

**V4 EUROPE – “PIECES OF POPULISM IN EUROPE AND HOW TO OVERCOME  
THE CHALLENGE”**

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***Querying the Migration-Populism Nexus:  
Poland and Greece in Focus***

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## **1. Introduction**

Over 1 million migrants arrived in Greece since 2015. Today, about 70.000 of them are stranded in hot spots and reception centres across Greece. An implicit consensus emerged on the Greek political scene that migration will not be used as a resource of political competition. The resultant debate on migration and its implications remains focused, largely, on technical aspects of the day-to-day migration management. From a different angle, in line with provisions of the Member States' Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism reached in 2015, Poland was committed to accept 6,182 individuals subject to the relocation scheme (EU, 2017). As of June 29, 2017, these commitments have not been abided by (EU, 2017). The issue of migration nevertheless has established itself as one of the tenets of political discourse on the Polish political scene, fuelling a debate involving a variety of stakeholders and dividing Polish politics and society. In this sense, migration turned into a resource of political competition that boosts populism and awakens wounds and cleavages thought to had been healed in the Polish society long ago.

In terms of culture, history, and ideologies that define the socio-political process, Poland and Greece stand far apart. Indeed, also at the level of popular cognition, very few, if any, similarities – that these two countries may share – seem obvious. Still, in several domains, the experiences of Greece and Poland either overlap or complement each other. For instance, whereas Greece is the cradle of Western civilization, successive generations of Poles have shared a deep fascination with Ancient Greece and its heritage. Over centuries, this heritage has had a profound impact on Polish literature, language, and culture in general. From a different angle, modern history of both countries, especially regarding the process of re-storing statehood and sovereignty, exhibits a similar pattern of tragedy, suspense, unfulfilled dreams, and bitter-sweet aftertaste.

For Greece, the landmark was the uprising of 1821 that eventually allowed the Greeks to end the 400 years of Ottoman occupation. Still, due to several domestic and external contingencies, the state-building process in Greece was handicapped rendering Greece a case study of unfinished modernization. For Poland, the landmark in modern history is defined by the year 1918, when – following the end of the First World War – Poland was brought back on the map of Europe. Nevertheless, Poland's modern state-building process was stopped abruptly when Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1939, respectively on September 1 and September 17. The tragic experiences of the Second World War that the Polish society incurred were followed by the imposition of communist regime in 1945. It was not until 1989 that, following the democratic elections held on June 4, 1989, Poland regained its sovereignty and embarked on a process of modernization. The experiences and contingencies inherent in the processes of state-building and modernization specific to Poland and Greece, have had serious ramifications for the ideological set up of respective political scenes and their dynamics. These experiences weigh in heavily in these countries stance towards migration and their ability to handle respective discourses.

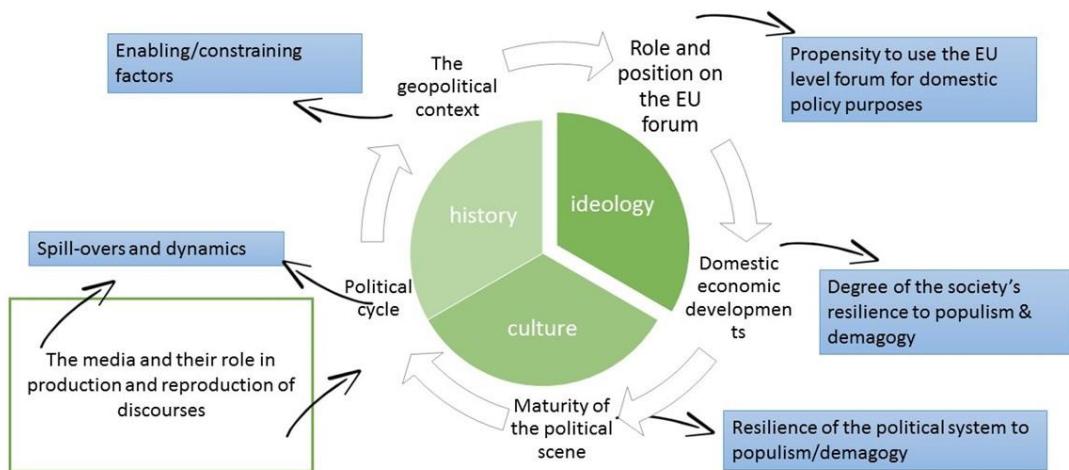
By querying the specificity of the cases of Poland and Greece, the objective of this discussion paper is two-fold, i.e. to acquire a better understanding of the logic underpinning the emergence and the evolution of the migration-populism nexus and to puzzle on lessons that the case of Greece can teach us. The argument is structured as follows. First, the conceptual framework employed for the discussion in this paper is outlined. Some aspects of this model are then employed to examine the intricacies of the political scenes in Greece and Poland and their influence on the shaping of the migration-populism nexus. In conclusions, ways of addressing the challenge of instrumental use of migration and lessons that the Greek case teaches are outlined.

