NO MIGRANTS, NO SCHENGEN: HOW RIGHT-WING POLITICAL PARTIES ARE INCREASING THEIR POPULARITY IN EUROPE

IED Research Project: "Migration, borders control and solidarity: Schengen at stake?"

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Abstract: This working paper seeks to answer the question why right-wing parties have increased in popularity following the European migrant crisis and the re-establishment of temporary borders control in some EU countries since 2015. Focusing on five EU Member States that have re-established borders check (i.e. France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark), this working paper also analyses to what extent mainstream parties in power in the aforementioned countries have been influenced by right-wing parties' claims concerning migrant policies and the return to internal borders control in order to tackle their drop in popularity, to safeguard their leadership, and to reduce the increasing support towards right-wing parties. Last, this working paper speculates on future developments of the EU and the Schengen system and what the EU should do to prevent the spread of populist and xenophobic movements.

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Introduction

In 2015, the European Union (EU) faced the biggest migration crisis since World War II, with more than one million people seeking asylum status within the EU's borders. This crisis was still a worrying issue in the first six months of 2016 with more and more people trying to enter the EU crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa, and through the so-called Balkan route from Turkey and Greece. The bulk of asylum seekers come from Syria, which has displaced around 12 million people since 2011. Moreover, migrants also come from other conflict and post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia but also countries with a high rate of unemployment and social restrictions such as Iran. The situation is crucial if we consider that the EU and its Member States have been struggling to find a joint solution in order to solve this crisis for many months. Indeed, some EU countries are more affected by the migrant pressure than others, and this may explain why the EU does not find an agreed policy among Member States on how to tackle this issue. The influx of migrants has put the Schengen Agreement under pressure and some analysts speculate that the free-circulation of people and goods would be at risk. Currently, six Schengen Members (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and non-EU member Norway) have re-established temporary borders control following the migrant crisis. In 2015, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban ordered to close the border with Serbia and Croatia, and to build a fence along its borders in

order to bar migrants[1]. In January 2016, he also called for the building of a fence along the border of Macedonia and Bulgaria with Greece and stated the following: "If we cannot secure the outer border [of the EU], regardless of how costly or demanding that is, we will destroy the Schengen regime by ourselves"[2]. The Germany's Economics Minister, Gerd Muller, argued that "the protection of external borders is not working", and that hence Schengen has collapsed[3].

To have worsened the Schengen's issue, it was also the dramatic rise of the terrorist threat throughout Europe, shown by two terrorist attacks carried out in Paris (January and November 2015), one in Brussels (March 2016), and also by the thwarted attack on the Thalys train Amsterdam-Paris in August 2015.

Facing the migrant crisis and the terrorist threat, it is clear that the EU appears to be weak not only because its ineffectiveness in solving the migrant crisis has undermined the image of the EU founded on the principle of human rights and solidarity, but also because the prevention from terrorist attacks has given room to Eurosceptic and populist claims promoted by right-wing political parties which link the national security issues to the on-going influx of migrants. In particular, as will be explored in this working paper, most right-wing political parties in Europe urge the end of the Schengen system, and then the closure of EU internal borders in order to stop the inflow of migrants and to prevent terrorist attacks, which according to right-wing and populist discourses represent two sides of the same coin. In fact, one of the main populist claims is to blame the Schengen system not only for the exacerbation of the migrant crisis, but also for the opportunity given to terrorists both to move freely across Europe and to exit and return with ease the EU.

According to recent election results and polls, indeed, the migrant crisis and the terrorist attacks seem to be the reason of the new rise in popularity of right-wing political parties

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[1] Patrick, Kingsley. "Migrants on Hungary's border fence: 'This wall, we will not accept it'" in *The Guardian*. 22 June 2015. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/migrants-hungary-border-fence-wall-serbia
[2] "Schengen kaput? 'Possibility exists' EU leaders will reintroduce internal border controls" in *RT*. 25 January 2016. See at: https://www.rt.com/news/330030-schengen-borders-reintroduce-eu/
[3] Ibid.

throughout Europe. However, it should be pointed out that discourses connecting immigration to security promoted by right-wing parties are not a new feature in Europe. In fact, after 11 September 2001 and the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London respectively in 2004 and in 2005, right-wing parties found on those attacks a fertile ground for their political discourses. However, the shift to right that the EU has witnessed in recent years has put at risk not only the Schengen system, but also the existence of the EU itself. May the EU be also responsible for this shift to right? This working paper seeks to analyse why right-wing political parties have increased their popularity in the light of recent historical developments such as the massive influx of migrants entering Europe since 2015, the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels respectively in 2015 and in 2016, and the re-establishment of temporary borders control. Moreover, this working paper also explores to what extent the rise in popularity of right-wing political parties throughout Europe has influenced both the political agenda of their respective incumbent governments and of the EU concerning migrant policies and borders control. In order to assess it, I will show whether some right-wing parties' requests have forced mainstream parties to shift to right both at national and European level. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: Why right-wing political parties have increased in popularity in Europe following the migrant crisis and the terrorist attacks? What has been the impact of the rise in popularity of right-wing political parties in Europe following the migrant crisis and the terrorist attacks since 2015?

This paper takes into account the case of those EU Member States that have suspended the Schengen Agreement since the end of 2015, namely France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark.

1. **Right-Wing Political Parties in Europe**

It should be pointed out that there is not a universal agreement in the academia that defines right-wing political parties, which according to different circumstances may be called right-wing populist, extreme right, far right, radical right, national populist, etc[4]. In this working paper, I simply use the objective word "right-wing" since, although these parties do not have a

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[4] John (Jack), Malone. "Examining the Rise of Right Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe" (2014). Honors Theses. Paper 45. http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses/45

homogeneous background, they share several common issues that characterise a right-wing ideology[5]. Generally, right-wing is defined "as an ideology that accepts or supports a system of social hierarchy or social inequality". This belief in social hierarchy is demonstrated by the limitation of total rejection of immigration[6]. Right-wing parties, however, have not a homogenous ideology, and some of them are inspired by "inter-war fascism" and others by "post-industrial extreme right politics"[7]. Nevertheless, the agenda that all these right-wing political parties have been sharing for the last decades deals with anti-immigration, anti-Islamism, Euroscepticism, emphasis on national identity and security[8].

