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**Migration and Political Discourse: Comparing the Visegrad Group and
European Union Institutional Narratives**

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Abstract

Over the last decade, migration has been a significant topic of debate among European politicians, political parties, academics and journalists. With the mass arrival of third-country nationals to the European Union, many different arguments, proposals, and approaches to managing migration have emerged. The complex nature of the issue, coupled with the high influx of irregular arrivals, has led to intensified disagreements both within and between member states and the European Union's decision-making institutions. This study analyses the temporal and thematic alignment between the securitisation discourse of the Visegrad Group and major terrorist events and the following change in the EU-level discourse on the migration crisis, particularly the European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission. In addition, the study evaluates the consistency of communication among European Union institutions. Furthermore, the study considers three interrelated frameworks to examine these dynamics: securitisation, agenda setting and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Additionally, this study contributes to the academic literature by analysing the collective response of the Visegrad Group and the shift in the discourse of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission. Our analysis shows that the Visegrad Group's communication focused predominantly on security rather than humanitarian issues. Also, this study suggests that the high politics route offers a valuable framework for understanding how the securitisation narrative developed from the Visegrad Group to the European Union institutions during the migration crisis. Lastly, the European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission demonstrated discursive alignment with the Visegrad Group's securitisation framing, particularly in late 2015 and autumn 2016.

Keywords: Migration; European Union; Visegrad Group; Discourse Studies; Securitisation

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1. Introduction

The arrival of a large number of asylum seekers¹ and migrants² in a short period has presented European leaders and politicians with one of the most significant external challenges in the history of the European Union (EU). The EU's politicians and other responsible actors failed to keep up with the changes in rhetoric and the reality of the crisis (Hintjens 2019). It became clear that the EU's migration policy (based on the Dublin Regulations) must be revised to deal with such a high migratory pressure. Despite this recognition, the EU member states, in the absence of an agreement, proved unable to adapt their policies to meet this unprecedented challenge.

The European migration crisis³ was a new political phenomenon that has substantially impacted politics throughout EU member countries, such as the rise of right-wing, populist, and anti-immigration parties. The EU's political sphere was divided into two groups: those focused on security and those taking a humanitarian approach.

According to the Copenhagen School, securitisation refers to the process by which political actors portray an issue as an existential threat, which justifies the implementation of extraordinary measures that extend beyond standard political procedures (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998). In the context of migration, political actors may implement this approach to frame

¹ Asylum seeker: In the global context, an asylum seeker is a person who is seeking international protection. In countries *"with individualised procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum-seeker will be identified as a refugee"* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2006, 4). However, at the beginning of the legal process, every refugee can be recognised as an asylum seeker.

In the EU context, *"a third-country national or stateless person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken"* (Art.2(b)) (European Council 2005, 16).

² Migrant: In the global context, *"migrant is defined as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. A person's country of usual residence is that in which the person lives, the country in which the person has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes recreation, holiday, business, medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage goes not entail a change in the country usual residence"* (United Nations 1998, 9). In the EU context, a person who either:

A. Establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU Member State or a third country,

B. Having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU Member State ceases to have their usual residence in the EU Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months" (European Commission 2020).

³ In this study, the author uses the term *"migration crisis"* to describe the mass influx of third country nationals into the EU, which includes both economic migrants and asylum seekers. However, given the nature of the research, which aims to analyse the discourse of various institutions, the term *"refugee crisis"* is also employed. Depending on the context, the selected institutions may use either *"migration crisis"* or *"refugee crisis"*.

migrants as a potential threat to internal security, an economic burden or a potential for cultural destabilisation.

In contrast, the humanitarian approach considers migration from the viewpoint of migrants, refugees⁴, and asylum seekers, who are vulnerable individuals compelled to leave their home countries in search of protection and support. This approach highlights the importance of defending human rights and ensuring international protection. It advocates for solidarity, shared responsibility, and the integration of these individuals into host communities.

In 2015, during the events in the Visegrad Group (V4) countries, right-wing politicians, political parties, and media portrayed asylum seekers and migrants as a threat to EU unity, security, and stability. They argued that the influx of undocumented immigrants should be seen as a *"security"* risk rather than just a *"humanitarian"* issue. The governments of the V4 countries claimed that within a mass of mixed undocumented irregular migrants⁵ and refugees, there could be foreign fighters, potential terrorists, and enemies of European culture. Simultaneously, they stated that asylum seekers and migrants attempting to enter the EU illegally violated international and EU regulations.

According to a study by Troszyński and El-Ghamari, the term *"illegal immigrant"* was the most widely used phrase in the Polish press from 2015 to 2018 (Troszyński and El-Ghamari 2022). A study by Simonovits and Sik, which analysed the content of the media during the migration crisis in Hungary, shows that during the peak of the migration crisis in 2015, the word *"illegal"* was frequently used (Sik and Simonovits 2019).

In addition, the proponents of the securitisation approach argued that the wave of immigration included economic migrants who were not entitled to international protection. V4 governments were among the first political actors to raise security concerns and emphasise the mixed nature of immigrants, including refugees and economic migrants. According to Hungarian Prime

⁴ Refugee: The term refugee shall apply to any person who *"as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"* (Art.1(A)(2)) (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1951, 14–15).

⁵ Irregular migrant: In the global context, *"a person who, owing to unauthorised entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country. The definition covers inter alia those persons who have entered a transit or host country lawfully but have stayed for a longer period than authorised or subsequently taken up unauthorised employment (also called clandestine/undocumented migrant or migrant in an irregular situation). The term 'irregular' is preferable to 'illegal' because the latter carries a criminal connotation and is seen as denying migrants' humanity"* (International Organization for Migration 2011, 54).

Minister Viktor Orbán, most immigrants who entered Hungary during the migration crisis were "*economic migrants*" and people travelling to Europe for a better life (Novak 2015). At the same time, Robert Fico, Prime Minister of Slovakia, rejected criticism from Western EU capitals and criticised other European leaders for not "*telling the truth*" about the background of the large majority of migrants (Vasagar, Byrne, and Barker 2015).

When three of the four V4 countries voted against the EU's mandatory quotas for the admission of refugees, they saw it in conflict with the sovereignty and safety of their countries. (Gallai 2018). One of the V4 countries that voted in favour of the resolution was Poland, whose government was led by Donald Tusk — the co-founder of the Civic Platform (PO), who was Prime Minister then and later became President of the European Council when the relocation quotas were agreed. Poland's position later changed following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels (Ibid). The then Prime Minister of Poland, Beata Szydło, announced the withdrawal of Poland's support for the Council's decision on relocation quotas. Instead, Poland would proclaim the right to control its borders completely and decide who can enter its territory alone (Rettman 2016). The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia governments argued that the relocation scheme would increase migration to the Union, resulting in long-term immigration challenges and difficulties in integrating newcomers from Arab and Muslim countries.

The main reason for the mandatory refugee quotas was to ease the extreme pressure on Greece and Italy's asylum and migration systems: 120,000 asylum seekers are to be relocated from the overburdened countries at the external Schengen borders (i.e. Greece and Italy) to other EU member states, according to the Council's relocation quota scheme⁶. The Council of the EU has decided on relocation quotas (2015/1601) "*in accordance with the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility between the member states, which govern the Union policy on asylum and migration, in the relocation of 120 000 persons in clear need of international protection*" (European Council 2015a, 82).

On the other hand, the supporters of the humanitarian approach argued that the EU and its member states have a responsibility to protect vulnerable individuals, including refugees,

⁶ Hungary was also presented with this option, but the Hungarian government chose to reject it. This decision was made for two main reasons: first, to demonstrate the efficiency of the Hungarian public administration, and second, to highlight that many individuals arriving in Hungary came from Greece without being registered. While registration was mandatory under the Dublin regulation, as Greece is the first Schengen country in the Balkans, most arrivals did not comply with this requirement.

asylum seekers, and migrants fleeing war-torn regions such as Syria and Afghanistan. Moreover, there was considerable backing for upholding that every individual has a right to seek asylum upon arrival. Additionally, at the political level of the EU, politicians, policymakers and NGOs advocated for solidarity and burden sharing, arguing that no single EU member state was solely responsible for addressing the crisis.

This research aims to analyse the temporal and thematic alignment between the securitisation discourse⁷ of the V4 and major terrorist events and the following change in the EU-level discourse on the migration crisis, particularly the European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission. Furthermore, the study seeks to assess the consistency of communication among EU institutions. The thesis utilised three interrelated frameworks to examine these dynamics: securitisation, agenda setting and the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The V4's joint stance on migration, framed as a security threat, is viewed as a coalition-level strategy that entails coordinated discourse and timing around key EU events.

Furthermore, the dissertation addresses the puzzling elements of the EU's institutional response to the migration crisis. Despite the significant impact of the 2015 migration crisis, such as a surge in irregular migration and repeated terrorist attacks, the institutional discourse of the EU did not uniformly shift towards a securitisation framework. This variation may reflect the EU's institutional complexity, member states' diverging priorities and external events such as terrorist attacks. Yet, it also overlaps in time with the securitised discourse of the V4. This suggests that external pressures such as terrorism and the V4's securitisation framing may coincide with shifts in discourse. However, institutional dynamics and the need for consensus likely shaped the pace and nature of these shifts.

After critically assessing the current literature on the topic, we can say that the literature lacks primary research analysing the shift in the discourse of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission and the role of the V4 and terrorism in this process. Currently, the literature focuses on the securitisation aspects of the migration crisis separately in the V4 countries, and Hungary is the most widely recognised case study. In the case of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission, academic literature concentrates more on policy research. Moreover, in the academic literature, most research focuses on media discourse rather than the discourse of the European Council, Council of the EU, and European

⁷ In this paper, "*discourse*" refers to the public language, frames and narratives used by political actors in official statements, speeches and documents.

Commission. Even if their study focuses on analysing the discourse of the EU institutions, they do not consider the impact of V4 and terrorism, despite the fact that these two factors are significant variables in the analysis of the change in the discourse. Furthermore, this research will not explore each V4 country separately but will analyse their collective response to the migration crisis. This notable gap in the academic literature acknowledges the need for more significant research efforts in the selected topic of this dissertation.

At the same time, it is important to note that the relevance of this thesis extends beyond academia and the migration crisis. As the EU confronts security challenges, migration flows, threats of terrorism, and geopolitical instability, this thesis provides a window into how its institutional discourse responds to internal and external pressures. These insights enhance our understanding of the evolution of political discourse within EU institutions during times of crisis.

2. Research Questions:

1. Did the discourse of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission) align with the securitisation discourse of the Visegrad Group during the migration crisis?

1.1. What were the relative weights of securitisation and humanitarian elements, and how did they change in the discourses of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission) and the Visegrad Group?

1.2. Did the humanitarian and securitisation elements in the discourse of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission) and the Visegrad Group exhibit similar or differing patterns?

2. Did the repeated terrorist attacks elevate the role of security in the discourse of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission)?

3. Hypotheses:

Hypothesis for RQ 1 – If the Visegrad Group made an impact on the EU discourse, their securitisation narrative at the time of the migration crisis should also be reflected in the communication of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission).

Hypothesis for RQ 2 – The major terrorist attacks during the migration crisis reinforced the securitisation arguments in the V4 discourse and were followed by security-related communications of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission).

4. Literature Review

4.1 The Dublin Regulation

Migration routes are constantly changing and evolving, depending on circumstances in the countries of origin, transit and destination. In the context of migration, country of transit means *“the country through which a person or a group of persons pass on any journey to the country of destination or from the country of destination to the country of origin or the country of habitual residence”* (International Organization for Migration 2011, 39). The migration crisis has shown that there are a number of routes available to those seeking to reach Europe. The most popular routes for migrants and asylum seekers have been the Western Mediterranean, the Central Mediterranean, the Western Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. During the migration crisis, asylum seekers and migrants travelled by land and sea. They often used dangerous and life-threatening routes to reach EU territory. Additionally, due to a poorly implemented registration system, it is possible that some individuals attempted to cross the external borders multiple times. It is essential to highlight that the significant rise in irregular migration has revealed the weaknesses of the Dublin Regulation.

On 15 June 1990, the Dublin Convention was signed by the EU member states (Demerouti 2020). Dublin Regulation was the first binding treaty in the field of asylum, and it gave member states the responsibility to examine asylum applications to provide a safe environment for the applicants living under threat in his/her origin country (Ibid). Also, the fundamental principle of the convention was *“to ensure that asylum applicants are not referred successively from one Member State to another without any of these States acknowledging itself to be competent to examine the application for asylum”* (European Union 1990, 2).

The Dublin II Regulation entered into force in February 2003, and the objective of the Regulation was to set the criteria to identify which member state would be responsible for investigating asylum applications as quickly as possible (European Union 2011). The heart of the Dublin II Regulation was to define the principle that only one member state is responsible for examining an asylum application, which burdens member states unevenly (Ibid). We can argue that this was one of the main reasons for the system's failure. The new changes were

based on preventing asylum seekers from being sent from one Member State to another and preventing the administrative system's abuse by one asylum seeker, making several asylum applications in different Member States (Ibid). It is essential to mention that the Dublin II Regulation did not form a quota system for distribution among the member states. As a result, the management of asylum applications is within the responsibility of EU member states located at the Union's exterior borders. For example, if an asylum seeker and/or an irregular migrant is detained in any inner country of the EU (i.e., in countries that are not external border countries), the detainee shall be transported to the first entry country. According to Articles 4 and 13 of the Dublin II Regulation:

“The process of determining the Member State responsible under this Regulation shall start as soon as an application for asylum is first lodged with a Member State” (Art 4(1)) (European Council 2003, 3)

“Where no Member State responsible for examining the application for asylum can be designated on the basis of the criteria listed in this Regulation, the first Member State with which the application for asylum was lodged shall be responsible for examining it” (Art 13) (Ibid, 5).

This is why, during the migration crisis, Italy and Greece did not want to register so many immigrants because they wanted to “get rid” of them, but if registered and caught in Germany or if they submitted their claim in Germany, the German authorities were supposed to send them back to Italy and Greece.

Also, in the case of irregular entrance, the first entry member state has to examine the application of an asylum seeker. Article 10 of the Dublin II Regulation states that:

“Where it is established, on the basis of proof or circumstantial evidence as described in the two lists mentioned in Article 18(3), including the data referred to in Chapter III of Regulation (EC) No 2725/2000, that an asylum seeker has irregularly crossed the border into a Member State by land, sea or air having come from a third country, the Member State thus entered shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum. This responsibility shall cease 12 months after the date on which the irregular border crossing took place” (Art 10(1)) (Ibid,5).

The weaknesses mentioned above in the Regulation are also relevant to the Dublin III Regulation. The Dublin III Regulation was introduced in July 2013, and the criteria for

establishing responsibility are, in order of priority: “(a) family unity, (b) possession of residence permits and visas; (c) irregular entry or stay, visa-waived entry; (b) applications in an international transit area of an airport; (c) the first country in which the application is lodged” (Movileanu 2021, 2). The core problem during the migration crisis was that EU member states frequently applied the “first country entry” rule and failed to adhere to the order of criteria. Consequently, because of their geographical location, member states like Greece, Italy, and Spain experienced immense pressure during the migration crisis. These countries were the main entry points for people from third countries, but they could not cope with the massive influx of irregular newcomers.

In 2016, the European Commission recommended modifying and replacing the current EU asylum instrument to manage migration better flow. The first proposal replaced the first entry and application criteria with an allocation system. According to the proposed changes, the asylum applicant would have an opportunity to choose to be allocated to one of the four EU member states with the fewest asylum applications. However, member states could not reach an agreement on this issue.

On the other hand, just before Christmas, on 20 December, the European Parliament and the Council reached political agreements on five fundamental asylum laws, including the Dublin system, the Eurodac database, the screening of migrants and crisis derogations. The new package of reforms was formally adopted on 14 May 2024 and includes:

- *Screening Regulation: creating uniform rules concerning the identification of non-EU nationals upon their arrival, thus increasing the security within the Schengen area.*
- *Eurodac Regulation: developing a common database gathering more accurate and complete data to detect unauthorised movements.*
- *Asylum Procedures Regulation: making asylum, return and border procedures quicker and more effective.*
- *Asylum Migration Management Regulation: establishing a new solidarity mechanism amongst Member States to balance the current system where a few countries are responsible for the vast majority of asylum applications, and clear rules on responsibility for asylum applications.*
- *Crisis and Force majeure Regulation: ensuring that the EU is prepared in the future to face situations of crisis, including instrumentalisation of migrants (European Commission 2023)*

The primary purpose of the newly reformed EU asylum system is to ensure better control of migration by improving the efficiency of the EU asylum system by limiting secondary movements of asylum seekers.

4.2 Security and Migration

The Copenhagen School of Security Studies interprets securitisation as a process in which supposedly non-security subjects (such as immigration) become security issues due to securitising speech acts (Buzan 1983). During this process, elites in power, politicians, and experts identify and characterise risks and threats in concrete moments and at different levels regional, global and national (Estevens 2018). Then, they should justify the credibility of threats against society and neutralise them whenever possible. According to Weaver, *“security is, in historical terms, the field where states threaten each other challenge each other's sovereignty, try to impose their will on each other, defend their independence, and so on”* (Weaver 1995, 49). As Weaver put it, security is built on a set of discourses and historical practices based on institutionally shared understanding and becoming a social and political construct (Ibid). The Copenhagen School sees securitisation as an intersubjective process (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998), which means that there are no security issues in itself and that anything can become a security issue if it is labelled as such (if the conditions are met) (Kabata and Jacobs 2022).

Many scholars argue that the security discourse was linked to migrants after the Cold War (Collyer, 2006; Wohlfeld, 2014). Traditional international relations theorists, who regarded states as the sole essential players throughout the Cold War, considered security in broad, military terms. Lippman suggested that *“a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war”* (Lippmann 1943, 51). On the other hand, Barry Buzan's *People, States and Fear* book was one of the first publications in the field of security studies that examined the risks to security presented by migration (Paoletti 2010). According to Wohlfeld, the so-called new security agenda, which was constructed at the end of the Cold War and led to a widening and deepening of our knowledge of what defines a security threat or challenge, contains one of the most mentioned, yet also most controversial, topics: international migration (Wohlfeld 2014). As Bureš and Stojanov argue, in recent decades, there has been an increasing perception of international migration as a threat to existential security (Bureš and Stojanov 2023, 2). Koser argues that in recent years, the acceptance of migration as a threat to national security has

unquestionably increased, in part because of the dramatic increase in the number of migrants, in particular, irregular migrants (Koser 2011). Moreover, it is essential to note that real or imagined linkages to terrorism, health risk factors and organised crime are at the centre of the idea that irregular migration presents a security threat (Wohlfeld 2014).

Weiner, in his work, identified five broad categories of situations where undocumented migrants can be perceived as a threat to the country that receives them:

- 1) They are regarded as a threat - or at least a thorn - in relations between sending and receiving countries, a situation which arises when refugees and migrants are opposed to the regime of their home country;*
- 2) Perceived as a political threat or security risk to the regime of the host country;*
- 3) Seen as a cultural threat;*
- 4) As a social and economic problem for the host society;*
- 5) When the host society uses immigrants as an instrument of threat against the country of origin (Weiner 1992, 105–106).*

In the case of the EU, Huysmans classified irregular migration as a threat to culture, the socio-economy and internal security (Huysmans 2002). Huysmans remarks that once it became a security issue, the immigrant appeared to be an outsider who had entered a peaceful environment and harmed the harmony by entering it (Huysmans 1995, 59). Furthermore, he argues that simply stopping the use of security discourse towards migrants will be enough to erase security issues because if the issue is no longer recognised and addressed as a security problem, it ceases to be a security problem (Ibid, 65). However, Wæver and Roe reject Huysmans's idea by arguing that if migration is considered a security matter, it is highly challenging to reverse course, to de-securitise and perhaps even logically impossible (Roe 2004).

The securitising moves enacted by elites have resonated with the general public of EU member states, thereby elevating migration to the status of urgent emergency politics. This phenomenon is often characterised by the utilisation of various instruments of influence, including speeches, reports, and legislation, to shape policy-making processes (Bureš and Stojanov 2023, 3). The policy in this context allowed for extraordinary measures, such as ethnic or religious-based

entry bans and increased border controls, which justified actions beyond the normal political process (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 24).

Gigitashvili and Sidlo argue that in the Visegrad countries, through speech acts demonstrating migrants and asylum seekers as a threat to the nations, the securitisation of the refugee crisis was implemented (Gigitashvili and Sidlo, 2015). The main features of the securitisation discourse identified are internal security (including economic security), sovereignty (i.e. state security), and (Christian) culture and identity (i.e. societal security). According to their study, refugees and migrants were portrayed as terrorists who wanted to impose their own (Islamic) values and cultures and get access to V4 countries' assistance, all with Brussels's approval and to enforce refugee quotas against the wishes of the governments (and people) of the Visegrad countries (Ibid). Securitisation is believed to begin when elite actors adopt existential threat rhetoric to bring 'low politics' public policy concerns into the sphere of 'high politics' (Messina 2017, 27). According to Messina, the securitisation process is fundamentally intersubjective, and the elite's securitising acts consist of a speech, a report or legislation (Ibid). At the same time, the process must be justified by objective facts. However, it was argued that the concept of securitisation was not restricted to speech acts but was also deeply grounded in institutional development (Karyotis 2007). Terrorism and migration have, therefore, been incorporated into a unified security continuum (Ibid).

Kazharski and Tabosa suggest that in the case of the Visegrad countries, the political elites have been using speech acts to securitise migration and processes associated with it in various sectors, including: *"as a threat to national and regional security, as a threat to the state's sovereignty and its ability to decide upon immigration policies, as a threat to the national economy, and as a threat to 'us,' in identarian terms"* (Kazharski and Tabosa 2018, 78). Also, a study by Barlai et al. indicates that initially, migrants were portrayed as a threat to social and national security in Poland and Hungary (Barlai et al. 2017). Kabata and Jacobs point out that the Polish ruling party (Law and Justice) used securitising discourse from 2015 to 2017 on the migration crisis. They identified five different elements: 'Security', 'Muslim other', 'We want to help, but . . .', 'The EU has gone astray' and 'Our other' (Kabata and Jacobs 2022, 11).

It is also important to note that the V4 countries' strong security-oriented approach to the migration crisis is shaped by factors such as domestic political considerations, historical legacies and political culture. Lang shows that the V4, in particular, opposed an EU-wide automatic mechanism for refugees (Lang 2015). He states that opposition was mainly fuelled

by domestic concerns (Ibid). Knodt and Tews indicate that domestic political goals also inspired the Hungarian government's response to the refugee crisis (Knodt and Tews 2017, 60).

Additionally, the V4 countries' historical context is crucial. It is important to note that these countries were effectively locked within the communist bloc, which severely restricted freedom of movement until the collapse of communism. The freedom of movement was highly restricted, contributing to the preservation of relative ethnic homogeneity within the V4 countries. Krastev and Holmes acknowledge that one factor explaining the different approach of Western and Eastern Europeans to the migration crisis ("*anti-immigrant hysteria*") is that while the East is still homogeneous and mono-ethnic, the West is seen as having become heterogeneous and multi-ethnic as a result of a thoughtless and suicidal policy of allowing easy immigration (Krastev and Holmes 2018, 127).

The importance of sovereignty should also be highlighted, as these countries had only recently regained autonomy—just 25 years before the migration crisis. Under the communist regime, their sovereignty was significantly constrained. Therefore, the issue of border control and the ability of governments to regulate who enters their territory is far more sensitive for these nations than for Western EU member states, which have had longer experience with multiculturalism and massive immigration. According to Bauerová, the V4 countries lack long-term experience dealing with a larger-scale influx of migrants, and their policies regarding migration and integration are not prepared for practical implementation. They emphasize a higher priority on state sovereignty and cultural and religious symbols, with each country having the authority to define solidarity and set criteria for accepting or rejecting migrants (Bauerová 2018a, 114).

In summary, reviewing the "*security-migration*" concept highlights the significance of elites and politicians shaping the perception of migration as a security issue. At the same time, discourse on migration as a threat to the state's national interest has intensified due to the nature of migration in recent years, including irregular migrants. Additionally, as revealed by earlier studies in the case of the V4 countries at the beginning of the migration crisis, migrants and asylum seekers were portrayed as a threat to national security through the speech acts of politicians and elites.

Although the V4 countries share common geographical characteristics, the literature suggests that their securitisation approach to the migration crisis is not solely attributable to geography.

Domestic political dynamics, historical legacies and political culture shaped the V4's security position approach to the migration crisis. The V4 countries were not identical regarding immigration impacts but shared concerns regarding migration governance. For instance, Hungary was the only country to experience mass immigration, yet the other V4 governments aligned their positions with Hungary's concerns, even though they were not directly affected. When the EU introduced migration governance measures, such as mandatory relocation, these countries joined the V4 platform to oppose them.

4.3 Terrorism and Migration

Since the 9/11 terror attack, there has been a growing linkage between migration and terrorism. As a result of the 9/11 terror attack, the connection between migration and international terrorism appears to have reappeared due to a lesson learnt by states: terrorism is no longer restricted to nations or regions (International Organization for Migration 2010). The spontaneous terror attack presented an opportunity and played a significant role in the rise of the 'securitisation' of the migration concept (Zucconi 2004).

This was supported by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, which stresses that states should:

"Prevent the movement of terrorists or terrorist groups by adequate border controls and controls on issuance of identity papers and travel documents, and through measures for preventing counterfeiting, forgery or fraudulent use of identity papers and travel documents" (Art.2(g)) (United Nations Security Council 2001, 2).

Additionally, an IOM report published in 2010 stated that a significant impact of the 9/11 terrorist attack was that migration became more strongly linked to national security concerns (International Organization for Migration 2010). Karyotis, in his paper, mentions that the securitisation of migration in the EU only intensified after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, the 9/11 attacks did not generate the *"insecurities, uncertainties, ambiguities and complexities regarding migration policy"* but intensified processes already profoundly established in the emerging European internal security framework (Karyotis 2007, 13).

According to the research of Cruz, D'Alessio, and Stolzenberg, which tested the relationship between terrorism and immigration, terrorism impacts attitudes towards ingroup and outgroup immigration unevenly. In countries plagued by terrorism, the probability of favouring outgroup immigration decreases. However, the opposite is occurring regarding ingroup immigration (Cruz, D'Alessio, and Stolzenberg 2020).

It is impossible to ignore the effect of international terrorism on the development of migration security nexus. *“Migration flows can interact with other factors in three ways to exacerbate conditions that foment violent conflict in the international system: by providing resources that help to fuel internal conflicts; by providing opportunities for networks of organized crime; and by providing conduits for international terrorism”* (Adamson 2006, 191). Also, Leiken argues that states view immigration as an economic opportunity, but in contrast, terrorist organisations view immigration as an opportunity to gain access to the target state (Leiken 2004).

Bove and Böhmelt find that terrorism can travel from one destination to another via migration, but immigration is unlikely to impact the rise of terrorism (Bove and Bohmelt 2016, 584–85). The theoretical framework of their research stresses that immigration from terror-prone states can be explored by a terrorist organisation that uses migrant communities as a recruitment pool (Ibid).

On the other hand, Iov and Bogdan mention in their work that the relationship between international migration and extremist and terrorist actions is used as a tool to increase the sense of insecurity in the host society by certain politicians or state representatives in their speeches (Iov and Bogdan 2017, 15).

When the mass migration movement peaked in 2015, political actors of the V4 countries claimed that the migration crisis was linked with terrorism. They increased their discourse on the securitisation of borders to avoid potential terrorists. For example, the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán told public radio while commenting on the terrorist attack in Nice:

“If we do not want to see cases such as those in Nice, we must not allow them. Apart from the few already here, we do not want new entrants, especially not [illegal] migrants” (Hungary Today 2020).

In the case of Poland, President Andrej Duda said:

“There is no doubt that the growing wave of terrorism is linked to migration” (Radio Poland 2017).

At the same time, then Czech President Milos Zeman, in his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, said:

“Migration is partially provoked by terrorist actions, for instance in Syria or in Iraq. But on the other hand, migration is connected to terrorism because some jihadists are hidden inside the migration wave. And in Europe and everywhere, they create sleeping units, lonely wolves and so on” (Prague Castle 2017).

The Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said:

“There is an absolute link between migration and terrorism. It is clear that potential terrorists might have used uncontrolled migration, not only for passage, but also to bring weapons and explosives. Therefore, the probability there might be more individual terror attacks is very high because there is potential for such attack” (Deutsche Welle 2016).

A different group of scholars believes that public opinion is the great engine of democracy, influencing what governments do. According to Lijphart and Dahl, government responsiveness to public opinion is at the heart of most conceptions of democracy (Dahl 1967; Lijphart 1984). Democracy generally operates as intended, with public officials continuously responding to fluctuations in public opinion (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995). At the same time, a distinct group of scholars has presented evidence demonstrating that public opinion does influence political speech (Hager and Hilbig 2020). Relatedly, Rottinghaus examined White House archival data, including internal polling reports, and concluded that public opinion shaped the presidential conceptualization of foreign policy of the state (Rottinghaus 2008).

On the other hand, Wood and Lee's research suggest that *“modern presidents are not centrists, responding predictably to changing mass preferences through time. Of the 10 presidencies examined graphically, the issue-based liberalism of eight was actually independent of or opposite from dynamic movements in public opinion. Controlling for other factors, the statistical analyses contained no model in which the public mood variable was statistically significant”* (Wood and Lee 2009).

From a normative point of view, we would like to believe that voters influence the political decisions made by their elected officials. Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson argue that politicians follow public opinion (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995). Nevertheless, it is not enough to claim that the process is one-way. Political speeches or political acts taken by elected government officials can impact public opinion. In this case, we can observe that the political statements described above are closely related to the survey below.

Project 28, an EU-wide survey conducted by the Századvég Foundation⁸ in 2016, revealed that 85% of Hungarians believed that the influx of immigrants to the country would increase the threat of terrorism, and 84% found it was confirmed that the influx of immigrants into the country would increase crime. In 2017, a survey showed 66% of survey participants believed that the influx of immigrants to Hungary would increase the threat of terrorism, and 78% found it was confirmed that the arrival of immigrants in Hungary would increase crime. In addition,

⁸ All the data is available at Projects28's homepage (<https://szazadveg.hu/en/project-europe>).

in 2019, as to the possibility of terrorist attacks happening in Hungary, 1% answered 'very likely', 32% 'somewhat likely', 65% 'not likely at all', and 2% 'refused' to answer a question. In Poland, in 2016, 77% found it was confirmed that the influx of immigrants would increase the threat of terrorism, and 77% thought that immigration would increase the crime rate. In 2017, the survey indicated that 66% of Polish survey participants believed that the arrival of immigrants would increase the threat of terrorism. At the same time, 66% found it was confirmed that the immigration movement would increase the crime rate in Poland. Contrary to the Hungarian case, in 2019, as to the possibility of a terrorist attack happening in Poland, 17% answered 'very likely', 68% 'somewhat likely', 8% 'not likely at all', and 7% 'refused' to answer a question.

In the case of the Czech Republic, in 2016, 84% of survey participants believed that the immigration process to the country would increase the threat of terrorism, and in 2017, the number slightly increased to 86%. On the other hand, in 2016, 90% of the respondents believed that the influx of immigrants into the Czech Republic would increase crime, and in 2017, it decreased to 86%. Based on the results of the survey in 2019, as to the possibility of a terrorist attack happening in the Czech Republic, 8% answered 'very likely', 55% 'somewhat likely', 27% 'not likely at all', and 10% 'refused' to answer a question.

In Slovakia, in 2016, 81% considered that immigration would increase the threat of terrorism, but in 2017, it significantly decreased to 66%. The impact of immigration on the rise of crime in 2016 was 86%, and in 2017, 80% of respondents thought it would have a positive outcome. In 2019, as to the possibility of terrorist attacks happening in Slovakia, 6% answered 'very likely', 37% 'somewhat likely', 44% 'not likely at all', and 13% 'refused' to answer a question. At the same time, the Standard Eurobarometer 86 survey (EB86),⁹ carried out between 3 and 16 November 2016, included topics such as immigration and terrorism. In Hungary, 30% of respondents answered 'Immigration'¹⁰ and 8% 'Terrorism'¹¹ to the question, "*What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?*" In addition, 65% of respondents identified 'Immigration'¹² and 40% 'Terrorism'¹³ as the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment.

⁹All the data is available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2137>

¹⁰ The average for the European Union is 26 %.

¹¹ The average for the European Union is 5 %.

¹² The average for the European Union is 45 %.

¹³ The average for the European Union is 32 %.

In the case of Poland, 11% of respondents identified ‘Immigration’ and 5% ‘Terrorism’ as the two most pressing issues facing their country. On the other hand, 50% replied that ‘Immigration’ and 40% ‘Terrorism’ are the two most significant issues facing the EU.

In the Czech Republic, survey results revealed that 25% of respondents mentioned ‘Immigration’ and 8% identified ‘Terrorism’ when asked, *"What do you think are the two most important issues facing our country at the moment?"* Furthermore, 65% of respondents replied ‘Immigration’ and 40% ‘Terrorism’ to the question *"What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?"*

Lastly, in Slovakia, 10% of respondents recognised ‘Immigration’ and 5% highlighted ‘Terrorism’ as the two most pressing issues facing their country. Nevertheless, in the case of the EU, these numbers rise to 51% for ‘Immigration’ and 40% for ‘Terrorism’.

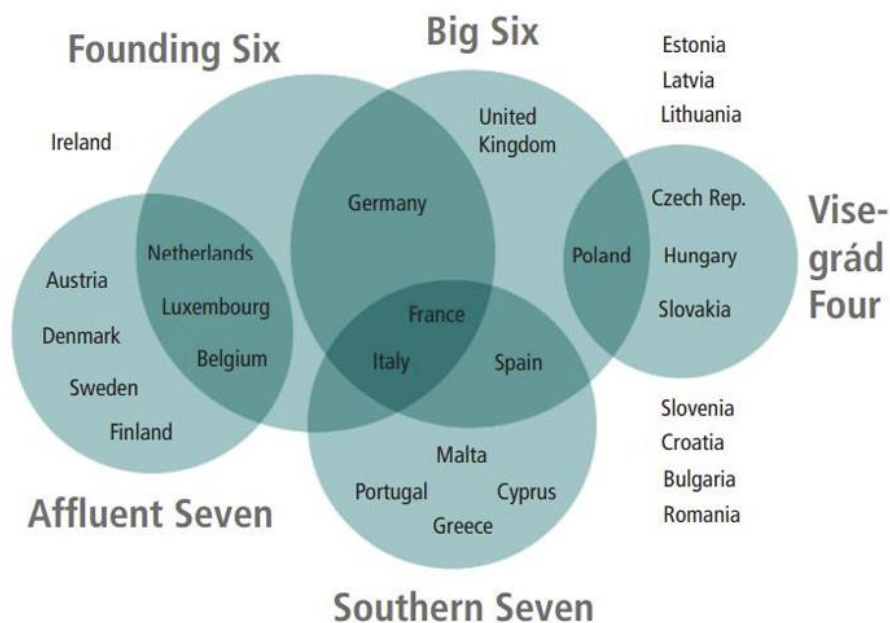
With the beginning of the migration crisis, the securitisation of migration and the linkage between migration and terrorism increased in the discourse of the politicians as they realised potential threats from the migration movement. Scholarly studies show that terrorism may use migrant populations for recruitment and has different impacts on sentiments towards ingroup and outgroup immigration. As noted above, the heads of state of the V4 countries frequently referenced migration-terrorism connections to justify security measures on migration.

4.4 The Visegrad Group and EU Decision-Making

Walsch points out that the V4 has always been the core of the East Central European states, and nearly all V4 politicians and analysts consider it an important regional collaboration (Walsch 2014, 1). Göllner mentions in his study that the Central and Eastern European states perceive the V4 as a potentially powerful actor on the European stage (Göllner 2018). Also, Cabada and Waisová draw attention from the standpoint of Central European political science, and the V4 is one of the most important regional groups operating in modern-day Europe or the EU (Cabada and Waisová 2018, 9). Bak-Pitucha remarked that the joint admission of the V4 countries in 2004 was a considerable success (Bak-Pitucha 2023), while Jankowski highlighted that, following this milestone, the V4 set new objectives for cooperation on European issues (Jankowski 2013). Furthermore, the V4 needs to identify areas and sectors of cooperation within the EU to help all member states achieve stability without failures or potential crises (Bak-Pitucha 2023).

