analyzing manifestos, the only party that has mentioned it was the EPP (almost at the end of their manifesto climate change was mentioned 5 times). Yet, Fidesz, the Hungarian governmental party who has a seat in the EPP, consequently denies its existence (MTI-Hungary, 2019). This shows us that each separate party members of four right-wing groups of European Parliament do not necessarily share similar vision and this could be further developed into another subject study.

To sum it up, as Muddle (2007) says these right-wing parties support the basic EU principles and do not completely reject it as a whole, however it is the fear of losing the 'pure' national identity, in case Europe would turn into multiculturalism.

Individuals that support the anti-immigration rhetoric of right-wing parties tend to overestimate the real number of immigrants because of the perceived threat that creates such support for right-wing, but not the actual threat itself (Sides and Citrin, 2007). Norris (2005) notes right-wing parties have been quite successful in making mainstream parties use the anti-immigrant rhetoric which eventually led to change of regulations in immigration in Denmark, Austria, Netherlands and France.

Bardeli (2016) describes European Identity as a process of acknowledging the diversity, different cultures and recognizing the notion of citizenship, which is a part of European image – an ability of different national identities to coexist and respect their differences in Europe. In order to promote the sense of European Identity, European Commission (2012) suggest to participate in collective activities, to join a social movement and to have a common goal.

Abstract

This thesis uses Grounded Theory approaches to analyze manifestos of the populist right-wing group members of the European Parliament in a recent pre-election campaign of May 2019. Party manifestos of European People's Party (EPP), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) were analyzed using descriptive coding which helped to detect the broad categories of topic's main components that includes: Whiteness; Language; Religion; Patriotism; Localism; Women role in society; Climate Change and other Political Entities/Ideologies.

The document analysis revealed that all previously determined components of European Identity were mentioned in the analyzed manifestos; however, in particular cases, not in all of them. "Role of women in society" was not discussed by EFDD and ECR, while "Language" did not occur in the ECR manifesto either and "Whiteness" as a main component that included topics related to migration, asylum, and refugees was a shared topic in the manifestos of EPP, ALDE and ECR and border protection appeared in all analyzed texts, integration in this regard appeared only by the EPP and ALDE; furthermore, ALDE was the sole political group, which was concerned with refugee protection.

Abstrakt

Diese Dissertation verwendet die Grounded Theory, um Manifeste der rechtspopulistischen Fraktionsmitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments im Rahmen eines Wahlkampfs im Mai 2019 zu analysieren. Parteimanifeste der Europäischen Volkspartei (EVP), der Allianz der Liberalen und Demokraten für Europa (ALDE), des Europas der Freiheit und der direkten Demokratie (EFDD) und Europäischen Konservativen und Reformer (EKR) wurden unter Verwendung einer deskriptiven Kodierung analysiert, die dazu beitrug das breite Spektrum zu erfassen. Dadurch ließen sich bestimmte Kategorien oder Kernthemen identifizieren, die sich wie folgt zusammenfassen lassen: Weißsein; Sprache; Religion; Patriotismus; Lokalität; die Frauenrolle in der Gesellschaft; Klimawandel und andere politische Einheiten / Ideologien.

Die Dokumentenanalyse ergab, dass alle zuvor ermittelten Bestandteile der europäischen Identität in den analysierten Manifesten erwähnt wurden. In bestimmten Fällen jedoch nicht in allen. „Die Rolle der Frau in der Gesellschaft“ wurde von EFDD und EKR nicht diskutiert, während „Sprache“ auch im ECR-Manifest nicht vorkam und „Weißsein“ als Hauptkomponente, die Themen in Bezug auf Migration, Asyl und Flüchtlinge beeinflusste. Gemeinsamkeiten der Themenbereiche ließen sich in Bezug auf Grenzschutz in den Manifesten der EVP, von ALDE sowie bei ECR in den vorgelegten Konzepten analysierten. Integration wurde nur von der EVP und von ALDE besprochen. Darüber hinaus war ALDE die einzige Fraktion, die sich mit dem Schutz von Flüchtlingen befasste.

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