As mentioned, right-wing political parties promoting anti-migrant policies have not recently emerged in Europe. In fact, since two decades Europe has witnessed their successful development, though they have had a marginal influence both in the national and international political scene. Particularly, the 1990s have been characterised by the establishment of some right-wing political parties, which may be arisen in the European political scene due to several factors such as the increasing immigration towards West Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the 11th September 2001, Muslim migrants became the primary focus of right-wing parties, inaugurating a new debate that links immigration to crime and terrorism[9]. Since recent years, however, many European countries have experienced not only the emergence of new right-wing parties, but also the rise in popularity of traditional right-wing parties, which have started to develop discourses combining the increasing immigration to terrorist attacks. Some analysts also link the economic crisis and the austerity measures to the rising electoral support towards right-wing political parties promoting anti-migrant and anti-EU policies (e.g. Golden Dawn in Greece), but it is also true that not all countries that have experienced a bailout programme developed right-wing political parties (e.g. Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Cyprus)[10].

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[5] Ibid., p. 16.

[6] Ibid., p. 11.

[7] Montserrat, Guibernau. "Migration and the rise of radical right. Social malaise and the failure of mainstream politics". Policy Network Paper. March 2010. p. 4.

[8] John (Jack), Malone. "Examining the Rise of Right Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe" (2014). Honors Theses. Paper 45. http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses/45

[9] Selcen Öner. "Different manifestations of the rise of rise of far-right in European Politics: The cases of Germany and Austria" in *Marmara Journal of European Studies*. Volume 22 No: 2. 2014. p. 89.

[10] See: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/08/22/contrary-to-popular-opinion-europe-has-not-seen-a-rise-in-far-right-support-since-the-start-of-the-crisis/

However, it should be noted that since the last decade these parties started to operate within the constitutional framework of their respective state, and they apparently do not aim to replace liberal democracy with an authoritarian regime but just to struggle against the current functioning of democracy[11].

2. The EU, the Schengen System, and Freedom of Movement

The concept behind the right to freedom of movement is the same concept behind the principles of the EU. In fact, the end of freedom of movement of people and goods within the EU may lead to the end of the EU itself. In fact, although its concept has changed several times throughout the twentieth century, freedom of movement represents one of the most fundamental rights that constitute the identity of the EU. Before the foundation of the EU as is known nowadays, freedom of movement was already object of discussion among European states. The Treaty of Paris in 1951, which established the European Coal and Steel Community, ensured freedom of movement of workers within these industries[12]. The Treaty of Rome in 1957, which created the European Economic Community (EEC), aimed *inter alia* at ensuring freedom of movement and establishment of workers within the community through the creation of a common market among its Members (i.e. France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries)[13]. However, it is the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 that, with the creation of the EU and introducing the concept of EU citizenship, established the basis to freedom of movement within the member states to all EU citizens who are not only workers or self-employed[14]. Indeed, two Schengen Agreements - the first in 1985 and the other in 1990 - which preceded the Treaty of Maastricht, led to the creation of an internal market where citizens and goods are able to move freely thanks to the abolishment of internal borders control[15]. At the time of writing, there are 26 Schengen member states: all EU Member States (with the exception of Cyprus, UK, Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia), plus 4 non-EU Members (i.e. Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway,

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[11] Guibernau, "Migration and the rise of radical right", p. 4.
[12] *Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community*. Paris, 18 April 1951.
[13] *Treaty establishing the European Economic Community*. Rome, 25 March 1957.
[14] *Treaty on European Union*. Maastricht, 7 February 1992.
[15] European Union, *Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic, on the Gradual Abolition of Checks at their Common Borders ("Schengen Implementation Agreement")*, 19 June 1990.

Iceland). The Schengen Borders Code allows Schengen Members to re-establish borders control in particular circumstances such as "serious threat to public policy or internal security"[16]. However, the reintroduction of borders control should "remain an exception" and "respect the principle of proportionality", and "used a measure of last resort"[17]. The duration of temporary borders control should be just limited to tackle the threat in question in a specific amount of time. In particular, as provided by article 23 and 24 of the Schengen Borders Code, temporary borders control should be limited to thirty day, after which may be extended for other thirty days up to six months in case of "foreseeable duration of the threat"[18]. Article 26 of the Schengen Border Code deals with cases of "serious deficiencies" in the control of EU's external borders which would put at risk the overall functioning of the Schengen Area. According to this, the Council of the EU may recommend "that one or more Member States decide to reintroduce border control at all or at specific parts of their internal borders"[19].

3. The Case of France

In 2015, France registered 70,570 first time asylum applicants, resulting to be ranked the sixth country with the highest number of applications in the EU in that year[20]. However, the bulk of migrants consider France as "unwelcoming and economically depressed", and for this reason the country has been mostly seen by them as a crossing point to reach the UK through the Eurotunnel[21]. The attempt to reach the UK brought thousands of migrants to live in makeshift camps known as "the Jungle" near Calais[22]. What is clear is that in a society characterised by a high rate of unemployment, and where security was put repeatedly at stake, France has not been

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[16] Regulation (EC) No 562/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 establishing a Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] "Asylum in the EU Member States Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis: top citizenships" in *Eurostat News Release*. 44/2016. 4 March 2016. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6
[21] Henry, Samuel. "Refugees shun France, land of red tape, unemployment and poor housing" in *The Telegraph*. 21 Septemebr 2015. See at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11880391/Refugees-shun-France-land-of-red-tape-unemployment-and-poor-housing.html
[22] "Why is there a crisis in Calais?" in *BBC* News. 3 October 2015. See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29074736