The cooperation is driven by the intention of ensuring that shared national and sub-regional interests have adequate representation in EU decision-making platforms. Dangerfield emphasises that *"integration, effective interest advocacy within the EU has been identified as*

one of the main priorities of the V4 countries and includes more effective regional coordination, brand building and enhanced visibility (Dangerfield 2014).” The EU Coalition Explorer Survey published by the European Council Foreign Relations allows us to understand the EU's coalition patterns, asymmetric ties, corresponding coalition potentials, and agenda-setting powers in various policy areas (European Council on Foreign Relations 2017). In the published report, it is noted that “*more frequently than other groups the Visegrad Four act as a political coalition within the European Union. Their cooperation is based on common cultural values, history and a similar outlook on economic and security policy (Ibid, 16)*”. Furthermore, Figure 1 below shows us the main building blocks of potential coalitions within the EU, and we can see that the V4 countries have established strong cooperation among themselves. The only exception in this case is Poland, which has the potential to form a coalition with the ‘Big Six’, suggesting that it has been in contact with other countries more frequently than other V4 countries.



neutrality rules during their Council presidency (Tallberg 2003). According to Napel and Widgrén, the V4 may play a significant role in the European stage if the Europeans could carefully arrange their voting behaviour in the Council and unite their objectives (Napel and Widgrén 2011).

Bauerová stresses that the migration crisis has given new impetus to the negotiations and strengthened the work of the V4 (Bauerová 2018a). The EU's decision on mandatory relocation quotas has also strengthened the ties between these four Central European states (Ibid). It is thus vital to acknowledge the significant role played by the V4's firm stance against the mandatory relocation scheme advocated by the EU, which led to abandoning it (Duszczyk and Pszczółkowska 2019).

Göllner noted that the migration crisis has contributed to overcoming dissent among the V4 countries and intensified cooperation, potentially influencing voting behaviour in the Council (Göllner 2018). Furthermore, Gallai acknowledges that the migration crisis and the EU's ineffective response have increased the relative political weight of the V4 (Gallai 2018). Nič also points out that throughout 2016, the Visegrad countries worked together as a cohesive bloc in Brussels on the issue of migration (Nič 2016). The same study underlines that 2016 can be seen as a turning point in the history of the V4 and its influence within the EU. In the minds of sharp disagreements among the member states over how Europe should handle the migration crisis, the V4 strongly opposed mandatory relocations. In his study, Nič remarked that *“once the EU–Turkey deal and other measures had achieved a dramatic drop in the flow of migrants, the V4 was able to leave its stamp on the new EU policy approach to the crisis: the roadmap agreed at the Bratislava Summit on 16 September places emphasis on the protection of external borders and promotes the concept of ‘flexible solidarity’ (Ibid, 282)”*.

Hokovský believes that because of the significant difference in approach and economic rivalry, *“the Visegrad Group has not yet played a highly significant or visible role throughout the course of most of its existence. This has changed with the migration crisis in 2015 (Hokovský 2017, 53).”* Also, the migration crisis and the approach of the V4 since the beginning of the crisis demonstrate that regional cooperation can act as a motor and a brake for European integration (Wientzek 2017, 47). The same issue has been discussed by Cabada and Waisová, where the authors note that the V4's aspirations to become a core driver have been overshadowed by the impression of a problematic group that is undermining attempts to find an EU-wide solution to migration (Cabada and Waisová 2018, 10).

On the other hand, Hokovský further claims a view that is also supported by Cabada and Waisová, that the V4 and its leader's agenda to stop illegal migration to the EU, which started to emerge in early 2015, eventually became the predominant message of most politicians in EU member states in 2017 (Cabada and Waisová 2018; Hokovský 2017). Moreover, Bauerová mentioned that *“the Visegrad Group helps to formulate a shared opinion among its member states, for example in the period of the migration crisis or upon entry into the Schengen system, and creates a complete unit defined by shared interests”* (Bauerová 2018b). The ability to formulate strong common positions among the V4 members would strengthen the push for their shared interests in negotiations at the EU level. Examples include creating mini summits by the V4 before the European summits to increase functionality and find shared stances on issues.

Garai mentions that the V4 successfully advocated the Central European stance on migration policy, which the increased number of EU member states has embraced (Garai 2018). Furthermore, Gallai highlighted that strong political cooperation and the pursuit of coordinated actions and common interests could significantly boost the V4 bloc's influence within the EU, and their unity might decrease the disparity between the Eastern (or ‘new’) and Western (or ‘old’) member states (Gallai 2018, 10). Also, in the same article, the author notes that considering the unequal power dynamics in Europe before the migration crisis, the Eastern member states often had less influence in EU decision-making (Ibid). The migration issue and the political responses have broken the usual pattern, and the strong opposition of the V4 countries to the quota proposals has introduced the Visegrad brand into EU decision-making (Bečka et al. 2017).

The V4's common position during the migration has evolved, making it a relevant regional coalition within the EU. On top of that, the migration crisis has highlighted the V4's ability to express their shared strategic interests as a coalition. Many scholars argue that V4's coordinated actions during the migration crisis strengthened their impact and involvement in the EU decision-making process.

5. Theoretical Part

5.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

The current literature defines *an agenda as a collection of issues* the political establishment carefully considers (R. W. Cobb and Elder 1972, 86; Kingdon 1995, 3). According to Princen, *“agendas are about the attention given to issues”* (Princen 2009, 19). Several different agendas

can be identified based on who is paying attention (Ibid, 21). These include the political agenda (the list of issues that decision-makers find extremely important), the media agenda (the list of issues that the media finds extremely important), and the public agenda (the list of issues that 'the general public' finds extremely important) (Princen and Rhinard 2006). Soroka emphasizes that the agendas presented above are distinct, and the subjects covered in them could change at any time. However, they are also interconnected in several ways (Soroka 2002). The connections between the media agenda and other agenda types also apply to issues that move from the public agenda to the political agenda and vice versa (Ibid). Vanhoonacker and Pomorska observe that *"while some issues may emerge automatically consequent to prior commitments, many others never materialize, or only appear after a lengthy process of trial and error"* (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska 2013, 1317).

The study of agenda-setting processes began in the United States of America in the 1960s and has since extended, building on the foundations of political power studies. Current trends include innovative approaches, an emphasis on non-U.S. nations, and comparative studies.

It is important to note that agenda-setting is crucial to political decision-making. According to Kingdon, agenda-setting affects how the fundamental problems of an issue are described, whether it receives political attention, enters the formal decision-making process, and which options are considered potential solutions (Kingdon 1984). Additionally, it is crucial to acknowledge that in the early 1970s, Cobb and Elder proposed agenda-building to relate public engagement and support to the dynamics of governmental decision-making (R. W. Cobb and Elder 1975). As stated by Cobb and Elder, agenda-building is when problems and issues demand the government's severe and active attention as potential subjects of public concern (Elder and Cobb 1984, 115). However, Deters and Falkner indicate in their work that whoever sets the agenda also influences the policies that are ultimately adopted (Deters and Falkner 2021). Since the policy agenda gives them some control over final policy decisions, political actors struggle to maintain a certain level of influence.

Birkland describes agenda-setting as a process in which issues and potential solutions attract or divert the public's and government's attention. Also, as noted by Green-Pedersen, agenda-setting centres on conflicts of conflict, where political actors decide which issues will be addressed and in what terms (Green-Pedersen 2007).

According to Anderson's agenda-setting theories, the study focuses on the factors influencing why and how problems escalate into public problems, which become issues and are brought up

on various agenda levels (Anderson 2014). Moreover, it is essential to note that four theoretical frameworks have been provided so far to understand agenda-setting. The first approach explains power's characteristics and role in agenda-setting (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). The second framework focuses on the nature of issues, methods for defining them, and factors affecting their position on the agenda. The third approach underlines the use of language and symbols to bring issues onto the public agenda (Edelman 1964, 1971, 1988). The fourth and final approach emphasises the identity and characteristics of political actors (Kingdon 1984; Sabatier 1987)

On the other hand, in 1972, Cohen et al. established the '*Garbage Can Model*', which is a theoretical abstraction of the decision-making process in an organization type known as 'Organized Anarchy', which has three fundamental characteristics: 'Problematic Preference', 'Unclear Technology', and 'Fluid Participation' (Cohen 2011). Kingdon later developed a revised garbage can model in which he identified three independent streams: Problem Stream, Policy Stream and Political Stream; one window - Policy window; one mechanism - Coupling, and one type of player - Public Entrepreneurs (Kingdon 1995).

In his work, Yu notes that the problem stream refers to perceiving problems as issues requiring government action (Yu 2004, 226). However, not all problems receive attention from the public and government, and even those on the institutional agenda do not always receive prompt resolution (Ibid). Moreover, policy communities, independent of specific problems, involve specialists from government and non-government sectors to design and draft policy alternatives, ensuring they are well-prepared for special events. Also, it is essential to note that bringing issues to the attention of decision-makers and pressuring them to take immediate action on the part of the government requires more than a well-prepared problem stream and policy stream. The politics stream, which includes political events, is the third stream that must be engaged. Kingdon argues that this mechanism is called 'Coupling' when the three streams come together at certain times (Kingdon 1995).

Nevertheless, critics like Mucciaroni question the international implementation of Kingdon's garbage can model due to its political foundation in the plural, liberal democratic U.S.A. (Mucciaroni 1992). Furthermore, Alexandrova and Carammia note that the distribution of attention does not always correspond with the seriousness of the issues (Alexandrova and Carammia 2018). On the contrary, issues are typically disregarded for an extended time, and overreactions commonly succeed under reactions. The study by Alexandrova and Carammia

points out that the political process is, at its core, the admission and ranking of policy concerns in the political agenda or the list of matters given careful thought in a political system (Ibid). As a result, learning about agenda-setting aids in comprehending not just the choices made on public policy but also the political processes that underlie them and the operation of the political system as a whole (Ibid).

Understanding agenda-setting is essential to grasp how political attention is allocated, how issues are framed, and, ultimately, how policies are shaped. In the following chapter, as we dive into details of agenda-setting in the EU, these foundational insights will serve as a framework for examining and interpreting the dynamics in a complex, multi-national political environment.

5.2 Agenda-setting in the European Union

The original formulation and packaging of policies significantly impact the outcome of any political system. This highlights why agenda dynamics are so intensely competitive and politically driven: institutions and actors who successfully get *"their"* issue on the agenda and maintain support over time can influence policy outcomes even if they lack the formal authority to make decisions. Leitner points out that the creation of the EU, which involves the economic and political integration of nation-states, was initially marked by struggles over the sharing of power and authority (Leitner 1997). The main point of debate has been the extent to which member states should relinquish their national sovereignty to the centralized EU institutions and in which policy areas. Additionally, Leitner notes that *struggles over the allocation of power and authority to different scales, the geographic scope of the supranational scale, and the visions of justice and democratic accountability that should govern the exercise of power together create an arena of negotiation, conflict and uncertainty that makes the reconstruction of the spatiality of power contingent and unpredictable* (Ibid, 127).

Princen and Rhinard highlight in their study that the EU has already established itself as a crucial hub for European decision-making and can produce collective policies that have binding effects and significant ramifications for its member states (Princen and Rhinard 2006). Furthermore, Bayers emphasizes that the EU's mixed institutional framework, with its multiple access points, contributes to a diversified access supply (Beyers 2004). Since every institution in the EU has a distinct function to fulfil in the legislative process, various interest groups target each institution to different extents with their actions (Ibid). Guy Peters' 1994 article argued that it is relatively easy to put issues on the EU agenda due to two intertwined factors (Peters

1994). Firstly, it is due to the involvement of numerous actors, venues, and access points (Ibid). Secondly, a wide range of policy alternatives is legitimized at the member-state level. This sparked a new way of thinking about how the agenda is set for the EU (Ibid).

Cobb, Ross, and Ross identified three types of agenda dynamics: 'outside initiative', 'mobilisation', and 'inside initiative' (R. Cobb, Ross, and Ross 1976). Each model differs in the four stages of 'issue careers': issue initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance (Ibid). Nevertheless, because there is limited public participation in decision-making within the EU, public and formal agendas are less significant. Therefore, in the context of the EU, focusing on the dynamics of the formal public agenda is less relevant. The result of its existing literature on agenda-setting within the EU mainly builds on the distinctions between two types of agenda processes: '*high politics*' and '*low politics*' (Caporaso and Keeler 1995; Hoffmann 1966; Peterson and Bomberg 1999).

In an ideal model, there are two pathways that issues can end up on the agenda: either they are introduced 'from above' by political leaders in the European Council (the "high politics" route), or they are brought forward 'from below' by experts collaborating in Commission Expert Groups or Council Working Parties (the "low politics" route) (Princen and Rhinard 2006). Recent empirical research has shown that the European Council has evolved toward balancing routine monitoring and selective agenda-setting (Carammia, Princen, and Timmermans 2016). It is crucial to understand that the high politics route tends to be political, whereas the low politics route is essentially technocratic.

According to Princen and Rhinard, influential politicians gathered in the European Council are the ones that initiate issues in the high politics route (Ibid). In this case, an issue is added to the agenda when a common political concern arises, frequently brought to light by a symbolic event. On the other hand, as outlined by Haas on the low politics route, issues will emerge from the professional concerns of individuals working in the same field, who function as an 'epistemic community' (Haas 1989).

Furthermore, when it comes to issue specification, the primary objective is to refine general issues into a set of specific demands closely related to framing issues. Despite several conflicting opinions on framing, Robert Entman's widely accepted definition of framing uses the term salient to support agenda-setting theory (Entman 1993). Entman defines framing *as the act of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal*

interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Ibid, 52). Moreover, according to Baumgartner and Jones, how an issue is framed is closely linked to the particular venue in which it is debated (Baumgartner and Jones 2009). Regarding the high politics route, the European Council tends to focus on outlining a shared approach, leaving the details to be worked out by institutions at a lower level (Princen and Rhinard 2006). Conversely, in the low politics route, working parties and expert groups will try to develop precise, technically sound recommendations on specific issues before submitting them to the broader decision-making process (Ibid).

The issue expansion relates to how issues are extended beyond their initial actors in specific venues to a broader set of participants (Ibid). In the case of the high politics route, issue expansion occurs from the European Council to lower-level institutions like the Council of the EU and the European Commission that have the authority to make official decisions. In the low politics route, issue expansion occurs in the direction of higher-level institutions that ultimately must decide on the proposals.

The final stage involves getting an issue onto the formal agenda of decision-makers within the EU, called the 'issue entrance'. High politics offers the opportunity to overcome political inertia, while low politics creates a self-sustaining dynamic, reaching a point of no return. However, issues may be blocked or hijacked if they move outside low political institutions, posing risks to the process.

Please refer to Table 1 for a detailed comparison of the characteristics of the two agenda-setting routes.

Table 1 Characteristics of the two agenda-setting routes (Princen and Rhinard 2006)

Stage in issue career	High politics route	Low politics route
Initiation	<i>By political leaders because of a politically salient event</i>	<i>Out of professional concerns in epistemic communities</i>
Specification	<i>Formulation of political consensus on an EU response in the European Council</i>	<i>Formulation of specific and technical policy proposals in Expert Groups and Working Parties</i>
Expansion	<i>Toward lower levels of decision-making in the EU</i>	<i>Toward higher levels of decision-making in the EU</i>
Entrance	<i>By creating political momentum</i>	<i>By gradually building impetus</i>

It is important to highlight that the presented routes are ideal-typical because they do not typically occur in their 'pure' forms (Ibid). Princen and Rhinard, in their study, point out that agenda-setting processes can occur in various ways, such as intermediate decision-making by permanent representatives or at the intermediate level (Ibid). At the same time, issues can change over time, leading to changing agenda dynamics. They can also unfold simultaneously, with issue initiation primarily through the high politics route and issue specification influenced more by low politics agenda dynamics. In principle, any combination of these processes can occur during agenda-setting stages (Meyerhöfer 2009).

In this subchapter, we analysed how agenda-setting works within the EU. We explored differences between high politics, which political leaders drive during important events, and low politics, involving expert groups and working parties. As a result of the analysis, we can claim that the high politics route is a relevant and robust framework to understand the agenda-setting dynamics within the EU, especially regarding issues like the migration crisis. Also, as discussed above, the high politics route in the EU's agenda-setting process involves the European Council, the Council of the EU, and the European Commission. During the issue specification stage, political leaders in the European Council work to reach a political consensus on the EU's response to a specific issue. This consensus is then passed down to lower-level institutions like the Council of the EU and the European Commission, which have the authority to make official decisions on the issue.

In this study, I differentiate between supranational and intergovernmental EU institutions. The European Commission is treated as a supranational actor, while the European Council is classified as an intergovernmental institution. However, the Council of the EU occupies a more hybrid position: *although it represents member states, it often operates through qualified majority voting, which reflects a supranational dimension*. This distinction is essential for understanding the EU's involvement in migration issues. Supranational institutions such as the European Commission tend to stress legal obligations, humanitarian norms, and shared European values in reflection of their role in implementing EU treaties and laws.

On the other hand, intergovernmental institutions are more likely to reflect securitising or politicised rhetoric in times of crisis, as national political agendas and member state bargaining more directly influence them. In times of crisis, the European Council and Council of the EU generally dominate agenda-setting for highly politicised issues such as border control, internal security and relocation programs, even though the European Commission has its formal right

of initiative and key role in policy implementation. Recognising these structural differences allows a more nuanced analysis of institutional discourse, helping to understand the diversity of language, tone and framing across EU institutions during the migration crisis.

5.3 Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was first developed by Sabatier over many years, beginning with a research session at the University of Bielefeld that lasted a year and produced two comparable articles (Sabatier 1987, 1988). The initial idea emerged out of: *a search for an alternative to the stages heuristic* (Jones 1977) *that was then dominating policy studies*, *(b) a desire to synthesize the best features of the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to policy implementation* (Sabatier 1986), and *(c) a commitment to incorporate technical information into a more prominent role in theories of the policy process* (Sabatier 1998, 98). Its objective was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key elements and mechanisms that influence the entire policy process within a specific policy area over at least a decade, including issue characterization, policy creation, implementation, and modification (Ibid).

Buonanno and Zahariadis point out in their research that the advocacy coalition strategy proposes that different actors aiming to influence decisions in a specific policy area should unite, communicate, and form coalitions (Zahariadis and Buonanno 2020). These coalitions compete and collaborate with each other's shared perspectives within policy subsystems, leading to comprehensive policy changes and promoting policy learning (Ibid). According to Sabatier, because coalitions use venue-shopping methods to maximize their advantage, the ACF sees them as a potential tool for policy influence. Moreover, Dudley and Richardson mention that advocacy coalitions use a specific policy "*frame*" to interpret reality (Dudley and Richardson 1999).

Schön and Rein define "*framing*" as a frame-reflective policy inquiry built on the concept of reflective policy dialogue. This means that policymakers must be able to justify their decisions to others in the environment. They must understand the various perspectives and perceptions of reality that shape different viewpoints. By doing so, they can effectively engage with their opponents and accurately identify problems in policy design (Schon and Rein 1995, 187).

According to Dudley and Richardson, people with opposing policy 'frames' may not want to engage in constructive dialogue (Dudley and Richardson 1999, 228). Sabatier also proposes that *'since coalition actors (by definition) share a set of policy core beliefs, actors in different coalitions will perceive the world through different "lenses" and thus often interpret a given*

piece of evidence differently. This contributes to in-group cohesion. It also produces distrust of people in other coalitions' (Sabatier 1998, 109).

Sabatier's work highlights that the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) assumes that players can be organized into a few "*advocacy coalitions*," typically ranging from one to four. Each coalition comprises individuals from various business and public organizations who share a standard set of beliefs and engage in coordinated activities over time. According to the ACF, these coalitions usually include interest group leaders, officials, lawmakers, scholars, and journalists. While the majority of people and organizations are not affiliated with a specific coalition, they are likely to join or leave one (Ibid).

Pierce and Weible also observe that advocacy coalitions are groups of policy actors who share policy core beliefs and coordinate their behaviour to influence the policy process (Pierce et al. 2017). In addition, Cairney remarks that ACF recognizes that policymaking is no longer solely controlled by a select few individuals or organizations. Influential actors champion important ideas rather than those who hold authority (Cairney 2015). Moreover, in his work, Brooks mentions the importance of broad coalitions to include a diverse range of individuals, including those who may not have previous experience in political participation (Brooks 2018).

On the other hand, permanent organisations such as Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders can play a significant role in advocating policies within the EU's policy process. It should be emphasised that the mentioned non-governmental organisations and others do not possess formal authority to make decisions. However, these organisations strive to influence the framing of issues or discourse surrounding the critical policies on the migration issue by providing expert knowledge, supporting advocacy coalitions, and targeting EU-level policymakers to ensure that the humanitarian concerns of migration remain central.

Following Sabatier's ACF model, this study conceptualises the V4 as an advocacy coalition. From the beginning of the mass arrival to the EU territory, V4 demonstrated coordinated actions, shared securitising discourse, and jointly pushed back against the EU relocation scheme. It is also important to note that the discourse shared by the V4 regarding migration was predominantly focused on the advocacy of securitisation to address crises. The V4 coalition advocated for their approach to migration in both formal EU institutions and informal political arenas, for example, by publishing joint letters or statements. The ACF provides a solid framework for this thesis to treat the V4 as aligned governments and as a discursive and strategic coalition. This coalition advocated for their stance through formal and informal

channels, promoting their shared beliefs and consistent political messages regarding security-related measures to address the migration crisis.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This research will focus on the V4, European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission. The Visegrad Group is a regional intergovernmental structure for cooperation between Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. It represents the efforts of the Central European countries to cooperate in many areas of common interest within the framework of all-European integration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland 2021).

The European Council is the EU's highest political strategic decision-making body, gathering EU leaders to establish political objectives. The European Council decides on the general direction of the EU's political and strategic priorities. Furthermore, it defines the EU's standard foreign and security policy, considering core interests and defence implications for the Union. Also, the European Council deals with problems that need to be more sophisticated and sensitive to address at lower intergovernmental cooperation levels (Citizens Information 2022).

The Council of the EU is commonly known as the government ministers of all EU member states and grouped by policy areas. The primary role of the Council of the EU is to negotiate and adopt EU laws. It is important to highlight that every six months, a different member state is selected to take on the presidency of the Council of the EU. Additionally, 70 and 80 Council of the EU meetings are scheduled yearly (Council of the EU 2024b).

Lastly, the European Commission functions as the executive body of the EU. It contributes to the overall EU policy, presents new EU laws and policies, supervises their implementation, and manages the EU budget. It also plays a vital role in international development and aid delivery. The European Commission has the authority to represent the EU on the global stage and in international organizations, representing all EU member countries, particularly in trade policy and humanitarian aid (Citizens Information 2022).

At the same time, in this research, the independent variable is V4 discourse, the dependent variable is EU institutional communications, and the counter-variable is (major) terrorist attacks. The V4 countries, from the beginning of the process, were the most vocal supporters of the securitisation aspect of the migration crisis. However, in the context of terrorism, three significant terrorist attacks have occurred during the migration crisis, which has also influenced

the discourse of the EU institutions and strengthened the stance of the V4. This research studies major terrorist attacks that resulted in devastating outcomes, specifically concerning the number of fatalities and the severity of harm inflicted on victims. The selected terror attacks are:¹⁴

Table 2 List of terror attacks (Bilefsky and Baume 2015) (France 24 2021a) (France 24 2021b)

Terror Attacks	Date	Number of individuals killed
Charlie Hebdo Attack	7-January-2015	12
Paris terror attacks	13-November-2015	130
Brussels Terror Attacks	22-March-2016	32

It is essential to mention that the research will focus on the period from 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2016. The primary reason for selecting this timeframe is its coverage of three significant terrorist attacks in the EU in recent years. Furthermore, selecting the second half of 2014 can be regarded as a control variable, not influenced by terrorism nor by V4 positions, which allows us to gain more insight into the selected institution's discourse on migration before the Charlie Hebdo attack. At the same time, this timeline covers the rise and peak of the migrant wave in the EU.

In addition, at the EU level, the unprecedented number of irregular migration arrivals was not considered a crisis before 2015, although it was regarded as a crisis mainly in Spain (and Italy). For example, in the case of Spain, in 2013, 4,285 first-time applicants' applications were received. In 2014, this increased to 5,460; in 2015, it further increased to 14,600. In 2016, the upsurge trajectory continued, reaching 15,570. At the same time, the Italian responsible government authorities received 25,720 first-time applicants applications in 2013. This number rose to 63,655 in 2014, 82,790 in 2015, and 121,185 in 2016 (Eurostat 2024).

In the selected period, the Slovak Republic presided over the V4 from July 2014–June 2015. The Czech Republic held the presidency from the second half of 2015 to the first half of 2016. Furthermore, Poland did take over the V4 presidency in the second part of 2016.

On the other hand, Donald Tusk, in full Donald Franciszek Tusk, was the President of the European Council from 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2019 (Wallenfeldt 2023). The Council itself elects the president of the European Council. The president's responsibilities

¹⁴ Smaller-scale terrorist attacks were excluded from this study due to less political and media attention, as well as being less likely to respond shift discourse.

include preparing for European Council meetings, part of the EU's agenda setting, and reporting to Parliament to promote cooperation and agreement (Citizens Information 2022b).

In the second semester of 2014, Italy presided over the Council of the EU, Latvia in the first half, and Luxembourg in the second half of 2015. The Netherlands received the presidency on 1 January, passing it to Slovakia from 1 July to 31 December 2016.

Furthermore, José Manuel Barroso served as Commission President until 31 October 2014, after which he was succeeded by Jean-Claude Juncker, who served as President of the European Commission from 1 November 2014 until 30 November 2019 (Ray 2023). In the case of the Commission, the presidential candidate is proposed by country leaders in the European Council, with the results of the European Parliament elections taken into consideration (Citizens Information 2022). To be elected, he or she requires the support of the majority of European Parliament members.

6.2 Data Collection

The data collection technique in this project will be the primary data collection method.

The joint declarations, communiqués and summit statements of the V4 are collected as a data source to analyse their stance. These include: V4 Prime Ministers' Joint Statements, Foreign Ministers' Joint Letters, Summit Declarations of Heads of Government, Press Statements from V4 Prime Ministers' Summits, Joint Communiqués from V4 Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs, and Statements from Meetings of Foreign Affairs Committees.

Additionally, as mentioned in the theoretical section, this thesis treats the V4 as an advocacy coalition that has promoted its securitisation narratives on the migration crisis. V4's coalition activities are identified through the selected documents analysed for the V4 discourse. The synchronised timing and framing of the published documents by the V4 around key EU events can be explained through the lens of strategic coordination and discursive alignment.

In addition, in the case of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission, data will be gathered from the following sources: press releases, reports and speeches of the Presidents of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission; press releases, reports and statements of the European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission following meetings on the migration crisis; speeches of the EU Commissioner for Migration (Dimitris Avramopoulos), First Vice-President of the European Commission (Frans Timmermans), and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and

Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (Federica Mogherini). The materials can be accessed on the official websites of the Visegrad Group, European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission.

Two stages of the data collection technique are used in this study. Two staged data collection processes allowed us to be more consistent and accurate. In the first stage, keywords are used to identify materials for the analysis. In this process, seven keywords were identified: Asylum seeker, Border, Migrant, Migration, Refugee, Security and Terrorism.

The materials obtained using keywords will be read in the second stage of data collection, and those materials that are not eligible for analysis will be eliminated. Materials for the second round of data collection will be selected based on their content and relevance to the analysis process.

Regarding the V4, 23 published materials were selected, covering 2015 - 2016. It is essential to highlight that no relevant materials have been found for the study of the V4 during the second half of 2014. In the case of the European Council 159 (5 – 2014; 85 – 2015; 69 – 2016), Council of the EU 161 (14 – 2014; 61 – 2015; 86 – 2016) and European Commission 498 (29 – 2014; 197 – 2015; 272 – 2016) materials collected.

6.3 Data Analysis

This study will use a Qualitative/Quantitative content analysis research methodology to analyse the collected data. Quantitative content analysis will assist us in quantifying and categorising particular elements within a dataset, but qualitative content analysis will be helpful in understanding and comprehending the underlying meanings, contexts, and nuances inside a dataset. Given the large amount of data and the systematic structure of the material to be assessed, content analysis is the most appropriate study method for this project.

Morgan, in his study, explains that when the available data and the study objectives call for the advantages of content analysis in explaining what patterns exist in the data as well as the advantages of grounded theory in understanding why these patterns are there, Qualitative content analysis is an acceptable choice (Morgan 1993). According to Krippendorff, “*content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use*” (Krippendorff 2013, 18). Cole defined content analysis as a research methodology to analyse written, verbal, or visual communication messages (Cole 1988). Barelson, in his study, defined content analysis as being “*objective*”

and “*systematic*” (Berelson 1952, 18). On the other hand, Elo and Kyngäs note that content analysis is flexible, and there is no one simple, “right” approach to conduct it, which presents one difficulty (Elo and Kyngäs 2008, 113). In this regard, researchers who use content analysis must determine which versions are most suitable for their specific issues (Weber 1990), and because of this, the analysing process is complicated and intriguing (Elo and Kyngäs 2008). Also, in their study, Polit and Beck mention that the content analysis procedure requires considerable work (Polit and Beck 2004).

In this study, the first step was to build a coding frame (main categories and subcategories) after deciding on a research question and collecting materials for the analysis. The coding frame's structure combines concept-driven (deductive approach) and data-driven (inductive approach) strategies. After building a coding frame, materials were divided into coding units (segments). This step is necessary because, in each selected data, we have to choose which part of the materials is decisive for analysis. These segments can be paragraphs or sentences. The next step was trying out the coding frame by double coding to evaluate the coding frame in terms of consistency and validity. Following the testing by double coding, the final version of the coding frame was prepared, and the primary analysis started. In this study, to analyse the collected materials, four main categories were identified: 1) Humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis, 2) Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees, 3) Security aspect of the migration crisis and 4) Measures to strengthen security. The full version of the coding frame, including main/subcategories and category descriptions, is presented in Appendix A.

It should be emphasised that the coding process in this study utilised securitisation and agenda-setting theoretical frameworks to identify specific indicators within the discourse, guiding the content analysis. For securitisation, the coding frame included references to threats, security, protection of borders, or portrayals of migration as a danger to public order, sovereignty, or cultural identity – elements rooted in the Copenhagen School's definition of securitisation as the framing of an issue as an existential threat. In the case of agenda setting, in line with the distinction between high and low politics, a strong focus was placed on whether the migration crisis was framed as a high-level political issue (e.g. discussed at EU summits, linked to crisis language or framed as urgent). These theoretical frameworks were used to build the coding frame for the analysis of the data collected in this study, ensuring that theoretical considerations were taken into account during the empirical analysis.

It is also important to note that the data presented in the table and figures can exceed 100% in some cases each year. The nature of the methodology and calculation used can explain this. As mentioned above, the materials collected (publications from the selected institutions) were divided into coding units or segments. Each segment is then coded based on the coding frame, assigning them to sub/main categories. Importantly, one segment can be coded under multiple categories, such as sub-category 1.1 and sub-category 2.1, but not under sub-categories 1.1 and 1.2 simultaneously. When a segment is coded into different main categories, such as 1.1 and 2.1, the percentage may exceed 100%.

After coding all segments, the following equation was used to calculate the percentages:

$$\% = \frac{\text{total number of codes in each main category}}{\text{total number of segments in each year}} \times 100$$

Importantly, the purpose of this study is not to establish a casual, direct relationship between V4 and the EU institutions. Instead, the study focuses on identifying discursive patterns and correlations that may indicate the presence of possible narrative influence. In this particular context, the use of the term “*influence*” pertains to a rhetorical alignment, the occurrence of such factors as overlapping frames, shared language, or timing around key events. This notion of influence does not extend to formal policy impact. It is also possible that the V4 and the EU institutions have reacted independently to terrorist attacks or increased number of arrivals to European soil. Although the findings point to discursive alignment, they should not be interpreted as proof of causality. Furthermore, identifying stronger causality would have required interviews of the EU Commissioners and national council members, participation in meetings, or detailed minutes and voting patterns of those meetings. In contrast, the lack of correlation would also indicate the lack of V4 influence on the EU institutional discourse, which can challenge views that emphasize the role of the East Central European block in the securitisation of the EU agenda.

7. Results

7.1 Visegrad Group

This section of the thesis presents the results of the author's analysis regarding the discourse study of the V4. It is divided into four sub-sections: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, chronological analysis, and conclusions.

7.1.1 Statistical Findings

This section of the thesis aims to examine the nature of the V4 discourse and provide statistical findings demonstrating how the discourse on migration evolved from 2015 to 2016. It is important to note that the analysis of the V4 results does not include the second half of 2014 due to a lack of engagement with the migration issue. During that year, the V4 did not issue any statements or documents addressing migration. The lack of documents mentioning migration in the second half of 2014 can be explained by the fact that the Mediterranean crisis did not directly concern them. The first V4 document analysed in my research is from February 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo attack, marking the start of their coordinated discourse. At the same time, with the help of the content analysis, the paper will clarify patterns, themes and key elements that dominated the discourse of the V4 regarding the migration crisis.

As it was mentioned previously, a total of 23 materials were collected for the analyses, precisely 14 in 2015 and 9 in 2016. Overall, from the selected materials in 2015, 61 segments and in 2016, 60 segments were generated for the content analysis. The segments differ in one aspect: while some consist of only one or two sentences, others include a whole paragraph.

Figure 2 shows that in 2015 – 2016, the '*humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis*' category in the discourse of the V4 countries was practically identical. In 2015, the overall percentage for this category was 3.28%, while in 2016, it was 3.33%. The results for the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' category suggested only minor differences in 2015 and 2016. This category stood at 9.84% in 2015 but decreased to 8.33% in 2016. The findings from our analysis indicate that the percentage gap between years hugely widens for the latter two categories. The category that measures the '*security aspect of the migration crisis*' increased from 29.51% in 2015 to 51.67% in 2016. Moreover, the overall percentage of the '*measures to strengthen security*' category in 2015 was 83.61%, but it slightly decreased to 80.00% in 2016.

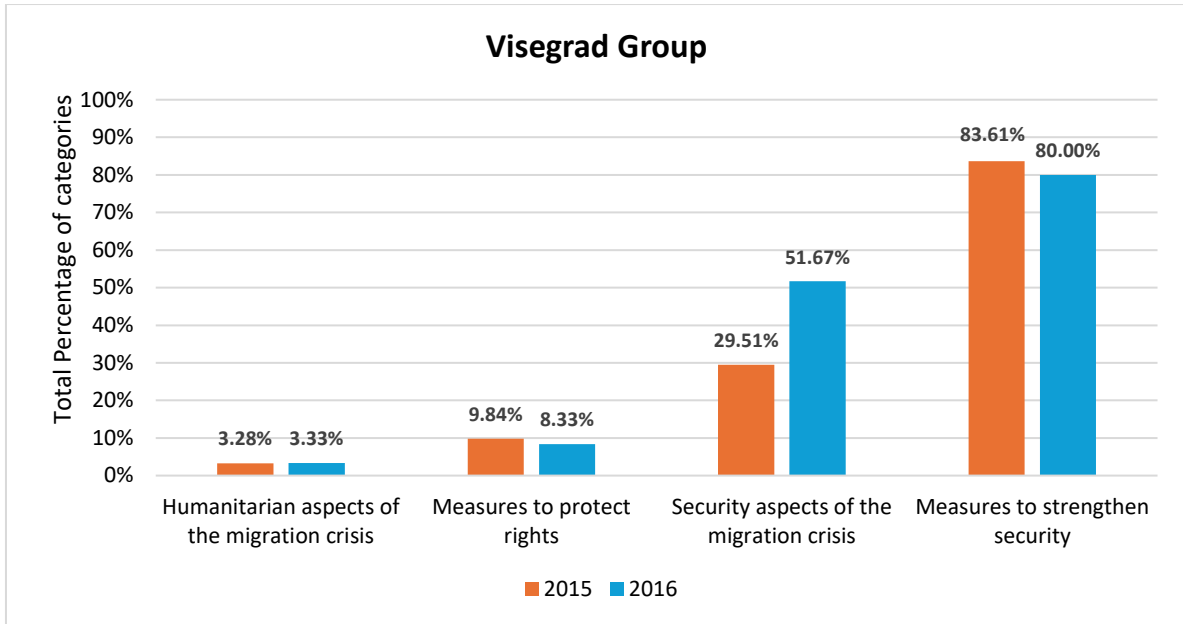


Figure 2 Visegrad Group communication 2015-2016

It is essential to highlight that in our analysis, the *'measures to strengthen security'* category had the highest percentage in 2015-2016. Another security-focused category, *'security aspects of the migration crisis'*, had the second highest percentage for the defined time range of analysis. At the same time, the percentage of both humanitarian-focused categories was significantly lower than security-focused categories in 2015 and 2016. Furthermore, the *'humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis'* category had the lowest percentage among all the categories during the selected time frame. Based on our analysis, we can confirm that during 2015-2016, the discourse of the V4 predominantly focused on security dimensions over humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis. Nevertheless, the presence of humanitarian discourse in the published materials of the V4 is somewhat minimal.