## **2. The analytical framework: the migration-populism nexus model**

The discussion in this paper is based on four interlinked assumptions, i.e. (i) populism is a complex socio-political phenomenon, (ii) several items of political debate have the potential to be employed to fuel the dynamics underlying populism and, yet, (iii) it is the broader set of country-specific

domestic and external circumstances that determine around which issue populist arguments actually converge, and (iv) populism unfolds in sequences that follow a cycle of action and reaction that, respectively, either trigger or feed populism, sequentially, over a given period of time.

**Figure 1: Drivers of the migration-populism nexus, i.e. the interlocking dimensions of the external and domestic context**



Source: Visvizi, A. (2017) 'Querying the Migration-Populism Nexus: The Cases of Poland and Greece', *IED Discussion Paper*, July 2017, Brussels: Institute of European Democrats (IED).

In the specific case of migration, and of populism converging around it, several groups of factors condition the cycle along which the migration-populism nexus unfolds. In the model introduced here, two dynamically interconnected and causally interlinked, groups/layers of factors have been identified, i.e.

- **the inner layer of factors:** it encapsulates the key features of a given society and the political scene at which interests of that society's members are aggregated and articulated. These features include, roughly speaking, culture, history, ideology.
- **the outer layer of factors:** it encapsulates the key features of the external context in which a given society and a political system are embedded. These features include: the geopolitical context, the role and position of a given country on the EU forum, domestic economic developments, maturity of the political scene and the society, the stage of the political cycle.

Given the causal relations and feedback effects that unfold between these two groups of factors, it is possible to argue that (see Figure 1 for a graphic depiction of the conceptual model employed in this policy brief):

- The broader geopolitical context, in which a given country is situated, defines the material and ideational factors that delineate the scope of the politically feasible for a given country;
- The historically established role and position of a given country at the EU forum conditions the propensity of the political establishment of a given country to use the EU level discourses for domestic policy purposes;
- Domestic economic developments condition a society's sensitivity/vulnerability to populism and demagogic;

- Maturity of the political scene and society condition, in their own specific ways, the resilience of the political system/process and of the society to populism and demagogy;
- The stage of the political cycle determines the dynamics of spill-overs and feedback effects that fuel the evolution of the migration-populism nexus;

Obviously, the media constitute a key factor in the discussion on populism and its spread in contemporary societies. How the political process unfolds is conditioned by the media, including social media. How individual politicians make it to the broader electorate in a sustainable manner, depends on their ability to use the media effectively. In the conceptual framework introduced in this study, the media are viewed primarily through their role as enablers (or not) of mechanisms conducive to the consolidation of the political debate around certain items already present in the political discourse. The point here is that the structure of the media market, and the resultant horizontal and vertical differentiation of the media market, will have serious implications on which items, how and in which strata of the society populist voices will converge. The cases of Greece and Poland offer a very interesting insight into the variety of roles media can play regarding migration and its instrumental use.

Overall, the schematic (Figure 1) depiction of factors, processes and issues that influence the dynamics behind the evolution of the migration-populism nexus leads to four observations. (i) If brought together, migration and populism form a complex relationship, whose dynamics is conditioned by country-specific circumstances. (ii) Critical junctures exist where the escalation of that migration-populism nexus can be either lessened or exacerbated. (iii) A variety of actors contributes to the emergence and evolution of the nexus. Thus, it is impossible to point to one culprit. (iv) The media play a significant role in streamlining and defining the dynamics of discourses centred on migration. The following sections add some empirical evidence to these claims.