immune by the development of anti-migrant sentiments. Indeed, the *National Front* (*FN*) was one of the first right-wing and anti-EU parties in Europe promoting anti-migrant policies, particularly Muslim immigration from North Africa and the Middle East. The party, which was founded in the 1970s by Jean-Marie Le Pen, rose in popularity when his daughter, Marine Le Pen, became the party's leader in 2011. In fact, following the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the subsequent influx of migrants coming from the North Africa and the Middle East, polls suggested that Marine Le Pen would have won the 2012 Presidential elections with the 23% of vote[23]. Although the *FN* came third with the 17.9% of the vote in the first round of the 2012 elections, the result was the best showing for this party since its emergence. The party's support definitely increased not only following the 2015 migrant crisis, but also following the two terrorist attacks which struck Paris in January and November 2015. Indeed, the ability of Marine Le Pen's *FN*, as many other right-wing political parties and leaders in Europe, was to associate, in a populist manner, the influx of migrant to the increasing Islamic radicalism. In fact, although the *FN*'s slogans seek to move away from "the racist, jackbooted, anti-Semitic imagery of the past" in order to broad its electorate, its concern towards Islam and immigration has not changed, and since the Paris attack their political discourses are mostly focused on "the migrant crisis, security, and radicalisation"[24]. In this regard, the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015 perpetrated by militants who claimed to be associated to the Islamic State (ISIS) embittered the fears that potential terrorists may enter Europe hiding themselves among the migrants[25]. Indeed, it was speculated that one the minds of the Paris attacks in November, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who had trained himself on the ground in Syria, exploited the migrant influx to return to Europe through Greece, concealing himself among asylum seekers[26].

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[23] Nick, Squires. "Marine Le Pen planning Italy trip to condemn North African refugees" in *The Telegraph*. 08 March 2011. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8369131/Marine-Le-Pen-planning-Italy-trip-to-condemn-North-African-refugees.html

[24] Angelique, Chrisafis. "Marine Le Pen's Front National makes political gains after Paris attacks" in *The Guardian*. 1 December 2015. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/01/marine-le-pen-front-national-political-gains-paris-attacks

[25] Esmé E, Deprez. "Political Asylum" in *Bloomberg QuickTake*. Updated March 9, 2016 9:08 PM UTC. See at: http://www.bloombergview.com/quicktake/political-asylum

[26] Gordon, Rayner. "Paris attacks: How Europe's migrant crisis gave terrorist Abdelhamid Abaaoud the perfect cover" in *The Telegraph*. 19 November 2015. See at:
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/12006713/paris-attacks-europe-migrant-crisis-terrorist-abdelhamid-abaaoud.html

Moreover, the finding of a Syrian passport next to the body of one of the attackers, which was registered by migrant officials in the Greek Island of Leros few months earlier the attacks, strengthened the fear that migration and terrorism may be interconnected[27]. Although it has not been proved whether the founded passport was true or fake, the leader of the *FN* called the country to "take back control of their borders and annihilate Islamist fundamentalism"[28]. After the Paris attacks, Marine Le Pen stated that the terrorist attacks were the results of "government inaction, lies, and, above all, 'its crazy undiscerning immigration policy'"[29]. It is noteworthy to mention that the rise in popularity of Marine Le Pen should be also regarded considering that, although she had moderate her tone after the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo and on a kosher supermarket carried out in January 2015, after the November attacks she claimed that "the disaster she had long predicted had finally arrived"[30]. The government's inability to prevent other attacks convinced more people to support the *FN* at the regional elections held less than a month later the November attacks. What is crucial is that the *FN* benefited from the French President Francois Hollande's adoption of "hardline security measures" in response to the Paris attacks, since they were measures that have been always fostered by the French right-wing party, including "borders control, more armed police, and revoking the citizenship of convicted terrorists with dual nationality who were born in France"[31]. In fact, Le Pen stated that the government's measures taken after the attacks were "picked from the saddlebag of the Front National", which underlined the influence and political relevance that the *FN* has in France[32].

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[27] Carol J. Williams. "The Paris terrorist attacks cast new suspicion on Syria's migrants" in *Los Angeles Times*. 15 November 2015. See at: http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-paris-attacks-migrants-20151114-story.html
[28] Ibid.
[29] Angelique, Chrisafis. "Marine Le Pen's Front National makes political gains after Paris attacks" in *The Guardian*. 1 December 2015. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/01/marine-le-pen-front-national-political-gains-paris-attacks
[30] Adam, Nossiter. "Marine Le Pen's Anti-Islam Message Gains Influence in France" in *The New York Times*. 15 November 2015. See at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/world/europe/marine-le-pens-anti-islam-message-gains-influence-in-france.html?_r=0
[31] Angelique, Chrisafis. "Marine Le Pen's Front National makes political gains after Paris attacks" in *The Guardian*. 1 December 2015. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/01/marine-le-pen-front-national-political-gains-paris-attacks pen-front-national-political-gains-paris-attacks
[32] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Hollande's political response to the Paris attacks borrowing the *FN*'s claims may also explain his slight rise in popularity at the regional elections[33]. However, this political choice raised the question whether the French government's strategy was carried out only for managing an emergency situation, or whether the party government, the *Socialist Party*, feared to have a strong defeat at the regional elections which would have affected its leadership at national level. Nevertheless, although in the first round of regional elections the *FN* was ranked as "the most popular party in France", in the second round the right-wing party did not triumph in any region[34]. However, the *FN* turned to be the second major political force in France gaining around 6.6 million of votes, and the Socialist Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, stated that "the danger of the far right has not been removed" in the light of the 2017 presidential elections[35]. In particular, Valls stated that Europe cannot accommodate so many refugees and that "if stricter controls were not imposed on the EU's external borders, then people would say enough of Europe"[36]. At the time of writing, France has extended temporary borders control until the 26th July 2016, officially not to tackle the entrance of migrants in France, but to face the terrorist threat in the light of international sporting events[37].

4. The Case of Germany

With 441 800 applications, Germany represented the country with the highest number of first asylum applications in the EU in 2015[38]. In September 2015, the statement of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to welcome all Syrian refugees in Germany, was seen with praise by many people throughout Europe. However, this act of solidarity towards people running away

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[33] "French trust in Hollande grows after Paris attacks" in *Reuters*. 1 December 2015. See at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-politics-hollande-idUSKBN0TK5DH20151201

[34] Angelique, Chrisafis. "French elections: Front National makes no gains in final round" in *The Guardian*. 14 December 2014. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/13/front-national-fails-to-win-control-of-target-regions-amid-tactical-voting

[35] Ibid.