Furthermore, the results in Figure 3 allow us to evaluate if terrorist events have contributed to the discourse on securitisation and whether there have been fluctuations in categories as a result of these attacks. As we see in Figure 3, from the Charlie Hebdo attack to the Paris terror attacks time frame, the first category (*humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis*) accounted for 4.76% of the total sample. However, this representation slightly decreased to 4.35% in the period between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks. Interestingly, our findings suggest that following the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, this category represented 0.00%, suggesting that zero segments were coded under this category.

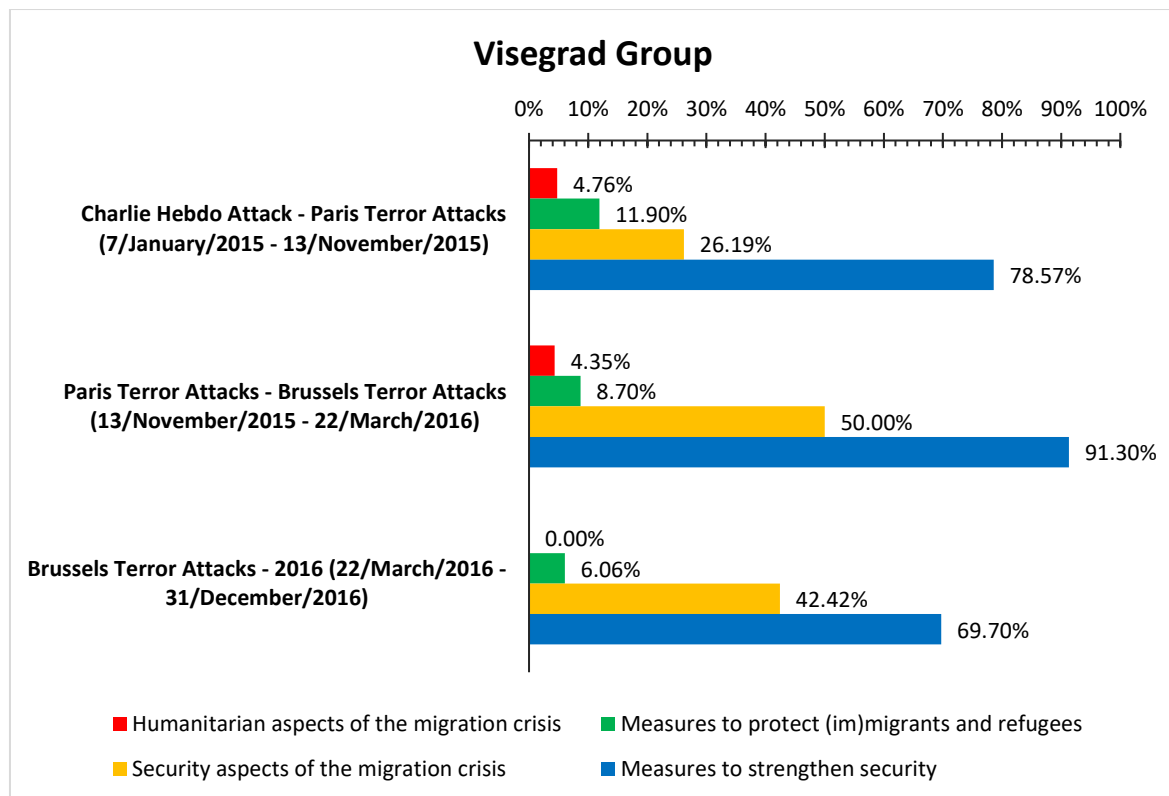


Figure 3 Visegrad Group communication based on terrorist attacks

In the case of the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*), from the Charlie Hebdo attack to the Paris terror attacks, it made up 11.90% of the overall sample. Subsequently, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, this percentage dropped to 8.70%. Following the Brussels terror attacks, this declining tendency continued until the end of 2016, with the category representing 6.06% of the total segments.

On the other hand, our analysis shows different outcomes for the two security-related categories. For example, the third category, which addressed the security aspect of the migration crisis, made up 26.19% of the total dataset within the time frame between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. However, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, this category's percentage substantially increased to 50.00%. Following that, it dropped to 42.42% between the terror incidents in Brussels and the end of 2016.

Moreover, Figure 3 illustrates that, between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks, 78.57% of the sample fell into the fourth category, which stands for measures to strengthen security. Similarly, mirroring the trend observed in the third category, during the period from the Paris terror attacks to the Brussels terror attacks, the fourth category notably increased to 91.30%. However, from the time of the Brussels terror events till the end of 2016, the fourth category's numbers dropped to 69.70%. Despite the decrease from the previous

timeframe, the fourth category obtained the highest percentage compared to other categories from the duration of the Brussels terror attacks until 2016.

In summary, Figure 3 explains that humanitarian categories were already low after the Charlie Hebdo attack and steadily declined following each subsequent terrorist event. These numbers decreased after the terror events in Paris and Brussels, with the first category even dropping to 0.00% from the Brussels terror attacks until 2016. On the other hand, the security-related categories already indicated the highest percentages compared to the categories that represented the humanitarian elements of the migration crisis between the Charlie Hebdo Attack and the Paris terror attacks. However, these categories reached their peak percentages between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks. Our findings suggest that the securitisation elements in the V4 discourse were noticeable following the Charlie Hebdo attack but peaked following the Paris terror attacks and continued to be prominent following the Brussels terror attacks. On the other hand, the humanitarian discourse of the V4 decreased after each terrorist attack.

Furthermore, Tables 4 and Table 5 explain and illustrate the subcategories of the main categories discussed earlier. Referring to the tables provided below, we can find the key elements and themes used in the V4 discourse in 2015 and 2016.

Representation of the humanitarian side of the migration crisis within the discourse of V4 is categorised under the main category, '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*'. This main category includes the subcategory '*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*', which had 2 codes for 2015 and 2016, as indicated in Tables 4 and Table 5.

Under the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' category for 2015, 2 segments were coded under the '*access to asylum procedures*' and '*providing humanitarian assistance*' subcategories. Furthermore, '*providing funds to support humanitarian assistance*' and '*religious support*' has 1 code for each. On the other hand, the subcategory of '*providing humanitarian assistance*' was only coded once in 2016, while '*access to asylum procedures*' was coded 4 times.

Table 3 Visegrad Group communication (main - subcategories) 2015

Visegrad Group – 2015
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 2 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 6 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 18 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 14 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 51 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 6 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 11 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 9 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 15 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 14 codes

In 2015, the '*security aspect of the migration crisis*' main category included subcategories such as '*border/territory control*', which accounted for 14 codes, and '*terrorist threats*', which comprised 4 codes. Nevertheless, in 2016, the number of segments classified under the subcategory '*border/territorial control*' increased to 27, a significant rise from the previous year. Also, 4 segments were coded under the '*public security threat*' subcategory. The main difference in this case is that in 2016, border and territory control issues gained statistical significance, and public security features appeared while the terrorism threat subcategory disappeared. Also, it is essential to mention that irregular migration and V4 opposition to the mandatory quotas were considered border control issues in this context. Because irregular migration exists where border control is ineffective, mandatory quotas undermine the state's ability to control who enters and stays in its territory.

Table 4 Visegrad Group communication (main - subcategories) 2016

Visegrad Group – 2016
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 2 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 5 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 31 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 27 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 48 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 13 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 13 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 15 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 11 codes

The subcategory of ‘*cooperation with third (transit) countries*’ under the main category ‘*measures to strengthen security*’ had 15 codes in 2015 and 2016, making it the most coded subcategory overall. Regarding the ‘*cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries*’ subcategory, 14 codes were assigned. In comparison, 11 segments were coded for the ‘*cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries*’ subcategory in 2016.

The ‘*cooperation with third (transit) countries*’ subcategory comprises hotspots, camps, and registration segments. Nevertheless, the ‘*cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries*’ subcategory contains information that addresses concerns, including causes and repatriation.

Moreover, 11 segments in 2015 were coded for '*border control measures*' (2 were in the '*internal border control*' subcategory, and 9 were in the '*external border control*' subcategory). In 2016, 13 segments were categorised under '*border control measures*', explicitly falling into the '*external border control*' subcategory. This suggests that in 2016, discourse within the V4 did not focus on internal border control challenges but instead emphasised efforts to protect external border control.

Furthermore, references to '*anti-terrorist measures*' occurred in 6 segments in 2015 and increased to 7 in 2016. In 2015, 5 segments were coded under '*fight against human smugglers/traffickers*'; in 2016, this number decreased to 2 segments.

7.1.2 Monthly Dynamics

This section presents an analysis to illustrate the monthly fluctuations in the dynamics of each main category from 2015 to 2016 and to identify precisely when the changes occurred. Figure 4 demonstrates the monthly dynamics of each main category as well as highlights three vertical lines implying terrorist attacks (January 2015 – Charlie Hebdo Attack; November 2015 – Paris terror attacks; March 2016 – Brussels Terror Attacks), which helps us understand how each attack elevated the discourse on securitisation in the V4 context. It complements the later chronological analysis.

In March 2015, following the Charlie Hebdo Attack, there was a steady increase across all categories, with the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories having the highest number of elements. There was activity in the number of elements in the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) in June 2015. At the same time, shifts were noted in three categories in September 2015, except the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*), followed by the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), reaching its highest. This can be explained by the fact that, in September 2015, the head states of the Visegrad Group adopted a Joint Statement following the extraordinary Summit on Migration (*The V4 Joint Statement called for 'protection of the external borders of the EU/ Schengen Area, assistance to the border protection and migration management of the countries of the Western Balkans, and highlighted the need for strengthening the fight against organisers of irregular migration'*), and the Visegrad Group Ministers of Foreign Affairs released a joint communication (*highlighted 'fighting against human trafficking and smuggling'*). This shows that the securitisation discourse dominated the two press releases from separate events.

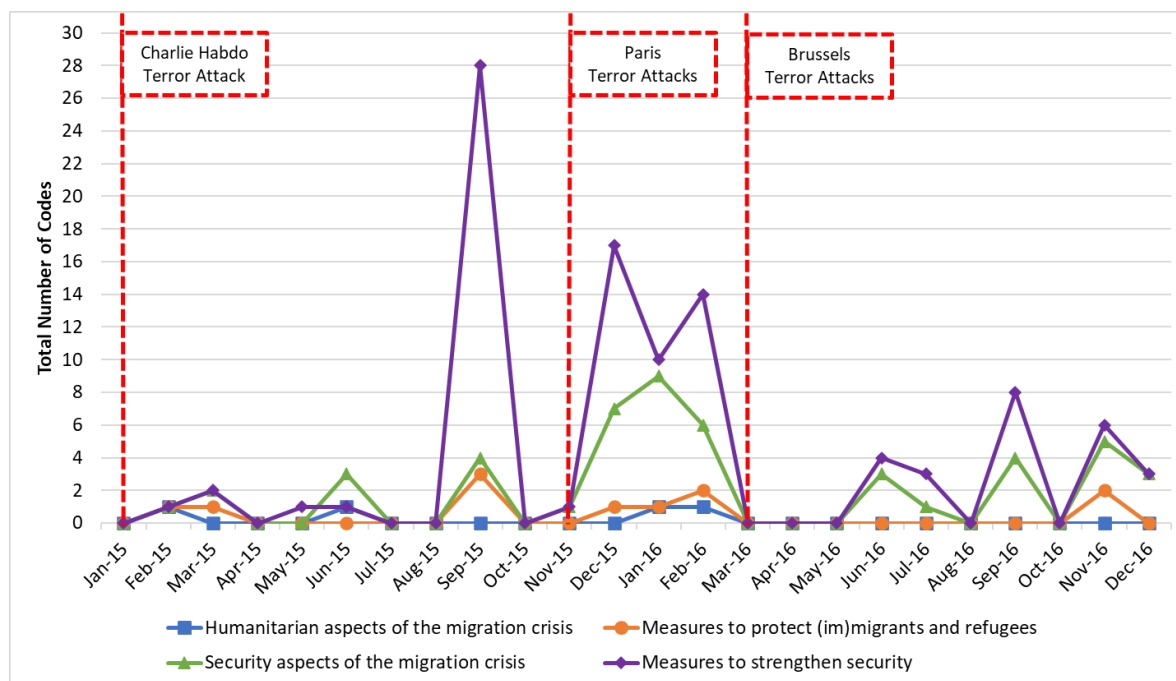


Figure 4 Visegrad Group communication – monthly

On top of that, Figure 4 highlights the V4's immediate reaction to the Paris terror attacks. Both categories reflecting securitisation discourse increased sharply in December 2015, January 2016, and February 2016. Additionally, January 2016 was the best-performing month for the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*), (as part of the Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4), the V4 Ministers of the Interior met in Prague on January 19, 2016, to discuss the challenges facing Europe in the area of internal affairs. They emphasised the need for an integrated EU approach to border management and highlighted the importance of border security within the EU). In contrast to the immediate response to the Paris attacks, the V4 discourse showed a delayed response to the Brussels attacks, with securitisation categories only increasing in June 2016. Furthermore, there was an increase in the categories corresponding to security in September and November. Notably, the number of elements in the second category (*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*) also showed a modest increase in November.

Figure 4 illustrates that after the Charlie Hebdo attack, there was a modest increase in the securitisation discourse. However, security-related categories reacted quickly following the Paris terror attacks. In contrast, there was no immediate reaction to the Brussels terror attacks, as there had been after the Paris attacks. Instead, the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories showed a response in the later months.

7.1.3 Chronological Analysis

This section of the study provides a chronological table intending to understand key developments in the statements of the V4 on the migration crisis. A chronological table in Appendix B provides a comprehensive analysis of the events and speeches.

Following the Charlie Hebdo Attack at the start of 2015, the issue of terrorism appeared in the discourse of the V4. The statement on 25 February 2015 by the Foreign Affairs Committees of V4 parliaments highlighted terrorism as a threat to European security and civilisation and urged the EU to intensify its fight against terrorism. On the other hand, a document released by the V4 Representatives of Parliament urges their governments to assist in fulfilling the needs of internally displaced people, refugees, and religious minorities, especially Christians. It is also important to note that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, after the Charlie Hebdo Attack, criticised different aspects of migration and the EU's migration policy. He gave an interview in Paris to the Hungarian state media and said that:

“Economic immigration is a bad phenomenon in Europe, and we cannot view it as something that has yielded benefits since the only thing it brings upon European people is danger,” Orbán said, adding, *“we have to stop immigration; this is the opinion of Hungary. Hoping that a sober, calm analysis of recent events will point European leaders as well as Brussels in the direction of a strict and more restrictive policy towards immigration issues in Europe”* (András 2015).

Moreover, the analysis results demonstrate that another element of securitisation, such as cooperation and strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), was included in the V4's discourse by the end of April. The following must be noticed: in the aftermath of the 23 April 2015 extraordinary European Council meeting, EU Foreign and Defence Ministers decided to establish EUNAVFOR Med as a naval force and begin the CSDP mission in the Mediterranean on 18 May 2015. The primary priority was to dismantle criminal networks of smugglers and traffickers in order to preserve lives (Latici, 2023).

Concerns about the mandatory redistribution scheme for asylum seekers were raised while examining key developments in the V4 statements on the migration crisis in the first half of 2015. Also, V4 called for a more effective return process, border management, and the fight against hybrid threats, terrorism, organised crime, foreign fighters, and irregular migration.

The head of state of the V4 highlighted measures on 4 September 2015, following the extraordinary Visegrad Group Summit on Migration, to reduce push factors and secure the external borders of the EU and the Schengen Area, namely by:

- *Enhancing bilateral assistance and aid schemes with particular focus on countries of transit and origin.*
- *Providing experts and technical equipment for: EU external border protection, asylum procedure and relevant support actions and assistance to the border protection and migration management of the countries of the Western Balkans.*
- *Increasing financial, technical and expert participation at the EU Common Security and Defence Policy mission against traffickers and smuggler networks.*
- *Continuing the support to the international coalition fighting Da'esh in Iraq and Syria and providing various means of contribution (political, military and humanitarian) to the efforts of the coalition and to the stabilisation of Iraq as tangible forms of tackling the root causes of the migration flows (Visegrad Group 2015a).*

Furthermore, a released statement by the V4 as a result of the extraordinary meeting notes that vital aspects of the EU's common strategy for the upcoming months should include in particular:

- *Effective control and protection of the EU external borders – common Frontex-led operations should supplement the current national capabilities in the most affected Member States while noting that the EU legislation framework clearly stipulates a responsibility of each Member State for the protection of the EU and Schengen Area external borders by any appropriate means under the EU law.*
- *Fulfilment of legal obligations by all Member States and of responsibilities by EU institutions – this concerns full and rigorous implementation of the current asylum acquis, with particular focus on Dublin regulation, a functioning system of registration and effective return policy, including drafting a common list of safe third countries.*
- *Preserving the voluntary nature of EU solidarity measures – so that each Member State may build on its experience, best practices and available resources; principles agreed at the highest political level, including in European Council conclusions must be respected; any proposal leading to introduction of mandatory and permanent quota for solidarity measures would be unacceptable.*

- *Swift implementation of hotspots in accordance with the June European Council conclusions – they should play an integral part in registration, documentation, screening (including proper identification of people who satisfy asylum criteria and economic migrants) and returns of irregular migrants.*
- *Strengthening the fight against organised crime and trafficking – the EU and the Member States must take a robust action against organisers of irregular migration profiting from the human tragedy, including through the existing EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions (Ibid.).*

On the other hand, a collective statement issued by the Foreign Ministers of the V4 following their discussions with counterparts from the Luxembourg Presidency and Germany on 11 September 2015 mentioned the importance of putting attention on the Western Balkan migration route, stabilisation of the European neighbourhood, fighting against human trafficking and smuggling, and development and humanitarian assistance to countries of origin and transit of migration.

One interesting observation is that after the 13 November 2015 Paris terror attacks, the emphasis on terrorism started to increase in the V4 statements. Our findings demonstrate that the V4 continuously stressed the need for a fight against terrorism in the timeframe between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks (see Table 6). For example, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, the terms "Terrorism," "Terror," and "Terrorist" in total 19 times appeared in the 7 selected documents of the V4. At the same time, addressing the root causes of migration, enhancing the protection of the European Union's external border and objection to the automatic permanent relocation mechanism were repeatedly expressed in the discourse of the V4 after the Paris terror attacks.

Then (and current) Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, after the Paris terror attacks, said there was an *“absolute link between migration and terrorism”* and *“it is clear that potential terrorists might have used uncontrolled migration not only for passage but also to bring weapons and explosives. Therefore, the probability there might be more individual terror attacks is very high because there is potential for such attacks”*(Reuters 2016).

Also, then Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Bohuslav Sobotka, mentioned that *“Europe must remain strong and prepared to defend its values, to ensure the security of its citizens, and to fight terrorism together”*(Government of the Czech Republic 2015).

Table 5 Visegrad Group communication - number of the terms

Charlie Hebdo Attack to Paris terror attacks		
Terrorism	Terror	Terrorist
6	1	2
9		
10 - Documents in total		
Paris terror attacks to Brussels Terror Attacks		
Terrorism	Terror	Terrorist
16	0	3
19		
7 - Documents in total		
Brussels Terror Attacks - End 2016		
Terrorism	Terror	Terrorist
4	0	1
5		
6 - Documents in total		

Furthermore, on 3 December 2015, the Prime Ministers of V4 countries issued a joint statement stressing that terrorism threatened EU security and called for the European Council to have a firm position on fighting terrorism and strengthening the security of the EU's external borders. The joint statement notes that:

“Given the nature and scope of this security challenge the European Union has to act. We underline that the upcoming December European Council must take a clear stance on fighting terrorism. The discussion should build on the action taken so far, identify further possible elements of a united and complex response of the European Union to the current security challenges and make sure this response is implemented quickly and effectively. All relevant means of countering terrorism must be mobilised. We place particular emphasis on the need to improve information and intelligence sharing within Europe, to finalise the Passenger Name Record Directive, on measures aimed at combatting financing terrorism and organised crime, as well as on a conclusive debate on a transparent EU framework for firearms control” (Visegrad Group 2015b).

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that on 15 February 2016, V4 released a joint statement in which they reiterated their objection to the automatic permanent relocation mechanism. At the same time, they urged the Council's position on the European Border and Coast Guard, on the effective management and control of EU external borders, and on a significant increase in the efficient return of irregular migrants.

The Joint Declaration of the V4 Prime Ministers on 8 June 2016 underlined how urgent it is to deal with migration by seeking European solutions that deal with the root causes, such as resolving the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Also, the document stressed the significance of swift EU action to preserve trust in its institutions, assisting frontline and Eastern Partnership countries and pushing for consensus-based policies that protect external borders, hotspots, and returns. Additionally, Prime Ministers advocated for evidence-based rather than drastic modifications, opposing mandatory redistribution of asylum seekers, and promoted progressive reform of the Dublin system.

Furthermore, on 21 November 2016, V4 Interior Ministers proposed solutions to address the root causes of migration, which should decrease the number of illegal migrants entering the European Union, granting restored control over managing mixed migratory flows. The statement suggested that in order to achieve the goal:

- *Providing assistance to third countries hosting large numbers of migrants;*
- *Supporting effective processing of asylum claims, including by tackling the phenomenon of the abuse of international protection for the purpose of unjustified illegal entry into the EU;*
- *Improving return and readmission rates of migrants not eligible for international protection in the EU* (Visegrad Group 2016).

Moreover, a joint statement by the heads of government of the V4 countries on 15 December 2016 emphasised the necessity of a solid external border system for European migration policy to fight migratory pressure effectively. They prioritised internal security and supported policies to increase public trust and safety, such as the Passenger Name Record and Counter Terrorism Directives.

The findings from this section of the study indicate that the security aspect of the migration crisis already featured in the V4 discourse after the Charlie Hebdo attack. However, due to the Paris terror attacks, the security dimension of the migration crisis started to intensify and continued until the end of 2016. The main security elements in the V4 discourse included the fight against terrorism and illegal migration, protecting external borders, managing the root causes of migration and preventing the EU's proposed automatic permanent relocation mechanism. It is important to note that the analysed documents of the V4 discourse included certain aspects of policy recommendations for EU institutions on how to fight terrorism and manage migration.

7.1.4 Conclusions of the Visegrad Group Discourse Analysis

Our analysis confirms that between 2015 and 2016, the V4's discourse on the migration crisis predominantly concentrated on security over humanitarian issues. However, published materials of the V4 contained limited humanitarian discourse. The humanitarian categories had the most significant percentages between the Charlie Hebdo and Paris terror events. However, these percentages decreased following the terror attacks in Paris and Brussels. It is important to note that V4's humanitarian discourse decreased after each terrorist attack.

At the same time, our findings suggest that the securitisation elements of the migration crisis in the discourse of the V4 became evident after the Charlie Hebdo Attack but peaked after the Paris terror attacks and remained prominent following the Brussels terror attacks. The V4 discourse included vital security components such as the fight against terrorism and illegal migration, protection of external borders, managing the root causes of migration and preventing the EU's proposed automatic permanent relocation mechanism. Moreover, the figure illustrating the monthly fluctuations of each main category confirms a slight increase in security discourse following the Charlie Hebdo attack, with a substantial rise following the Paris terror attacks. In contrast, their reaction to the Brussels terror attacks was delayed, with securitisation discourse intensifying only in the following months.

In conclusion, we can confirm that there was a noticeable focus in the V4 discourse throughout the migration crisis toward securitisation, particularly following major terrorist acts, while a gradual marginalisation of humanitarian concerns. Furthermore, the findings show that, by portraying migration primarily as a security threat, the V4 countries were instrumental in the initiation stages of the high politics route, acting as an advocacy coalition.

7.2 European Council

This section of the thesis presents the results of the author's analysis regarding the discourse study of the European Council. It is divided into four sub-sections: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, and chronological analysis, and the final section encompasses discussions and conclusions.

7.2.1 Statistical Findings

This section of the thesis aims to examine the nature of the European Council discourse and provide statistical findings demonstrating how the discourse on migration evolved from 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2016. Also, the paper uses content analysis to explain further the patterns,

themes, and key elements driving the discourse of the European Council regarding the migration crisis.

As noted, 159 materials were collected for the analyses, precisely 5 in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 85 in 2015 and 69 in 2016. In segments generated for content analysis, there were 5 segments in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 240 segments in 2015, and 162 segments in 2016. The segments differ in one aspect: while some consist of single sentences or paragraphs long. At the same time, the significant increase in the number of collected materials and segments in 2015 and 2016 compared to 2014 (1 July – 31 December) must highlight the European Council's rising focus on migration since 2015.

Figure 5 shows that in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' totalled 80%, representing the highest percentage among all other categories. On the other hand, the '*measures to strengthen security*' category stood at 40% in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). Also, the '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' and '*security aspects of the migration crisis*' categories reached 20 % from 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014.

However, upon examining the data in Figure 5 for 2015, it is clear that the '*measures to strengthen security*' category received the highest percentage of 75.83%. In 2015, the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' category garnered 30.42%, while the '*security aspects of the migration crisis*' category got 21.67%. It is important to highlight that the category addressing the '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' obtained the lowest percentage, comprising only 12.92%.

During 2016, there was a slight increase in the '*measures to strengthen security*' category, reaching 76.88%. However, the category which represents '*security aspects of the migration crisis*' significantly increased to 38.13%. Regarding the categories addressing the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis in the discourse of the European Council, a decline was observed from 2015 to 2016. For example, the categories regarding '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' and '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' declined to 23.75% and 5.63%, respectively.

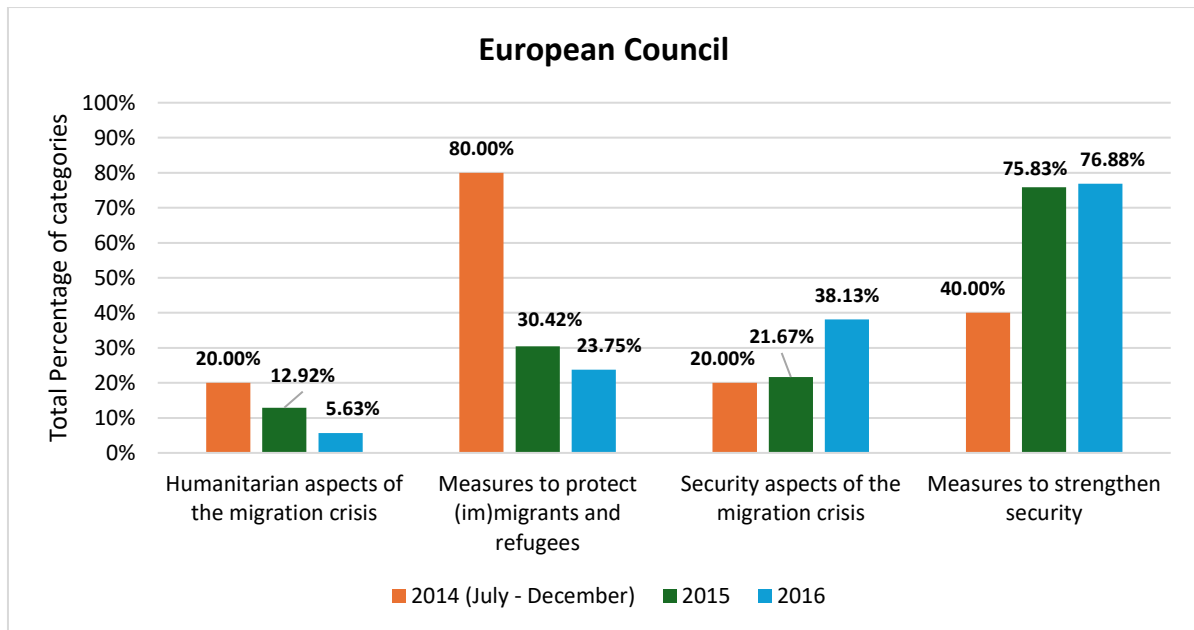


Figure 5 European Council communication 2014 (July - December); 2015; 2016

Our analysis based on Figure 5 demonstrates that from July 1st to December 31st, 2014, the category focusing on the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) received the highest percentage. However, in 2015, the '*measures to strengthen security*' category took the lead percentage, while the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' category fell to second place. Similarly, in the same year, another category that measures the security aspect of the European Council's discourse obtained the third highest percentage, while the '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' category received the lowest percentage. In contrast to the previous year, our study for 2016 reveals a decline in the percentages of both categories addressing the humanitarian side of the migration crisis.

On the other hand, there was an upward trend in the percentages of categories that reflected security issues. Additionally, it is notable that from 2014 (1 July 2014 – 31 December 2014) to 2015 and 2016, the percentages of the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories are declining annually. However, we observe the opposite trend in the case of security-related categories, indicating a strengthening of the security discourse with each passing year of analysis.

Moreover, the results shown in Figure 6 aim to evaluate if terrorist events have contributed to the discourse on securitisation and whether there have been fluctuations in categories due to these attacks. As we can see in the case of the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the*

migration crisis), its percentage rose to 13.66% from the Charlie Hebdo attack to the Paris terror attacks. However, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, it considerably decreased to 5.69%. Also, our analysis shows a slight increase to 6.76% after the Brussels terror attacks.

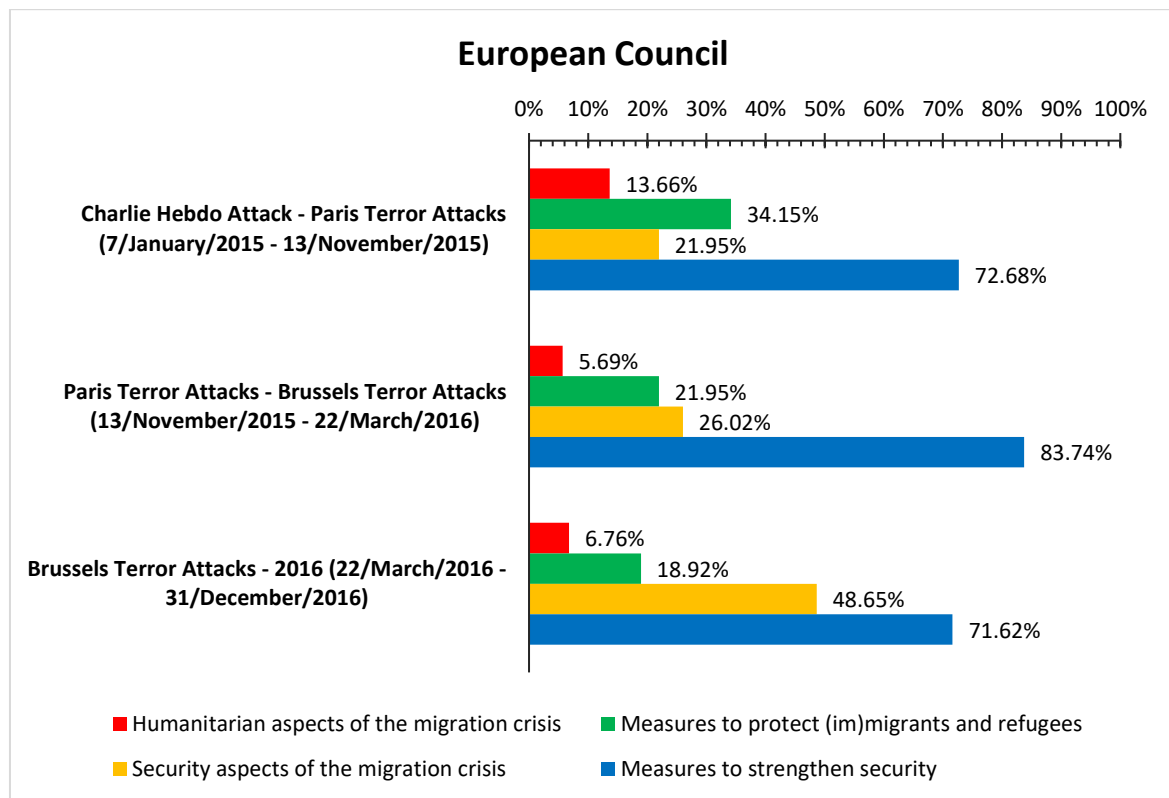


Figure 6 European Council communication based on terrorist attacks

Figure 6 indicates a similar pattern for the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) compared to the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*). For example, after the Charlie Hebdo attack and until the Paris terror attacks, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) got 34.15% of the overall sample. Nevertheless, the numbers decreased to 21.95% between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks. Moreover, they continued to decrease further after the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, hitting 18.92%.

Regarding the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*), from the Charlie Hebdo attack to the Paris terror attacks, this category received 21.95% of the total segments. However, it increased to 26.02% between the terror attacks in Paris and Brussels, followed by a significant increase after the Brussels terror attacks, reaching 48.65%.

Lastly, in the case of the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) following the Charlie Hebdo attack, it reached 72.68% and increased to 83.74% between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks. Interestingly, from the time of the Brussels terror attacks till the end of 2016, the total percentage of the fourth category decreased to 71.62%.

To summarize our findings from Figure 6, we note that in the case of the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories, a consistent trend of decline is evident after each terror attack, except for the first category's (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) minimal increase of 1.07% following the terror incidents in Brussels. The first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) reached their peak percentages between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. However, following the Paris terror attacks, the first category consistently received the lowest percentage, while the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) received the second lowest percentage.

Furthermore, the percentages of the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories representing the security dimension of the migration crisis in the discourse of the European Council tend to increase after each terrorist attack, except the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) following the Brussels terror attacks. Despite the decline, in the time frame of the Brussels terror attacks and the end of 2016, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) still maintained the highest percentage compared to other categories. It is important to note that the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) obtained its highest percentage between the terror attacks in Paris and Brussels. However, following the Brussels terror attacks, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) received its highest percentage.

On top of that, Table 8, Table 9 and Table 10 provide explanations and illustrate the subcategories of the main categories previously discussed. The tables below identify the key elements and themes used in the European Council discourse 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 2015 and 2016.

For example, Table 8 shows that the '*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' subcategory under the main category of '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' was coded once. In the category of '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*,' both '*access to asylum procedures*' and '*providing humanitarian assistance*' subcategories were represented

by two codes each. The subcategory '*public security threat*' was allocated a single code under the major category of '*security aspects of the migration crisis*'. Finally, under the main category of '*measures to strengthen security*,' both '*anti-terrorist measures*' and '*cooperation with third (transit) countries*' subcategories were represented by a single code each.

Table 6 European Council communication (main - subcategories) 2014 (1 July - 31 December)

European Council - 1 July (2014) - 31 December (2014)
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 1 code
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 4 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 1 code
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 2 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat) - 0 code
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code

At the same time, as Table 9 and Table 10 illustrate, from 2015 to 2016, the number of codes was considerably higher than in the second semester of 2014 due to the availability of relevant resources accessible for analysis. In 2015, the subcategory of '*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' was coded 31 times, but this number decreased by 9 codes in 2016. The subcategories under the primary category of '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' included the following: access to asylum procedures 38 codes, providing humanitarian assistance 19 codes, preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees 9 codes, and

providing funds to support humanitarian assistance 7 codes. On the other hand, in 2016, the subcategory of '*access to asylum procedures*' was reduced to 9 codes from 2015. Nevertheless, the subcategory of '*providing humanitarian assistance*' had the same amount of codes in 2016 as it received in 2015. Furthermore, the subcategory of '*providing funds to support humanitarian assistance*' got 10 codes in 2016. At the same time, the subcategory '*preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' was eliminated in 2016.

Table 7 European Council communication (main - subcategories) 2015

European Council - 2015
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 31 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 31 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 73 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 38 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 9 codes
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 19 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 52 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 11 codes
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 36 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 182 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 24 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 21 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 58 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 4 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 54 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 41 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 38 codes

Between 2015 and 2016, the main category '*security aspects of the migration crisis*' subcategories adjusted. Specifically, the '*public security threat*' subcategory received 11 codes in 2015, which dropped to a single in 2016. The '*border/territorial control*' subcategory codes increased from 36 in 2015 to 52 in 2016. Similarly, the '*terrorist threats*' subcategory gained 5 codes in 2015, which climbed to 8 in 2016.