### **3. The migration-populism nexus: the case of Greece**

As a result of the sovereign debt crisis and the resultant fiscal adjustment and economic reform programs, so-called Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) curated by Greece's international creditors, the Greek political scene has remained fragmented and unstable since 2010. The case of three cycles of elections that were needed in 2012 to build a government attests to that (Visvizi, 2012). The early elections of January 2015 shook the Greek political scene by granting an unprecedented victory to SYRIZA – otherwise an outlier on the Greek political spectre – who won the elections on a populist anti-MoU mandate. Irrespective of its victory, following the September 2015 elections, the leftist SYRIZA was forced to form a coalition government, with no other junior partner than the ideologically opposite, right wing Independent Greeks' party. As Table 1 depicts, several other parties/movements have made it to the Greek parliament, including the New Democracy, The River, Golden Dawn, the Communist Party, and PASOK. None of them, either was asked or considered, joining the SYRIZA-led coalition government.

Table 1: The key actors on the Greek political scene following the January & September 2015 general elections					
	Name of the party	Number of seats	Percentage	Number of seats	Percentage
	SYRIZA	149	36,34	145	35,46
	New Democracy	76	27,81	75	28,10
	The River	17	6,28	11	4,09
	Golden Dawn	17	6,05	18	6,99
	Communist Party (KKE)	15	5,47	15	5,59
	Independent Greeks	13	4,75	10	3,69
	PASOK	13	4,68	---	---
	---	Democratic Coalition (PASOK-DIMAR)		17	6,28
	---	ENOSI KENTROON		9	3,43

Source: Hellenic Parliament (2015) *Election Results*, <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Eklogika-apotelesmata-New/#Per-17> [2017-07-03]

To understand the dynamics shaping the developments on the Greek political scene it is important to consider the following points. Until 2012, the Greek political scene was dominated by two parties, including the centrist right-wing New Democracy and the socialist PASOK. The left end of the political spectre was populated by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and SYRIZA. It is important to note the difference between the two. KKE is a party deeply entrenched in the communist dogma, its rhetoric resembles that of the Stalinist era. Ideologically-wise, KKE remains devoted to proletariat and class struggle. KKE plays an important systemic role as the guardian of the purity of the communist idea and ideals; regardless if these have been discredited elsewhere in the world and in Europe in particular. As such, KKE is an ardent adversary of SYRIZA, which -- in KKE's view -- abuses the ideals of the 'true left'. As far as SYRIZA itself, it is difficult to gauge its identity today. Several reasons contribute to that:

(i) following the landslide loss that PASOK incurred in successive rounds of the 2012 elections, several members of PASOK migrated to SYRIZA; (ii) SYRIZA's rise to power and Tsipras' role as the PM, forced Tsipras to change the, until then at least benign, attitude to anarchist factions of SYRIZA; (iii) SYRIZA's role in the government, and so in negotiations with Greece's international creditors, forced Tsipras to drop the majority of SYRIZA's populist electoral promises and be vocal about reforms contradicting the mandate that brought SYRIZA to power; (iv) the de facto ideological U-turn of SYRIZA has been a source of dissatisfaction within SYRIZA, either causing several of its influential members leave the party, or leading to the emergence of a serious caucus of opposition within SYRIZA. Thus, it remains an open question how long party discipline and personal loyalty to Tsipras will hold.

On the right end of the political spectre lies the hotly debated Golden Dawn frequently discussed in foreign media in context of the emergence of fascist currents in Europe. The rise of Golden Dawn, a right-wing extremist party, is directly linked to the rise of the extreme left on the Greek political scene; thus, it is systemic. In the May 2012 elections, Golden Dawn won 21 seats in the Greek parliament. This caused confusion in some circles outside Greece. Discursive interventions of its members, moving in a broad space defined by nationalism, socialism, and demagogic, certainly did not gain them friends in the Greek parliament. As a result, Golden Dawn was contained in the Greek Parliament, with no prospect of joining a caucus and thus exercising influence on Greek politics (see also Visvizi, 2012). Moreover, over the period 2013-2014, the Samaras' government launched inquiries into allegations on Golden Dawn's unlawful behaviour; this was followed by measures aimed at curbing instances of breaches of law. As a result, several Golden Dawn members were tried and imprisoned. This notwithstanding, in the January 2015 elections, Golden Dawn, won 17 seats in the Greek Parliament

and in September 2015 18 seats, with no prospect whatsoever of being invited to join the coalition government.