[36] "Migrant crisis: France Valls warns on refugee numbers" in *BBC News*. See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34904931

[37] See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/index_en.htm

[38] "Asylum in the EU Member States Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis: top citizenships" in *Eurostat News Release*. 44/2016. 4 March 2016. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6

from war and destruction also triggered strong criticisms not only in Europe, but also in Germany, since these words were interpreted as an encouragement for more people to reach out the EU. In this regard, the right-wing party *Alternative for Germany* (*AfD*), founded in 2013 as an anti-EU party and led by Frauke Petry, turned to be a controversial anti-immigration party which strongly criticised Merkel's open policy[39]. At national level, however, the *AfD* does not only focus on the criticism of the government's refugee policies and the call for the reintroduction of border checks, but also fosters "a referendum on Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and immediate suspension of sanctions towards Russia"[40]. It should be remarked that as many other right-wing parties throughout Europe, the *AfD*'s consensus took advantage from the government's "failure to coordinate migrant burden-sharing across the European Union"[41]. In fact, in September 2015 the *AfD* was polled at 2%, whereas in April 2016 was suggested at 14%, becoming the third largest party of the country in view of the 2017 Presidential elections. Between 2014 and 2015, this party won seats not only in Regional Parliaments, but also elected seven MPs after the European Parliament election. The political campaign of the regional elections held in March 2016 was a test on Merkel's management of the migrant crisis, and the *AfD* carried out a campaign based on slogans such as "Secure the borders" and "Stop the asylum chaos"[42]. The outcome of these elections resulted in an "unprecedented success" of this right-wing party, which gained more consensus and seats in three German states[43]. For example, in Saxony-Anhalt, the *AfD* won the 24.2 % of the vote becoming the second largest party behind Merkel's *CDU* that gained the 29.8%. Moreover, it should be pointed out that in these elections, the *AfD* overtook the number of supporters of the mainstream centre-left *Social Democratic Party* (*SPD*) in both Saxony-Anhalt and Baden-

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[39] "Rise of AfD is about more than the refugee crisis, but Angela Merkel is no more secure for that" in *Independent*. 15 March 2016. See at: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/rise-of-afd-is-about-more-than-the-refugee-crisis-but-angela-merkel-is-no-more-secure-for-that-a6931376.html

[40] Katrina, Gibbs. "Rifts, Racism, and Refugees: The German Elections and the Syrian Refugee Crisis" in *Alternative International Journal*. 1 April 2016. See at: http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article4458

[41] Alexander, Saeedy. "Germany's Far-Right AfD Party Is Scaring Europe, And Rising in the Polls" in *Vice News*. 11 March 2016. See at: https://news.vice.com/article/germanys-far-right-afd-party-is-scaring-europe-and-rising-in-the-polls

[42] "Angela Merkel's CDU suffers German state election setbacks" in *BBC News*. 13 March 2016. See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35796831

[43] Ibid.

Wurttemberg[44]. Certainly, the Paris attacks in November 2015 had also a strong backlash in Germany. In fact, political discourses similarly developed in France after the attacks were made in Germany not only by right-wing parties, but also by some politicians close to Merkel's *CDU* that pointed their fingers against the German open-door policy which would put at stake national security. For example, a member of the sister's *CDU*, the *Christian Social Union*, and Bavarian state Finance Minister, stressed that Germany "cannot allow illegal and uncontrolled border crossing to continue" since it is not clear who enters the country[45]. On the other side, the German government, through its Interior Minister, urged not to make comparison between the terrorist attacks and the migrants seeking asylum into the country since they deal with these issues separately[46].

Another feature that has characterised the rise in popularity of the *AfD*, which is also a common aspect with the Marine Le Pen's *FN* in France, is the apparent detachment from the use of a racist and extreme language and the expulsion of radical members. In Germany, the public opinion is still very sensitive from the German Nazi's crimes of the past, and any supporting references to Adolf Hitler would not only constitute a crime, but would also represent the drop in popularity for a political party. Nevertheless, many people consider the *AfD* a racist party, given the fact that some racist statements of some members were not punished with the expulsion from the party. Moreover, the *AfD* shares many ideas with the Islamophobic German movement, *Pegida*, which fosters *inter alia* the deportation of migrants from Germany, particularly Muslim migrants[47]. It has been argued that "So long as Merkel fails to deliver a comprehensive political platform on refugees, migration, and integration, AfD will benefit"[48]. Merkel said that "the future of Europe is at stake" and that the return to nationalism can be stopped if the EU secures

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[44] Katrina, Gibbs. "Rifts, Racism, and Refugees: The German Elections and the Syrian Refugee Crisis" in *Alternative International Journal.* 1 April 2016. See at: http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article4458
[45] Carol J. Williams. "The Paris terrorist attacks cast new suspicion on Syria's migrants" in *Los Angeles Times.* 15 November 2015. See at: http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-paris-attacks-migrants-20151114-story.html
[46] Ibid.
[47] Katrina, Gibbs. "Rifts, Racism, and Refugees: The German Elections and the Syrian Refugee Crisis" in *Alternative International Journal.* 1 April 2016. See at: http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article4458
[48] Alexander, Saeedy. "Germany's Far-Right AfD Party Is Scaring Europe, And Rising in the Polls" in *Vice News.* 11 March 2016. See at: https://news.vice.com/article/germanys-far-right-afd-party-is-scaring-europe-and-rising-in-the-polls

its external borders and guarantees freedom of movement and the Schengen system[49]. However, although the EU-Turkey deal, which aims to return to Turkey migrant entering illegally the EU, was strongly encouraged by the German government, this deal was not supported by most of German people according to polls[50]. Indeed, Merkel is under pressure considering the polls in the light of the 2017 Presidential elections, and although she had previously announced that Germany would have granted asylum to Syrians, the country closed the border with Austria in order to stop the flooding of migrants into Germany on the 12th May 2016. At the time of writing these temporary measures are planned to be implemented until the 12th November 2016, like in the case of Austria[51].