Table 8 European Council communication (main - subcategories) 2016

European Council - 2016
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 9 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 9 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 38 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 9 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 19 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 10 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 61 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 52 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 8 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 123 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 14 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 51 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 24 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 27 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 42 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 11 codes

In the main category of 'measures to strengthen security,' the subcategory of 'border control measures' received the most codes in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, this subcategory got 58 codes, with 'internal border control' accounting for 4 and 'external border control' for 54. However, in 2016, the 'border control measures' subcategory dropped to 51. Particularly, 'internal border control' rose to 24 codes, while 'external border control' reduced to 27 codes. The 'cooperation with third (transit) countries' subcategory almost had the same number of codes: 41 in 2015 and 42 in 2016. Furthermore, in 2015, the 'cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries' subcategory generated 38 codes, which was reduced to 11 codes in 2016. In 2016, both the category 'anti-terrorist measures' and 'fight against human smugglers/traffickers' experienced decreases in numbers. Specifically, 'anti-terrorist measures' earned 24 codes in

2015, which dropped to 14 in 2016. Similarly, the *'fight against human smugglers/traffickers'* subcategory received 21 codes in 2015, falling dramatically to just 5 in 2016.

7.2.2 Monthly Dynamics

This section analyses the monthly fluctuations of all the main categories throughout 2014 (1 July - 31 December), 2015 and 2016 to identify precisely when the changes occurred.

It is important to consider that Figure 7 reviews the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) main categories. In contrast, Figure 8 gives information about the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) main categories.

As we can see in Figure 7, until the terror attack of Charlie Hebdo, neither category had any significant shifts. Also, a similar pattern was witnessed until April 2015, when both categories experienced a rise. It is important to note that in April 2015, then President of the European Council Donald Tusk called for an extraordinary European Council meeting to discuss migration pressure, including humanitarian concerns (*in April, in the extraordinary European Council meeting, Donald Tusk highlighted that 'it unacceptable that hundreds of people die each year trying to reach Europe via sea' as well as Donald Tusk's remarks before the Special European Council noted that the primary objective is saving lives of innocent people*). In the following months, the humanitarian discourse of the European Council decreased compared to April 2015, but it started to increase in September 2015, October 2015 and November 2015. In particular, the second main category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) indicated far more engagement than the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*). It is important to note that in September 2015, there were informal meetings of heads of state or government of EU leaders to discuss migration, including migration issues. In addition, European leaders gathered in October 2015 to discuss European migration and refugee crisis, followed by the Valetta summit in November (*on 4 November 2015, following a meeting with Stefan Löfven, then Prime Minister of Sweden, President Donald Tusk stated that there is a fundamental right to political asylum. Also, the participants of the Valletta summit adopted a political statement and an action plan that emphasised the protection of migrants and asylum seekers*).

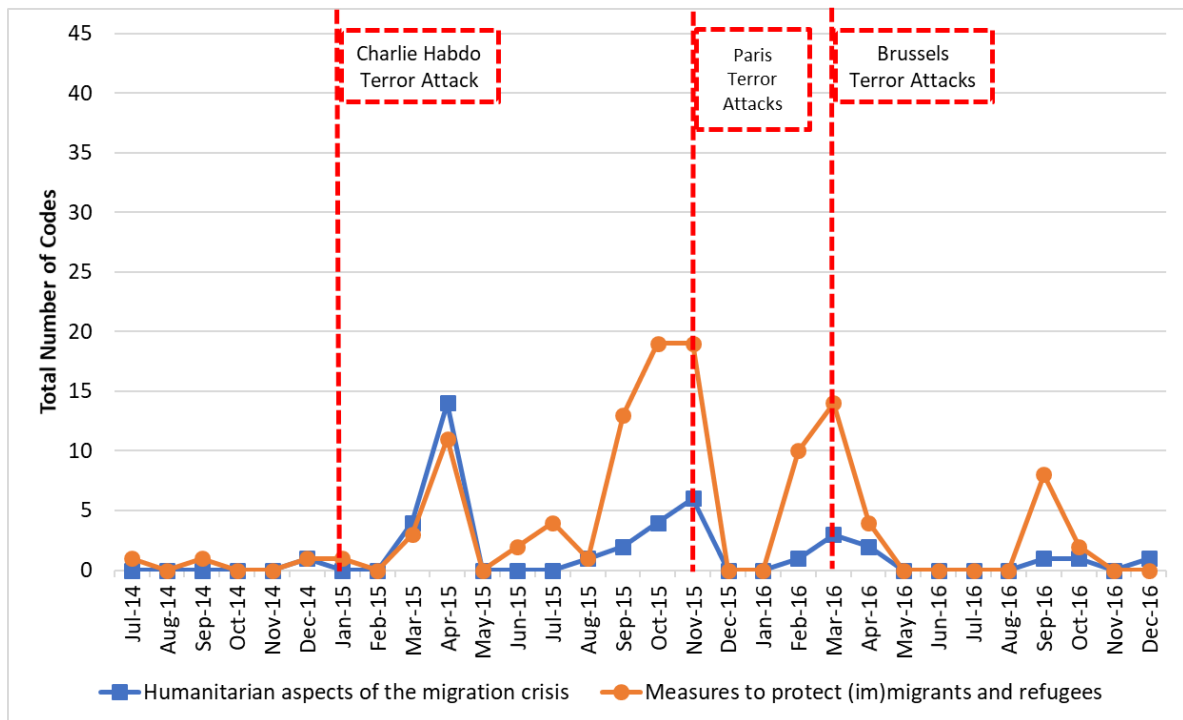


Figure 7 European Council communication (first/second categories) - monthly

However, after the terror events in Paris, there was a two-month period of stagnation for both the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories. Nevertheless, a little upsurge was seen in February 2016 and continued until March 2016. During this time frame, Figure 7 shows that there was only a slight increase in the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*), with a notable increase mainly in the second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) category. On the other hand, following the terror incidents in Brussels, Figure 7 reveals a significant decline in both categories. There was barely a modest rise in September 2016, explained by the then European Council President Donald Tusk's address at the United Nations summit and the release of the Bratislava declaration, which briefly mentioned humanitarian issues (*at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants, President Donald Tusk said the EU prepared to step up humanitarian and development assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities*).

In the case of the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories, Figure 8 shows a similar trajectory until the Charlie Hebdo Attack. However, following the incident, there was a rise in both categories, which peaked in April 2015 and was followed by a noticeable decline in May 2015. Additionally, the patterns in both categories were comparable, even though the fourth category (*measures to strengthen*

security) encompassed more codes than the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) (on 20 April, President Donald Tusk, in an extraordinary European Council meeting, noted that some of the summit's objectives were to 'stop the human traffickers, as well as step up cooperation with the countries of origin and transit'. Furthermore, on 23 April, during a special meeting of the European Council, leaders committed to four priority areas for action, one of which was to prevent the flow of illegal migration).

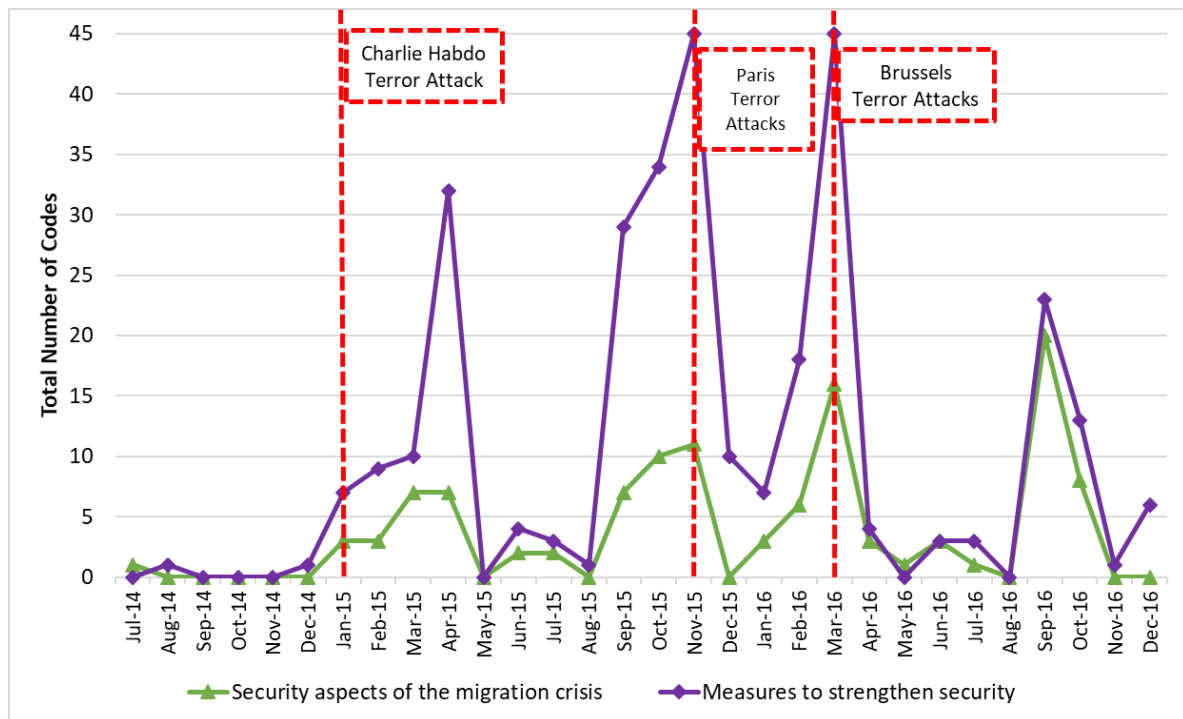


Figure 8 European Council communication (third/fourth categories) - monthly

Moreover, our study's results, which can be observed in Figure 8, suggest minor fluctuations in both categories from May 2015 to August 2015. Nevertheless, there was a noticeable rise from August 2015 onward, particularly in the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), which peaked in November before declining in December 2015. Notably, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) peaked in November 2015, which also happened to be the month when the terror attacks in Paris happened, and the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) similarly reached its highest point compared to the previous months. There was a substantial drop in the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) in January 2016, whereas the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) continued to increase during the same period. Also, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) rose again from February 2016. In March, the Brussels terror attacks took place, and the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) reached the same level as it did in November 2015.

Furthermore, it is essential to point out that the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) peaked in September 2016, primarily due to the adoption of the Bratislava Declaration, where predominantly security discourse was evident (*Bratislava Declaration objectives included restoring full control of the external borders, ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism, and strengthening EU cooperation on external security and defence. Also, on 19 September at the UN summit for refugees and migrants, President Donald Tusk said the EU aims to establish control on its external borders*).

A monthly analysis of the main categories suggests similar patterns with some differences. While all categories varied over time, security-related categories demonstrated more sustained and sharper increases. For example, in April 2015, November 2015, and March 2016, we observed an increase in trajectory across all categories, with the fourth category consistently recording the highest number of coded segments during peak months. Similarly, in September 2016, there was an increase in all categories, with security-related categories dominating others. Furthermore, after the Charlie Hebdo terror event, the third and fourth categories steadily rose until May, with the fourth category peaking in November 2015 and March 2016. This observation confirms that the discourse of the European Council reacts to each terrorist attack, incorporating and sometimes prioritising elements related to security, which often dominated humanitarian discourse.

7.2.3 Chronological Analysis

In this section of the thesis, we present a chronological development of the important events and speeches to understand the stance of the European Council on the migration crisis. A comprehensive analysis of the events and speeches can be found in a chronological table provided in Appendix C.

Herman Van Rompuy, the Belgian politician who served as a president of the European Council (from 1 June 2011 to 30 November 2014), in his speech to the European Parliament on 2 July 2014 following the June 26-27 European Council meeting encouraged attracting talented and skilled third country citizens through the legal migration to EU member states (European Council 2014d). At the same time, in his closing speech for the Sixth Cohesion Forum on 9 September 2014, he expressed similar views, stating that the EU's competitiveness and welfare systems face significant challenges due to the ageing demographics and shrinking workforce, which can only be addressed by immigration. He highlighted the expected political, social, and economic challenges in managing migration and demographic shifts. Finally, the

European Council president emphasized that discussions on legal migration are crucial to bolstering Europe's talent-based economic advantage(European Council 2014a). Furthermore, in his address at the UN Security Council Special Session on Foreign Terrorist Fighters on 24 September 2014, Herman Van Rompuy pointed out the EU's readiness to help countries providing shelter to refugees, deliver humanitarian assistance and strengthen counter-terrorism capacity in countries across Northern Africa and the Sahel region that have been impacted by terrorism(European Council 2014c).

On December 23, 2014, President Donald Tusk, succeeding Herman Van Rompuy, highlighted the European Union's commitment to help Turkey handle Syrian refugees and provide humanitarian aid(European Council 2014b). Following the Charlie Hebdo attack on 9 January 2015, Donald Tusk, then president of the European Council, met with the ex-prime minister of Estonia, Taavi Rõivas and urged the European Parliament to expedite the implementation of the EU Passenger Name Record system. Tusk highlighted the importance of the EU's contribution to promoting attempts to strengthen security (European Council 2015k). Furthermore, on 13 January 2015, Donald Tusk addressed the European Parliament, underlining the necessity of balancing security and freedom and a single European Passenger Name Record for a cohesive security strategy that benefits the Union's security and freedom(European Council 2015r). Moreover, on 12 February, during the informal meeting of heads of state or government, the discussion revolved around three key challenges facing Europe, with counterterrorism being one of them. As a result, EU leaders agreed on a statement to guide the EU's work on counterterrorism(European Council 2015f).

On the other hand, President Donald Tusk stated after the tripartite social summit on 19 March 2015 that the EU's inability to tolerate the tragic deaths of refugees at sea, emphasizing the imperative of a political settlement and a Libyan government of national unity is required to address these difficulties fully (European Council 2015p). Moreover, on 30 March 2015, following his meeting with the then-prime minister of Malta, Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, he underlined the responsibility of the EU to provide help to people in need. Nevertheless, he highlighted that the stability and security of the member states continue to be necessary. Tusk stressed the need to stop individuals from feeling forced to leave their country, pointing out that the EU cannot accommodate everyone (European Council 2015m).

On 20 April 2015, President Donald Tusk called an extraordinary European Council meeting on migratory pressure in the Mediterranean. In his statement, Donald Tusk noted that the

situation in the Mediterranean is dramatic, and it is unacceptable that hundreds of people are losing their lives trying to reach Europe by sea. Also, the purpose of the meeting was to address some significant challenges, including fighting against human traffickers, rescuing people in need, and cooperating with the countries of origin and transit(European Council 2015j). After the special meeting, the EU leaders agreed on four areas for action: *fighting against traffickers, strengthening presence at sea, preventing illegal migration flows, and providing more protection to refugees*(European Council 2015q).

At the same time, discussions at the European Council meetings held on the 25-26 June focused on three critical dimensions of the migration crisis. First, EU leaders agreed to relocate 60,000 people who needed international protection. Secondly, the European Council adopted a return policy for migrants without the legal right to enter the EU territory. Lastly, it stressed the importance of cooperation with countries of origin and transit(European Council 2015e).

Moreover, on 1 September 2015, after he met with the then President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Donald Tusk said: *We talked about the ongoing migration crisis on our borders and what the European Union can do to help to solve it. Europe's priority remains preventing migrants from losing their lives when trying to reach Europe. Whatever the challenges migration might bring, there is never a justification for hostile, racist or xenophobic reactions to migrants*(European Council 2015l). Following the meeting with the then President of Croatia, Donald Tusk, visited Hungary on 3 September 2015 to meet with Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán. Before the meeting, Tusk made several statements outlining key discussion points. The then president of the European Council mentioned that European countries, even if the crisis does not directly impact them, should demonstrate solidarity with migrants, acknowledging that their historical interactions with the EU shape their treatment of refugees. Also, Tusk remarked on the importance of border enforcement, regaining Europe's sovereignty from criminals and human traffickers, and creating a united Europe. A balanced strategy that incorporates control and solidarity measures is required. Lastly, Donald Tusk called for solidarity with member states dealing with high migration rates and humanitarian help for non-EU countries(European Council 2015n).

On 23 September 2015, EU leaders met in Brussels during the informal meeting of heads of state or government to discuss an unprecedented number of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe and agreed on a set of priorities:

- *Assist Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis*
- *mobilise at least 1 billion additional funding for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme*
- *reinforce cooperation and dialogue with Turkey at all levels*
- *assist the countries of the Western Balkans in the management of refugee flows*
- *increase funding to address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa*
- *tackle the dramatic situation at the EU external borders and strengthen their control*
- *assist frontline member states in the establishment of hotspots, to ensure a correct identification of migrants and at the same time ensure relocation and returns (European Council 2015g).*

In addition, a speech delivered by President Donald Tusk on 6 October 2015 to the European Parliament at the informal meeting of heads of state or government on 23 September 2015 mentioned Europe as the most tolerant and open continent and to avoid making Europe the victim of our disagreements and mutual blaming. Also, the president called for togetherness and noted that the EU must protect its reputation so that theocracies and dictators will not tell us how to treat migrants. He stressed that supporting migrants and securing the EU's external borders need solidarity; everyone is responsible for upholding these principles. Moreover, regaining control over the EU's external borders is the first requirement to maintain a successful, humane, and secure migration approach (European Council 2015a).

In the following meeting of the EU leaders on October 15 2015, they agreed on the political direction and main priorities regarding the migration crisis: *cooperation with the countries of origin and transit to stem the migratory flows. EU leaders welcomed the agreement on an EU-Turkey joint action plan and agreed to achieve concrete operational measures at the forthcoming Valletta Summit with African heads of state or government; strengthening the EU's external borders with an integrated border management system that will go beyond the Frontex mandate, and the addition of hundreds more border guards to secure the hotspot areas in Greece and Italy; the issue of return and readmission (European Council 2015c).*

Our analysis of the chronological study finds an interesting observation that remarks by President Donald Tusk on 4 November 2015, following his meeting with Stefan Löfven, then Prime Minister of Sweden, for the first time, mentioned the newcomers do not have an absolute

right to choose their destination. However, there is a fundamental right to political asylum(European Council 2015o).

Furthermore, since the beginning of the migration crisis, European and African heads of state and governments have gathered for the first time at the Valletta Summit on November 11-12, 2015. The summit's participants adopted a political statement and an action plan intended to: *address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement; enhance cooperation on legal migration and mobility; reinforce the; protection of migrants and asylum seekers; prevent and fight irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; work more closely to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration*(European Council 2015s).

After the Paris terror attacks on 13 November 2015, a letter to then President François Hollande of France from European Council President Donald Tusk noted that Europe will continue to fight against terrorism(European Council 2015h). Additionally, following a meeting between the heads of state or government of the EU and Turkey on 29 November 2015, a Joint Action Plan was adopted to address the Syrian refugee crisis. As a result of the action plan's implementation, both parties will increase their active collaboration concerning migrants who do not require international protection: *preventing travel to Turkey and the EU; ensuring the application of the established bilateral readmission provisions; and swiftly returning them to their countries of origin*(European Council 2015i). On the other hand, in the next European Council meeting in Brussels on 17-18 December 2015, European leaders discussed the migration crisis and the fight against terrorism. As a result of two-day discussions, European leaders agreed on the operation of hotspots, the implementation of the relocation decisions and returns, the control of the EU's external borders, and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Moreover, regarding counterterrorism efforts, extra steps were taken to exchange information and terrorism financing, control the external border conditions leading to terrorism, prevent radicalisation and violent extremism, and counter-terrorism cooperation with third countries(European Council 2015d).

After meeting with the then Polish President Andrzej Duda on one of his first visits in 2016, President Donald Tusk remarked in a statement that the primary objective is to strengthen the EU's external borders. He highlighted that effective control of the EU's external borders is essential for any migration policy and fundamental to maintaining the Schengen Agreement(European Council 2016i). On the other hand, at the London conference, which took

place on 4 February 2016, the EU and its member states pledged more than € 3 billion to aid Syrians living there and refugees and the communities hosting them internationally (European Council 2016a). Furthermore, at the European Council meeting on 18-19 February, the discussions mainly focused on: *“EU-Turkey Action Plan; humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees, including in the Western Balkans countries; external border management; the need to gradually get back to a situation where all Members of the Schengen area fully apply the Schengen Borders Code; the requirement for hotspots to be fully functional; the implementation of decisions on relocation, returns and readmission”* (European Council 2016d).

In his visit to Greece on 2 March 2016, a country heavily affected by the migration crisis, President Donald Tusk, following discussions with then Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens, said: *“I want to appeal to all potential illegal economic migrants wherever you are from: Do not come to Europe. Do not believe the smugglers. Do not risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing. Greece or any other European country will no longer be a transit country. The Schengen rules will enter into force again”* (European Council 2016h). At the same time, it is important to emphasize that on March 18, 2016, the EU and Turkey agreed to stop the flow of irregular migration into EU territory. This agreement is designed to stop human traffickers from operating while giving migrants safer options instead of risking their lives (European Council 2016c).

Following the Brussels terror attacks, Donald Tusk, after his meeting in Helsinki with then Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä, highlighted numerous existential threats and challenges confronting the EU. He noted that the massive influx of refugees and migrants, along with the threat of terrorism, is a sign of the existential challenges facing the EU (European Council 2016j). On top of that, after meeting with then Luxembourg Prime Minister Bettel on 1 September 2016, Donald Tusk emphasized that irregular migration and migration are still key issues for the EU. Also, he mentioned the importance of avoiding repeating the chaos in 2015 regarding the migration crisis (European Council 2016g).

At the same time, in the informal meeting of the 27 heads of state or government on 16 September 2016, they met in Bratislava to launch a political discussion about the future direction of the EU. The leaders agreed on the following objectives: *restoring full control of the external borders; ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism; strengthening EU*

cooperation on external security and defence; boosting the single market and offering better opportunities for young Europeans(European Council 2016f).

Furthermore, the EU's top officials gathered in Brussels on October 20 and 21 to discuss the Union's most pressing issue of migration. EU leaders stressed that the return rates must increase, and illegal migration through the Central Mediterranean route must substantially decrease. They emphasised the value of working with African nations of migration's origin and transit in this context. As noted by EU leaders, the recent launch of the EU Border and Coast Guard and national initiatives were crucial milestones towards enhancing control of the EU's external borders and returning to Schengen. Protecting external borders was emphasized, and the fast implementation of updated Schengen rules establishing systematic inspections at EU borders was requested. Additionally, they called for: *faster returns from the Greek islands to Turkey; assistance by EU countries to Greece if it's deemed necessary by EU agencies* (European Council 2016e).

The final meeting of the European Council in 2016, held on December 15th, focused on evaluating the EU-Turkey Statement and reviewing the EU's position on the migration route in the Eastern Mediterranean, which had previously been addressed during the October 20-21, 2016 European Council meeting. Furthermore, the need to increase assistance for the Libyan coast guard in its fight against people smugglers was highlighted (European Council 2016b).

The findings from this section of the study indicate that the European Council's discourse during the chosen period shows fluctuations. For example, in the second half of 2014, there was a notable humanitarian discourse within the European Council. However, following the Charlie Hebdo attack, the security aspect of the migration crisis began to gain prominence, leading to a shift in the initial approach. Despite the emergence of the security dimension, the humanitarian dimension did not entirely disappear from the discourse of the European Council. The chronological development of the crucial events and speeches indicates that the humanitarian dimension remains evident even after the Charlie Hebdo attack in the European Council's discourse. Furthermore, our analysis reveals similar patterns after the Paris terror attacks and Brussels terror attacks. Nevertheless, a key distinction lies in the fact that these terrorist attacks helped gain a strong base for their securitisation dimension, resulting in the dominance of the security dimension over the humanitarian dimension in the discourse of the European Council.

7.2.4 Conclusions of the European Council Discourse Analysis

Our analysis demonstrates that in the second half of 2014, the European Council's discourse was predominantly focused on humanitarian issues. In 2015, there was a noticeable rise in the discourse concerning securitisation, which led to the decline of humanitarian discourse within the European Council's communication. This shift highlighted security aspects such as public security terrorist threats and emphasised the significance of controlling EU borders and territory. Furthermore, the European Council's discourse included measures to strengthen EU's security related to anti-terrorism, fight against human smugglers/traffickers, border control (internal and external), cooperation with third (transit) countries and cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries.

However, in 2016, our data suggest that the emphasis on security dimensions within the European Council's discourse increased even further compared to 2015, while the humanitarian elements decreased to their lowest point within the selected timeframe. Based on our analysis, we can determine that the security aspect of the migration crisis in the European Council's communication began to intensify in 2015 but became notably prominent in 2016. In 2016, there was a notable increase in the emphasis on border and territorial security aspects within the discourse of the European Council compared to 2015. Additionally, measures involving internal border control and cooperation with third (transit) countries were prioritised.

Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative content analysis result indicates that the humanitarian elements in the discourse of the European Union declined after each terror attack (except for the first category's minimal increase of 1.07% following the terror incidents in Brussels). The humanitarian discourse in the communication of the European Council was the most prominent between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. On the other hand, the securitisation discourse started to intensify after the Paris terror attacks and persisted until the end of 2016. It is important to note that after the Paris terror attacks, we witnessed a shift in the European Council's discourse to more complex, which incorporated the security dimension. Furthermore, the Brussels terror attacks even more strengthened the security dimension in the discourse of the European Council. On the other hand, there is a strengthening and intensification of security components in the European Council's discourse, and it does not imply the complete disappearance of humanitarian elements. Instead, there is a more significant decline compared to the discourse on security.

It should also be noted that the securitisation of border control, returns and smuggling was explicitly expressed as a political interest that had been agreed upon at the highest level. The discourse of the European Council at that time was an example of the specification stage of the high politics route.

7.3 Council of the EU

This thesis section provides the findings from the author's analysis of the Council of the EU discourse study. It comprises four parts: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, chronological analysis, and conclusions.

7.3.1 Statistical Findings

This part of the thesis aims to examine the Council of the EU's discourse and present statistical results illustrating the progression of migration communication from 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2016. Furthermore, content analysis explains the patterns, themes, and key components influencing the discourse surrounding the migration crisis within the Council of the EU.

As mentioned, 161 materials were collected for the analyses, precisely 14 (1 July 2014 – 31 December 2014) in 2014, 61 in 2015 and 86 in 2016. Overall, from the selected materials in 2014 (1 July 2014 – 31 December 2014), 20 segments, 2015 109 segments, and 2016 140 segments were generated for the content analysis. The segments differ in one aspect: while some consist of only one or two sentences, others include a whole paragraph.

As demonstrated in Figure 9 below, between 1 July and 31 December 2014, the category of *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'* accounted for 65.00% of the discourse within the Council of the EU, making it the largest category. Regarding the discourse on security, the *'measures to strengthen security'* category constituted 45.00%, while the *'security aspects of migration'* category comprised 35.00%. However, the discussion regarding the *'humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'* category accounted for 30.00% during the same period.

In 2015, there was a notable decline in the percentage of the category of *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'*, which decreased to 25.69% compared to 65.00% in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). It is important to note that this category received the highest percentage compared to others in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). Similarly, another category that evaluates humanitarian aspects in the Council of the EU discourse, *'humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'*, experienced a sharp decrease from 30.00% to 6.42% in 2015. Conversely,

the '*measures to strengthen security*' category increased significantly, reaching 84.40%, while the '*security aspects of migration*' category accounted for 23.85% in 2015.

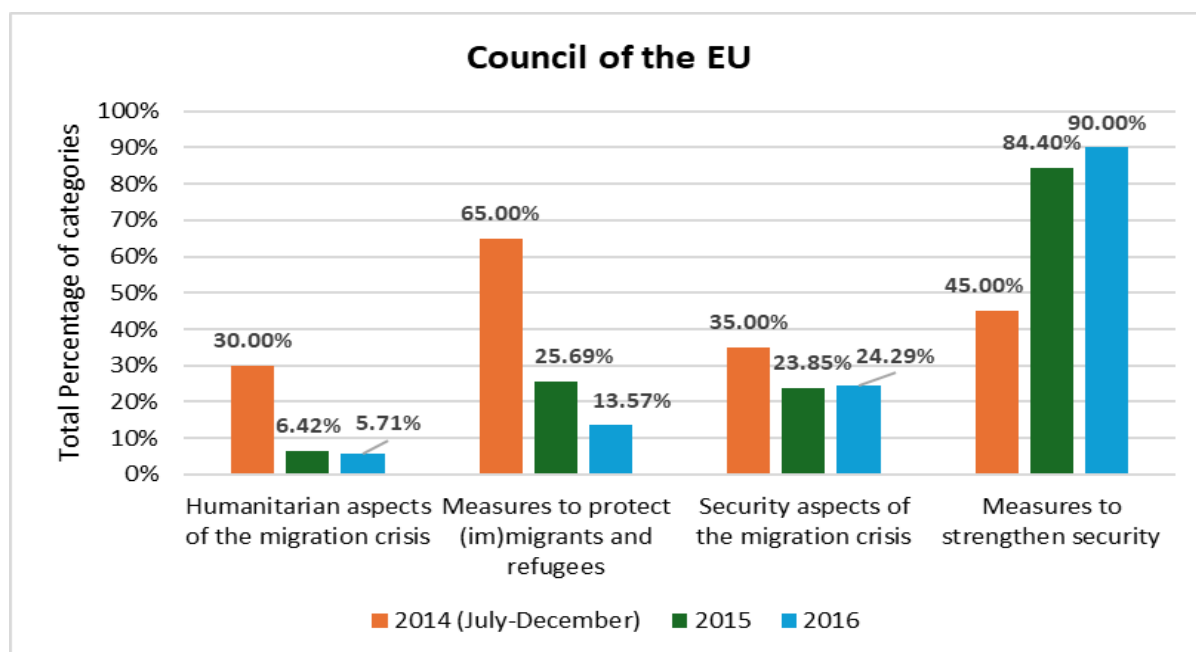


Figure 9 Council of the EU communication 2014 (July - December); 2015; 2016

Furthermore, in 2016, there was a further decrease in both categories, which refers to the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis in the Council of the EU discourse. For example, the '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' category decreased slightly from 6.42% to 5.71%. Similarly, the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' category declined substantially in 2016 compared to 2015, from 25.69% to 13.57%. On the other hand, Figure 9 indicates opposite results for the security-related categories. In 2016, the '*measures to strengthen security*' category maintained its upward trajectory from previous years, reaching 90.00%. Additionally, the '*security aspects of migration*' category increased marginally to 24.29% in 2016.

In summary, Figure 9 shows that in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), the category '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' representing humanitarian discourse earned the highest percentage. However, during the next two years, this category and the '*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*' category experienced a significant decline. In contrast, the '*measures to strengthen security*' category rose significantly in percentage in 2015 and 2016, compared to 2014 (1 July – 31 December). While the '*security aspects of migration*' category decreased from 35.00% in 2014 (July–December) to around 24.00% in 2015 and 2016, this represents a modest decline followed by a stabilisation rather than a sharp downward trend. Our analysis

shows a significant decrease in the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis in the EU Council's discourse following 2014 (1 July – 31 December), particularly reaching its lowest point in 2016. On the contrary, there was a significant increase in proposed security measures concerning the migration crisis in the communications of the Council of the EU in 2015 and 2016.

At the same time, Figure 10 indicates that between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) accounted for 7.69% while the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) received 28.57%. The third category (*security aspects of migration*) received 24.18%, whereas the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) got 81.32%. The findings suggest that proposed measures to strengthen the security of the EU dominated the discourse of the Council of the EU between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. Additionally, measures to protect the rights of the newcomers received the second highest percentage in our analysis.

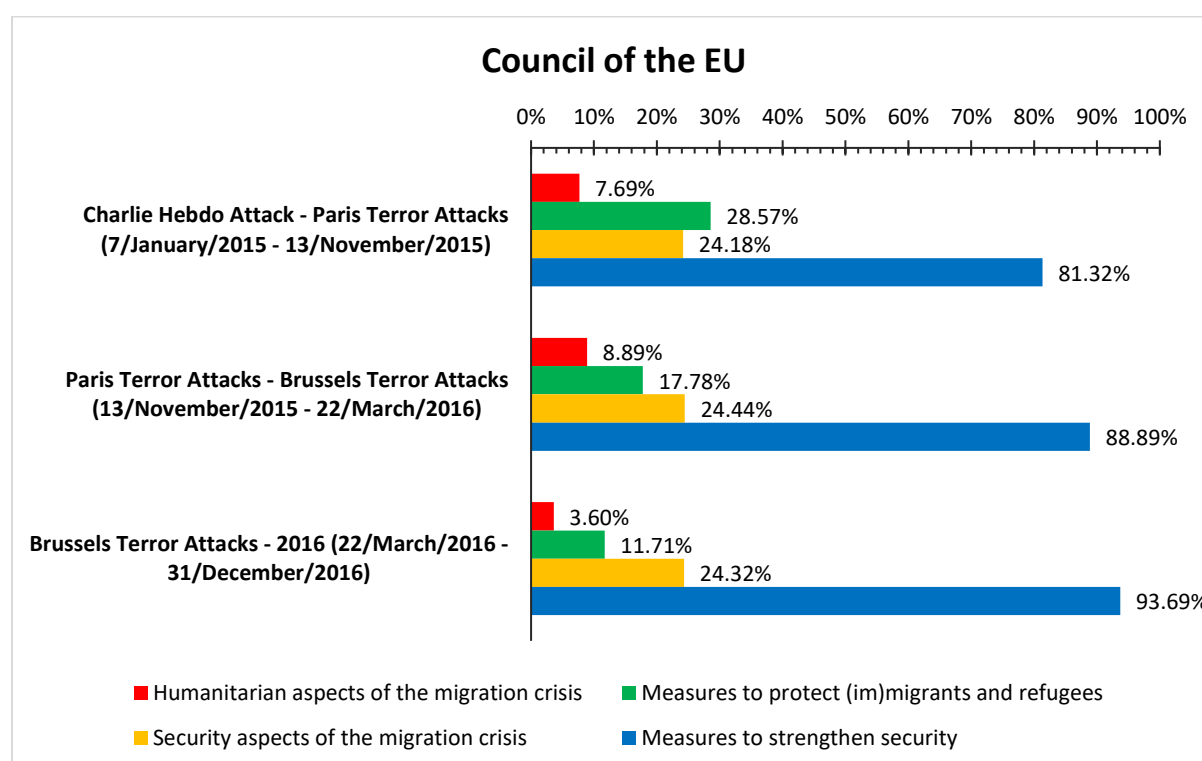


Figure 10 Council of the EU communication based on terrorist attacks

During the period between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks, a slight increase was observed in the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*), rising to 8.89%. However, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) decreased to 17.78%. Moreover, the third category (*security aspects of migration*) marginally increased by 24.44%,

while the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) surged to 88.89%. Once again, between the Paris terror attacks and the Brussels terror attacks, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) received the highest percentage. However, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) dropped to third place, while the third category (*security aspects of migration*) overtook it with a slightly higher share. Following the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, our data shows that the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) decreased to 3.60%, marking the lowest percentage. Similarly, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) declined to 11.71%. Conversely, the third category (*security aspects of migration*), focusing on security aspects of migration, remained relatively stable at 24.32%, while the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) increased substantially to 93.69%.

The findings in Figure 10 suggest that the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories, representing humanitarian elements in the Council of the EU discourse, reached their lowest levels after the Brussels terror attacks. On the other hand, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), associated with security measures, had the highest percentage of omitted post-Brussels attacks. This suggests that, particularly through operational security measures, securitisation peaked in the Council's communications following the Brussels attacks.

At the same time, it is essential to note that the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) gradually declined after each terror event. While the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) saw a slight increase between the Paris and Brussels attacks, there was a subsequent decline after the Brussels terror attacks. Another interesting observation is that the third category (*security aspects of migration*), which represents the security aspects of migration, was relatively steady during the analysis. This suggests that the attention level remained consistent in the Council of the EU discourse regardless of terror incidents.

Furthermore, Tables 12, Table 13, and Table 14 provide explanations and illustrations for the subcategories of the main categories that were previously discussed. Reviewing the tables below, one can determine the main elements and subjects covered in the Council of the European Union's discourse in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 2015 and 2016.

For example, as Table 12 shows, in the latter half of 2014, the subcategory of '*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' within the main category of '*humanitarian aspects of the*

migration crisis' received 6 codes. However, Table 13 demonstrates that in 2015, this total increased to 7 codes; in 2016 (Table 14), it rose to 8 codes.

In the case of the '*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*' main category in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), there were 4 codes allocated to the '*access to asylum procedures*' subcategory, 1 code attributed to the '*prevention of violations of rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' subcategory, 3 codes assigned to the '*providing humanitarian assistance*' subcategory and 5 codes designated for the '*providing funds to support humanitarian assistance*' subcategory.