The question of the centre of the Greek political scene is a difficult one. Traditionally it was divided between PASOK and ND. With the post-2010 demise of PASOK, several contenders raised claims to the vacuum it left on the political scene. Surprisingly, it was SYRIZA that skilfully claimed a serious chunk of the space left. The remaining space has been claimed by POTAMI, a movement whose social and political clout seems to be wearing out quickly. ND itself, under the leadership of -- as many observers say--untested Kyriakos Mitsotakis, tries to re-invent itself by balancing in-between its more liberal and more conservative factions. The truth is, nevertheless, that in face of commitments that Greece has vis-à-vis its creditors, there is no space for ideological and programmatic experiments in the centre of the Greek political spectre today.

Given the specificity of the Greek political scene heavily influenced by the MoUs and the resulting fiscal policy commitments, the important question is how the key actors operating on Greek political scene address the issue of migration? As mentioned in the introduction, a tacit consensus has emerged in Greece that migration will be not be used as a resource of political competition. Three key issues have to be outlined to explain the mechanism behind this development.

1. A key factor explaining why migration is not employed in Greece in an instrumental way is that no political actor that considers itself a serious political player would do that. Failure to comply with this tacit consensus would discredit any political actor and would propel mechanisms leading to that actor's containment on the political scene. The case of Golden Dawn attests to that.
2. Importantly, the mainstream Greek media comply with the largely implicit consensus and do not fuel the debate beyond upright information.
3. It is certainly not to suggest that migration is absent from the Greek political discourse. This would be hardly possible given the fact that migrants have become a part of the landscape of Greek cities and countryside, including the islands. In this context four observations deserve mentioning.
  - The amount of human tragedy that unfolded in Greece in connection to the influx of migrants and refugees via the Mediterranean route and the enormous rescue and shelter effort that the Greek society extended to the masses of incoming individuals, limit the scope of haphazard and light-hearted references to migration; likewise, they do not allow its direct instrumental use.
  - As a result, migration is viewed as unavoidable phenomenon. It is discussed mainly through the lens of technical challenges that the management of increased, irregular, mixed migratory flows generates. Greece's obligations towards ensuring effective management of population influx within the framework of Schengen Agreement, international humanitarian law, refugee law, and the emerging EU migration regime constitute important tenets that define the debate.
  - Throughout 2015-2016, arguments picking on shortcomings related to the delivery of these commitments were occasionally employed to criticize the SYRIZA government. Importantly, migration itself never served as the resource of political competition. Moreover, arguments of that kind would form only a part of larger argumentative schemes employed by SYRIZA's opponents to blame it on a different account.
4. Another factor that may help understand the emergence of the implicit consensus concerning migration is the fact that over the past 40 years Greece received several waves of migration, the largest one from Albania in early 1990s. At that time, following the collapse of the communist regime in Albania and the subsequent opening of borders, Greece received about 1 million of Albanians. Many of them fuelled the, at that time vibrant, construction industry and other sectors of the Greek economy.

5. Finally, it needs to be stressed that in Greece, ridden by disastrous economic recession, massive unemployment, reversed brain-drain, no investment, shrinking savings' levels, and rising impoverishment of the society (see Visvizi, 2016) other issues set the tone and content of political discourse and serve as resources of political competition. These are: Greece's debt (and its sustainability) and the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), i.e. the content of economic adjustment programs for Greece, the resultant conditionality, and prospect of access to successive tranches of funds that will enable Greece to service its debt. What follows is that, given the foreign policy implications of Greece's lock-in between its commitments towards international creditors and its ability to service its debt, Greece is not quite in a position to question EU-level agreements concerning migration. Therefore, there is no space for Greek political actors to use migration instrumentally in EU-level discourses to promote certain domestic policy interests and objectives.

