



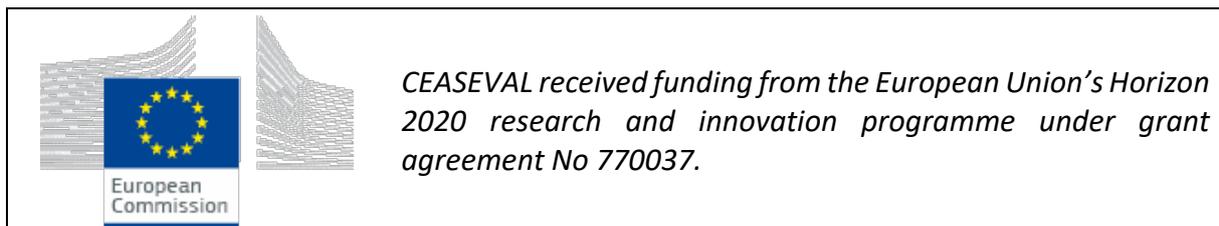
Patterns of politicisation on refugees and policy responses: The case of Germany

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Abstract

Since the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers during the year 2015, the question of how to deal with asylum seeking immigrants in political but also in practical terms has become one of the most crucial policy issues on all governance levels throughout Europe. The politicization of the topic led to policy changes and electoral success of nationalist parties throughout Europe. This country report examines politicization patterns in Germany, focusing on the question of responsibility sharing in the field of asylum and refugee migration between 2015 and 2017. Looking at two episodes of contention (May-November 2015 and September-December 2017), we analyze the development of public opinion, parliamentary debates and media discourses.

Our results show that the question of responsibility was not prominent in the discourses, while migration and related issues developed high salience and manifold and changing connotations. While in 2015, many discourses dealt with human tragedies in the context of flight and the necessity to act up and show solidarity via humanitarian engagement, migration in 2017 was often connoted with “strangeness” and “security threat”, and had triggered debates on deservingness of individuals regarding their causes of flight, and limits of solidarity in terms of immigration numbers and integration efforts. Two major discourse lines – the integrative and the preventive discourse – developed from those processes and directly relate to competing policy approaches regarding strategies of the EU to face the reception of asylum seekers.

Keywords: politicisation, refugees, Germany, migration, asylum responsibility sharing,

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1. Introduction

Since the arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers during the year 2015, the question of how to deal with asylum seeking immigrants in political but also in practical terms has become one of the most crucial policy issues on all governance levels throughout Europe. Faced with rapidly increasing numbers of migrants travelling via the so-called Balkan route and the central Mediterranean route in 2015, countries along those routes as well as the most important reception countries developed numerous pragmatic approaches on the local and regional level to accept, distribute and accommodate asylum seekers. At the same time, debates about how to achieve a fair distribution of asylum seekers among EU countries, and how to harmonize the reception of refugees and the processing of asylum applications, in order to reduce incentives for onward-movements of asylum seekers increased on the national and EU-level. This process was paralleled by a rise in politicization of the issues of migration, reception and integration of asylum seekers.

Politicization is defined as “an increase in salience and diversity of opinions on specific societal topics”, and it develops when “issues become more contested and there are increasing public demands on public policy” (De Wilde 2011, 561). While this is a general pattern, there is still considerable variation throughout Europe in terms of how politicization processes develop, how debates are framed, how the mutual influence of actors in the politicization process is shaped, and how politicization affects policy outcomes and/or electoral behavior (see Barlai et al. 2017; Glorius 2018).