Table 9 Council of the EU communication (main - subcategories) 1 July (2014) - 31 December (2014)

Council of the EU - 1 July (2014) - 31 December (2014)
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 6 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 6 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 13 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 3 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 7 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 9 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 6 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 1 code
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 1 code</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 2 codes

In 2015, under the '*access to asylum procedures*' subcategory, 7 codes were assigned, but this decreased to 1 code in 2016. Comparably, the subcategory '*prevention of violations of rights of (im)migrants and refugees*' had 10 codes in 2015; by 2016, that number had dropped to 8.

On the other hand, the '*providing humanitarian assistance*' subcategory rose from 6 codes in 2015 to 7 codes in 2016. Lastly, the subcategory of '*providing funds to support humanitarian assistance*' experienced an increase from 5 codes in 2015 to 9 codes in 2016.

At the same time, in the second half of 2014, under the main category of '*security aspects of migration*', only one subcategory appeared, namely '*border/territorial control*', and it received 7 codes. However, in 2015, the '*border/territorial control*' subcategory had a notable increase and received 23 codes. Also, in 2016, this subcategory experienced a slight decline to 22 codes. Another interesting observation is that the subcategory '*terrorist threats*' was not present in the latter half of 2014, but it was coded 2 times in 2015 and 11 times in 2016. Also, the '*public security threat*' subcategory, absent in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), appeared only once in the Council of the EU discourse.

Table 10 Council of the EU communication (main - subcategories) 2015

Council of the EU – 2015
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 7 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 28 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 10 codes
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 6 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 26 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 23 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 92 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 27 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 18 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 8 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 7 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 20 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 19 codes

In addition, in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), under the '*measures to strengthen security*' main category, the subcategory of '*fight against human smugglers/traffickers*' received 2 codes, '*cooperation with third (transit) countries*' received 4 codes and 2 codes were assigned for '*cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries*' subcategory. Meanwhile, within the subcategory of '*border control measures*', '*external border control*' obtained 1 code.

Table 11 Council of the EU communication (main - subcategories) 2016

Council of the EU - 2016
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 8 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 8 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 19 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 9 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 34 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 22 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 11 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 126 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 48 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 11 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 21 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.)</i> - 3 codes
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.)</i> - 18 codes
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 31 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 15 codes

In 2015 and 2016, the number of codes increased significantly compared to the latter half of 2014. For example, a new subcategory called '*anti-terrorist measures*' emerged in 2015, obtaining 27 numbers, which rose to 48 codes in 2016. Also, the '*fight against human smugglers/traffickers*' subcategory obtained 18 codes in 2015 and 11 codes in 2016. Similarly, the subcategory of '*border control measures*' acquired 8 codes (1 code - internal border control; 7 codes – external border codes) in 2015, increasing to 21 codes (3 codes - internal border control; 18 codes – external border codes) in 2016. The '*cooperation with third (transit)*

countries' subcategory increased significantly, from 20 codes in 2015 to 31 in 2016. Conversely, the subcategory of '*cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries*' had 19 codes in 2015, which dropped to 15 in 2016.

7.3.2 Monthly Dynamics

This section outlines the monthly fluctuations in the trends across all main categories throughout 2014 (1 July - 31 December), 2015 and 2016 to note when the changes took place.

It is important to note that Figure 11 demonstrates the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) main categories. At the same time, Figure 12 reviews the monthly trends of third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) main categories.

According to Figure 11, between October and December of 2014, there was a modest rise in both the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories. In October 2014, a Joint Declaration on a mobility partnership was signed with Jordan, addressing issues such as the protection of refugees, humanitarian and financial aid, and the commitment on both sides to manage migration in an orderly manner and facilitate legal migration. Also, the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in October 2014 concluded to mobilise financial support for the Syrian refugees and their host communities.

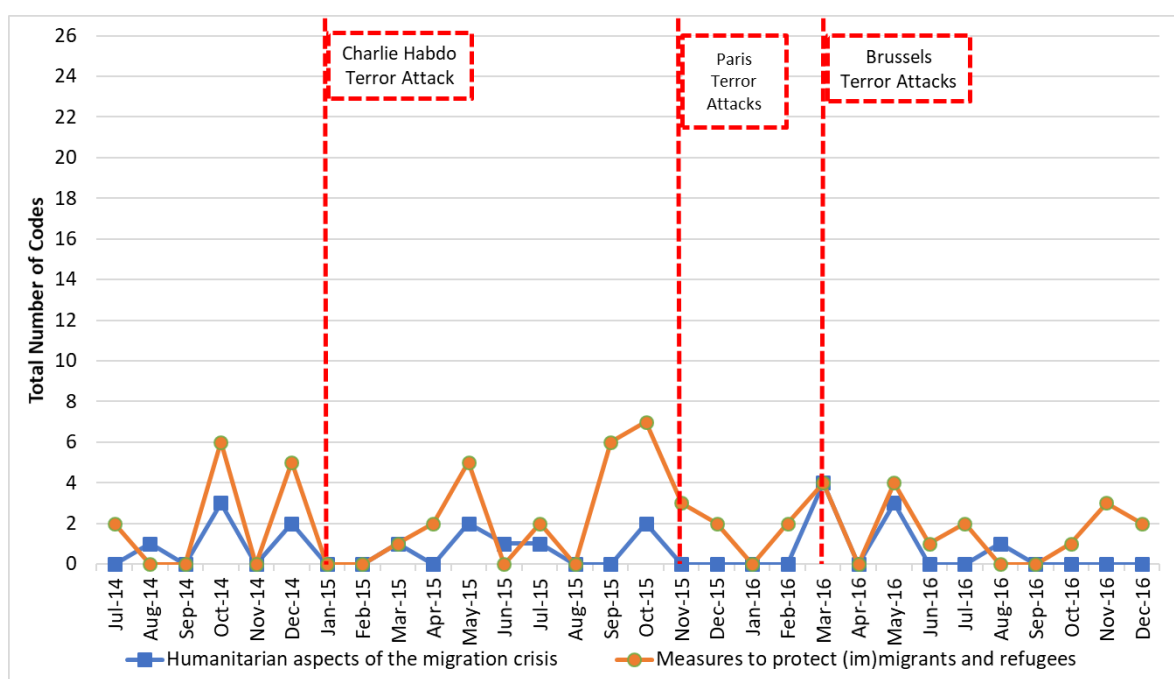


Figure 11 Council of the EU communication (first/second categories) - monthly

Furthermore, no coded statements were observed for either the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) or second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) category in the month of the Charlie Hebdo attack and the following month. However, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) rose from March 2015 to May 2015, decreasing to zero in June. The increase in the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) in May 2015 can be explained by establishing an EU naval operation to disrupt human smugglers in the Mediterranean. Additionally, we witnessed a modest increase in the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) in March 2015, followed by a decrease to zero in April 2015, and then experienced another rise in May 2015.

On the other hand, as Figure 11 shows, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) rose after August 2015 and peaked in October 2015 of the same year. Similarly, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) experienced a minor increase in October 2015 (*on 8 October, the Council issued a series of conclusions granting more funding to support third countries hosting Syrian refugees, providing urgent assistance and humanitarian aid*). However, both categories experienced a decline following the Paris terror attacks. After the Paris terror attacks, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) did not reappear in the discourse until March 2016. However, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) witnessed a continuous decrease following the Paris terror attacks, reaching its lowest point of zero codes in January 2016 before beginning to rise again in March 2016. At the same time, after the Brussels terror attacks in March 2016, both categories saw a sharp decline in April 2016. Subsequently, in May 2016, both categories experienced an increase (*the documents published by the Council of the EU in May highlighted clear humanitarian themes, specifically: a commitment to humanitarian assistance, support for refugees and internally displaced persons, addressing long-term crises, and a strong emphasis on human rights and international law*), but the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) did not register any codes after August 2016. In contrast, the second category fluctuated from May 2016 until the end of the year.

According to Figure 12, neither the third (*security aspects of migration*) nor fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories demonstrated considerable activity in July and August 2014. However, in September 2014 and October of 2014, slight fluctuations were observed. On the other hand, in November 2014, no codes were recorded for both categories. However, in December 2014 of the same year, they experienced an upward trend (*the following*

securitisation subjects were in the agenda of the Council of the EU: the framing of migration as a threat to internal security and the need for enhanced border surveillance through Frontex-led operations such as Triton).

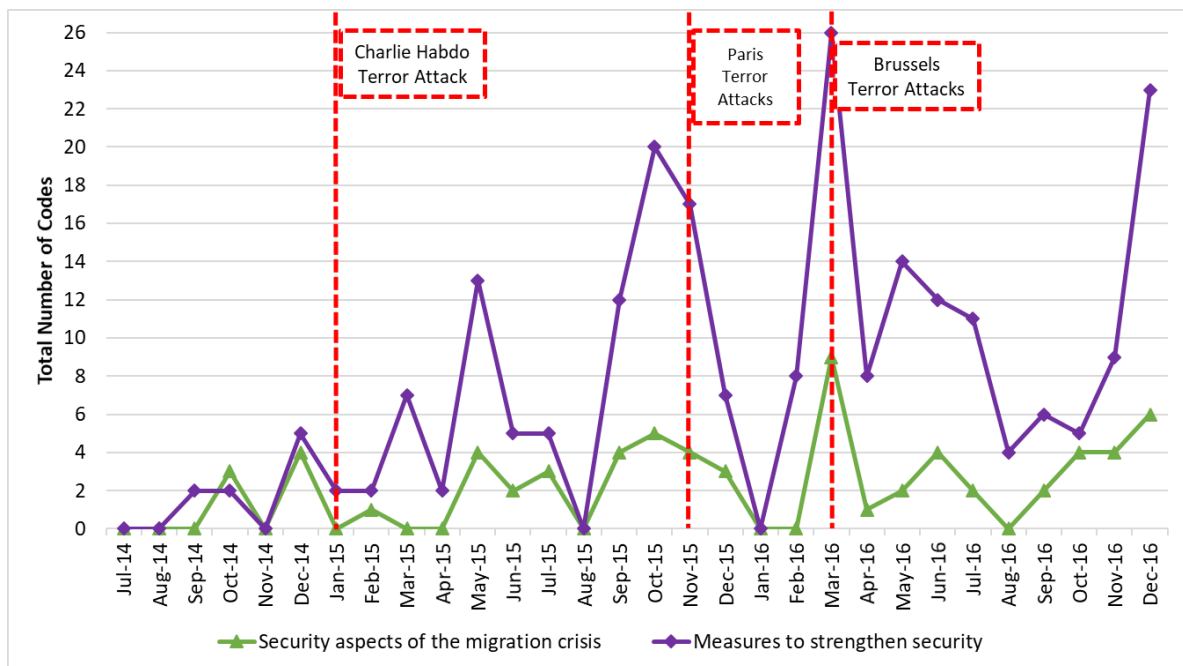


Figure 12 Council of the EU communication (third/fourth categories) - monthly

Notably, no notable changes were observed after the Charlie Hebdo attack. Discourse remained minimal in the third (*security aspects of migration*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories during this period. From January 2015 to May 2015, a slight increase was observed in the third category in February 2015. However, we noticed an upsurge in the fourth category in March 2015. This is a consequence of the decisions made during the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on March 12-13, 2015, which acknowledged progress in controlling migrant flows, agreed to expand Frontex's capabilities, and prioritised fighting illegal smuggling and trafficking networks. In May 2015, both categories increased, but the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) rose more than the third.

Moreover, both categories decreased in June 2015, resulting in a zero in August 2015. Also, both categories began to increase the following month, with the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) experiencing a significant rise in October. This was a result of the Council's decision in October 2015 to establish provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece, start the active phase of the operation against human smugglers and rename it "*Operation Sophia*" and focus on border control during the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting.

On the other hand, following October, both categories began to decrease gradually. Nevertheless, in November 2015, when the Paris terror attacks happened, the number of registered codes in both categories remained high in their respective groups. As a result of the gradual decrease that began in October 2015, both categories reached zero in January 2016. After experiencing a decrease, both categories reached their peak in March 2016 when the Brussels terror attacks occurred. Although both categories experienced a decline in April 2016, the new increase wave started and continued until June 2016. From June to September, the third (*security aspects of migration*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories continued to decrease. Interestingly, as Figure 12 shows, from September 2016, both categories continued to grow, indicating a resurgence of security-related discourse within the Council of the EU. This resurgence aligns with sustained institutional responses to persistent security concerns in the aftermath of the Brussels attacks, including implementing border control initiatives, enhanced internal security collaboration, and the commitments outlined in the Bratislava Roadmap.

7.3.3 Chronological Analysis

In this section of the thesis, we outline a chronological overview of the important events and speeches to understand the stance of the Council of the EU on the migration crisis. A comprehensive analysis of the events and speeches can be found in a chronological table provided in Appendix D.

On 29 July 2014, the Council of the EU approved an increase in humanitarian and development assistance for Syria, backed by a Commission proposal. A proposal by the Commission to increase humanitarian assistance to Syria by €50 million, bringing the total to €150 million in 2014, was approved by the Council of the EU. In addition, the Council approved a proposal by the Commission to improve development support to neighbouring countries, increasing the total amount of support from the European Neighbourhood Instrument to €200 million in 2014 (Council of the EU 2014f). On the other hand, at the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 15 August 2014, EU Foreign Ministers expressed gratitude to neighbouring countries for supporting Libya in resolving its situation and for their solidarity in handling displaced persons (Council of the EU 2014a).

The Council of the EU confirmed another partnership with third countries on migration on 29 September 2014 at the General Affairs meeting. A joint declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the European Union and Jordan has been adopted by the Council of the EU. This

partnership is intended to enhance migratory flow management and implement the EU's Global Approach to migration (Council of the EU 2014b). It is important to note that the partnership on mobility strengthens Jordan's commitment to orderly migration management, facilitating both legal and irregular migration and maximising the developmental benefits for Jordan (Council of the EU 2014c).

At the same time, migration was high on the agenda during the Council of the EU meeting held on 9-10 October 2014. Ministers discussed approaches for improving the management of migratory flows. Following these discussions, the Council of the EU underlined the need for a strategic and operational approach to improve the management of migration flows. The mentioned measures are: *action in cooperation with third countries; reinforced management of external borders and Frontex; action at member state level – reception and fingerprinting* (Ibid). Furthermore, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on 20 October 2014 concerning the ISIL/Da'esh situation in Syria and Iraq. These conclusions emphasised the EU's deep concerns about the humanitarian situation affecting millions of Syrians and Iraqis, many of whom have been forcefully relocated inside their own countries or to neighbouring countries. In addition, the statement confirmed that around €2.9 billion has been mobilised for humanitarian aid. It also highlighted the EU's continued commitment to respecting international human rights laws and the importance of abiding by humanitarian principles (Council of the EU 2014e).

At the Council of the EU meeting on 4 and 5 December 2014, ministers welcomed the EU-funded operation Triton, which successfully began on 1 November 2014 to strengthen border monitoring in the seas around Italy's coastline (Council of the EU 2024a). At the same time, on 4 December 2014, following the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, a document was published under the title "*Development of a renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy*". The published statement urged the EU Commission to incorporate illegal migration as a main common threat and challenge for the coming years in the field of Internal Security. The same document noted that the EU should regularly address internal security in its foreign policy to ensure solid foreign policy consistency. Also, migration and refugee policies, cooperation with third countries, and effective common return policies should be incorporated into development policies (Council of the EU 2014g).

Moreover, on 12 December 2014, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on migration in EU development cooperation. The conclusion noted that the Council of the EU recognises the

severe global issues that internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees experience as a result of crises and wars. It emphasised the significance of implementing international protection mechanisms such as the 1951 Geneva Convention into operation. In addition, the Council highlighted that development cooperation can be employed to combat political and economic instability (Council of the EU 2014d). On 15 December 2014, the Council of the EU stated the terrible conditions facing refugees in Syria and the EU and its member states donated a total of €3 billion to help those in need, including refugees in Syria and its neighbouring countries. Also, the statement stressed the willingness to continue providing assistance and fostering resilience (Council of the EU 2014e).

After the Charlie Hebdo terror attack, in the first meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 January 2015, the Council focused on how foreign policy can strengthen the EU's efforts in fighting terrorism. As a result of the discussion, the Foreign Affairs Council stated that information exchange should be strengthened between member states and partner countries, as well as boosting collaboration with Arab and Mediterranean countries in the fight against terrorism (Council of the EU 2015d). Similarly, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted the following counter-terrorism outcomes on 9 February 2015: *strengthening partnerships with key countries, supporting capacity building, countering radicalisation and violent extremism, promoting international cooperation, and addressing underlying factors and ongoing crises* (Council of the EU 2015a).

In the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on 12-13 March 2015, the ministers agreed to strengthen surveillance, reinforce Frontex resources, prioritise fighting smugglers, and cooperate with third countries for efficient migratory flow management (Council of the EU 2015m). At the same time, they highlighted that to protect migrants and save their lives, the fight against illegal smuggling and trafficking networks must remain a primary priority. Furthermore, on 20 April 2014, interior and foreign ministries gathered to discuss recent Mediterranean developments and address migration issues. The Council of the EU pledged to strengthen the EU's efforts to save lives at sea, fight human trafficking with greater intensity, and provide more refugee resettlement assistance to frontline countries (Council of the EU 2015g). Another important development in migration management occurred on 18 May 2015, when the Council of the EU established the EUNAVFOR Med naval operation to prevent the operations of human traffickers in the Mediterranean (Council of the EU 2015f).

On June 15-16, 2015, The Council of the EU reviewed the European Agenda on Migration and its implementation package and expressed support for its comprehensive, cross-cutting approach, immediate actions, and long-term measures for a European migration policy. Moreover, at the same meeting, the interior ministers of the EU member states reviewed the implementation of counter-terrorism measures and adopted conclusions on the Renewed European Union Internal Security Strategy for 2015-2020 (Council of the EU 2015o). On the other hand, a few days later, on 19 June 2015, the Council of the EU approved the proposal by the Commission to provide an extra €89 million in pledges and €76.6 million in payments in a fast-track process toward managing migration and refugee flows. In addition, on 20 July 2015, the Council of the EU adopted migration conclusions, supporting cooperation with transit and origin nations with the ultimate objective of: *addressing root causes of and preventing irregular migration, including smuggling and trafficking, protecting persons in need of international protection, respecting the right to seek asylum, ensuring effective return and readmission, and maximising the development impact of well-managed migration and mobility* (Council of the EU 2015h).

On 3 September 2015, the Council of the EU approved provisional measures in international protection for Italy and Greece, following a proposal from the European Commission and the European Parliament. This means that:

According to Article 78(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ('TFEU'), in the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned (Council of the EU 2015b).

On 14 September 2015, following the approval of provisional measures for Italy and Greece, the Council of the EU established a temporary relocation mechanism for 40,000 international protection-needy individuals from Italy and Greece, effective from 15 August 2015 to 16 September 2017 (Council of the EU 2015n).

On 28 September 2015, the Council of the EU decided to begin the active phase of the operation against human traffickers and call it "Operation Sophia" as another action to combat human smugglers and rescue individuals in the Mediterranean (Council of the EU 2015c). At the same time, on 8 October 2015, the Council of the EU approved €300 million in the EU budget for migration crisis assistance, including €100 million for emergency aid and €55.7 million for

humanitarian aid. Additionally, on the same day, following discussions on the return policy and the future management of the EU's external borders, the Council of the EU released several conclusions at the end of the Justice and Home Affairs meeting. The Council reached resolutions on increasing efforts to fight firearms trafficking simultaneously. The Council approved additional funding for managing the refugee crisis across sectors, including supporting third countries hosting Syrian refugees, offering them urgent assistance, and providing humanitarian aid (Council of the EU 2015k).

During the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 12 October 2015, the Council of the EU reaffirmed its commitment to addressing the root causes of migration, working in cooperation with the first countries of origin or asylum, and providing more funds to manage migration crises (Council of the EU 2015e). Moreover, following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 26 October 2015, the Council committed further to develop bilateral and multilateral migration cooperation with third countries (Council of the EU 2015i). On 9 November 2015, the Council of the EU decided on additional measures to address the refugee and migration crises. The measures include features such as: *increasing reception capacities; establishing hotspots in Italy and Greece; expediting relocation processes by identifying capacities for first relocations and nominating liaison officers to Italy and Greece; significantly enhancing the return rate; supporting the Commission in pursuing contingency planning of humanitarian assistance for the Western Balkans; assisting the Member States concerned in respecting their legal obligation to perform adequate controls; and inviting Europol to accelerate the establishment of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC)* (Council of the EU 2015l).

Justice and Home Affairs ministers met in Brussels following the Paris attacks to follow up on current measures and consider ways to strengthen the EU response by adopting conclusions. The Council of the EU approved the subsequent outcomes: *to finalise an ambitious EU Passenger Name Record before the end of 2015; strengthening controls of external borders; information sharing; enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the fight against financing terrorism; and criminal justice responses to terrorism and violent extremism* (Council of the EU 2015p). Furthermore, following the statement made during the Justice and Home Affairs meeting on 3-4 December 2015, it was noted that the European Parliament and Council reached a compromise on a PNR-based regulation to prevent, identify, investigate, and prosecute terrorist and serious crimes (Council of the EU 2015j).

On the other hand, the Council of the EU Presidency report by Luxembourg on 16 December 2015 reveals that the European Council, the Council, and the Presidency have set four objectives to address the unprecedented refugee flows in 2015:

1. *Providing assistance to those in need: humanitarian situation, civil protection, etc.*
2. *Stemming the migration flows: cooperating with third countries, prevent/deter, actions against smugglers, targeted communication, etc.*
3. *Strengthening the capacity at entry: hotspots, entry points, registration, security, border cooperation, etc.*
4. *Managing the flows within internal borders: processing including screening, security checks, reception, asylum, relocation, return, etc.* (Council of the EU 2015r).

Due to increased terror threats in the EU on 12 February 2016, the Economic and Financial Council outlined its priorities to prevent the funding of terrorism. This follows after the Commission released an action plan in response to recent terrorist attacks and to address current issues. By bringing current EU regulations and practices up to date with global norms and new threats, the plan improves upon them (Council of the EU 2016e). In addition, the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 25 February 2016 discussed the EU's migration problem, explicitly focusing on the most recent changes along the Western Balkans route. The Council agreed on its negotiating stance on the proposed regulation to strengthen database checks at external borders. It is important to note that this proposal required member states to conduct systematic inspections of everyone entering the EU from outside, including EU citizens (Council of the EU 2016b). On the other hand, on 9 March 2016, due to the serious humanitarian situation in Greece caused by the influx of arrivals, the Permanent Representatives Committee of the Council was prompted to establish an emergency assistance mechanism. The primary objective of humanitarian aid is to provide refugees with food, housing, water, medication, and other basics to meet their fundamental needs (Council of the EU 2016r).

At the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on March 10-11, 2016, the Council of the EU decided on a proposed rule relating to the European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training (Europol) on the first day of discussion. Monitoring the movement of migrants, identifying weak points and taking action when the EU's external borders are at risk are all tasks in which Europol will play a role. Also, the proposed directive on restricting the purchase and possession of weapons was the topic of a policy debate in the Council in response to the most recent terrorist attacks (Council of the EU 2016p). As a result of this

discussion on the second day of the meeting, the Council agreed to its negotiating position on the proposal for a Directive on combatting terrorism. The proposed Directive, which modifies and enhances the current Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA and particularly criminalises the following:

- *Travelling for terrorist purposes to counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters;*
- *the funding, organisation and facilitation of such travels, including through logistical and material support, the provision of firearms and explosives, shelter, means of transportation, services, assets and goods;*
- *receiving training for terrorist purposes, including by providing the possibility to investigate and prosecute training activities having the potential to lead to the committing of terrorist offences;*
- *providing funds to be used to commit terrorist offences and offences related to terrorist groups or terrorist activities.* (Council of the EU 2016d)

On 22 March 2016, on the day of the Brussels terror attacks, the EU Heads of State or Government and the leaders of the EU institutions made a joint statement noting that the attack boosted the desire to protect European values and tolerance against intolerant attacks as well as EU is united in the fight against hatred, violent extremism and terrorism (Council of the EU 2016m). Two days after the attacks in Brussels on 24 March 2016, in the extraordinary meeting of EU ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, representatives of EU institutions expressed their support and solidarity to Belgium. Additionally, the Council of the EU released a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to fighting against terrorism. Statement noted that Ministers are convinced of the need to: *further build upon the combined national efforts to investigate, as a matter of urgency, the networks involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks and other similar networks; adopt the PNR directive in April 2016 and implement it as a matter of urgency; share information with transport authorities and operators as appropriate; swift completion of legislation on combatting terrorism, on systematic checks at external borders of the Schengen area, on control of the acquisition and possession of firearms, on the extension of the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) to third country nationals; increase as a matter of urgency the systematic feeding, consistent use and interoperability of European and international databases in the fields of security; continue to develop effective preventive measures; fully support the work of the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG); use more*

regularly Joint Investigation Teams; set up a joint liaison team of national counter-terrorism experts at Europol's European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) (Council of the EU 2016l).

Furthermore, following the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 18/19 April 2016, the Council agreed to intensify its focus on the Eastern/Central Mediterranean routes, fight against traffickers and smugglers and support Africa through the Emergency Trust Fund (Council of the EU 2016a). Moreover, half a year following the approval of the Valletta Action Plan during the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 May, ministers concentrated their attention on ensuring its effective implementation. Additionally, the Council approved the proposal for an implementation decision that would have allowed the continuation of temporary internal border restrictions in exceptional circumstances (Council of the EU 2016j).

At a Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting held on June 9-10, 2016, just a few months after the Brussels terror attacks, ministers approved the Council's position on the proposed regulation on the control of the acquisition and use of weapons, which updates and accomplishes the current directive 91/477/EEC. They also endorsed a plan to strengthen management and information exchange in response to the current terrorist threats and migration problem. During the second day of the meeting, the Council directed its attention to issues concerning migration, reaffirming Greece's return to Turkey, prioritising EU assistance, and urging states to expedite Syrian refugee resettlement and asylum seekers' relocation (Council of the EU 2016o). At the same time, on 22 June 2016, the Council of the EU took further measures to secure its external borders and ease migration pressure on member states. On this day, on behalf of the Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee reached a compromise with the European Parliament on the proposed regulation of the European Border and Coast Guard. In cooperation with national authorities, the European Border and Coast Guard aimed to manage European integrated border management, ensuring migration, security, and free movement within the EU (Council of the EU 2016g).

On 4 August 2016, the Council of the EU extended the mandate of the planning mission EUBAM Libya until 21 August 2017. The EUBAM Libya mission's mandate included planning for a possible future EU mission providing advice and capacity-building for migration, border security and counter-terrorism (Council of the EU 2016f). In addition, on 14 September 2016, the Council of the EU gave its final approval to the European Border and Coast Guard (Council of the EU 2016h). Also, on 20 September, the Council of the EU passed a legislative framework that gives the EU the power to independently impose sanctions on Al-

Qaida and ISIL/Da'esh, allowing individual EU members to target these groups (Council of the EU 2016i). On 13 October 2016, the Council of the EU authorised another security measure, approving the European Travel Document for Return. This document establishes the format, security features, and technological requirements for a joint European travel document to return third-country nationals who are illegally staying (Council of the EU 2016q). Moreover, on 17 October 2016, as a result of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, ministers decided on collaboration frameworks with Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, Ethiopia, Niger, and Mali after evaluating the current state of migration. The Council agreed upon priorities and agreements with Jordan and Lebanon, focusing on providing Syrian refugees with strengthened protection, employment possibilities, and high-quality education during their short-term stay in those countries (Council of the EU 2016k).

On the other hand, another security measure within the EU was agreed upon on 5 December 2016, when the Slovak presidency and the European Parliament ratified an agreement on a directive for combating terrorism. The legislation protects victims' rights and strengthens the legal framework of the EU by making conduct such as terrorist training and travel illegal (Council of the EU 2016c). Also, on 8 December 2016, Home Affairs ministers discussed border regulations, relocations, expert deployment, EU response, and partnership frameworks with migration. They supported European Asylum Support Office (EASO) initiatives to fill skilled positions and address staffing shortages (Council of the EU 2016n).

Our chronological analysis suggests that the Council of the EU discourse, particularly, emphasises increasing security after every terrorist attack. In the second half of 2014, the humanitarian aspects of migration were more visible in the Council of the EU discourse. Nevertheless, after the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks, there was an apparent shift in communication away from humanitarian issues and toward security. However, after the Brussels terror attacks, this tendency became more prominent, with a particular focus on issues like the fight against terrorism, protection of external borders, and cooperation with third countries

7.3.4 Conclusion of the Council of EU Discourse Analysis

The analysis of the Council of the EU discourse suggests an apparent decrease in the emphasis on the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis. The decline became particularly evident following the second semester of 2014 when it reached its lowest point in 2016. On the other

hand, our analysis indicates a notable increase in proposed security measures concerning the migration crisis in the communications of the Council of the EU in 2015 and 2016. The Council of the EU emphasised security concerns like border and territorial control and terrorist threats. On the other hand, in the case of proposed migration crisis measures, priorities included the fight against human smugglers/traffickers, border control measures, anti-terrorist measures and cooperation with third (transit) and refugee-sending countries.

It is also important to note that the humanitarian elements in the discourse of the Council of the EU reached their lowest point after the Brussels terror attacks. The *'security aspects of the migration crisis'* category in the Council of the EU's communication has remained stable after each terrorist attack, while the *'measures to strengthen security'* category has reached its highest percentage ever recorded in the aftermath of the Brussels attacks. The Council of the EU's discourse has shifted towards increasing emphasis on security after every terrorist attack. The humanitarian elements of migration gained greater prominence in the second half of 2014. However, there appeared to be a shift in communication away from humanitarian issues and toward security after the Charlie Hebdo and Paris terror events. Following the terror attacks in Brussels, this trend continued. The EU's Operation Sophia, the Passenger Name Record directive, and the establishment of the European Border and Coast Guard are just a few examples of real institutional responses showing the securitising change beyond rhetoric. Also, the Council of the EU's rhetoric indicates the expansion stage of the high politics approach by operationalising the securitising frameworks that the European Council emphasised through measures on border control, returns, and external cooperation.

7.4 European Commission

This part of the thesis outlines the author's analysis of the results of the European Commission's discourse on the migration crisis. It is divided into four sub-sections: statistical findings, monthly dynamics, and chronological analysis, and the final section encompasses discussions and conclusions.

7.4.1 Statistical Findings

This thesis section focuses on the nature of the European Commission discourse and provides statistical data illustrating the evolution of the discourse on migration from July 1, 2014, to December 31, 2016. Additionally, this part applies content analysis to deliver more insight into the themes, patterns, and key components influencing the European Commission's discourse on the migrant problem migration crisis.

As noted, 498 materials were collected for the analyses, precisely 29 in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 197 in 2015 and 272 in 2016. Additionally, 70 segments were generated in 2014 (1 July–31 December), 585 in 2015, and 816 in 2016.

As Figure 13 shows, the main category of *'humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'* reached its highest percentage in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), hitting 24.29%. However, it declined to 18.12% in 2015 and 9.93% in 2016. Another main category representing humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis in the European Commission discourse, *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'* got 68.57% in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). Also, this category experienced a decrease in the following years, mirroring the trend observed in *'humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'* category. For example, in 2015, the percentage of the *'measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees'* category decreased to 53.50, further declining to 39.22% in 2016.

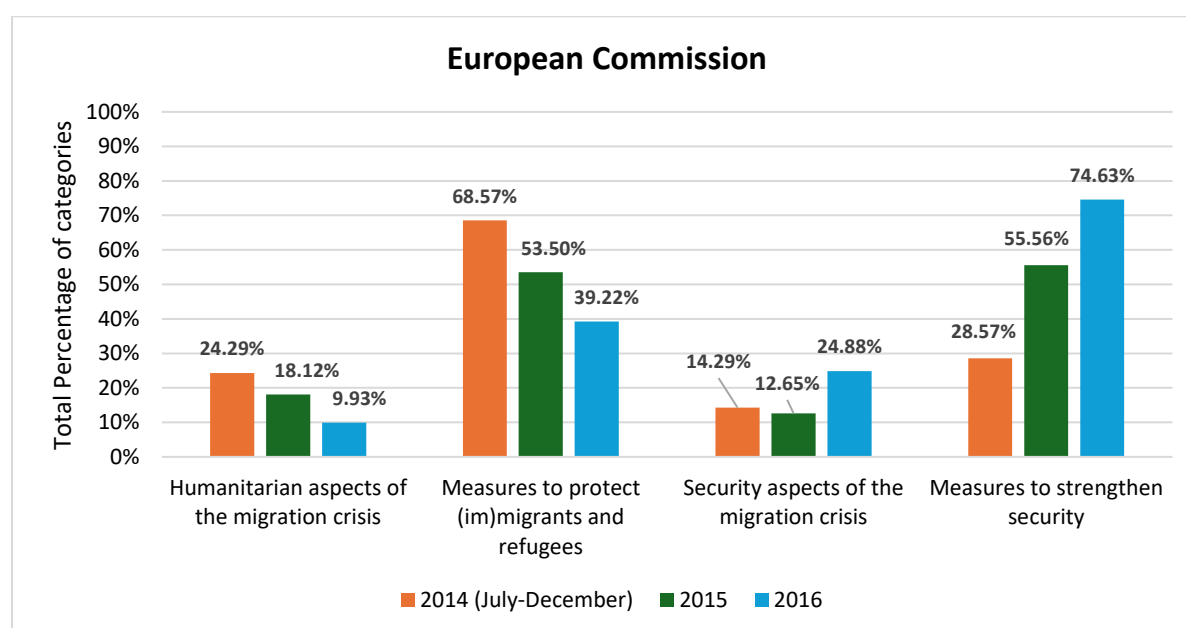


Figure 13 European Commission communication 2014 (July - December); 2015; 2016

Furthermore, the main category labelled *'security aspects of the migration crisis'* received 14.29%, making it the category with the lowest percentage compared to others between 1 July and 31 December 2014. The noteworthy finding is that in 2015, this category had an unexpected decline to 12.65% but afterwards experienced a significant increase to 24.88% in 2016. In the case of *'measures to strengthen security'*, the main category got 28.57% in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). At the same time, in 2015, this category substantially increased to 55.56%, and this upward trend continued into 2016, reaching 74.63%.

In summary, we can see from Figure 13 that both categories representing the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis in the European Commission's discourse reached their highest percentage in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). In the following years, both categories experienced a linear decrease and reached their lowest percentage in 2016. Regarding security-related categories reflecting the securitisation dimension of the migration crisis, the European Commission's discourse reached its highest percentage in 2016. At the same time, the '*measures to strengthen security*' main category received its lowest percentage in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). On the other hand, it is important to note that the '*security aspects of the migration crisis*' category decreased in 2015 after 2014 (1 July – 31 December) but then notably increased in 2016.

Furthermore, as revealed in Figure 14, inserted below, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) accounted for 21.03% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. However, the percentage dropped to 9.94% between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks. From the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) experienced a modest decline to 8.84%. At the same time, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) recorded the highest percentage during this period, reaching 56.08% between the terror attacks in the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. However, it decreased to 45.03% between the terror incidents in Paris and Brussels, and this downward trend continued after the Brussels attacks, falling to 35.74% by the end of 2016. The third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks accounted for 11.55%, marking it as the category with the lowest percentage during that period. However, during the Paris and Brussels terror attacks, this number noticeably increased to 21.55%. This upward trend continued after the Brussels terror attacks, reaching 25.81% until the end of 2016.