#### **4. The migration-populism nexus: the case of Poland**

In the popular media discourse in the EU, Poland, along with other Visegrad Group (V4) countries, is considered as one of those countries that has a strikingly negative stance toward migration (see Pachocka, 2016 for a detailed insight). Indeed, migration has emerged as one of the issues that fuel the political debate and divide both politics and society. When it comes to the instrumental use of migration, it has two facets. On the one hand, the parliamentary discourse is not devoid of discursive interventions in which migration is linked to threats to security. This -- typical to several other countries in the EU -- reference to migration-terrorism nexus (Mazzucelli et al., 2016), is then reproduced by media outlets, either uncritical or openly supportive of anti-migrant attitudes. On the other hand, indeed, overtime, migration and the EU relocation scheme, have been employed by the Polish government, both at the EU level and domestically, to assert a certain stance towards the EU and its policies. In this case the instrumental use of EU-level discourse on migration may have been geared toward attaining very specific, but irrelevant to migration, domestic policy purposes and objectives. Since the practice of instrumental use of EU-level discourses for domestic policy purposes is by no means a new thing, it would be an overstretch to refer to it in terms of populism. It is not to say that migration and the spread of negative attitudes to migration are not an issue in contemporary Poland; it is. Consider this:

Warsaw, July, early afternoon, a tourist – in his early forties, tidy, judging from his features, probably from India – enters an established chocolate boutique in the city centre. The young seller automatically stops serving the lady at the counter, freezes, scans every movement of the tourist, who gazes at the boutique's glamorous interior and beautifully packed products. Eventually, the seller accepts the payment, the lady leaves, yet the seller continues scanning the tourist. Only when prompted, he asks the man, rather aggressively: "What do you want?".

Xenophobia is on the rise in contemporary Poland. Attacks on foreigners or individuals of a different skin tone increase. At times, specific instances of parliamentary discourse make one ask: 'what happened to traditionally democratic and liberal Poland, for centuries known for its religious and cultural tolerance?'. It would be a simplification to pick one culprit behind the emergence of anti-migration attitudes and xenophobia. Similarly, it would be pre-mature to make a case for a migration-populism nexus in Poland; even if demagogues and villains deploy migration in an increasingly instrumental manner. A case can be made, nevertheless, that Poland is at a tipping point where the emergence of the migration-populism nexus as the central tenet of the political discourse can be blocked. Therefore, when examining the question of Poland vis-à-vis migration, the big question that needs to be addressed is: what is the source of anti-migrant attitudes and what drives their dynamics. The following section, through the lens of the developments on the Polish political scene post-2015 elections, places this issue in the spotlight.

The year 2015 marks a watershed in Polish post-1989 politics. First, the May 2015 presidential elections revealed that things should not be taken for granted on Polish social and political scenes. The victory of Andrzej Duda, a figure previously largely unknown to the broader audience, signalled that a turn on the Polish political scene was in the cards. The presidential elections of 2015 attested to demographic changes that have taken place in Poland since 1989. That is, a new generation of voters born in late 80s and early 90s participated in the elections. Given their age, these voters did not share the collective memory of Poland before the end of communism and right after the liberal democratic transition. Therefore, these voters cannot comprehend the uniqueness and historic value of the change Poles and Poland achieved in the late 80s essentially forcing the collapse of the entire communist system (Hornik, 2014). Moreover, these voters are immune to political discourses founded on references to the success of Polish transformation. From a different angle, as people get older, the recognition of the ground-breaking nature and path-dependent positive implications of transition and transformation for the Polish economy, politics and society seem to be fading away as people forget and their past experiences become relative. Similarly, as the benefits of transition and transformation have not spread evenly across the society, even if Poland is the most successful case of transition (EBRD, 2016: 17), the achievements of the early 90s are traded easily for brand new electoral promises. What is perhaps more important in context of protests shaking Poland this July, the privilege of freedom and liberty that the post-1989 transition signified, has not been appreciated equally and sufficiently across the entire spectre of the society. These factors explain a part of the political phenomenon behind Duda's victory, and correspondingly, Komorowski's loss in presidential elections. The same factors played a role in September 2015 parliamentary elections that reversed the balance of power on the Polish political scene. Table 2 offers a detailed insight into the elections' results. For several reasons, also these elections were unique.