5. The case of Austria

Austria received a dramatic number of asylum applications in 2015 (around 85,500 applications) considering that in 2013 received only 17,520 in a country of around 10 million people. These figures show that Austria was ranked the fourth country in the EU after Germany, Hungary, and Sweden for asylum applications in 2015.[52] The high number of asylum seekers entering Austria in 2015 has also determined the rise in popularity of the *Freedom Party* (*FPÖ*), which deems the influx of migrants a threat not only to the "traditional Austrian values", but also to the job market[53]. Like many other right-wing parties throughout Europe, the *FPÖ* emerged in the 1990s under the leadership of Jörg Haider, receiving the 22.5% of the vote in the 1994 Parliamentary election. Since then, the *FPÖ* has continued to be a popular party in Austria with a vote share never below 10% of the vote. In 1999, it became the second major party in Austria

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[49] Justin, Huggler. "Germany's far-Right AfD party 'has more public support than ever" in *The Telegraph*. 5 may 2016. See at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/05/germanys-far-right-afd-party-has-more-public-support-than-ever/

[50] "Most Germans oppose EU migrant deal with 'untrustworthy' Turkey – poll" in *RT*. 8 April 2016. See at: https://www.rt.com/news/338940-eu-turkey-german-poll/

[51] See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/index_en.htm

[52] "Asylum in the EU Member States Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis: top citizenships" in *Eurostat News Release*. 44/2016. 4 March 2016. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6

[53] George, Jahn."Migrant influx boosts right-wing in key Austrian election" in *AP*. 8 October 2015. See at: http://bigstory.ap.org/article/7f672eb850474f99942cce301e660e63/migrant-influx-boosts-right-wing-key-austrian-election

after receiving the 27% of the vote at the national elections. However, in 2002 its support dropped to 10% after that "the FPÖ's-ÖVP coalition government was widely criticized when it failed to deliver its promises to reduce taxes"[54]. In 2004, Haider left the party and Heinz-Christian Strache became the new leader. Since then, the *FPÖ* again started to gain support from Austrian people.

It is arguable that immigration has always been at the core of the *FPÖ*'s agenda. In fact, since the 1990s this right-wing party has been demanding to include "more rigorous measures against immigration, more efficient borders controls and expansion of the police force"[55]. Some of these demands, such as the "Alien Law Package", passed during the FPÖ's-ÖVP coalition government in 2002 since there was a fear that the *FPÖ* could take a leading role in the Austrian political scene[56].

The recent migrant crisis has definitely contributed to the new increasing popularity of the *FPÖ*, which now aspires to guide the country. In the late September 2015, the *FPÖ* won 30.4 % of the vote in the state of Upper Austria, getting closer to the centrist conservative Austrian People's Party (*ÖVP*) which, although received 36.4% of the vote, lost 10.4% of preferences in respect to previous elections[57]. In October, the election in Vienna bestowed another important result for the *FPÖ*, which achieved 31% against the 39.5% of the *Social Democratic Party*, which was traditionally the most voted party in Vienna[58]. Taking as model Hungary's decision to build a border fence at the Serbian border in order to stop the influx of migrants, the *FPÖ* also believes that Austria should do the same together with "stricter border controls"[59]. The election results and polls started to warn mainstream parties on the increasing

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[54] John (Jack), Malone. "Examining the Rise of Right Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe" (2014). Honors Theses. Paper 45. http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/honors_theses/45, p. 30.

[55] Ibid., p. 31.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Melanie, Hall. "Austria's Right-wing populist party makes huge gains fuelled by migrant crisis fears" in *The Telegraph*. 28 September 2015. See at:
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/austria/11896406/Austrias-Right-wing-populist-party-makes-huge-gains-fuelled-by-migrant-crisis-fears.html

[58] "Refugee crisis fuels record result for Austrian far-right in Vienna elections" in *The Guardian*. 11 October 2015. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/11/social-democrats-win-vienna-election-despite-freedom-party-gains

[59] Melanie, Hall. "Austria's Right-wing populist party makes huge gains fuelled by migrant crisis fears" in *The Telegraph*. 28 September 2015. See at:

popularity of the *FPÖ* in the light of the 2016 Presidential elections. This fear may have influenced the Austrian government, ruled by the *Social Democratic Party*, to plan the introduction of stricter controls at the Brenner Pass (which connects Italy to Austria) consisting in a system of fences, lanes, and tents[60]. In fact, the work for tightening the border at the Brenner Pass has started in early April 2016 and has raised huge criticisms not only among EU institutions and refugee agencies, but also among Italian authorities claiming that these measure are contrary to Schengen regulations[61]. The European Commission through its spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud said: "If these plans were to materialize, then we would have to look at them very seriously. The Brenner Pass is essential for the freedom of movement within the European Union"[62]. However, the government's plan to stop the inflow of migrants in Austria did not stopped the rising of the *FPÖ*, which won the first round of the Presidential elections on 24 April 2016 with the 36% of the vote[63]. In case of victory at the second round, Norbert Hofer, the *FPÖ*'s candidate, promised to dissolve the Parliament before the Parliamentary election scheduled in 2018, considering that polls showed the *FPÖ* winning the 30% of the vote for parliamentary election[64]. The result of the first round was welcomed by other right-wing leaders throughout Europe, such as Marine Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and Matteo Salvini in Italy. Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, stated that "the result could have consequences for the border region between Austria and Italy"[65]. The Austrian Prime Minister belonging to the *Social Democrat Party*, Werner Faymann, stated that the result of the first round was a "clear signal to the government that we have to cooperate more strongly"[66]. In fact, few days after the result of the first round of the Presidential election, the Parliamentary passed a

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http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/austria/11896406/Austrias-Right-wing-populist-party-makes-huge-gains-fuelled-by-migrant-crisis-fears.html

[60] Kirsti, Knolle. "Austria to tighten checks at Italian border from June 1 at the latest" in *Reuters*. 12 April 2016. See at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-austria-idUSKCN0X90VE

[61] "Europe migrants: Austria builds Brenner border centre despite criticism" in *BBC News*. 12 April 2016. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36022914

[62] Kirsti, Knolle. "Austria to tighten checks at Italian border from June 1 at the latest" in *Reuters*. 12 April 2016. See at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-austria-idUSKCN0X90VE

[63] Philip, Oltermann. "Austrian far-right party's triumph in presidential poll could spell turmoil" in *The Guardian*. 25 April 2016. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/25/austrian-far-right-partys-triumph-presidential-poll-turmoil-norbert-hofer

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

controversial Refugee Law "that restricts the right of asylum" also to those escaping from war-zones, and allows the government to declare the state of emergency in case of a massive influx of migrants[67]. Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka justified this law stating that "Austria had no other choice as long as so many other EU members fail to do their part to limit the influx of migrants and refugees"[68]. Moreover, he declared that Austria "cannot shoulder the whole world's burden", and that the future of the Brenner Pass will also depend on the Italy's willingness to control the inflow of migrants across its borders[69]. Indeed, Austria has tightened its borders, which can be crossed only at authorised crossing border points since the 16th November 2015, and at the time of writing this decision has been extended until the 12th November 2016[70]. An independent candidate running for the Green Party narrowly won the second round of the Presidential election held at the end of May 2016, which witnessed for the first time the absence of mainstream parties. In fact, the *Green*'s candidate Van der Bellen won the 50.3% of the vote against the 49.7% of the vote of the *FPÖ*'s candidate Hofer. However, although many people breathed a sigh of relief in Europe for the failed victory of the *FPÖ* that seemed to be certain before Election Day, the two candidates were separated by only 31,000 votes, which represents a further warning for the future[71].