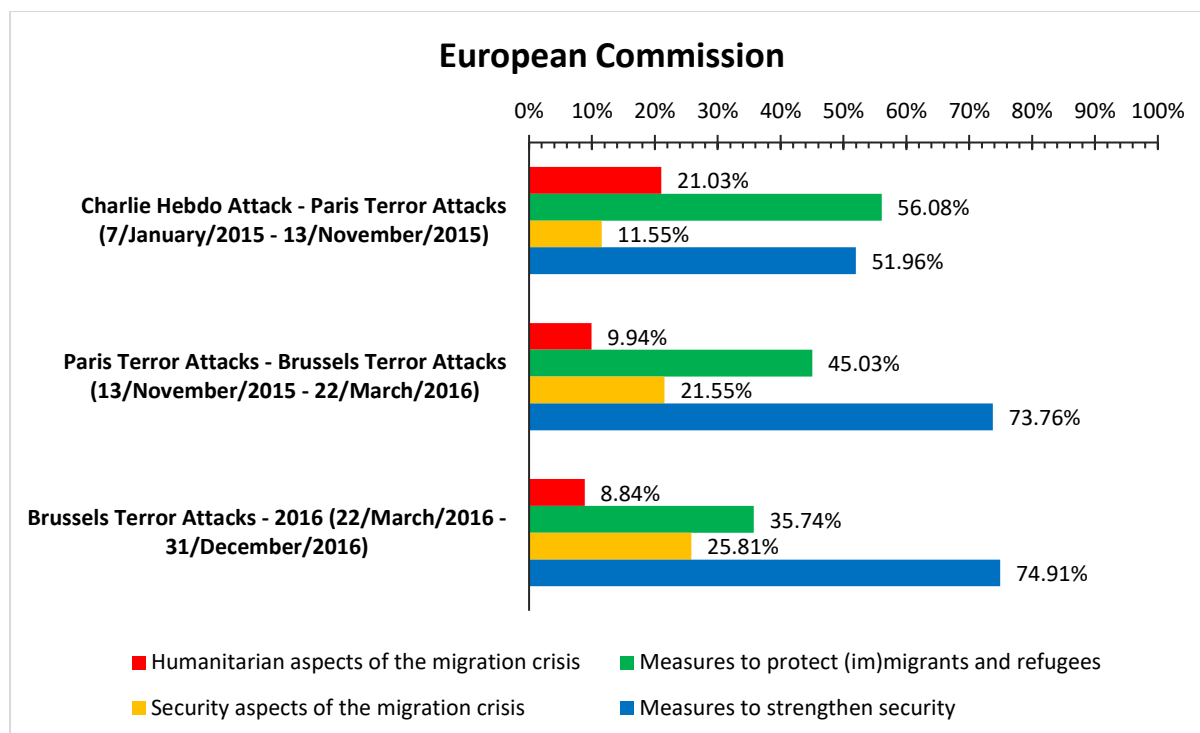


Figure 14 European Commission communication based on terrorist attacks

The case of the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) recorded 51.96% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks. Moreover, it significantly increased to 73.76% within the time frame of the Paris and Brussels terror attacks. Also, there was a slight increase to 74.91% from the time of the Brussels terror attacks to the end of 2016.

In summary, Figure 14 shows that both humanitarian categories saw their highest percentages between the Charlie Hebdo and Paris terror attacks. Following the Paris terror attacks, the percentages of first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) started to decrease and reached their lowest point after the Brussels Terror. It is also important to note that the percentages of the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories experienced their most considerable decrease after the Paris terror attacks, and this trend continued after the Brussels terror attacks.

Moreover, between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terror attacks, categories which address the security elements in the discourse of the European Commission received their lowest percentages. However, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) experienced their highest percentages following the Brussels terror attacks. Notably, both security-related categories experienced their most significant percentage increases between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks.

On the other hand, Table 16, Table 17, and Table 18 below provide explanations and demonstrate the subcategories of the above-mentioned main categories. These tables identify the key elements and themes used in the European Commission’s discourse in 2014 (1 July – 31 December), 2015 and 2016.

Table 12 European Commission communication (main - subcategories) 1 July (2014) - 31 December (2014)

European Commission - 1 July (2014) - 31 December (2014)
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 17 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 17 codes
Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees: A total of 48 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 18 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 8 codes
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 9 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 13 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 10 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 6 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 4 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 20 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 7 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat) - 2 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 2 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 0 code</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 5 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 4 codes

For example, as Table 16 shows, the ‘*protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees*’ subcategory under the ‘*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*’ received 17 codes in 2014 (1 July – 31 December). Furthermore, within the main category of ‘*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*’, the subcategory focusing on ‘*access to asylum procedures*’ was given 18 codes. The subcategory addressing ‘*preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees*’ obtained 8 codes while ‘*providing humanitarian assistance*’ assigned 9 codes. Also, ‘*providing funds to support humanitarian assistance*’ subcategory acquired 13 codes in 2014 (1 July – 31 December).

Moreover, the *'border/territorial control'* subcategory obtained 6 codes, and the *'terrorist threats'* subcategory gained 4 codes under the main category *'security aspects of the migration crisis'*. Under the main category of *'measures to strengthen security'*, the *'anti-terrorist measures'* subcategory was assigned 2 codes. Also, 7 codes have been provided to the subcategory of *'fight against human smugglers/traffickers'*. The *'border control measures'* obtained 2 codes, with 2 codes designated for *'internal border control'*. Additionally, the *'cooperation with third (transit) countries'* subcategory acquired 5 codes, and the *'cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries'* subcategory received 4 codes.

Table 13 European Commission communication (main - subcategories) 2015

European Commission - 2015
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 106 codes
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 106 codes
Measures to protect rights: A total of 313 codes
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 94 codes
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 71 codes
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 78 codes
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 69 codes
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 1 code
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 74 codes
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 66 codes
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 8 codes
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 325 codes
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 67 codes
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 53 codes
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 71 codes
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 12 codes</i>
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 59 codes</i>
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 45 codes
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 89 codes

In addition, Table 17 shows that within the main category *'humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis'*, the subcategory of *'protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees'* received 106 codes in 2015, but Table 18 indicates that this number dropped to 81 in 2016. The subcategory *'access to asylum procedures'* under the main category *'measures to protect*

(im)migrants and refugees’ experienced an increase from 94 codes in 2015 to 139 codes in 2016.

The subcategory of *‘preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees’* got 71 codes, while the subcategory focusing on *‘providing humanitarian assistance’* was assigned 78 codes in 2015. In comparison, in 2016, the *‘preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees’* subcategory dropped to 37 codes, and the *‘providing humanitarian assistance’* subcategory decreased to 61. The subcategory of *‘providing funds to support humanitarian assistance’* in the European Commission's discourse increased from 69 codes in 2015 to 83 in 2016. Notably, the *‘religious support’* subcategory only had 1 code in 2015 and did not appear in 2016.

Table 14 European Commission communication (main - subcategories) 2016

European Commission – 2016	
Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 81 codes	
Protection rights of (im)migrants and refugees (1.1 Sub cat.) - 81 codes	
Measures to protect rights: A total of 320 codes	
Access to asylum procedures (2.1 Sub cat.) - 139 codes	
Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees (2.2 Sub cat.) - 37 codes	
Providing humanitarian assistance (2.3 Sub cat.) - 61 codes	
Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance (2.4 Sub cat.) - 83 codes	
Religious support (2.5 Sub cat.) - 0 code	
Security aspects of the migration crisis: A total of 203 codes	
Public security threat (3.1 Sub cat.) - 1 code	
Border / territorial control (3.2 Sub cat.) - 179 codes	
Terrorist threats (3.3 Sub cat.) - 23 codes	
Health threat (3.4 Sub cat.) - 0 code	
Measures to strengthen security: A total of 609 codes	
Anti-terrorist measures (4.1 Sub cat.) - 137 codes	
Fight against human smugglers/traffickers (4.2 Sub cat.) - 46 codes	
Border control measures (4.3 Sub cat.) - 160 codes	
<i>Internal border control (4.3.1 Sub cat.) - 67 codes</i>	
<i>External border control (4.3.2 Sub cat.) - 93 codes</i>	
Cooperation with third (transit) countries (4.4 Sub cat.) - 165 codes	
Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries (4.5 Sub cat.) - 101 codes	

Regarding the ‘security aspects of the migration crisis’ main category, the subcategory of ‘border/territorial control’ received 66 codes in 2015 and significantly increased to 179 codes in 2016. Additionally, the subcategory focusing on ‘terrorist threats’ got 8 codes in 2015 and

rose to 23 codes in 2016. Furthermore, in 2016 the *'public security threat'* subcategory appeared only once in 2016 but was absent in 2015.

7.4.2 Monthly Dynamics

The objective of this section is to describe the monthly shifts in patterns in each of the main categories in 2014 (1 July - 31 December), 2015 and 2016 and to highlight when the changes happened.

It is significant to acknowledge that Figure 15 shows the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) main categories. At the same time, Figure 16 illustrates the monthly patterns of third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) main categories.

As illustrated in Figure 15, the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories saw activity in the second half of 2014. In the case of the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*), we witnessed a rise in November 2014. The second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) steadily increased from July 2014, with a slight decline in October before starting a new upward trajectory until December 2014. In December 2014, the European Commission increased its humanitarian support for Syrian refugees in Turkey. On the occasion of 'International Migrants Day', the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, made a statement noting the importance of protecting and integrating migrants. Furthermore, in January 2015, when the Charlie Hebdo terror attack happened, we observed a sharp decline in the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*). On the other hand, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) was largely unaffected by the terror attack on Charlie Hebdo since it was steady in January and February of 2015 and started its decline, which continued until April 2015.

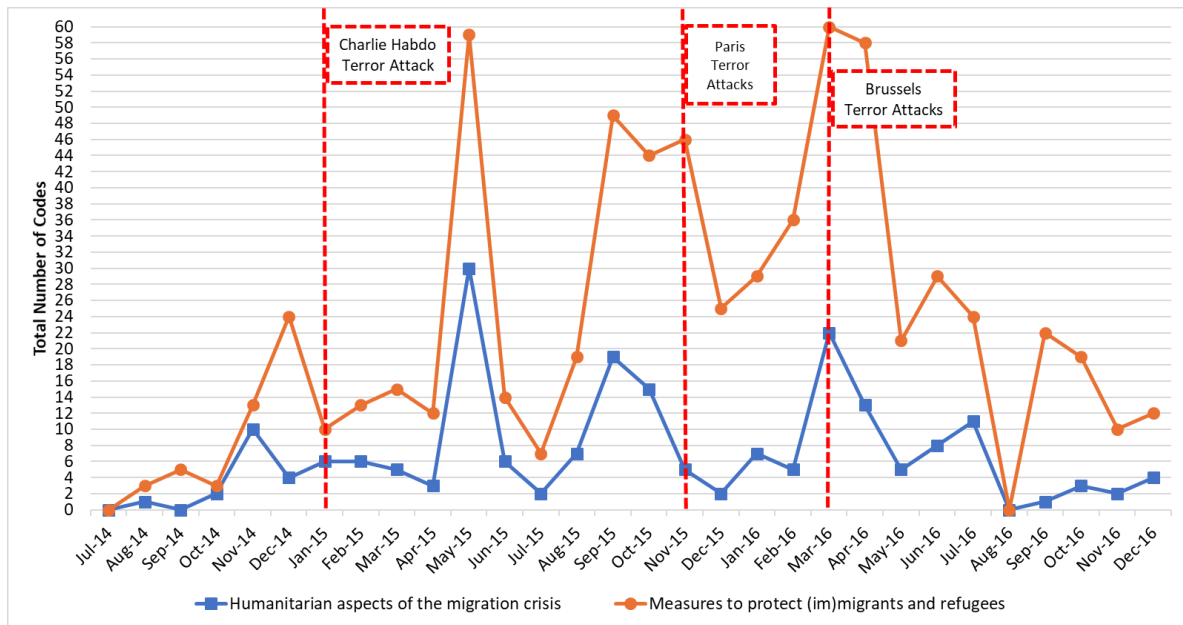


Figure 15 European Commission communication (first/second categories) - monthly

Moreover, Figure 15 shows a notable increase in both categories in May 2015 and the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) reaching its peak within the timeframe of our analysis. May 2015 was an active month for the Commission as multiple published materials discussed the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis (*in May, several documents published by the European Commission—including the European Agenda on Migration (13 May 2015), the Speech of Commissioner Avramopoulos on Security and Migration Challenges (19 May 2015), and the Statement of Commissioner Avramopoulos at the end of his visit to Jordan—contained clear humanitarian elements, such as commitments to save lives at sea, resettle refugees, support frontline states, and deliver humanitarian aid to third countries hosting displaced populations*). In the following months, the number of codes for both categories significantly dropped but increased in August 2015. Both categories demonstrated a similar pattern of rise in September 2015 (*on 4 September, First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Avramopoulos travelled to Athens and Kos, where they proposed resettling 120,000 refugees. During Commissioner Avramopoulos's visit to Hungary on 17 September, he acknowledged the need for protection for Syrian refugees, highlighted €7 million in emergency funding to increase asylum reception capacity, and spoke about the moral obligation to provide humanitarian support for Syrians arriving in Europe. Additionally, on 23 September, then-President Juncker delivered a speech in which he announced an increase in funding from €4.6 billion to €9.2 billion, which would be allocated for neighbourhood stability, emergency assistance, and humanitarian aid. He also rejected the idea of constructing border*

fences). Following the September peak, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) declined more sharply than the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*), suggesting a waning emphasis on humanitarian framing. In November 2015, when the Paris terror attacks happened, the number of codes for the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) significantly dropped, whereas for the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*), it remained high. Following the Paris terror attacks in December 2015, both categories experienced a decline, highlighting how acts of terror impacted the Commission's discourse.

A noteworthy finding is that both categories trended upward in March 2016, coinciding with key events such as the EU-Turkey Statement signed on 18 March, which emphasized humanitarian assistance and the return of irregular migrants. However, there was a noticeable decrease in both categories after the terror attacks in Brussels, which lasted until May 2016. Following May 2016, both categories experienced fluctuations until the end of 2016.

On the other hand, as demonstrated in Figure 16 below, no codes were recorded for the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories in July, August, and September of 2014 (1 July - 31 December). Both categories slightly increased in October 2014 (1 July - 31 December). While the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) remained relatively flat after the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, but there was a modest increase in March. Compared to the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*), the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) showed a more noticeable increase following the Charlie Hebdo attack. Similarly, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) rose in March 2015. Also, it is important to note that both categories showed an upward trend in May 2015. However, in 2015, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) experienced a notable decrease in June, July, and August 2014 before beginning to increase again. On the other hand, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) declined in June and July of 2015 before increasing again in August.

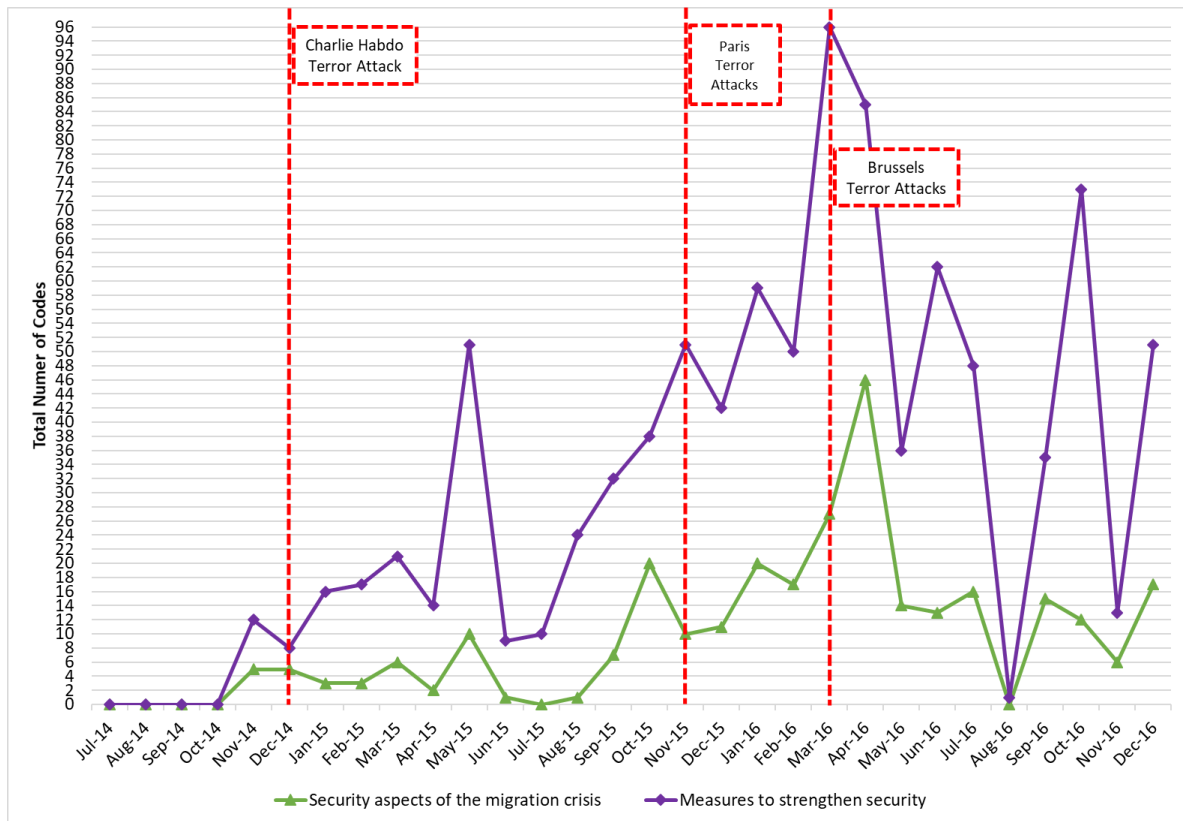


Figure 16 European Commission communication (third/fourth categories) - monthly

In October 2015, the third (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) and fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) categories significantly increased. On the other hand, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) unexpectedly declined in November 2015, while the fourth category noted an increase. Nevertheless, following the Paris terror attacks, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) had an upsurge, reaching its peak in April 2016, one month after the Brussels terror attacks. Comparably, the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) peaked in March 2016, coinciding with the Brussels terror attacks. In May 2016, there was a notable decrease in both categories. August 2016 witnessed the absence of any codes for any category. Interestingly, the fourth category witnessed significant growth in October 2016.

Overall, our analysis shows that the first (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) and second (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) categories, which address the humanitarian dimensions of the migration crisis in the discourse of the European Commission, experienced a decline following the Paris and Brussels terror attacks. On the other hand, the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) had a rise following the Paris terror attacks and Brussels terror attacks, with a more significant rise observed after the Brussels

attacks compared to the Paris incident. In the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), we observe an increasing trajectory after the Charlie Hebdo attack, a high result during the Paris terror attacks, and it peaked in the month of the Brussels terror attacks. These patterns reflect the Commission's heightened focus on border control, counter-terrorism, and institutional securitisation responses over time.

7.4.3 Chronological Analysis

In this part of the thesis, we present a chronological development of the European Commission's discourse on the migration crisis to understand how their discourse evolved.

As part of the EU's humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis, on August 29 2014, the European Commission increased the amount of money it provides to Syrian refugees to €17 million. The aid covers internally displaced Iraqi and Syrian refugees, adding to the €145 million already provided since 2007 (European Commission 2014a). Furthermore, on 23 September 2014, the European Commission allocated €215 million in aid to Syria and its neighbours, comprising €165 million for long-term development and €50 million for humanitarian relief. Along with reducing the pressure on Syria's borders, relief operations will deal with the tens of thousands of refugees heading into Turkey—the most significant influx of migrants since the crisis started (European Commission 2014j). At the same time, on 2 October 2014, the EU Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs announced a project worth €10 million to protect the rights of migrants, with a particular focus on domestic workers and those who have been trafficked between developing countries. The project provides direct social assistance and protection to migrants and their families, promotes well-managed migration, labour, and anti-trafficking policies, and promotes dialogue with public authorities and employers (European Commission 2014c).

On the other hand, on 3 November 2014, the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, expressed worry at the drowning of a boat carrying migrants in Turkey and called for more cooperation with other EU members as well as a comprehensive strategy to address migration issues (European Commission 2014i). Also, European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, at the "Fundamental Rights and Migration to the EU" conference hosted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU on 10 November 2014 noted that: in order to stop more abuses of human rights, the EU is focused on safeguarding the fundamental rights of migrants and creating a Task Force Mediterranean as part of its response to the Mediterranean crisis. The

EU prioritises establishing a comprehensive strategy to combat migrant smuggling, disrupt criminal organizations, and improve collaboration with non-EU nations. The EU's strategy on border management gives priority to the rights of migrants, guaranteeing increased security without discrimination. The EU's border control organization, Frontex, will assist Member States in handling irregular migration circumstances. Additionally, the EU supports international relocation initiatives and bolsters children's safety measures(European Commission 2014g).

At the same time, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs, and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos, at the OECD High-Level Policy Forum on Migration on 1 December 2014, stated that the development of a new regular migration strategy, emphasizing the advantages of highly skilled migrants for the labour market and society, is the EU's top priority. The corporate sector and social partners will be involved in the EU's efforts to integrate legal migrants into the labour market(European Commission 2014h).

On top of that, on 4 December 2014, the European Commission approved a €180 million package dedicated to addressing the Syrian crisis in Lebanon and Jordan. The action plan focuses on the economic development and education of refugees and internally displaced people(European Commission 2014f). Also, on 9 December 2014, the European Commission increased its humanitarian aid, offering €10 million in cash, material aid, and medical treatment to Syrian refugees in Turkey and Syria (European Commission 2014b). Additionally, to mobilize support for the response to the Syrian Crisis, on 15 December 2014, the European Commission and Italy signed a fundamental agreement to establish the first-ever EU Regional Trust Fund. The fund, financed by 3 million from Italy and 20 million from the EU budget, will first be used to help host communities and refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries (European Commission 2014d).

On 11 January 2015, several days after the Charlie Hebdo terror attacks, Dimitris Avramopoulos, in his speech during the international ministerial meeting in Paris on Charlie Hebdo, stated that the European Commission supports Member States' counterterrorism efforts as the European Union faces increasing terrorist threats. Also, member states promote enhancing information access, avoiding radicalization, fighting money laundering, developing a European passenger data transfer system, and promoting cooperation and financial assistance (European Commission 2015c).

On the other hand, on 29 January 2015, due to the worsening humanitarian situation inside Syria and the number of refugees in neighbouring countries, the Commission committed an additional €136 million towards humanitarian aid for the Syrian crisis (European Commission 2015f). Moreover, on 6 February 2015, the European Commission and the High Representative presented the first comprehensive EU strategy to address the crises in Syria and Iraq. The strategy included an additional €1 billion in funds for development, stability, and relief efforts (European Commission 2015x).

Nevertheless, a speech by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, on 12 February 2015, prior to the informal meeting of the European Council on 12 February, pointed out the EU's desire to combat terrorism following the Charlie Hebdo attack. He mentioned that the European Commission has to ensure that the reaction is well-balanced, protecting individuals' rights and liberties while also considering their security. The first step in the European response to terrorism must be straightforwardly applying previously approved agreements, such as the Schengen Borders Code (European Commission 2015y). At the same time, on 12 February 2015, a statement by Frans Timmermans stressed that the Commission regrets the recent sea tragedies and urges collaboration between Member States and countries of origin to manage migration better. , First Vice-President of the European Commission also underlined the necessity of a comprehensive and successful approach that addresses the causes of migration and promotes accountability and solidarity within the EU (European Commission 2015ai).

On 19 February 2015, Dimitris Avramopoulos emphasized that the Commission is developing a new European Agenda on Migration to address global migration concerns while supporting Italy and other EU Member States facing high migratory pressures, including emergency funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (European Commission 2015v). Also, on 4 March 2015, in order to better control the influx of migrants from third countries, the European Commission launched a comprehensive European Agenda on Migration that involves policies such as: a robust Common Asylum System, a new European policy on legal migration, fighting irregular migration and human trafficking more robustly and securing Europe's external borders (European Commission 2015b). Furthermore, Commissioner Avramopoulos, following his visit to Europol and the official launch of JOT MARE on 17 March 2015, emphasized the importance of Europol's role in detecting illegal content, countering radicalization, and fighting terrorism (European Commission 2015ad). On 19 April 2015, while the tragic development in the Mediterranean continued, the Commission issued a

statement expressing its commitment to prevent further loss of life and implementing comprehensive measures for managing migration. The Commission announced that it is consulting agencies, international organizations, and Member States on an ongoing basis to prepare a new European Migration Strategy (European Commission 2015l).

On the other hand, on 28 April 2015, the Commission launched a new program to provide €10 million to stem the flow of foreign fighters from North Africa, the Middle East, and the Western Balkans, disputing radicalization in the Sahel-Maghreb. Additionally, Commissioner Avramopoulos made the following statement on 29 April 2015, during the EP plenary discussion on the extraordinary European Council meeting on migration and the most recent tragedy in the Mediterranean: *The EU is focusing on migration as a holistic approach, addressing not just specific crises but also smugglers and smuggling. Frontex is incorporating assets into the operations Triton and Poseidon, demonstrating solidarity. The European Commission will present the European Agenda on Migration on 13 May, focusing on resettlement, relocation, and concrete solutions. The agenda will be geographically broad, involving agencies like EUROPOL, FRONTEX, EASO, EMSA, and EUROJUST. The EU must work together to implement decisions and find midterm and long-term solutions* (European Commission 2015ah).

It is also important to note that the Commission announced a European Agenda on Migration on 13 May 2015, which included four main components: *reducing the incentives for irregular migration; border management – saving lives and securing external borders; Europe's duty to protect: a strong common asylum policy; a new policy on legal migration* (European Commission 2015t).

In addition, on 29 May 2015, in response to the Syrian crisis, the EU established a €40 million regional Trust Fund, which will help 400,000 Syrian refugees and host communities in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan (European Commission 2015aj). Also, on 19 June 2015, the Commissioners issued a joint statement ahead of World Refugee Day on 20 June. The statement noted that: *the European Union is making coordinated attempts to control migration and manage the increasing global displaced population. In addition to urging Member States to pledge to resettle 20,000 migrants from outside Europe over the following two years, the EU is seeking to provide legal routes for individuals to enter the EU. In addition, the EU is a major international contributor and offers humanitarian help to refugees in 33 different countries as*

well as developing countries. The Commission calls on decision-makers to face the refugee crises with unity and shared accountability (European Commission 2015q).

Moreover, on 26 June 2015, the European Council, based on the Commission's proposal, agreed to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other EU countries and 20,000 to third countries (European Commission 2014e). Furthermore, following Commissioner Avramopoulos's visit to Budapest and discussions with the Minister of Interior Sándor Pintér and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjá on 30 June 2015, remarked that the EU is prepared to assist Hungary in regulating migrant flows. The assistance includes deploying hotspot teams, offering financial assistance, switching on the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and setting up a high-level conference on the Western Balkans route. Also, it was noted that the assistance mentioned above will facilitate the processing of asylum requests and the return of irregular migrants (European Commission 2015ab).

Also, remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos after the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 20 July 2015 revealed that 22,504 refugees relocated so far, and the European Union has hit a record high in the number of refugees resettled. However, with 40,000 already relocated, the total number of refugees within the EU in need of international protection is almost achieved. Member states have promised 32,256 slots; by December 2015, 7,744 had been allocated. Later this year, the Commission will propose a fixed emergency mechanism to deal with unexpected developments. The "Hotspots" strategy will enable EU organizations to improve asylum procedures, support return operations, and act swiftly at Europe's external frontiers (European Commission 2015ae).

Furthermore, on 3 August 2015, the European Commission allocated €6 million to meet the increasing needs of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers impacted by the ongoing conflict in Libya (European Commission 2015j). Several days later, on 6 August 2015, a statement by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, High-Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Migration and Home Affairs Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos indicated that recent incident in the Mediterranean has caused the EU to express sadness and emphasize the necessity for a European response to migration. Also, the statement outlined that the goal of the European Agenda on Migration is to tackle migration from every perspective. The EU is stepping up its naval presence to tackle the crisis, collaborating with key African nations, breaking smuggling networks, and displaying support for frontline countries (European Commission 2015r).

To further implement the relocation of refugees within the EU, on 4 September 2015, First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Avramopoulos travelled to Athens and Kos as part of the Commission's visits to several of the Member States most affected by the refugee crisis, proposing an enhanced package that would involve the relocation of an extra 120,000 additional refugees (European Commission 2015z). Moreover, on 9 September 2015, the Commission presented a strengthened proposal to assist Greece, Italy, and Hungary. The measures included *an emergency relocation proposal for 120,000 refugees from Greece, Hungary and Italy; a temporary solidarity clause; a Permanent Relocation Mechanism for all member states; a common European list of safe countries of origin; making return policy more effective; communication on Public Procurement rules for refugee support measures; addressing the external dimension of the refugee crisis; a Trust Fund for Africa* (European Commission 2015aa).

Remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos during his visit to Hungary on 17 September 2015 emphasized that the EU has already provided €7 million in emergency funding to increase asylum reception capacity. He emphasized that the EU would continue to address the refugee situation, cooperate with neighbours, and defend its external borders. Avramopoulos noted that the vast majority of Syrians who arrive in Europe need protection, and it is the moral obligation of the EU to provide it (European Commission 2015ac). At the same time, President Juncker, in his speech on 23 September 2015, stressed that the solution to the refugee crisis is to protect the EU's external borders jointly, requiring more personnel and resources without closing borders or building fences. Additionally, he highlighted that the Commission has doubled funding, from €4.6 billion to €9.2 billion, to support immediate neighbourhood stability, emergency relief, and humanitarian aid (European Commission 2015u).

At the same time, President Juncker, on 6 October 2015, presented Turkey with a Draft Action Plan for increased cooperation between both parties on refugees and migration management (European Commission 2015o). Also, on 8 October 2015, the European Commission provided information on how it would provide €17 million to assist Serbia and the then Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cope with the unprecedented refugee flows (European Commission 2015e). On the other hand, in an attempt to reach a consensus on immediate operational actions, on 25 October 2015, President Juncker asked for a leaders' summit of heads of state or government to explore refugee flows along the Western Balkan route. The agreed-upon operational activities address the three primary difficulties: *providing shelter, managing the migration flows together, and border management* (European Commission 2015s).

Additionally, on 1 November 2015, the Commission approved €28 million and €43 million on November 2, 2015, in humanitarian assistance to Syrians displaced by the conflict in their host communities in Jordan and Lebanon (European Commission 2015a) (European Commission 2015n). In furtherance of humanitarian efforts, on 12 November 2015, European Commission President Juncker launched the EU Emergency Trust with donations from EU Member States and contributors totalling €1.8 billion and funding from EU finance tools. The fund prioritises Africa's displaced people and irregular migration (European Commission 2015d).

Several days after the Paris terror attacks, Joint declaration by European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, and Deputy Prime Minister Etienne Schneider, representing the Luxembourgish Presidency of the Council of the EU, issued a joint declaration on 15 November 2015. They emphasized the EU's commitment to coordinate swift action in response to the horrible attacks in attacks, and it focuses on a European PNR, weapons security, and strengthening of controls at external borders (European Commission 2015p). Furthermore, on 18 November 2015, a speech by Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos at the Press Conference on the Preparation of the 20 November Justice and Home Affairs Council and the Firearms Package stated that: *the European Union has accelerated its response to the Paris attacks, focusing on a united European response. The European Agenda on Security, adopted in April, is the basis for this action. The EU is working on tackling illegal trafficking in firearms and explosives, enhancing EU operational cooperation, and collaborating with third countries. The EU is also working on a proposal for a more efficient border management system and a Smart Borders Package. The European Counter Terrorism Centre will launch in January, and a Directive modifying the existing EU framework on Terrorism will be proposed by the end of November. The EU is also addressing the root causes of radicalization and promoting cooperation between internet actors. The EU is also addressing the refugee crisis by implementing relocation and resettlement policies, fighting smuggling, and improving returns* (European Commission 2015af).

On 18 November 2015, the European Commission adopted measures to strengthen firearms control across the EU (European Commission 2015m). In a speech at the European Parliament Plenary Session: "Prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations", on 24 November 2015, Commissioner Avramopoulos outlined that the EU is implementing measures to prevent and counter-radicalisation. Among these actions are the establishment of the Radicalization Awareness Network and the adoption of the European Agenda on Security (European Commission 2015ag). On the other hand, on 1 December 2015,

the EU Regional Trust Fund approved €350 million to assist 1.5 million Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq (European Commission 2015g). Furthermore, on the same day, the European Commission announced an increase in humanitarian aid to Turkey and Iraq of €20 million and €40 million, respectively, to address life-threatening needs in the Western Balkans, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan (European Commission 2015k).

Also, on 2 December 2015, in the wake of the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris, the European Commission adopted a set of measures to further up the fight against terrorism and the illegal trafficking of weapons and explosives (European Commission 2015h). On the other hand, as a part of humanitarian efforts on 14 December 2015, the Commission and UNHCR announced a €80 million scheme to finance accommodation in the private sector for 20,000 more reception places for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece (European Commission 2015i). Furthermore, on 16 December 2015, to address irregular migration and displacement, the European Commission launched 16 initiatives totalling €300 million, 10 located in the Horn of Africa (European Commission 2015w).

Moreover, on 19 January 2016, the Commission proposed to upgrade the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS). This will enable the exchange of criminal records between non-EU citizens and improve cooperation in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime (European Commission 2016f). At the same time, on 21 January 2016, a speech by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the increased terrorism threat outlined that the Commission has accelerated the implementation of its European Agenda on Security, stressing the need to improve border control and avoid classifying migrants as terrorists given the significance of the EU's heightened terrorism threat (European Commission 2016z). Also, on 2 February 2016, the Commission presented an Action Plan to strengthen the fight against terrorism financing. The proposed plan focuses on monitoring financial transactions and cutting off terrorist organizations' sources of revenue (European Commission 2016e). On the other hand, remarks by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the launch of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre on 22 February 2016 indicated the Commission's willingness to fight against migrant smuggling by enhancing Europol's operational presence and fostering cooperation with relevant organizations (European Commission 2016u).

It is also important to note that on 4 March 2016, the World Food Programme, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent, received €40 million in assistance from the European Commission. This is on top of €55 million to support Syrian schoolchildren in Turkey (European Commission 2016j).

In response to the Brussels terror attacks, the President of the European Commission, on 22 March 2016, assured that security will always be a top priority of the European institutions and outlined their commitment to cooperate in the fight against terrorism (European Commission 2016r). Furthermore, on 23 March 2016, to secure the EU's external border, the Commission proposed additional anti-terror measures that target organized crime and terrorist groups. These measures include modifying the Schengen Borders Code and proposing a European Border and Coast Guard (European Commission 2016n). Nevertheless, as part of a €500 million aid package for European farmers in 2015, the European Commission approved a €30 million program on March 30, 2016, to supply 350,000 Syrian children with drinking milk, addressing the refugee crisis (European Commission 2016m).

Additionally, the European Commission approved a Communication on Stronger Information Systems for Borders and Security on 6 April 2016, intending to improve data management architecture and internal security (European Commission 2016d). On 12 April 2016, Commissioner Avramopoulos addressed the European Parliament's Plenary Session, where he remarked on the PNR Directive and the European Commission's combined efforts to fight terrorism. He emphasized the development of warnings in the Schengen Information System, the foundation of the European Counter Terrorism Center, and the progress made in information sharing. He also mentioned that the Security Union will give updates on the developments (European Commission 2016y). Furthermore, On April 13, 2016, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker delivered two speeches to the European Parliament, focusing primarily on the outcomes of the March European Council and the Brussels attacks. He underlined the value of cooperation and the necessity of a genuine security union. Juncker also emphasized the agreement between the EU and Turkey over the refugee crisis and the idea of solidarity in upcoming changes (European Commission 2016s).

On the other hand, on April 18, 2016, the European Commission revealed 20 new initiatives totalling more than EUR 280 million to help the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin deal with displaced people and irregular migration in Africa. The initiatives emphasise enhancing migration management, fostering economic growth, and resolving instability (European Commission

2016a). Additionally, on 3 May 2016, the European Commission announced the allocation of €3 million for a national polio vaccination campaign in Syria to provide essential medical care to 2 million children residing in underserved regions (European Commission 2016k). It is also important to point out that the Commission proposed modifications to the Common European Asylum mechanism on 4 May 2016, intending to develop a more equitable, effective, and long-lasting mechanism for dividing asylum requests among Member States. The plan calls for efficiency in resettlement operations, safeguarding the best interests of asylum seekers, and a fair system (European Commission 2016ae).

The Commission approved the latest progress report on emergency relocation and resettlement programs on 18 May 2016, and it reveals insufficient progress with additional preparation for future action. Even though relocation operations have been reinforced, they still must speed up pace to prevent migrants from using illegal routes again. It has not been possible to reach the 20,000-person target (European Commission 2016t). Additionally, Commissioner Avramopoulos's statements following the Justice and Home Affairs Council on May 20, 2016, emphasized the importance of the EU-Turkey statement, which stresses the decrease in arrivals to Greek islands and the rise in returns to Turkey. Also, Turkey has assured that Syrians and non-Syrians in Turkey will be protected. The European Commission has granted Greece emergency financing of €56 million to enhance the country's migratory conditions and strengthen the ability of its agencies to register and handle asylum requests. It is also essential to relocate from Greece and Italy and to resettle Syrian refugees under the 1-to-1 agreement with Turkey (European Commission 2016v).