<b>Table 2: The key actors on the Polish political scene following the October 2015 general elections</b>			
	Name of the party	Number of seats	Percentage of support
	Law and Justice (PiS)	235	37,58
	Civic Platform (PO)	138	24,09
	Kukiz'15	42	8,81
	Nowoczesna	28	7,60
	PSL	16	5,13.
	German Minority	1	0,18

Source: PKW (2015) *Wyniki wyborów do Sejmu RP* [Elections' Results], Polska Komisja Wyborcza [Polish Electoral Committee] (PKW), [http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/349\\_wyniki\\_sejm](http://parlament2015.pkw.gov.pl/349_wyniki_sejm) [2017-07-03]

As several observers note, for the first time in post-communist Poland, the winning party was not forced to build a coalition in order to form the government (Markowski, 2016; Wojtasik, 2016). At the same time, no left-wing party won seats in the parliament. The landslide victory of the right-wing conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) meant a comprehensive defeat of the centrist Civic Platform (PO). At the same time, even if the Polish Agrarian Party (PSL) managed to gain seats in the parliament, it incurred substantial losses. Two new parties entered the parliament, i.e. the anti-establishment Kukiz'15 party and liberal Nowoczesna (Modern).

The victory of PiS left the centre of the Polish political scene broken, thus automatically strengthening PiS' clout. The PO, devoid of leadership capable – in face of the crushing defeat -- to mobilize the falling morale of its members and unite competing factions, essentially imploded. Other political parties, either uncertain what to do with the unexpected victory or lacking the capacity to do so, left significant

part of the political spectre open for grabs. Since 2015, several, more and less serious leadership crises swept across the Polish political spectre. Nevertheless, the ruling party succeeded in maintaining its dominant position on the political scene, also because of the enduring fragmentation of the opposition. The case of PO and Nowoczesna is quite telling here. Although the programs of both parties are very similar (Zielinski, 2017), each of them pursue their political goals and objectives not only individually, but also by means of strikingly different strategies. This, in turn, exacerbates the image of them fighting each other rather than being inclined to cooperate. This certainly creates a lot of space of opportunity for contending parties to gain voters' hearts and minds.

Another important facet of Polish political life that has been reaching the surface of socio-political life in Poland gradually, and consolidated in the period post-2015 elections, is that of the Church's direct involvement in the political debate. In this view, the Church seems to be undergoing a difficult transition itself, searching for a new role and identity in a rapidly changing socio-political context of today's Poland. The next piece of the puzzle of the Polish political scene is marked by the emergence of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD), a civic movement that openly questions PiS' policies, especially regarding the reform of the judiciary. Notably, the emergence of KOD, remotely clinging to the idea of Solidarność, is an important reminder of the role civil society played in the process of dismantling communism in Poland. It also serves as a reminder that civil society and its capacity to engage with socio-political process attest to the level of maturity of a given society.

Overall, the Polish political scene is polarized and the society remains divided. The lines of division are defined by such issues as the Smolensk tragedy, abortion, the role of the Church, the EU and its future, Poland's role in the EU, NATO, Trump, Russia and Ukraine, and for instance migration. Each of these items of the political debate have a very specific role to play in the mainstream political discourse in contemporary Poland. Migration, as mentioned earlier, established itself as an important part of these discourses. Several actors operating on the Polish political scene contributed to that. It is important, though, not to conflate each of these actors' role in this respect. Regarding PiS, it is necessary to distinguish between the government and the PiS parliamentarians. Frequently, the parliamentarians, expressly present migration in terms of a threat to safety and security. In this way, they attract considerable attention of both media and the opposition, which in turn uses respective instances of parliamentary discourse instrumentally. This is perhaps the worst part of the non-debate on migration, which nevertheless effectively fuels the subtle mechanisms behind the gradual emergence of the migration-populism nexus in Poland.