6. The Case of Sweden

Sweden is considered to be one of the most liberal countries in Europe in terms of immigration rules, but last historical developments have changed this record. Receiving 156,110 applications, which is a high figure considering that the country is populated by around 10 million inhabitants, Sweden represented the third country in the EU for number of first time

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[67] "Migrant crisis: Austria passes controversial new asylum law" in *BBC News*. 27 April 2016. See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36152927
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/index_en.htm
[71] Kate, Connolly. Philip, Oltermaan. Jon Henley. "Austria elects Green candidate as president in narrow defeat for far right" in *The Guardian*. 23 May 2016. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/far-right-candidate-defeated-austrian-presidential-election-norbert-hofer

asylum applications[72]. In the last years, Sweden has also experienced a rise in popularity of a right-wing party whose main focus is to limit the influx of migrants into the country: the *Sverigedemokraterna*, or *Sweden Democrats* (*SD*)[73]. However, it should be pointed out that the *SD*' increasing support already started before the beginning of the migrant crisis in 2015, since Sweden has been characterised by a massive inflow of migrants since the last decade. Indeed, the party gained visibility for the first time after the 2006 Municipal and County Council elections, when the *SD* registered a great success at local level[74], and at the 2010 General election when the party entered the Swedish Parliament for the first time with the 5.7% of the vote and 20 MPs[75]. At the General elections in September 2014, the *SD,* led by Jimmie Åkesson, got 12.86% of the vote and 49 MPs, becoming the only anti-EU party in the Swedish Parliament[76]. Few months later, however, polls increased *SD*' support to 16%, most likely "stealing voters from centre-right parties", and they felt more confident to make pressure to the government in order to change Sweden's liberal migration policies[77]. In December 2014, the *SD,* together with the *Alliance of Conservatives*, the *Liberals*, the *Social Liberals*, and the *Christian Democrats*, forced the centre-left wing's government to call for early elections in March 2015, after that its 2015's budget proposal was voted against by the Parliament[78]. Although the *Social Democrats* again managed to win the election, the government faced a new crisis due to the refusal of all parties in the Parliament to work with the *SD*, considered to be racist and rooted in the "Neo-Nazi scene"[79]. As many nationalist and right-wing parties, the *SD* believes that immigration policies have been a

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[72] "Asylum in the EU Member States Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis: top citizenships" in *Eurostat News Release*. 44/2016. 4 March 2016. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6

[73] Henriette, Jacobsen. "Swedish far-right party rewarded for bringing down government" in *EuroActiv.com* 18 December 2014. See at: http://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/swedish-far-right-party-rewarded-for-bringing-down-government/

[74] See: http://www.val.se/val/val2006/slutlig/K/rike/delar.html

[75] See: http://www.val.se/val/val2010/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html

[76] See: http://www.val.se/val/val2014/slutresultat/R/rike/index.html

[77] Henriette, Jacobsen. "Swedish far-right party rewarded for bringing down government" in *EuroActiv.com* 18 December 2014. See at: http://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/swedish-far-right-party-rewarded-for-bringing-down-government/

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

failure in Sweden, and that the lack of integration is not beneficial for the social and economic situation of the country. Moreover, the *SD* rejects multiculturalism and argues that immigration threatens the Swedish national identity. The European migrant crisis in 2015 determined a further rise in popularity of the *SD*. In fact, although the number of refugees entering Sweden has dropped by 60% since the government has introduced new asylum policies in November 2015 - which included *inter alia* the grant of temporary residence permits for refugees - the *SD* continued to increase in popularity becoming the biggest opposition party[80]. In fact, according to polls, the *SD* was suggested to have the 25.2% in August 2015, and 26.9% in December 2015, whereas the *Social Democrats* were respectively suggested at the 23.4 % and 22.3%[81]. The Swedish Prime Minister said that "the poll is very worrying, especially since he has already given in and swallowed big concessions in the migration area"[82]. In fact, what is interesting is that although in September 2015, the Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, had stated that "my Europe does not build walls", the arrival of 80,000 migrants and the drop of popularity three months later, he stated that "the system cannot cope" and established temporary borders control[83]. In this regard, the leader of the Italian right-wing party, the *Northern League*, stated that if "a leftist government, as the Swedish one, sent back home 80,000 migrants, that means that Schengen is over"[84]. Besides the borders control established on the bridge connecting Denmark to Sweden, the Swedish Parliament has also introduced ID checks on buses, trains, and ferries for those entering the country also from other border points[85]. At the time of writing, Sweden has extended borders tightened until the 7th of June 2016 but according to particular circumstances may be further extended. What is clear is that the future of one of the most open countries applying humanitarian values is uncertain. What is sure is that the outcome of the next

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[80] "Poll: Support swells for Sweden's extreme right" in *EuroActiv*.com. 17 December 2015. See at: http://www.euractiv.com/section/social-europe-jobs/news/poll-support-swells-for-sweden-s-extreme-right/
[81] See: https://yougov.se/news/2015/12/17/mps-lagsta-siffra-sedan-riksdagsvalet/
[82] "Poll: Support swells for Sweden's extreme right" in *EuroActiv*.com. 17 December 2015. See at: http://www.euractiv.com/section/social-europe-jobs/news/poll-support-swells-for-sweden-s-extreme-right/
[83] David, Crouch. "Sweden and Denmark crack down on refugees at borders" in *The Guardian*. 4 January 2016. See at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/03/sweden-to-impose-id-checks-on-travellers-from-denmark
[84] See: http://tv.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/01/28/migranti-salvini-se-la-svezia-manda-a-casa-i-clandestini-schengen-e-finita/472168/
[85] "Migrant crisis: Sweden border checks come into force" in *BBC News. 4 January 2016.* See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35218921

General election in 2018 will depend on the government's ability to deal with the refugee crisis, and there have been speculations that the government will try to find an agreement either with the centre-right wing opposition party or with the *SD* in order to try to keep its leadership and rise again its popularity[86].