Moreover, on 7 June 2016, the European Commission proposed a new results-oriented Partnership Framework in an attempt to focus EU activity on controlling migration. The framework aims to save lives at sea, enhance returns, facilitate migrants and refugees, and address root causes (European Commission 2016c). Also, on 14 June 2016, the Commission presented initiatives to assist Member States in preventing and combating the violent radicalization leading to terrorism. These initiatives include countering terrorist propaganda and illegal hate speech online, addressing radicalisation in prisons, promoting inclusive education and EU common values, promoting an inclusive, open and resilient society and reaching out to young people, strengthening international cooperation, boosting research, evidence building, monitoring and networks, focusing on the security dimension (European Commission 2016ac). Furthermore, on 5 July 2016, the European Commission and the High Representative proposed a joint communication and legislative proposal to strengthen security

sector reform and promote sustainable development in partner countries (European Commission 2016b).

Furthermore, to establish a unified European resettlement strategy and provide safe pathways for individuals seeking international protection, the European Commission proposed an EU Resettlement Framework on July 13, 2016 (European Commission 2016i). At the same time, on 14 September 2016, President Juncker presented his State of the Union speech. He emphasised that the EU could increase security by reinforcing border controls, promoting information sharing, and improving travel document security (European Commission 2016aa). Nevertheless, on 28 September 2016, the European Commission signed €600 million in direct grants to assist Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey, using more than €2 billion from its €3 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey (European Commission 2016o).

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, responsible for monitoring the EU's external borders and resolving possible security risks to the Schengen region, is being established at Bulgaria's Turkey border on 6 October 2016 to strengthen Member States' capacity at the external frontiers (European Commission 2016q). On top of that, the European Travel Document on Return, which the Commission proposed, was approved by the Council on 13 October 2016. A statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos on the adoption noted that the objectives are to ensure that international law and fundamental rights are respected, reduce the incentives for irregular migration, and make it easier for citizens of third countries to return home (European Commission 2016h). Additionally, on 25 October 2016, the European Commission to prolong temporary border controls at the Schengen borders of Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway for an additional three months because of the need for stabilisation and the "Back to Schengen" requirements have not yet been fully met (European Commission 2016g).

President Juncker, in his statement on the first anniversary of the attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, pointed out that despite 130 lives and families lost to terrorism, Europe is still dedicated to upholding its democratic, open, and multicultural character while guaranteeing the security of its citizens (European Commission 2016ab). Also, on 16 November 2016, the European Commission recommended establishing the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) to improve internal and external border security inside the EU by strengthening security checks for travellers without visas (European Commission 2016w).

Furthermore, the EU Regional Trust Fund approved a €139 million aid package for Syrian refugees and their host communities, including a specific stabilisation package for Iraq, on 6 December 2016 (European Commission 2016l). Also, on 15 December 2016, the Commission approved the EU to invest €170 million to tackle instability and irregular migration in the Horn of Africa (European Commission 2016ad). On the other hand, on 21 December 2016, the Commission proposed reinforcing the Schengen Information System to fight terrorism and cross-border crime better (European Commission 2016x). Nevertheless, on 22 December 2016, the European Commission provided €270 million in contracts to build and furnish 100 schools in Turkey to benefit Syrian refugee children and the host communities (European Commission 2016p).

In conclusion, our analysis shows that the discourse of the European Commission on the migration crisis from 2014 (1 July – 31 December) to 2016 draws attention to an inclusive and evolving approach to addressing the difficulties caused by mass migration and related humanitarian demands. In the crisis's early stages, the main focus was to increase financial commitments for development and humanitarian assistance in Syria and neighbouring countries. As the number of uncontrolled arrivals to the EU member states increased, the Commission's approach evolved to actions to strengthen border security, combat human trafficking, and establish a Common Asylum System. Furthermore, from 2014 (1 July – 31 December) to 2016, the Commission repeatedly demonstrated that it was committed to respecting migrant rights and tackling security concerns, particularly in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Europe. It is also important to note that the terror attacks increased the securitisation elements in the discourse of the Commission. Following the Paris terror attacks, the securitisation discourse had a substantial rise and remained so until the end of 2016. On the other hand, the rise in security elements did not entirely erase humanitarian factors in the discourse of the Commission, which tried to establish a balance.

7.4.4 Conclusion of the European Commission Discourse Analysis

The findings of the Commission's discourse analysis on migration from 2014 (1 July – 31 December) to 2016 reveal indications of migration's humanitarian and security aspects. Initially, the Commission focused on addressing humanitarian challenges caused by mass migration, which led to the peak of the *'humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis'* and *'measures to protect (im)migrant and refugees'* categories in 2014 (July 1–December 31). This period was highlighted by significant responsibilities such as providing funds to support

humanitarian assistance, providing newcomers with access to asylum procedures, and protecting the rights of migrants and refugees.

On the other hand, as the migration crisis intensified and the number of irregular arrivals increased, our analysis suggests that the Commission's discourse evolved in response to emerging challenges. The shift in the Commission's approach became apparent following the Paris and Brussels terror attacks. It is also important to note that the security elements in the Commission's discourse increased significantly between the Paris and Brussels terror attacks, with the categories implying security issues reaching their peak after the Brussels terror attacks. Following the Paris terror attacks, security concerns became increasingly prominent, reaching a peak after the Brussels attacks. The Commission's approach evolved to prioritise security measures, including EU border and territorial control, anti-terrorist measures, cooperation with third (transit) and sending countries and combating human smuggling. It should also be emphasised that this shift reflected a more complex and multifaceted response to the migration crisis. Rather than replacing the humanitarian approach with a security focus, the discourse evolved to incorporate both elements, emphasising border security and counter-terrorism while maintaining rhetorical commitments to asylum rights and humanitarian aid. This discursive inclusion coincided with a number of significant institutional initiatives, such as the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the implementation of the Passenger Name Record (PNR) Directive, and the introduction of the European Agenda on Migration.

To sum up, we can state that the discourse of the European Commission on the migration crisis demonstrates an adaptable approach that strikes a balance between security requirements and humanitarian commitments. This illustrates an in-depth awareness of the complexities of the migration crisis within the framework of increasing security challenges. The European Commission's communication strategy, particularly in late 2015 and 2016, demonstrates its role in the expansion phase of the high politics route.

8. Interpretation of Findings

8.1 High Politics Route

This part of the study will explore how the V4 was conceptualised as an advocacy coalition engaged with the high politics route during the migration crisis. The high politics route provides a solid framework for our analysis to understand shifts in the discourse of the EU institutions, especially when a crisis prompts agenda-setting. The theoretical section explains that the high politics route consists of four stages: initiation, specifications, expansion and entrance.

This study considers the V4 an advocacy coalition that initiated the high-politics approach by presenting migration as a security threat during the 2015–2016 crisis. Through a qualitative and quantitative content analysis, the findings show that, during the migration crisis, the V4 prioritised national and EU security and border control over humanitarian concerns. The coordinated discourse of the V4, articulated through joint declarations and high-level political statements, particularly in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, signifies the beginning of this process.

The European Council played a central role in shaping the EU's political consensus during the migration crisis, and its discourse demonstrates a gradual but precise specification process along the high politics route. An early securitising turn appeared in April 2015, when an extraordinary European Council meeting responded to the tragic deaths in the Mediterranean. While the April conclusions concentrated on the need for humanitarian assistance, they also called for dismantling smuggling networks and strengthening border control – language that aligns with the indicators of securitisation. However, this shift seemed to be driven internally and reactive, rather than the V4 directly shaping it, as its securitising discourse had not yet peaked.

By contrast, September to October 2015 shows a stronger alignment between the V4's agenda and the European Council's discourse. At the V4 Summit on 4 September 2015, migration was framed as a security threat, and calls were made for EU-level action on external border protection, Frontex support and combatting human trafficking. Just weeks later, the European Council conclusions of 15 October 2015 adopted similar language, stressing the need for 'an integrated management system for external borders', 'deployment of Rapid Border Intervention Teams', and 'robust and prompt action' on return policies. These shifts coincided with the peak of securitising rhetoric from the Visegrad Group (as shown in the September spike in V4 security discourse), suggesting temporal alignment between national and EU-level framing.

While the European Council did not always replicate V4 proposals verbatim, the convergence on key securitising frames. The border protection, migration control, and security governance demonstrate that the specification stage was shaped through high-level political consensus. This supports the theoretical claim that high-level political institutions, such as the European Council, are key venues where advocacy coalitions can raise specific issues on the EU's agenda during times of crisis.

The expansion stage of the high politics route is reflected in the Council of the EU's increasing securitisation discourse and concrete operational follow-through beginning in October 2015, closely aligned with the European Council's formal specification of priorities during its 15 October 2015 meeting.

This period marks a key pivot as the Council of the EU began echoing securitising frames established by the European Council, particularly about external border control, returns and combatting human smuggling. Interestingly, the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting on 8–9 October 2015 anticipated these trends, and the Foreign Affairs Council on 12 October 2015 supported the launch of Operation Sophia, which was in line with the European Council's request to break up smuggling networks.¹⁵ Similarly, the Council's conclusions in November and December 2015 showed ongoing use of securitised framing through the execution of the Valletta Action Plan, extended duties for Frontex, and increased collaboration with third countries on returns and readmissions. The significant rise in securitisation categories in October 2015 and March 2016 further supports these developments. The latter rise came after the terror attacks carried out in Brussels and the Council's discussion on enhancing border and internal security. Although elements of the security discourse were present earlier in 2015, the post-October alignment with the framing and priorities of the European Council marks a transition to a coordinated expansion phase. This confirms the transmission of the securitising discourse at a high level into the operational agenda of the Council of the EU.

The adoption and implementation of securitisation frameworks following the European Council's conclusions in October 2015 mark a gradual expansion of the high politics route, as reflected in the European Commission's discourse. Initially, the Commission's rhetoric was balanced, focusing on humanitarian protection and the need for security. However, following the conclusions of the European Council in October 2015, a noticeable shift was seen, with more focus being placed on border protection, return procedures and the dismantling of smuggling networks, while humanitarian language was still being used. This rhetorical evolution is supported by statements from Commissioner Avramopoulos and others referencing “external threats,” “irregular flows,” and the urgency to strengthen the EU's borders.

¹⁵ The Justice and Home Affairs Council (8–9 October) and the Foreign Affairs Council (12 October) meeting, which preceded the European Council meeting on 15 October, reflected securitising language and priorities. This indicates that there is anticipation for high-level consensus at an institutional level.

Several Commission documents in late 2015 and 2016 explicitly aligned with European Council priorities. For example, the State of Play reports and press releases in April and May 2016 referenced earlier European Council mandates and emphasised operational steps: launching the European Border and Coast Guard, improving readmission agreements, and expanding Frontex's role in returns. The May 2016 "Back to Schengen" roadmap reiterated these priorities, directly linking them to the European Council's prior strategic direction.

The monthly data dynamics show that securitisation-related categories rose steadily in late 2015, peaking mostly in February–March 2016, with further increases in June and October 2016. These discursive surges followed the Paris and Brussels terror attacks and demonstrate how the Commission, though institutionally inclined to balance humanitarian and legal obligations, increasingly echoed the securitising momentum initiated at the highest political level. This pattern confirms the Commission's role in the expansion phase, where high-level frames are translated into institutional discourse and policy proposals.

The entrance stage in the high politics route involves embedding securitising discourse into EU-level responses, which are used to address and tackle the issues that matter most to the EU. The European Council's conclusions in October 2015 opened the political window, resulting in operational measures such as Operation Sophia, Frontex mandates and the European Border and Coast Guard. This marked the final step of the high politics route.

8.2 The Visegrad Group's Discursive Alignment with EU Institutions

This section aims to clarify whether and how the V4 securitising discourse aligned with the communication discourse of the European Council, the Council of the EU and the European Commission during the migration crisis. The main objective is to identify discursive parallels and temporal correspondences rather than claiming direct influence. This section is divided into three parts: Temporal correspondence in monthly trends; Shared political language and framing; Subcategory convergence: shared priorities across actors.

- Temporal Correspondence in Monthly Trends

Our analysis of the monthly trends of the selected institutions shows that discursive alignment emerges through synchronised timing, though not uniformly. In September 2015, the security discussion within V4 communications peaked, and we noticed a rise in securitising discourse within EU institutions in October 2015. Furthermore, in September 2016, the V4 renewed its focus on migrant/refugee return and external border controls, a move that EU institutions

matched. The monthly dynamics of security-related categories experienced an increase in September 2016 in the case of EU institutions. The Bratislava Declaration (European Council, September) and the launch of the European Border and Coast Guard (October) suggested a shared sense of political momentum.

- Shared Political Language and Framing

The second type of alignment emerges from common rhetorical framings. The following phrases appeared in V4 statements and EU-level communications.

“Fight against organised crime and smuggling/trafficking.”

V4: 4 September 2015 Summit Declaration

Council of the EU: Operation Sophia (launched Oct 2015)

Commission: Anti-smuggling measures proposed Nov–Dec 2015

“Control of external borders.”

V4: 15 February 2016 Joint Statement

European Council: 16 September 2016 (Bratislava Declaration)

Commission: ‘Back to Schengen’ roadmap (May 2016)

“Solidarity through security.”

The V4's post-Paris framing emphasised EU solidarity through security measures, an approach that was reflected in the European Council's conclusions in December 2015 and in speeches delivered by the Commission throughout the early months of 2016.

- Subcategory Convergence: Shared Priorities Across Actors

The shared emphasis on particular security-oriented subcategories reveals the third area of alignment. The V4 continuously presented migration as a security issue, emphasising border protection, anti-terrorist responses, and external cooperation. These topics started to appear more frequently in the discourse of EU institutions.

Subcategory: *Cooperation with third (transit) countries*

V4: 15 codes in both 2015 and 2016; European Council: 41 → 42; Council of the EU: 20 → 31; European Commission: 45 → 165

Subcategory: *Border/territorial control*

V4: 14 → 27; European Council: 36 → 52; Council of the EU: stable (23 → 22); European Commission: 66 → 179

Subcategory: *Anti-terrorist measures*

V4: 6 → 7; Council of the EU: 27 → 48; European Commission: 67 → 137

In the case of the “*cooperation with third (transit) countries*” subcategory, we can see that all institutions converged on this issue, particularly in 2016. The “*border/territorial control*” and “*anti-terrorist measures*” subcategories show that all the institutions prioritised these topics.

In summary, we can say that this study does not aim to assert the direct influence of the V4 on EU institutions but provides evidence of discursive alignment across the three dimensions mentioned above. Also, it is important to say that this alignment was evident in late 2015 and autumn 2016, yet this could hardly be interpreted as a direct and effective influence by the V4 countries.

8.3 Reviewing the Results of EU Institutions

In this part of the thesis, we will review and compare the results of our study to highlight how the discourse of the selected EU institutions evolved during the migration crisis and identify any consistencies and divergences.

In the case of the European Council, our analysis indicates that following the terrorist attacks in Paris, the attention of the European Council shifted from humanitarian issues and immediate crisis responses to strategic security. This further shifted following the Brussels terror attacks. For example, the figures presented in our analysis show that in the case of the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*), its percentage increased to 13.66% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terrorist attacks. However, between the Paris and Brussels attacks, it fell significantly to 5.69%. Our analysis shows a slight increase to 6.76% after the Brussels attacks.

Our results show a similar pattern for the second category. For example, after the Charlie Hebdo attack and until the Paris terrorist attacks, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) received 34.15% of the total sample. However, between the Paris attacks and the Brussels attacks, the figures fell to 21.95%. Moreover, they continued to decrease after the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, reaching 18.92%.

Regarding the third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*), from the Charlie Hebdo attack to the Paris terror attacks, this category received 21.95% of the total segments. However, it increased to 26.02% between the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, followed by a significant increase after the Brussels terrorist attacks, reaching 48.65%.

In the case of the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), it reached 72.68% after the Charlie Hebdo attack and increased to 83.74% between the Paris and Brussels attacks. Interestingly, from the time of the Brussels terror attacks until the end of 2016, the total percentage of the fourth category decreased to 71.62%.

Security concerns have begun to dominate the European Council's discourse following the terrorist attacks in Paris, indicating a shift in the institution's agenda in favour of prioritising security. The European Council's entire agenda reflects this shift from addressing immediate crises to focusing on long-term strategic security.

On the other hand, the Council of the EU managed to keep its discourse consistent while balancing immediate operational responses and strategic security. However, as the negative impact of the migration crisis grew, the Council of the EU shifted towards strategic security measures. Our results show that the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) received 7.69%, while the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) received 28.57% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terrorist attacks. The third category (security aspects of migration) received 25.18%, while the fourth (*measures to strengthen security*) accounted for 81.32%.

There was a slight increase in the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) to 8.89% in the period between the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. However, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) decreased to 17.78%. In addition, the third category (security aspects of migration) increased slightly by 24.44%, while the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) jumped to 88.89%.

After the Brussels terrorist attacks and until the end of 2016, our data indicates that the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) decreased to 3.60%, the lowest percentage. Similarly, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) decreased to 11.71%. Conversely, the third category (security aspects of migration) remained almost unchanged at 24.32%, while the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*) increased significantly to 93.69%.

In the aftermath of the Paris terror attacks, the European Commission's discourse displayed a significant increase in security-related topics, indicating a temporal correlation with wider EU concerns regarding terrorism and migration. Following the Paris terror attacks, the published materials of the Commission indicate a focus on complex strategic security issues. Similarly to the Council of the EU, in the discourse of the Commission, categories representing humanitarian elements received their lowest percentage following the Brussels terror attacks. However, security-related categories had the highest percentage during this period.

In the case of the Commission, the findings show that the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) represented 21.03% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terrorist attacks. However, it fell to 9.94% between the Paris and Brussels attacks. After the Brussels attacks and until 2016, the first category (*humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis*) experienced a slight decline to 8.84%. At the same time, between the Charlie Hebdo attacks and the Paris attacks, the second category (*measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees*) recorded the highest percentage during this period, reaching 56.08%. However, it declined to 45.03% between the Paris and Brussels attacks. After the Brussels attacks, this downward trend continued until 2016, reaching 35.74%.

The third category (*security aspects of the migration crisis*) accounted for 11.55% between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris attacks, making it the category with the lowest percentage during this period. However, during the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, this figure increased significantly to 21.55%. This rising trajectory continued after the Brussels attacks, reaching 25.81% by the end of 2016. In the case of the fourth category (*measures to strengthen security*), 51.96% was recorded between the Charlie Hebdo attack and the Paris terrorist attacks. It also increased significantly to 73.76% during the period of the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks. There was also a slight increase to 74.91% from the time of the Brussels terrorist attacks to the end of 2016.

Presented research results indicate that the terror attack in Brussels significantly impacted the Commission's shift from a humanitarian approach to a securitisation approach, or at least a more complex one, incorporating the security dimension. It should be mentioned that the Commission is based in Brussels, and the terror events there might have more of an impact on their discourse. On the other hand, the Commission was the least reflective institution compared to the other two. It aimed to strike a balance between security requirements and humanitarian commitments. This can be explained by the nature of the institution, which is

more bureaucratic than other European institutions, such as the European Council and the Council of the EU. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the less reflective nature of the Commission was due to a lack of political inclination or a reluctance to adopt. Although this securitisation coincided with elements present in the V4 discourse, the timing strongly suggests that the terror attacks could be more effective drivers of the EU-level changes, especially in the cases of the Council of the EU and the European Commission.

During the migration crisis, the political discourse of the European Council, Council of the EU, and European Commission did not remain the same as in the initial phase but changed as migration progressed. The EU institutions discourse shifted from immediate crisis management, which included humanitarian elements, to a stronger emphasis on security. Following the terrorist attacks, especially after the Paris terror attacks, the European Council's discourse and political agenda started to focus on security-related matters mainly.

On the other hand, there was an attempt to balance humanitarian and security concerns in the earlier phase of the migration crisis. However, as security threats increased, the focus shifted heavily towards security discourse. Especially after the Brussels attacks, the humanitarian aspects of the discourse within the Council of the EU significantly decreased, increasing security elements. Lastly, the European Commission developed a more comprehensive, integrated strategy encompassing security, humanitarian, and operational aspects compared to the other two institutions.

9. Conclusions

This section of the thesis presents the main findings of our analysis.

Firstly, the quantitative and qualitative content analysis reveals that V4's communication during the migration crisis predominantly focused on security rather than humanitarian issues. The V4 discourse included key security components such as fighting terrorism, protecting borders, managing migration root causes, and the lack of willingness to implement the EU's proposed permanent relocation mechanism. From the beginning of 2015, security elements in the communication of the V4 regarding the migration crisis were already highly noticeable, and terror attacks further elevated the prominence of these elements. Securitisation elements in the discourse of the V4 peaked following the Paris terror attacks and remained prominent until the end of 2016.

Our analysis indicates that the European Council discourse on the migration crisis in the selected timeframe shifted from humanitarian framing to the gradual incorporation of security discourse. Initially, the communication from the European Council emphasised the importance of sharing responsibility and protecting human rights. However, the European Council discourse began to incorporate security-related language increasingly, particularly after the Paris terror attacks in November 2015.

Furthermore, during the migration crisis, the Council of the EU's discourse demonstrated a noticeable shift towards securitisation, particularly following significant terrorist incidents. In the second half of 2014, initial communications by the Council of the EU emphasised humanitarian obligations and asylum protection. However, in 2015, securitisation components became more noticeable, reaching a peak in March 2016.

Throughout the migration crisis, the European Commission's rhetoric has gradually incorporated securitisation features, particularly in the aftermath of major terrorist incidents. It is also important to note that, due to the nature of the Commission as an institution, a balancing act was observed between humanitarian values and growing security concerns. However, following the November 2015 Paris attacks and, more importantly, the March 2016 Brussels attacks, the Commission began to place a greater emphasis on security-related themes. These included strengthening external borders, combating smuggling networks, and improving internal security coordination.

Secondly, this research suggests that the high politics route offers a valuable framework for understanding how the securitisation narrative developed from the V4 to EU institutions during the migration crisis. Furthermore, in this study, we conceptualised the V4 as an advocacy coalition characterised by a coordinated discourse articulated through joint declarations and high-level political statements. The V4 initiated this process through its coordinated security discourse during the migration crisis.

In this case, the European Council was the main venue for the specification stage. The conclusions of the October 2015 meeting were adopted, and the language used directly aligned with the V4's discourse, with external border control, Frontex deployment and stronger return mechanisms being highlighted. The Council of the EU and the European Commission exemplified the expansion stage. The EU Council put high-level security frameworks, such as the Valletta Action Plan, Operation Sophia and Frontex's enhanced responsibilities, into operational terms. Moreover, the European Commission increasingly echoed the security

priorities set out by the European Council, particularly in communications relating to border protection, returns and dismantling smuggling networks. The 'Back to Schengen' roadmap and the European Border and Coast Guard launch reflect the Commission's increasing securitisation measures.

Thirdly, this study identifies discursive alignment between the V4 and EU institutions, particularly in late 2015 and autumn 2016, across three dimensions: timing, shared political language and thematic priorities. The alignment was identified in key security areas such as external border control, anti-terrorism and cooperation with third countries, as reflected in the discourses of the European Council, the Council of the EU and the European Commission. This might suggest some influence of the V4 on the EU institutional communication, but the corresponding data of the other investigated periods seem to weaken this supposition.

Finally, it is important to note that this dissertation only partially supports hypothesis for Research Question 1, indicating a degree of alignment (*If the Visegrad Group consistently advocated a securitisation narrative during the migration crisis, the discourse of the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission) will increasingly align with the Visegrad Group's securitisation arguments over time*) while fully supports the hypothesis for Research Question 2 (*The major terrorist attacks during the migration crisis reinforced the Visegrad Group's securitisations arguments in the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission). Furthermore, terrorist attacks contributed to the increasing presence of securitisation narratives in the European Union institutions (European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission) discourse*), demonstrating the contribution of terror attacks to reinforcing securitising discourse during the migration crisis.

It is important to reaffirm that this research did not establish a causal relationship between the V4 and the EU institutional communications, which is the key limitation of this research. One can assume that other factors, including both internal (such as the nature and operation of the EU institutions) and external factors (such as terrorist attacks), could be of more impact. However, as mentioned above, establishing such linkages would require interviews with EU and national politicians and/or access to records/minutes of decision-making meetings.

10.Recommendations for Future Research

The research can be expanded in several different ways for future studies. Due to the nature of the research, the analysis timeframe could be extended, particularly in the case of the European Council, the Council of the EU and the European Commission. This would help us determine if the presented findings in this research were also valid for an extended period or applied specifically to the time period studied above. Secondly, future work could include more qualitative research, such as conducting interviews with the Commissioners and national policymakers to gain more information on the role and importance of various factors in the communications of EU institutions and member states (individually or as members of any coalitions). This would help to identify causal relationship between the V4 and the EU institutional communications.

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Appendix

A. Coding Frame

Nr.	Type of Category	Category Name	Category Description
1	Main	Humanitarian aspects of the migration crisis	This category aims to document the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis in the discourse of the Visegrad Group, European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission.
1.1	Sub	Protection of (im)migrants and refugees	
1.2	Sub	Other	
2	Main	Measures to protect (im)migrants and refugees	This category aims to document the recommended measures to protect the rights of (im)migrants and refugees by the Visegrad Group, European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission.
2.1	Sub	Access to asylum procedures	
2.2	Sub	Preventing violation rights of (im)migrants and refugees	
2.3	Sub	Providing humanitarian assistance	
2.4	Sub	Providing funds to support humanitarian assistance	
2.5	Sub	Religious support	
2.6	Sub	Other	
3	Main	Security aspects of the migration crisis	This category aims to document the security aspect of the migration crisis in the discourse of the Visegrad Group, European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission.
3.1	Sub	Public security threat	
3.2	Sub	Border / territorial control	
3.3	Sub	Terrorist threats	
3.4	Sub	Health threat	
3.5	Sub	Other	
4	Main	Measures to strengthen security	This category aims to document the recommended measures to strengthen security by the Visegrad Group, European Council, Council of the EU and European Commission.
4.1	Sub	Anti-terrorist measures	
4.2	Sub	Fight against human smugglers/traffickers	
4.3	Sub	Border control measures	
4.3.1	Sub	<i>Internal border control</i>	
4.3.2	Sub	<i>External border control</i>	
4.4	Sub	Cooperation with third (transit) countries	
4.5	Sub	Cooperation with (im)migrants and refugees sending countries	
4.6	Sub	Other	

B. Visegrad Group: Chronological Table

Chronology of key developments in the documents collected for the V4 analysis of the migration crisis in the context of terrorist attacks: 2015 - 2016
7 January 2015 – Charlie Hebdo Attack
25 February 2015 – The Foreign Affairs Committees of V4 parliaments stated that the increasing instability in Iraq, Syria, and Libya and the activity of ISIL presented an additional threat to European security and contributed to the migration crisis. The statement noted the importance of the fight against ISIL for preserving <i>'our'</i> civilisation's achievements and values and called to support the refugees, internally displaced persons, and religious minorities. At the same time, they called their governments to deliver assistance to V4. Representatives of Parliament urge their governments to assist in fulfilling the needs of internally displaced people, refugees, and religious minorities, especially Christians.
12-13 March 2015 – The statement after the 3rd Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic States voiced their deep concern about the terrorist attacks in France and Denmark. Ministers confirmed that other parts of Europe also remain in danger of terrorist attacks. They stressed the urgent need to intensify EU efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism.
23 April 2015 – The Ministers of Defence of the V4 countries decided on further defence cooperation and supported strengthening the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.
12 May 2015 – After the working meeting of foreign ministers of V4 Turkey, they shared the opinion that Islamic radicalism and immigration are a strong challenge for both sides.
19 June 2015 – Before the European Council in June 2015, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia released the Bratislava Declaration, which aimed for a more robust Common Security and Defence Policy. The Prime Ministers of the V4 noted that realisable ideas should be the foundation for the Common Security and Defence Policy's long-term strategy. Strengthening EU cooperation must continue to be significant in tackling issues such as hybrid threats, terrorism, organised crime, foreign fighters, irregular migration, and border management.
19 June 2015 – To mark the end of the one-year Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group, the Prime Ministers of the V4 adopted a joint statement which stresses to be prepared to review the Commission's proposal for the European Migration Agenda published on 27 May. However, the report notes that the agenda does not address or provide solutions to reduce the number of arrivals via Western Balkan and Eastern migration routes. They raised their

concern about the mandatory redistribution scheme for asylum seekers and listed it as one of the pull factors. Also, the Prime Ministers of the V4 argued for executing a more effective return process.

19 June 2015 – The heads of government of France, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, on the Occasion of the Summit of the V4 Prime Ministers and the President of the French Republic, stressed the need for short-term and long-term strategies to avoid the unfortunate incidents involving migrants in the Mediterranean.

4 September 2015 – The head states of the Visegrad Group, following the extraordinary Visegrad Group Summit on Migration, adopted a Joint Statement that recommended a list of measures to effectively manage the root causes of the migration crisis to end pull factors and protect the external borders of the EU and the Schengen Area.

11 September 2015 – A joint communication of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Foreign Affairs after the meeting with their counterparts from the Luxembourg Presidency and Germany stated the importance of focusing on the Western Balkan migration route to achieve better-functioning border control. Also, the document noted the importance of stabilising the European neighbourhood, fighting against human trafficking and smuggling, and developing and providing humanitarian assistance to countries of origin and transit of migration.

11 November 2015 – A joint article of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Foreign Affairs titled "We Offer You Our Helping Hand on the EU Path" called the migration and refugee crisis one of the most challenging crises the EU has ever faced and urged to get special attention to the Western Balkan migration route.

13 November 2015 – Paris terror attacks

3 December 2015 – The Prime Ministers of V4 countries, on the occasion of the Visegrad Group Summit, adopted a joint statement stressing that terrorism is a security threat to the EU. Also, the report emphasised that in December, the European Council must take a clear stance on fighting terrorism, addressing migration-related challenges and their root causes, and enhancing the protection of the European Union's external border.

15 December 2015 – The V4 countries welcomed the focus of the European Council conclusions on addressing the migration crisis's root causes, with particular emphasis on the adequate protection of the external border. Also, the V4 countries supported the proposed measures in the European Council's conclusions to fight terrorism. Moreover, the Prime Ministers of V4 countries emphasised that progress is needed to make hotspots functional, combating financing terrorism and organised crime.

19 January 2016 - Joint Declaration by the V4 Ministers of the Interior concentrated predominantly on the issues of illegal migration, the fight against terrorism and control over the EU's external border.

15 February 2016 - The Prime Ministers of the V4 countries met in Prague for an extraordinary summit addressing the issues that Europe, particularly the Balkans region, are experiencing regarding migration challenges. They underlined their objection to the automatic permanent relocation mechanism while expressing their full support for measures approved at the EU level to protect the external borders more effectively, including strengthened cooperation with third countries. The Prime Ministers of the V4 call for improvement, notably in two areas: first, for prompt adoption of the Council position on the "European Border and Coast Guard" based on the principle of the appropriate balance between the EU powers and the Member States sovereign competences; and second, for an efficient outcome of the implementation of the European Union-Turkey Joint Action Plan. A joint declaration of the Prime Ministers of the V4 countries emphasised that external border protection must remain the top priority.

22 March 2016 - Brussels Terror Attacks

8 June 2016 - The Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group Prime Ministers emphasised the importance of seeking solutions that deal with the root causes, such as resolving the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Also, Prime Ministers pushed for consensus-based policies that protect external borders, hotspots, and returns.

21 November 2016 - Following the meeting in Warsaw, the V4 Interior Ministers released a joint statement on establishing the Migration Crisis Response Mechanism (MCRM). The MCRM strives to strengthen or develop new links between the governmental institutions managing migration in the Member States. Also, the statement emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes of illegal immigration to the EU and proposed measures. According to the V4 interior ministers' statement, uncontrolled mixed migration movements threaten the security of the EU and Member States.

15 December 2016 - The Head of Governments of the Visegrad countries adopted a joint statement that acknowledged vast improvements in protecting EU external borders and the dimension of migration. According to the report, the Anti-Terrorism Directive and the Passenger Name Record Directive should be adopted and implemented to increase the security of the EU, its Member States, and its citizens.

C. European Council: Chronological Table

Chronology of key developments in the statements of the European Council on the migration crisis: 2014 (1 July – 31 December) - 2015 -2016
2 July 2014 - Herman Van Rompuy, then President of the European Council, in his speech to the European Parliament following the June 26-27 European Council, noted that: <i>on migration, more specifically, it is important that our countries keep attracting talent and skills through legal migration, whilst dealing more robustly with irregular migration, also through better cooperation with third countries</i> (European Council 2014a).
31 August 2014 - The conclusions adopted by the European Council at the Special meeting of the European Council (30 August 2014) urged swift action to curb foreign fighters, urging the swift implementation of EU measures to prevent radicalization and extremism, effectively share information, dissuade suspicious travel, and investigate and prosecute foreign fighters. The Council called for the Council and the European Parliament to finalize the EU Passenger Name Record proposal by the end of the year.
9 September 2014 – Then president of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, in his closing speech for the Sixth Cohesion Forum, pointed out that demography and an ageing population pose significant challenges to the EU's competitiveness and welfare systems. Also, he noted that immigration is essential to address the EU's shrinking workforce, which would decrease from 500 million to below 430 million within 50 years. At the same time, he acknowledged that addressing migration and changing populations will be an economic, social, and political challenge. To tackle this, a debate on legal migration and how to enhance Europe's competitiveness in the global talent race is necessary.
24 September 2014 - Remarks by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, at the UN Security Council Special Session on Foreign Terrorist Fighters noted that the EU is prepared to support countries in the region with border and aviation security, counter-terrorism capacity, humanitarian assistance, and refugee shelter provision while continuing to provide aid.
23 December 2014 - A press statement by European Council President Donald Tusk after his telephone call with President Erdogan of Turkey on 23 December 2014 welcomed Turkey's efforts in hosting over 1.5 million refugees from the ongoing Syrian war, and the EU is committed to supporting this effort.
7 January 2015 - Charlie Hebdo Attack

9 January 2015 - The European Council President Donald Tusk, after he meets with the ex-prime minister of Estonia Taavi Rõivas, said that the EU should contribute to strengthening its security and will urge the European Parliament to accelerate the implementation of the EU Passenger Name Record system, which can help in identifying possibly dangerous travellers.

13 January 2015 - On 13 January 2015, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, delivered a speech to the European Parliament about the dilemma between security and freedom and the importance of balancing these two fundamental needs. Also, he discussed achieving a single European Passenger Name Record. According to Donald Tusk, the European Passenger Name Record will allow the building of a coherent security policy, which is better for the security and freedom of the Union.

14 January 2015 - Donald Tusk's press statement after meeting with then President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, he urged the European Parliament to unblock the EU Passenger Name Record System.

12 February 2015 – Following the informal European Council meeting, the heads of state or government of the EU agreed with a statement with three areas of action: *ensuring the security of citizens, preventing radicalisation/safeguarding values and cooperating with international partners.*

It called for specific measures, including: *the adoption of a European Passenger Name Records (PNR) directive, implementation the current Schengen framework to the maximum, cooperation to fight against terrorist financing, identifying and delete terrorism-promoting content from the web and addressing crises and conflicts* (European Council 2015e).

25 February 2015 – President Donald Tusk, in his speech to the European Parliament, noted their commitment to a new counter-terrorism work plan and welcomed progress on re-starting the negotiations on an EU agreement on Passenger Name Records.

19 March 2015 - European Council President Donald Tusk remarked that they could not deal with the heart-breaking daily sight of migrants drowning at sea. A swift political solution and a Libyan government of national unity are required to address these problems effectively.

19-20 March 2015 - EU leaders acknowledged the need to adequately manage migration flows and implement concrete action in the Council's October 2014 decisions to bolster Triton, the Frontex operation in the central Mediterranean. Increased support from the EU for the countries of origin and transit is required.

30 March 2015 - Following his meeting with then Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, Donald Tusk stated that the EU must assist people who are in need. However, the member states' security and stability are paramount to us. We must stop people from deciding to leave their country because we cannot open our doors to everyone.

20 April 2015 - President Donald Tusk calls for an extraordinary European Council meeting to discuss migration pressure in the Mediterranean. In his statement, Donald Tusk noted that the Mediterranean situation is dramatic and cannot continue this way. Also, he said that it is unacceptable that hundreds of people die each year trying to reach Europe via sea. The objective of the summit was to address some of the urgent issues, such as: how to stop the human traffickers that cynically earn money by putting the migrants' lives at risk, how to step up our combined efforts to rescue people in need, how to help better the EU Members States most affected; and how to step up our cooperation with the countries of origin and transit (European Council 2015h).