When it comes to the Polish government, a negative image of Poland's position towards refugees emerged in conjunction with the Visegrad Group (V4) stance towards the mandatory relocation scheme discussed at the EU forum (see also, Pachocka, 2016). By expressing their dissatisfaction with the scheme, the V4 countries were said to be lacking solidarity (The Economist, 2016; Zalán, 2016). The truth, as always, is more complex than that, and in order to get a well-founded insight into the issue, several other factors should be considered in the analysis. Essentially, the Polish government's line of argumentation concerning the mandatory relocation quota is that the EU scheme encourages traffickers, does not lessen human tragedy, and by no means fosters sustainable way of navigating the roots of the migration and refugee crises. From a different angle, and in a less pronounced way, it is also stressed that arbitrary determination of the relocation destination is per se a breach of freedom and liberty of an individual migrant. The prospect of the European Commission launching infringement procedure for non-compliance with the relocation scheme was contested by some members of the cabinet; similarly, as the actual launch of the procedure in June 2017 (European Commission, 2017). A stylized argument could be made that in this case, migration and, for that matter, EU-level discourses, indeed were employed instrumentally for domestic policy purposes. It would not amount to populism though. In other words, the fabric of the emerging migration-populism nexus in Poland is subtle and very different from that, which unfolds in Hungary (see for instance, Sata, 2016). In some senses, the actors operating on the Polish political scene, and by default, Polish society, were caught

unprepared to address either migration, or migration as an item of political debate or, particularly, to deal with escalating discourses revolving around migration.

Poland is not a stranger when it comes to accepting and welcoming refugees and migrants; over the past years mostly from Chechnya, Ukraine, but also from Vietnam and other countries. The tragic developments in neighbouring Ukraine and the resulting wave of migration, showed that the Polish society can express its empathy and solidarity with people in need. Similarly, at the level of policy-making, decisions were taken aimed at facilitating the influx of Ukrainians to Poland as the war in Ukraine raged. The migration and refugee crises that peaked in 2015-2016 and placed in the spotlight Greece, the Balkan route and eventually Hungary, did not influence Poland directly. As a result, the connection between the migration and refugee crises and the EU mandatory relocation scheme was not obvious at first to large parts of the Polish society. The way the scheme was communicated to the societies across the EU, including Poland, did not help in improving the citizens' understanding of its relevance either. References to 'European solidarity' were in this context pre-mature and misplaced. Had they been preceded by a more thorough debate, confusion and unnecessary tension related to the prospect of receiving refugees under the relocation scheme would have been easily avoided. The case of Poland attests to that. As Szczerbiak (2017) observes,

"knowing that opinion polls show three-quarters of Poles are against the EU scheme, Civic Platform leader Grzegorz Schetyna initially denied that the migration crisis was still an issue and then, when pressed by a reporter, appeared to suggest that he was against admitting any refugees (...). Under pressure from the liberal-left media, Civic Platform rowed back from this and suggested instead that it was only against 'illegal migrants' and in favour of accepting a small number of refugees who were genuinely escaping armed conflict and had been vetted on security grounds. To add to the confusion, the majority of the party's MEPs abstained during a May European Parliament debate on the issue (Szczerbiak, 2017).

Still, as Schetyna's gaffe was picked up by Nowoczesna, seeking in this way to re-gain some points, the issue was exacerbated – by the media and PO's contenders – to unhealthy proportions. Again, neither of these amount to populism. Still, the question remains why migration is an issue in Poland and why anti-migrant and xenophobic arguments and attitudes find supporters?

In the debate on migration, similarly as in the earlier debate on abortion, the Church played an influential role. It would not be proper to delve into generalizations about the Church in Poland. There are several wonderful parishes embracing enlightened Christian values and countless priests that are devoted to serve. That being said, the issue of migration shows that some parts of the Church had to figure out their way regarding migration, since instances of ambivalent approach to migration were many. For instance, an overview of audio- and print-content of the key Catholic news provider, Radio Maryja, surprises unpleasantly with a narrative that equals migration with threat to security. The Polish Episcopate made a fundamental effort to set things right by urging solidarity with refugees. In their statement, the Bishops argued that solidarity with migrants should be seen as an "expression of Christian sensitivity and national tradition" (KEP, 2016). This official position of the Polish Episcopate notwithstanding, the Catholic media seem to be operating under a different ideational framework to say the least.