7. The Case of Denmark

Although compared to other countries it has not traditionally attracted many migrants, Denmark has witnessed an increasing number of asylum applications in the last years[87]. Particularly, Denmark received 7,757 asylum applications in 2013, 14,815 in 2014[88], and around 21,000 in 2015[89]. As occurred in other EU countries, Denmark has also experienced a rise in popularity of a right-wing party rejecting multiculturalism and multi-ethnic transformation of Denmark: the *Danish People's Party* (*DPP*). This party was founded in 1995 but it steady rose in popularity in the 2000s when it turned to be the third largest party in the Parliament winning the 13.3% of the vote in 2005[90]. However, it should be pointed out that this party did not rise in popularity only promoting anti-migrant policies, but also focusing on other topics such as the abolishment of the blasphemy clause and the hate speech clause in the Danish Criminal Code, and the rejection of the accession of Turkey to the EU. In 2006, indeed, the party dramatically rose in opinion polls following the "Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy", which on the other side determined a drop in popularity of the *Socialist Democratic Party*[91]. After supporting the Conservative-Liberal *Venstre*'s government urging to change immigration policies until 2011, the *DPP* won the 26.6 % of the vote at the 2014

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[86] "Poll: Support swells for Sweden's extreme right" in EuroActiv.com. 17 December 2015. See at: http://www.euractiv.com/section/social-europe-jobs/news/poll-support-swells-for-sweden-s-extreme-right/

[87] Edward, Delman. "How not to welcome refugees" in *The Atlantic*. 27 January 2016. See at: http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/denmark-refugees-immigration-law/431520/

[88] "Denmark sees asylum numbers double in 2014" in *The Local*. 23 January 2015. See at: http://www.thelocal.dk/20150123/denmark-asylum-seekers-refugee-double-2014

[89] "Asylum in the EU Member States Record number of over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2015 Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis: top citizenships" in *Eurostat News Release*. 44/2016. 4 March 2016. See at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/790eba01-381c-4163-bcd2-a54959b99ed6

[90] See: http://www.electionresources.org/dk/folketing.php?election=2005

[91] Peter McGraw and Joel Warner. "The Danish Cartoon Crisis of 2005 and 2006: 10 Things You Didn't Know About the Original Muhammad Controversy" in *The Huffington Post*. 09/25/2012 01:28 pm ET | Updated Nov 25, 2012. See at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-mcgraw-and-joel-warner/muhammad-cartoons_b_1907545.html

European Parliamentary election resulting to be the first largest party in the country. Nevertheless, in the general election held on June 2015, the *DPP* resulted to be the largest second party with the 21% of the vote[92]. However, the *DPP* did not join the centre-right government of *Venstre* that, unable to form a coalition with any parties, had to "lead a single-party minority government, with tacit parliamentary backing from the DPP and two other right-leaning parties"[93]. What is crucial is that given the fact Denmark has a multi-party electoral system, the *DPP* gained more seats (37 seats out of 179) than *Venstre* (34 seats). For this reason the *DPP* may be able to have an influential power in governmental decisions during this term[94]. In fact, the ruling centre-right party led by the Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen has "promised to get tough on immigration since its election in June", which is the main focus of the *DPP*'s agenda[95]. Facing the European migrant crisis, in August 2015 the government of Denmark has tried to dissuade the influx of migrants by introducing cuts to the welfare benefits by 45% for refugees and immigrants[96]. Moreover, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the legislation with the purpose to make Denmark a less attractive destination for refugees, the Danish government advertised on a Lebanese newspaper the reduction of social benefits and other unfavourable provisions on behalf of refugees and immigrants[97]. Furthermore, following Sweden's decision to re-establish borders control, Denmark has also temporary re-introduced borders control with Germany, which at the time of writing has been extended until the 2nd June 2016[98]. In the early 2016, the Danish government also started considering to move migrants from urban areas into camps outside cities under the pressure of the *DPP*. According to *Reuters,*

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[92] See: http://www.electionresources.org/dk/folketing.php?election=2015

[93] "The centre-right Liberals depend on a far-right party bigger than themselves" in *The Economist.* 4 July 2015. See at: http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21656723-centre-right-liberals-depend-far-right-party-bigger-themselves-coalition-one

[94] Ibid.

[95] "Migrant crisis: Denmark MPs consider seizing valuables" in *BBC News.* 13 January 2016. See at: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35300262

[96] "Denmark enacts cuts to refugee benefits" in *The Local.* 26 August 2015. See at: http://www.thelocal.dk/20150826/denmark-passes-controversial-refugee-benefit-cuts

[97] Adam, Taylor. "Denmark puts ad in Lebanese newspapers: Dear refugees, don't come here" in *The Washington Post.* 7 September 2015. See at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/07/denmark-places-an-advertisement-in-lebanese-newspapers-dear-refugees-dont-come-here/

[98] See: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/index_en.htm

this proposal seemed to be "a tactic that the anti-immigration Danish People's Party hopes will shift the focus of government immigration policy to repatriation rather than integration"[99].