23 April 2015 - Donald Tusk's remarks before the special European Council meeting noted that the primary objective is saving the lives of innocent people. Additionally, issues such as measures against human smugglers, boosting Triton and Poseidon border operations, strengthening cooperation with the countries of origin and transit, and reinforcing European solidarity were on the agenda of the meeting.

23 April 2015 - In the special meeting of the European Council, leaders discussed the dramatic situation in the Mediterranean. They committed to four priority areas for action: *strengthening our presence at sea, fighting traffickers following international law, preventing illegal migration flows, and reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility* (European Council 2015p).

25-26 June 2015 - Discussions at the European Council meeting focused mainly on migration. The European Council concentrated on three crucial areas that must be advanced concurrently: *relocation/resettlement to help 60,000 people, return/readmission/reintegration, cooperation with countries of origin and transit* (European Council 2015j).

9 July 2015 - Donald Tusk's speech during a meeting with then Prime Minister Xavier Bettel in Luxembourg mentioned that we must fulfil our obligations in several areas, with the current migration crisis in the Mediterranean being one of the most critical. Additionally, Donald Tusk noted that how we tackle the migration crisis will impact the Schengen area of passport-free travel.

31 August 2015 - A press statement by Donald Tusk after he met with Miro Cerar, the then Prime Minister of Slovenia, noted that while the migration crisis cannot and should not be blamed on the EU, more must be done at the European level to address it. The President stated that the EU needs to halt the horrific catastrophes and human suffering that have practically become daily headlines in Europe. On the other hand, the statement clarified that human trafficking and migrant smuggling are not only illicit enterprises but also result in mass murder. To stop this, we must take every possible action. Our efforts must be focused on limiting the influx of migrants, certainly in a humanitarian manner, while respecting all legal requirements.

1 September 2015 - Donald Tusk underlined in remarks made during his meeting with then President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović of Croatia that saving the lives of migrants trying to get into Europe remains the primary priority for Europe. Regardless of the challenges that migration can cause, there is never a reason to react negatively to migrants with a racist or xenophobic attitude.

3 September 2015 - President Donald Tusk, after meeting with the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, said: *Prime Minister Orbán has asked to meet with the heads of the European institutions to discuss the situation in Hungary. Although Prime Minister Orbán has taken steps to enhance the security of EU borders, other European nations must advance further. The two strategies of containment and solidarity must work together because it would be unacceptable if Europe were divided among those who support containment and those who want complete openness. A new blame game, political blackmail, and divisiveness will replace togetherness if leaders do not act with goodwill. Building reception centres nearer to non-European war zones is a good idea, and the EU should provide surrounding nations with additional assistance. Leaders must decide what other resources will be spent on humanitarian efforts to stop migrant flows when they gather in October. Regardless of ethnicity, religion, or nationality, Christians have a responsibility to help people in need.*

23 September 2015 – After the informal meeting of heads of state or government, EU leaders agreed on the following:

- *Assist Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis*
- *mobilise at least 1 billion additional funding for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme*
- *reinforce cooperation and dialogue with Turkey at all levels*

- *assist the countries of the Western Balkans in the management of refugee flows*
- *increase funding to address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa*
- *tackle the dramatic situation at the EU external borders and strengthen their control*
- *assist frontline member states in the establishment of hotspots, to ensure a correct identification of migrants and at the same time ensure relocation and returns* (European Council 2015a).

6 October 2015 - Speaking to the European Parliament, Donald Tusk outlined the informal summit of heads of state and government. He said that Europe is still the most tolerant and open continent, but we must avoid making it the victim of our disagreements and mutual blaming. The president called for unity and noted that the EU must protect its reputation so that theocracies and dictators will not tell us how to treat migrants. He stressed that supporting migrants and securing the EU's external borders need solidarity; everyone is responsible for upholding these principles. Also, regaining control over the EU's external borders is the first requirement to maintain a successful, humane, and secure migration approach.

9 October 2015 - Comments made by President Donald Tusk during his meeting with then Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Boyko Borissov, that all state and government leaders in the EU now agree that regaining control over the bloc's exterior borders is a top priority. Regaining control of our external borders is a sine qua non-condition, a successful, compassionate, and secure migratory policy.

15 October 2015 - The EU leaders gathered during the European migration and refugee crisis on October 15, 2015. The EU leaders declared that the Union and its member states are working to create an efficient, humanitarian, and safe European migration policy. They agreed on: *cooperation with the countries of origin and transit to stem the migratory flows; EU leaders welcomed the agreement on an EU-Turkey joint action plan and agreed to achieve concrete operational measures at the forthcoming Valletta Summit with African heads of state or government; strengthening of the EU's external borders with an integrated border management system that will go beyond the Frontex mandate, and the addition of hundreds more border guards to secure the hotspot areas in Greece and Italy; the issue of return and readmission* (European Council 2015m)

27 October 2015 - President Donald Tusk addressed the European Parliament, stating that the current crisis could undermine achievements like Schengen's border-free travel. He

emphasized the importance of protecting the EU's external borders and the need for unity, sacrifices, and extraordinary actions. The European Council also focuses on socio-economic development in Africa, readmission and return, criminal network destruction, and illegal immigration prevention. Tusk stressed the need for refugees and their families to have access to education and employment until they can return to their home countries.

4 November 2015 - Following a meeting with Stefan Löfven, the then Prime Minister of Sweden, President Donald Tusk stated that working together is the only solution to this common problem. The president stressed the importance of solidarity and responsibility. Also, he added that there is no absolute right to one's choice of destination, but there is a fundamental right to political asylum. The influx has to be controlled, contained, and brought under control. Restoring efficient external border control has to be achieved initially. Additionally, we must keep in touch and cooperate with vital third countries.

11-12 November 2015 - The Valletta summit on migration brought together European and African heads of state and government to improve cooperation and address the current and future issues and opportunities of migration. The summit's participants adopted a political statement, and an action plan intended to: *address the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement; enhance cooperation on legal migration and mobility; reinforce the; protection of migrants and asylum seekers; prevent and fight irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; work more closely to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration* (European Council 2015o).

12 November 2015 - Following the Valletta Summit on migration, President Tusk called an informal meeting of heads of state or government. EU leaders discussed the latest developments in the migration crisis and agreed on the following: *stepping up cooperation with third countries; including Turkey; decisions on relocation; setting up hotspots in Greece and Italy and reinforcing FRONTEX and EASO; effectively reinforcing control of EU external borders* (European Council 2015o).

13 November 2015 – Paris terror attacks

21 November 2015 - After meeting with Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, Donald Tusk said that recent events had strengthened his belief that solid border control is crucial. Although it is not the answer to our problems, it is a vital requirement for progress. He added that several countries in the region are intensifying border controls due to ineffective restrictions on the external border between the EU and, among other things, Turkey.

29 November 2015 - Following a meeting between the heads of state or government of the EU and Turkey on November 29, 2015, a joint action plan was adopted to address the Syrian refugee crisis. After the action plan's implementation, both parties will increase their active collaboration concerning migrants who do not require international protection: preventing travel to Turkey and the EU; ensuring the application of the established bilateral readmission provisions; and swiftly returning them to their countries of origin.

17-18 December 2015 - European leaders gathered in Brussels to discuss the migration crisis and the fight against terrorism. The European Council evaluated how decisions were being put into action and decided to move more quickly on: *the operation of hotspots, the implementation of the relocation decisions and returns, the control of the EU's external borders, and cooperation with countries of origin and transit* (European Council 2015r).

18 January 2016 - Comments made by President Donald Tusk following his discussion with then-Polish President Andrzej Duda reflected that their views are in line with the fact that the primary objective is to strengthen the EU's external borders and that effective control of the EU's external borders is both an essential requirement for any migration policy and a guarantee for the continuation of Schengen.

4 February 2016 - The EU and its Member States pledged more than €3 billion to aid Syrians living there, refugees, and the communities hosting them internationally.

15 February 2016 - President Donald Tusk, after his meeting in Bucharest with President Klaus Iohannis of Romania, said that the most critical thing we must do to stop an influx of migrants is to protect our external borders. He noted that the return of economic migrants to their homelands must also be quickened, and we must provide more humanitarian aid to Syria's neighbouring countries. Furthermore, the deal with Turkey must be practical and result in a sharp decline in the number of arrivals, something we are now waiting to witness. Also, Tusk noted that the EU must immediately address the humanitarian situation of migrants in Greece and during their journey across the Western Balkans.

18-19 February 2016 - EU leaders adopted conclusions on the migration and refugee crisis. The discussion focused on building a European consensus on migration. The European Council agreed to focus on:

- *progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Action Plan but also the need to see a substantial and sustainable reduction of the number of illegal entries from Turkey*

- *humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees, including in the Western Balkans countries*
- *external border management*
- *the need to gradually get back to a situation where all Members of the Schengen area fully apply the Schengen Borders Code*
- *the requirement for hotspots to be fully functional*
- *the implementation of decisions on relocation, returns and readmission (European Council 2016c)*

1 March 2016 - President Donald Tusk urged for better and more cooperation amongst member states to address the migration crisis in his remarks during his meeting with then Prime Minister Miro Cerar in Ljubljana. The President also underlined the need for the EU to be ready to significantly increase its support to minimise the humanitarian consequences of their decision. Also, to successfully implement the EU-Turkey action plan and significantly decrease the number of migrants arriving in Europe via Turkey.

2 March 2016 - President Donald Tusk stated after meeting with then Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Athens that: *I want to appeal to all potential illegal economic migrants wherever you are from: Do not come to Europe. Do not believe the smugglers. Do not risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing. Greece or any other European country will no longer be a transit country. The Schengen rules will enter into force again (European Council 2016d).*

7 March 2016 - The EU head of state or government met with Turkey to improve migration and refugee crisis cooperation. They committed to partnering according to the principles that they uphold:

- *the return of all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into the Greek islands*
- *the acceleration of the implementation of the visa liberalisation roadmap*
- *the decision to speed up the disbursement of the 3 billion and decide on additional funding for the refugee facility for Syrians*
- *the preparation for the decision on the opening of new chapters in the accession negotiations*
- *the possibility to work together on the improvement of humanitarian conditions in Syria to allow the local population and refugees to live in areas which will be safe*

- *the resettlement, for every Syrian readmitted by Turkey from Greek islands, of another Syrian from Turkey to the EU.*

Also, the EU leaders resumed their discussion at 28 following their lunch with then Prime Minister Davutoglu and decided to: *go back to the full application of the Schengen Borders Code in order to bring the irregular flow of migrants along the Western Balkan route to an end; reinforce the humanitarian assistance to refugees in Greece; support Greece in the management of its external borders.*

17-18 March 2016 - Then Prime Minister Ahmed Davutoglu and Donald Tusk agreed to reduce the flow of illegal immigrants from Turkey into Europe, end the smugglers' economic model, and provide migrants with an alternative to risking their lives. Additionally, the European Council continued to discuss and confirm its all-encompassing plan to address the migration crisis. They requested:

- *more work to be done on hotspots*
- *support the capacity of Greece for the return of irregular migrants to Turkey*
- *emergency humanitarian support to be provided to help Greece*
- *accelerated relocation from Greece*
- *the quick adoption of the European Border and Coast Guard proposal*
- *work on the future architecture of the EU's migration policy, including the Dublin regulation (European Council 2016e).*

22 March 2016 – Brussels Terror Attacks

19 June 2016 - President Donald Tusk emphasized the existential threats and challenges faced by the EU, including terrorism and the significant influx of refugees and migrants, during a meeting with Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä.

28-29 June 2016 - At the 27 heads of state or government's informal meeting, they emphasized the necessity for a framework of cooperation and engagement with particular countries of origin or transit. EU leaders also highlighted that travel between Turkey and the Greek islands has almost stopped.

1 September 2016 - President Tusk's press release following his meeting with Prime Minister Bettel noted that he firmly believes restoring total control over our external borders and the area of internal security should be the primary objective. He mentioned that the primary issues are still irregular migration and terrorism.

16 September 2016 - In the informal meeting, the 27 heads of government and states agreed on the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, which outlined the targets for the upcoming

months. Those objectives include the following: *restoring full control of the external borders; ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism; strengthening EU cooperation on external security and defence; boosting the single market and offering better opportunities for young Europeans* (European Council 2016h).

19 September 2016 - At the UN summit for refugees and migrants, President Donald Tusk said the EU explicitly aims to establish control over its external borders. At the same time, the EU prepared to increase aid for refugees, internally displaced people, and host communities in the humanitarian and development sectors.

20-21 October 2016 - The EU's top officials gathered in Brussels on October 20 and 21 to discuss the Union's most important subject, migration. According to EU leaders, return rates must increase, and illegal migration through the Central Mediterranean route must substantially decrease. They emphasized the value of working with African nations about migration's origin and transit in this context. According to EU leaders, the recent launch of the EU Border and Coast Guard and national initiatives were crucial milestones towards enhancing control of the EU's external borders and returning to Schengen. They also spoke about protecting external borders and requested the fast implementation of updated Schengen rules establishing systematic inspections at EU borders. Also, they called for: *faster returns from the Greek islands to Turkey; assistance by EU countries to Greece if it's deemed necessary by EU agencies* (European Council 2016i).

15 December 2016 - The EU-Turkey Statement was one of the subjects that the December European Council assessed, and they additionally revisited their stance on the Eastern Mediterranean migration route from the October 20–21, 2016, European Council meeting. Furthermore, the December European Council highlighted the need to increase assistance for the Libyan coast guard in its fight against people smugglers.

D. Council of the EU: Chronological Table

Chronology of key developments in the statements of the Council of the EU on the migration crisis: 2014 (1 July – 31 December) - 2015 -2016
29 July 2014 - The EU Council approved a €50 million increase in humanitarian and development assistance for Syria and a €200 million increase in development support from the European Neighbourhood Instrument, backed by a Commission proposal.
15 August 2014 - EU Foreign Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels praised neighbouring countries for their support in resolving Libya's situation and solidarity in handling displaced persons.
20 October 2014 - The EU Council adopted conclusions on the ISIL/Da'esh situation in Syria and Iraq, highlighting humanitarian concerns, mobilising €2.9 billion for aid, and reaffirming international human rights laws.
7 January, 2015 - Charlie Hebdo Attack
19 January 2015 – At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting, an agreement was reached on strengthening the exchange of information between member states and partner countries. Also, to intensify counter-terrorism cooperation with Arab and Mediterranean countries.
9 February 2015 – At the 3367th Council meeting, ministers welcomed the following efforts. They emphasised the EU's role in the fight against terrorism: strengthening partnerships with key countries, supporting capacity building, countering radicalisation and violent extremism, promoting international cooperation and addressing underlying factors and ongoing crises.
12-13 March 2015 – Ministers at the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting applauded progress in better-controlling migrant flows due to the Task Force Mediterranean's operational activities. The ministers agreed to expand Frontex's operational and financial capabilities and border surveillance. Cooperation with other countries remains crucial to managing migratory flows successfully. They highlighted that to protect migrants and save their lives, the fight against illegal smuggling and trafficking networks must remain a primary priority. At the same time, the Council also provided political recommendations in the following areas as it reviewed the implementation of counter-terrorism measures: reinforced application of the Schengen Framework, fighting radicalisation on the internet, fighting the illicit trafficking of firearms and information sharing and operational cooperation.

20 April 2015 - Addressing recent developments in the Mediterranean, the foreign and interior ministries met collectively to address migration issues. Ministers committed to stepping up efforts to fight human trafficking, increase EU efforts to save lives at sea and increase help for frontline countries by distributing refugee resettlement.
18 May 2015 - The EUNAVFOR Med naval operation was launched during the Foreign Affairs Council meeting to prevent the operations of human traffickers in the Mediterranean.
25 May 2015 - High Representative's statement noted that the EU applauds the Lebanese government and people for their selfless efforts to welcome, help, and protect refugees fleeing the violence in Syria while highlighting the significance of protecting human rights and humanitarian values.
15-16 June 2015 - The Council has examined the European Agenda on Migration and its implementation package in detail. Following the terrorist attacks on European soil in February, the Council reviewed the implementation of the counter-terrorism measures indicated in that declaration. The Council also agreed on the revised European Union Internal Security Strategy for the period between 2015 to 2020.
19 June 2015 - The Council approved allocating more funds to regulate the refugee influx.
20 July 2015 - The Council encourages an active foreign and security policy approach that is vital for boosting cooperation with countries of origin and transit with the ultimate objective of: <i>addressing root causes of and preventing irregular migration, including smuggling and trafficking, protecting persons in need of international protection, respecting the right to seek asylum, ensuring effective return and readmission, and maximising the development impact of well-managed migration and mobility (Council of the EU 2015h)</i>
3 September 2015 - The Council decided on establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece
14 September 2015 - The Council has emphasised the importance of effective border control in managing migration movements. The temporary and extraordinary displacement procedure over two years from the frontline member states Italy and Greece to other member states was decided by the Council. The Council voted to give affected Western Balkan countries further assistance in managing their borders, accepting and processing migrant flows, providing refuge to those who qualify, and ensuring the return of those who do not require international protection.
28 September 2015 - The EU decides to rename EUNAVFOR Med "Sophia" and launch the active phase of the operation to fight human traffickers in the Mediterranean.

8 October 2015 - The Council issued a series of conclusions after discussing the management of the EU's external borders in the future and return policy. The Council reached conclusions on stepping up efforts to fight firearms trafficking simultaneously. The Council granted more funding to address the refugee crisis across sectors, including supporting third countries hosting Syrian refugees, providing urgent assistance, and providing humanitarian aid.

12 October 2015 - The Council reaffirms its dedication to dealing with the root causes of migration, partnering with first countries of asylum/origin, and increasing resources for managing migration crises.

26 October 2015 – The Council confirmed its commitment to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the EU and third countries in migration.

9 November 2015 - Following the meeting of Home Affairs Ministers, the Council decided on measures such as: Following the meeting of the Home Affairs Ministers, the Council decided on measures such as that the establishment of hotspots in Italy and Greece will be intensified; that all participating Member States will speed up the relocation process; *that the Member States, with the full support of the Commission and Frontex, will substantially improve the return rate; member states, to overcome the potential lack of cooperation of migrants as they arrive into the European Union and while fully respecting the fundamental rights and the principle of non-refoulment; to fully support the Commission in pursuing contingency planning of humanitarian assistance for the Western Balkans; to assist the Member States concerned in respecting their legal obligation to perform adequate controls, to manage and to regain controls of the external borders (Council of the EU, 2015l).*

13 November 2015 – Paris terror attacks

20 November 2015 - Justice and home affairs ministers discussed strengthening the EU response after the devastating terrorist attacks in Paris by adopting a set of conclusions. The Council approved the subsequent outcomes: *the Council reiterates the urgency and priority to finalise an ambitious EU Passenger Name Record before the end of 2015, strengthening controls of external borders information sharing, enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the fight against financing terrorism; criminal justice response to terrorism and violent extremism (Council of the EU 2015q).*

3-4 December 2015 - The revised form for the suggested regulation on the use of passenger name record data was accepted by the Council and the European Parliament.

The latest EU immigration policies were discussed in-depth by ministers, as well as the steps needed to improve the Schengen area.

4 December 2015 - The Council has approved the European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training (Europol) draft rule as a compromise text reached with the European Parliament.

12 February 2016 - In the context of increased attempts to stop the financing of terrorism, the Council highlighted its objectives. This follows the Commission's published action plan to address existing problems and respond to recent terrorist attacks.

25 February 2016 - The Council discussed the migration problem and focused on recent shifts along the Western Balkans route. The Council decided on its negotiating stance over a proposed rule to strengthen database checks at external borders. Also, ministers reviewed the progress made for a European border and coast guard.

9 March 2016 - By granting emergency aid to meet the humanitarian needs of the enormous influx of arriving men, women, and children, the Council demonstrated its support for Greece. With a supply of food, housing, water, medication, and other basics, the EU aims to address the fundamental needs of refugees.

10-11 March 2016 - On its initial reading, the Council decided on its stance on a proposed rule involving the European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation and Training (Europol). Europol will assist with maintaining track of migrant movements, detecting weak points, and acting when the EU's external border is threatened. Considering the most recent terrorist incidents, the proposed directive on restricting the acquisition and ownership of firearms was the subject of a policy discussion in the Council.

11 March 2016 - The Council agreed on their stance over the proposed directive to combat terrorism and was ready to negotiate with the Parliament. The proposed Directive modifications and strengthens the current Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA in particular because it makes the following acts illegal: *Travelling for terrorist purposes to counter the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters; the funding, organisation and facilitation of such travels, including through logistical and material support, the provision of firearms and explosives, shelter, means of transportation, services, assets and goods; receiving training for terrorist purposes, including by providing possibility to investigate and prosecute training activities having the potential to lead to the committing of terrorist offences; providing funds to be used to commit terrorist offences and offences related to terrorist groups or terrorist activities (Council of the EU, 2016d).*

15 March 2016 - The Council approved a regulation establishing an EU emergency support mechanism to assist Greece and other member states in dealing with the unprecedented flow of refugees and responding quickly and effectively.
22 March 2016 – Brussels Terror Attacks
24 March 2016 - In a joint statement on the terror attack, EU Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs and representatives of EU institutions highlighted that this was an attack on a free, democratic society.
18-19 April 2016 - The Council agreed to intensify its focus on the Eastern/Central Mediterranean routes, fight against traffickers and smugglers and support Africa through the Emergency Trust Fund.
12 May 2016 - Ministers concentrated on its implementation six months following the approval of the Valletta action plan. Additionally, the Council approved the proposal for an implementation decision that would have permitted the continuance of temporary internal border controls under extraordinary conditions.
23 May 2016 - Ministers discussed the threat posed by Da'esh and the effective implementation of the EU's regional policy for Syria and Iraq. The Council emphasised its commitment to a broad and geographically balanced strategy for migration and underlined the need to enhance the work on the subject further.
9-10 June 2016 - Following several terrorist incidents in Europe, Ministers approved the Council's negotiating position on the draft regulation on the control of the acquisition and use of weapons, which updates and accomplishes the current directive 91/477/EEC. Also, ministers approved a strategy to improve information exchange and information management in response to the current migratory crisis and terrorist attacks.
22 June 2016 - On behalf of the Council, the European Parliament and the Permanent Representatives Committee reached a compromise about the suggested regulation of the European Border Coast Guard.
20 July 2016 - The Council continues to provide member states with substantial financial assistance to manage the migration crisis, protect the EU's external borders, and fight against terrorism and organised crime.
4 August 2016 - The Council renewed the planning mission EUBAM Libya's term until 21 August 2017. The EU mission helps develop capacity for migration, border security, and counter-terrorism.

14 September 2016 - The Council gave its final approval to the European Border and Coast Guard.
20 September 2016 - The Council approved a legal framework that, for the first time, will let the EU impose sanctions on ISIL/Da'esh, Al-Qaida, and individuals and businesses linked to or supporting them independently.
13 October 2016 - The Council approved the European Travel Document for Return, establishing the format, security features, and technological requirements for a joint European travel document to return third-country nationals who are illegally staying.
11 November 2016 - The recommendation offering for the extension of temporary internal border restrictions in extraordinary circumstances was accepted by the Council as an implementing resolution.
5 December 2016 - The agreement between the Slovak presidency and the European Parliament on the directive for fighting terrorism has been approved by the Permanent Representatives Committee. <i>See the 11 March 2016 section for more details.</i>
8 December 2016 - The Permanent Representative's Committee accepted the compromised text with the European Parliament on the Schengen Borders Code, which will be amended to strengthen checks against relevant information databases at external borders.
20 December 2016 - The agreement with the European Parliament about the proposal for a directive on control of the purchase and possession of weapons, which evaluates and completes the current directive 91/477/EEC, was confirmed by the Permanent Representatives Committee on behalf of the Council.
20 December 2016 - The Council has decided on its negotiating position regarding stricter EU regulations to stop the funding of terrorism and money laundering.

E. European Commission: Chronological Table

Chronology of key developments in the statements of the European Commission on the migration crisis: 2014 (1 July – 31 December) - 2015 -2016
29 August 2014 - As the humanitarian crisis in Iraq escalated, the European Commission increased its aid efforts through various instruments and the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). However, the capacity of the international community to assist remains limited. On 29 August 2014, the European Commission announced an additional €17 million in funding for Syrian refugees. This aid will support internally displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees, bringing the total assistance from 2007 to €145 million.
23 September 2014 - The European Commission allocated €215 million in aid to Syria and its neighbours, including €165 million for long-term development and €50 million for humanitarian assistance. In addition to relieving pressure on Syria's borders, the aid will help deal with the tens of thousands of refugees heading to Turkey - the largest influx of migrants since the start of the crisis.
2 October 2014 - EU Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs announced a €10 million project aimed at protecting the rights of migrants, particularly focusing on domestic workers and individuals trafficked between developing countries. This project seeks to provide direct social assistance and protection for migrants and their families, promote well-managed migration, develop labour policies, combat trafficking, and encourage dialogue between public authorities and employers.
3 November 2014 - The European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, expressed concern over the drowning of a boat carrying migrants in Turkey and called for more cooperation with other EU members and a comprehensive strategy to address migration issues.
10 November 2014 - European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, speaking at the conference 'Fundamental Rights and Migration to the EU', hosted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Italian Presidency of the EU, noted that the EU is focusing on migrants' rights, border management and child safety, highlighting the creation of a Mediterranean Task Force, the fight against smuggling and enhanced cooperation.
1 December 2014 - European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, declared at the OECD High-Level Policy Forum on Migration that the development of a new regular migration strategy, emphasising the benefits of highly skilled migrants for the labour market and society, is a top priority for the EU. The business

sector and social partners will be involved in the EU's efforts to integrate legal migrants into the labour market.
4 December 2014 - The European Commission has approved a €180 million package to address the Syrian crisis in Lebanon and Jordan. The action plan focuses on economic development and education for refugees and internally displaced people.
9 December 2014 - The European Commission has stepped up its humanitarian aid, providing €10 million in cash, non-food items and medical treatment to Syrian refugees in Turkey and Syria.
15 December 2014 - The European Commission and Italy have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the first-ever EU Regional Trust Fund. The fund, financed by €3 million from Italy and €20 million from the EU budget, will initially be used to help host communities and refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries.
7 January 2015 - Charlie Hebdo Attack
11 January 2015 - Speaking at the international ministerial meeting in Paris on Charlie Hebdo, Dimitris Avramopoulos said that the European Commission supports Member States' efforts to combat terrorism as the European Union faces increasing terrorist threats. Member States have also agreed to work to improve access to information, prevent radicalisation, fight money laundering, develop a European Passenger Name Record system and promote cooperation and financial assistance.
29 January 2015 - Due to the deteriorating humanitarian situation inside Syria and the number of refugees in neighbouring countries, the Commission has allocated an additional €136 million in humanitarian aid for the Syrian crisis.
6 February 2015 - The European Commission and the High Representative presented the first comprehensive EU strategy to address the crises in Syria and Iraq. The strategy included an additional €1 billion for development, stability and relief.
12 February 2015 - A speech by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, ahead of the informal European Council meeting on 12 February, highlighted the EU's desire to combat terrorism following the Charlie Hebdo attack. He mentioned that the European Commission has to ensure that the response is balanced, protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals while considering their security. The first step in the European response to terrorism must be the straightforward application of previously approved agreements, such as the Schengen Borders Code.

19 February 2015 - Dimitris Avramopoulos underlined that the Commission is developing a new European Agenda on Migration to address global migration concerns while supporting Italy and other EU Member States facing high migratory pressures, including emergency funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.
4 March 2015 - In order to better manage the influx of migrants from third countries, the European Commission has launched a comprehensive European Agenda on Migration, which includes measures such as a robust Common Asylum System, a new European policy on legal migration, a stronger fight against irregular migration and human trafficking, and the securing of Europe's external borders.
17 March 2015 - Following his visit to Europol and the official launch of JOT MARE, Commissioner Avramopoulos underlined the importance of Europol's role in detecting illegal content, countering radicalisation and fighting terrorism.
19 April 2015 - As the tragic situation in the Mediterranean continued, the Commission issued a statement expressing its commitment to prevent further loss of life and to implement comprehensive measures to manage migration. The Commission announced it was in continuous consultation with agencies, international organisations and Member States to prepare a new European migration strategy.
28 April 2015 - The Commission has launched a new €10 million programme to stem the flow of foreign fighters from North Africa, the Middle East and the Western Balkans and to tackle radicalisation in the Sahel-Maghreb region.
29 April 2015 - Commissioner Avramopoulos highlighted the EU's holistic approach to migration during the EP plenary debate on the European Council's meeting on migration. He also noted that the European Commission will present the European Agenda on Migration, involving agencies such as EUROPOL, FRONTEX, EASO, EMSA and EUROJUST, focusing on resettlement, relocation and concrete solutions.
29 May 2015 - In response to the Syrian crisis, the EU has set up a €40 million regional trust fund to help 400,000 Syrian refugees and host communities in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.
26 June 2015 - Based on the Commission's proposal, the European Council agreed to relocate 40,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to other EU countries and 20,000 to third countries.
30 June 2015 - Following Commissioner Avramopoulos' visit to Budapest and talks with Minister of Interior Sándor Pintér and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó, it

was announced that the EU is ready to assist Hungary in managing migration flows. The assistance includes deploying hotspot teams, offering financial support, activating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, and organising a high-level conference on the Western Balkans route. It was also noted that the above assistance will facilitate the processing of asylum applications and the return of irregular migrants.

20 July 2015 - Commissioner Avramopoulos' remarks after the Justice and Home Affairs Council revealed that 22,504 refugees have been resettled so far, and the European Union has reached a record high in the number of refugees resettled. However, with 40,000 already relocated, the total number of refugees needing international protection in the EU is almost reached. Member States have pledged 32,256 places, of which 7,744 have been allocated by December 2015. Later this year, the Commission will propose a permanent emergency mechanism to deal with unexpected developments. The "hotspots" strategy will allow EU organisations to improve asylum procedures, support return operations and act quickly at Europe's external borders.

3 August 2015 - The European Commission has allocated €6 million to meet the growing needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers affected by the ongoing conflict in Libya.

6 August 2015 - Frans Timmermans, Federica Mogherini and Dimitris Avramopoulos expressed their sadness at the incident in the Mediterranean and underlined the need for a comprehensive EU response to migration, highlighting increased naval presence, cooperation with African nations and support for frontline countries.

4 September 2015 - First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Avramopoulos travelled to Athens and Kos as part of the Commission's visits to some of the Member States most affected by the refugee crisis, proposing an enhanced package to resettle 120,000 refugees.

17 September 2015 - In remarks during his visit to Hungary, Commissioner Avramopoulos underlined that the EU has already provided €7 million in emergency funding for the increase of asylum reception capacity. He underlined that the EU will continue to address the refugee situation, cooperate with neighbours and defend its external borders. Avramopoulos noted that most Syrians arriving in Europe need protection and that the EU has a moral obligation to provide it.

23 September 2015 - In his speech, President Juncker stressed that the solution to the refugee crisis is the joint protection of the EU's external borders, which requires more staff and resources, without closing the borders or building fences. He also highlighted that the

Commission has doubled its funding from €4.6 billion to €9.2 billion to support immediate neighbourhood stability, emergency assistance and humanitarian aid.
6 October 2015 - President Juncker presented Turkey with a draft Action Plan for enhanced cooperation between the two parties on refugee and migration management.
8 October 2015 - The European Commission outlined how it would provide €17 million to help Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia cope with unprecedented refugee flows.
1 November 2015 - The Commission approved humanitarian aid of €28 million and €43 million, respectively, for Syrians displaced by the conflict in their host communities in Jordan and Lebanon.
12 November 2015 - European Commission President Juncker launched the EU Emergency Trust with donations from EU Member States and donors totalling €1.8 billion and funding from EU financial instruments. The fund will prioritise displaced people in Africa and irregular migration.
13 November 2015 - Paris terror attacks
15 November 2015 - A few days after the terrorist attacks in Paris, European Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve and Deputy Prime Minister Etienne Schneider, representing the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU, issued a joint statement. They underlined the EU's commitment to coordinate swift action in response to the horrific attacks, focusing on a European PNR, weapons security and strengthening external border controls.
18 November 2015 - The European Commission has adopted measures to strengthen firearms control across the EU.
24 November 2015 - In a speech at the plenary session of the European Parliament: "Preventing radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations", Commissioner Avramopoulos explained that the EU is implementing measures to prevent and counter radicalisation. These actions include the establishment of the Radicalisation Awareness Network and the adoption of the European Security Agenda.
1 December 2015 - The EU Regional Trust Fund has approved €350 million to support 1.5 million Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.
2 December 2015 - Following the tragic terrorist attacks in Paris, the European Commission has adopted a series of measures to step up the fight against terrorism and the illicit trafficking of weapons and explosives.

14 December 2015 - The Commission and UNHCR announced an €80 million scheme to finance private sector accommodation for 20,000 more places for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece.
16 December 2015 - To address irregular migration and displacement, the European Commission has launched 16 initiatives totalling €300 million, 10 of which are in the Horn of Africa.
21 January 2016 - Speech by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the European Parliament's plenary session on the increased terrorist threat, outlining that the Commission has accelerated the implementation of its European Security Agenda, stressing the need to improve border control and to avoid classifying migrants as terrorists, given the importance of the increased terrorist threat to the EU.
2 February 2016 - The Commission presented an action plan to strengthen the fight against terrorist financing. The proposed plan focuses on monitoring financial transactions and cutting off terrorist organisations' sources of income.
22 February 2016 - Speaking at the launch of the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, Commissioner Avramopoulos demonstrated the Commission's willingness to combat migrant smuggling by strengthening Europol's operational presence and promoting cooperation with relevant organisations.
4 March 2016 - The World Food Programme, in partnership with the Turkish Red Crescent, has received €40 million from the European Commission. This comes on top of €55 million to support Syrian schoolchildren in Turkey.
22 March 2016 – Brussels Terror Attacks
22 March 2016 - In response to the terrorist attacks in Brussels, the President of the European Commission assures that security will always be a top priority for the European institutions and outlines their commitment to work together in the fight against terrorism.
23 March 2016 - To secure the EU's external borders, the Commission has proposed additional anti-terrorism measures targeting organised crime and terrorist groups. These measures include amending the Schengen Borders Code and proposing a European Border and Coast Guard.
6 April 2016 - The European Commission adopted a Communication on Stronger Information Systems for Borders and Security to improve data management architecture and internal security.

12 April 2016 - Commissioner Avramopoulos addressed the plenary session of the European Parliament, where he spoke about the PNR Directive and the European Commission's joint efforts to combat terrorism.
18 April 2016 - The European Commission has unveiled 20 initiatives totalling more than €280 million to help the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin deal with displaced people and irregular migration in Africa. The initiatives focus on improving migration management, promoting economic growth and addressing instability.
3 May 2016 - The European Commission has announced the allocation of €3 million for a national polio immunisation campaign in Syria to provide essential health care to 2 million children in underserved areas.
18 May 2016 - The Commission approved the latest emergency relocation and resettlement program progress report.
7 June 2016 - The European Commission has proposed a new results-oriented partnership framework to focus EU action on managing migration. The framework aims to save lives at sea, improve returns, facilitate migrants and refugees and address root causes.
14 June 2016 - The Commission presented initiatives to support Member States in preventing and combating violent radicalisation leading to terrorism.
5 July 2016 - The European Commission and the High Representative proposed a joint communication and legislative proposal to strengthen security sector reform and promote sustainable development in partner countries.
14 September 2016 - President Juncker delivered his State of the Union address, emphasising that the EU could enhance security by strengthening border controls, improving information sharing, and increasing the security of travel documents.
6 October 2016 - The European Border and Coast Guard Agency, responsible for monitoring the EU's external borders and addressing potential security risks to the Schengen area, will be established at the Bulgarian Turkish border to strengthen member countries' capacity at the external borders.
25 October 2016 - The European Commission will prolong the temporary border controls at the Schengen borders of Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway for three months because the need for stabilisation and the "back to Schengen" requirements have not yet been fully met.

16 November 2016 - The European Commission recommended creating the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to improve the security of the EU's internal and external borders by strengthening security checks on travellers without visas.

15 December 2016 - The Commission approved the EU to invest €170 million to tackle instability and irregular migration in the Horn of Africa

21 December 2016 - The Commission proposed strengthening the Schengen Information System to fight terrorism and cross-border crime better.