On a positive note, the atmosphere – ripe with negative attitudes to migration – apparent in parliamentary discourse, media, and in day-to-day developments in Poland, triggered protests. The mayors of major Polish cities expressed their dissatisfaction with the government's unwillingness to abide by Poland's commitments and welcome refugees under the relocation quota. Several opinion-makers, including university professors, writers, recognized individuals etc. began expressing their opposition to anti-migrant approaches and xenophobia. In June, Nowoczesna, adopted a more active stance towards migration, making a point that to be European means to actively subscribe to the idea

of solidarity with other EU member-states towards migration. These examples suggest that counter-narratives to those negative to migrants and migration can be generated.

By means of wrapping up: The discussion in this section suggests that while anti-migrant approaches and xenophobia, sadly, are an issue in contemporary Poland, it would be a simplification to argue that a migration-populism nexus has emerged. Migration is employed instrumentally by the variety of political actors who are active on Polish political scene. Yet, even if a case for demagogic can be made, it is impossible to talk of populism converging around migration. Poland is at a tipping point where the mechanisms fuelling the evolution of the migration-populism nexus can still be stopped.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The discussion on the ways the issue of migration is dealt with in Poland and Greece reveals striking differences between these two countries. While in the Greek case, a very clear attempt aimed at avoiding instrumentalization of migration can be identified, in the case of Poland, several instances of instrumental use of migration can be pointed out. In the case of Poland, so it seems, the media and, at times, also the opposition, played a role in augmenting voices and arguments that should have been shamed, silently. Certainly, country-specific circumstances condition the way migration has been confronted in the main discourse reflecting the developments of socio-political life in both countries. That geography matters and has an impact on citizens' attitudes to migration has been confirmed empirically (Czaika, di Lillo, 2017). In the particular cases of Poland and Greece, geography in a way, it led to a paradoxical situation, where a country directly exposed to uncontrolled influx of migrants, i.e. Greece, succeeded in developing benign attitudes to migration. In contrast, a country outside the main migratory routes, i.e. Poland, finds itself at a tipping point where the emergence of a powerful migration-populism nexus constitutes a viable possibility.

The discussion in this paper confirmed the assumptions forming the conceptual framework of this analysis. These suggested that specific socio-economic developments as well as the maturity of the political scene influence peoples' and the political system's resilience to demagogic and populism. In the case of Greece, the desolate economic situation renders the key discourses converge around matters directly related to economic situation in the country. In Poland, demographic shift and fading relevance of the success of the Round Table Talks of 1989, make the society extremely vulnerable to manipulation and the political scene apparently unable to regroup and consolidate beyond particular interests and objectives. In both countries, migration established itself as a tenet of everyday life and political discourse. The difference is that in Poland, the non-debate on migration created a vacuum conducive to instrumental use of migration as a resource of political competition, be it tiny, petty wars. Against this background, the big question is what lessons can be drawn from the case of Greece. Three major points can be made.

First, at the conceptual level, and specifically in the academic debate and expert analysis, it is imperative to introduce a clear distinction between populism and demagogic. Also, it is important to recognize that not all instances of instrumental use of migration amount to populism.

At the level of political communication, it is imperative that greater emphasis is placed on migration as a socially (unavoidable) phenomenon that concerns all of us. Accordingly, effort needs to be invested in developing discourses that speak to peoples' objective and subjective concerns that irregular migratory flows are bound to trigger (Visvizi et al., 2017: 231-232). Only by presenting migration in a comprehensive way, i.e. as a social phenomenon bearing implications for both the receiving and the incoming populations will be able to improve our society's resilience to demagogic and populism converging around anti-migrant attitudes.

At the empirical level, it is imperative to develop and emulate examples of successful projects aimed at shaping young peoples' awareness of and attitudes to migration. The examples two Erasmus+

projects, including ALIEN<sup>1</sup> and EUMIGRO<sup>2</sup> confirm that enlightened education focused on equipping students with critical thinking skills and competencies may in fact be the most sustainable way of managing peoples' attitudes to migration.

Finally, at the level of party politics and communication, it is necessary that all actors engaged on Polish political scene political parties get together and engage in true dialogue on migration. Failure to do that will exacerbate the use of migration as a resource of political competition at home, thus effectively fuelling the dynamics behind the migration-populism-migration nexus in Poland. While engaging in a true dialogue on migration, it is equally important to consider the strategies of containment and silencing, successfully employed in Greece, and against this backdrop identify specific strategies that might work in Polish circumstances.

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