8. Future Developments

The credibility and the existence of the EU is at a turning point, like the Schengen system. In fact, the management of the recent migrant crisis has raised many questions regarding the identity of the EU, whether it still represents a community based on human rights or rather a community which only obliges Member States to adopt specific economic measures. The image of thousands of migrants stranded at Idomeni for many months trying to cross the Greek-Macedonian border, the makeshift "Jungle" camp around Calais hosting thousands of migrants willing to reach the UK from France, the closure of borders of many EU states in order the arrival of asylum seekers, and the continuous deaths of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea, have undermined the concept of the EU as an entity founded on human rights and the principle of solidarity. Moreover, the recent EU-Turkey deal, which for the sake to protect EU internal borders forces asylum seekers entering the EU to return to Turkey, has raised concerns on the legality of this agreement according to international human rights law. Yet, the Turkey's "blackmail" claiming financing, the acceleration of the accession of Turkey to the EU, and the visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens to enter the EU in return of preventing migrants to reach the EU, has also raised criticisms towards the EU for its ambiguous approach in dealing with a country which does not respect basic human rights principles necessary in a democratic society such as freedom of expression. In so doing, the EU has showed its weakness and right-wing parties, which are anti-EU *par excellence* and strives for its dissolution, have taken advantage not only from the migrant crisis and the increasing climate of insecurity within states, but also from the increasing dissatisfaction towards mainstream parties which have been underestimating the needs of people for the last years. According to this, it is not surprising if some social or liberal parties in Europe have been adopting populist policies for the sake of preserving consensus, but polls and elections have showed that this has not been always the case. In fact, in my view, this

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[99] Alexander, Tange. "Denmark considers moving migrants to camps outside cities" in *Reuters*. 21 January 2016. See at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-denmark-idUSKCN0UZ1MK

strategy has continued to determine the loss of credibility of mainstream parties and the strengthening of populism. However, from the second half of 2016 we might expect that mainstream parties will continue to have a double face fostering on the one hand discourses in solidarity with migrants, and on the other hand enhancing borders patrol, even without limiting the freedom of movement of EU citizens. What is clear is that the success of right-wing parties is not only due to the bad management of the migrant issue at EU level, but also to constant political pressures towards governments at national level. In fact, the lack of a common and agreed policy among EU Member States has increased the egoism at national level due to the pressure which right-wing parties have put towards their respective national governments, and led many EU countries to reject the proposal which each EU Member States should share a migrant quota. This aspect is crucial since in my view if each EU Member States shared a migrant quota, countries more affected by the inflow of migrants not only would guarantee an efficient protection to a reasonable number of people escaping from war zones according to international law, but also would not constitute a burden on State's shoulders and would not encourage anti-systemic and xenophobic sentiments. Most important, this solution may prevent to not assist any longer to the image of asylum seekers stranded as Europe closes off its borders, and to preserve in practice EU's values and principles. It should be reminded that the terrorist attacks in France and Belgium, along with the migrant crisis, have also affected the freedom of movement within the EU, since some countries, like France, have re-established temporary borders control for security threats. Again, the lack of coordination among EU countries in sharing information about the movement of suspected terrorists has led governments to close their own borders for internal security, and indirectly supporting right-wing parties' claims. This solution reflected not only the bad management of the EU in tackling the terrorist threat at European level, but also the lack of willingness of EU Member States to cooperate with each other for the sake of a common security. Nevertheless, for the future we shall expect the establishment of mechanisms and EU bodies that may allow different security services to share information among each other.

Speculations about the "death" of the Schengen system, and hence of the EU, turned to be more persistent in recent times. In my view, the fact that Schengen is temporarily facing some

challenges does not mean that its system would be at stake. In fact, the free movement of people and goods within the EU is an aspect by now part of our identity and is destined to continue, since to step back would not only look impracticable for the economy, but would also mean to deny our rights and history. The EU has the big responsibility to preserve these rights and has still a chance to implement its values of solidarity, justice, integration, and equality, which indeed represent the real tools to combat the rise of populism and extremism. However, the EU should bear in mind that this can be accomplished only through an efficient human rights monitoring within the EU, through the concept of sharing which ought to be applicable to all spheres of life at EU level, and not just through the monitoring of economic development and policies. Indeed, it can be argued that the EU's crisis may be grounded on the fact that strong legislations are only implemented if Member States do not follow the EU economic framework, but there are not sanctions if EU Member States breach human rights, though be part of the EU legal framework.

Conclusion

This working paper has analysed why right-wing political parties have increased in popularity following recent historical events like the European migrant crisis started in 2015 and the re-establishment of temporary borders control. Moreover, this working paper has sought to examine the impact of this rising consensus towards populism at national and EU level, and in particular whether mainstream parties (i.e. centre-left and centre-right parties) in power have been influenced by right-wing parties' policies in opposition in order to tackle their drop in popularity, to safeguard their leadership, and to stop the increasing support towards populist right-wing parties. Focusing on the case of five EU countries that have re-established temporary borders control since the end of 2015 (i.e. France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark), it emerges that right-wing parties developed in those countries - some of which had already started gaining popular support before the outbreak of the migrant crisis - took advantage not much from the arrival of millions of migrants in the EU, but more from the bad management of this crisis and from the lack of willingness to share the migrant quota among all EU countries. Right-wing parties blame the lack of borders control - both internal and external - for exacerbating this crisis

and national governments to encourage their integration putting at risk the welfare system and the national identity. With the exception of France, indeed, the countries that have re-established borders control are those that have received the highest number of asylum applications in 2015. Hence, the governments of those countries have repeatedly stated that they could not carry the migrant burden on their own and that since the EU was not able to

defend its own external borders, they were forced to defend theirs. Moreover, the case of France shows that the debate concerning the return to internal borders control carried out by the *FN* links the migrant crisis to national security. In fact, the terrorist attacks in Paris led the *FN* not only to underline that the EU-nationality attackers were able to go back and forth within and outside the EU, but also to speculate that likely terrorists may be able to enter the EU concealed among migrants.

The rise in popularity of right-wing parties had also a strong impact on mainstream parties' decisions both at national and at EU level. In fact, the re-establishment of temporary borders control may be regarded as a populist policy taken by governments in order to face not only their drop in popularity according to polls, but also as a tool of propaganda for upcoming elections. Furthermore, some governments - like in Austria, Denmark, and Sweden – have approved laws that create limitation to the welfare system for refugees, which not only aim to find the support in the Parliament of right-wing parties, but also to dissuade migrants to strive for entering the EU or to convince them to return to their own countries. At the EU level, the controversial EU-Turkey deal, which substantially prevents migrants to enter the EU, seems to be a 'desperate' remedy in line with right-wing parties' claims, and contrary to the spirit of solidarity, in order to solve the deadlock of temporary internal borders control of some countries within the EU.

Overall, the lack of solidarity and the ineffectiveness of the EU and some member states to deal with the migrant crisis may have contributed to the rise in popularity of right-wing political parties, which are struggling for the end of Schengen and of the EU. Moreover, the increasing dissatisfaction towards mainstream parties are leading these parties in power to take populist measures in order to reduce their drop in popularity in view of the next General elections.