Given the necessity of a joint European approach towards the reception and distribution of asylum seekers in the EU, we need to assess how such a joint approach can be developed, and what obstacles it might face on the different levels of governance and by different political actors. Also, we need to keep in mind that the reform of the Coming European Asylum System (CEAS) might serve as a litmus test for the further European integration (or disintegration) process. In the light of these considerations, this country report examines the politicization patterns focusing on the question of responsibility sharing in the field of asylum and refugee migration in Germany. We do so by investigating two episodes of contention: The first episode stretches from May to November 2015 and is characterized by an increased visibility of asylum seekers on migration routes to Europe and to major destination countries. At the same time European governments tried to control migration flows and discussed a fair distribution of asylum seekers among EU member states. The second episode under observation looks at the period before and after the national parliamentary election in Germany and spans from September to December 2017. The topics of asylum and refugee policy heavily influenced the parliamentary elections of 2017. A majority of voters (55%) were dissatisfied with the Grand Coalitions’ refugee policies in the years of the migrant crisis. Hence, the governing parties CDU/CSU and SPD¹ suffered significant losses in the election.² At the same time the right-wing populist Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) entered the Bundestag for the first time in the party’s history and became the third strongest parliamentary party group there. As the Free Democratic Party (FDP) was able to re-enter the German Bundestag, the Federal Assembly became a six-party parliament. As several coalition options were possible, government formation took a long time and was only successful in March 2018, after our period of observation.

¹ CDU = Christian Democratic Union, CSU = Christian Social Union, SPD = Social Democratic Party of Germany

² The CDU/CSU lost 8.6 % of the vote, the SPD 5.2%. The results marked the worst result for the SPD and the second-worst result for the CDU/CSU since 1949.

The paper is organized as follows: The introductory part (chapter 1) gives an overview on the dynamics of asylum seeker migration to Germany since reunification and outlines our research methodology. Chapter 2 and 3 present the results of our analysis for the two episodes of contention by looking at the development of public opinion, political debates, and media discourses. Lastly, Chapter 4 delivers a comparative interpretation of results with regards to our research questions.

1.1 The dynamics of asylum seeker migration to Germany

The year 2015 marks an exceptional moment in the migration history of Germany. An estimated 1.1 million asylum seekers³ arrived in Germany and about 442,000 formally applied for asylum (BAMF 2016, BMI 2016a, 2016c). Already in 2013 and 2014 the number of asylum seekers in Germany increased significantly notably of asylum seekers from Syria, Eritrea, the West Balkan States and the Russian Federation⁴. The dynamics of the summer 2015 led to a number of instantaneous decisions by the German government. For example at the end of August 2015 the Merkel government suspended the Dublin regulation for asylum seekers from Syria in order to relieve pressure on Greece and Hungary. As the migration numbers on the Balkan route were accelerating, at the night from 4th to 5th September the German chancellor Angela Merkel and the Austrian chancellor Werner Faymann jointly decided to accept several thousands of asylum seekers who were stranded in Hungary. They were transported to Germany and Austria by train, and welcomed in Austria and Germany by numerous individuals gathering at train stations greet them and to provide for food, water, clothes and shelter. This was a first strong demonstration of the so-called “welcoming cultures”. Those scenes and the slogan “Refugees welcome” dominated the media coverage for weeks during the summer 2015 (see IFEM 2015). At the same time the number of critics increased arguing that those pictures would motivate even more migrants to travel on to Germany and that the abandonment of the Dublin regulation was unlawful.⁵

Since September 2015, up to 10,000 persons per day arrived at the Austrian-German Border and needed to be taken care of, before they were registered and re-distributed throughout the country. On September 13th 2015 the Schengen regulation was temporarily suspended⁶ and border controls were re-introduced at the Austrian-German border in order to regain control over the migration movements. The arrival numbers remained high until the effective closure of the Balkan route in March

³ This number is based on the persons registered via the “EASY”-system, an IT application used for the initial distribution of asylum seekers among the German Federal *Länder*. As the number of arrivals was so enormous in the summer and fall of 2015, not everyone wishing to do so could formally apply for asylum in Germany in 2015 and many of them were able to do so only in 2016. That year the number of formal asylum applications reached 722,370, the highest in the history of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

⁴ The top three countries of origin of asylum seekers in Germany in 2013 were Russia, Syria and Serbia and in 2014 Syria, Eritrea and Serbia.

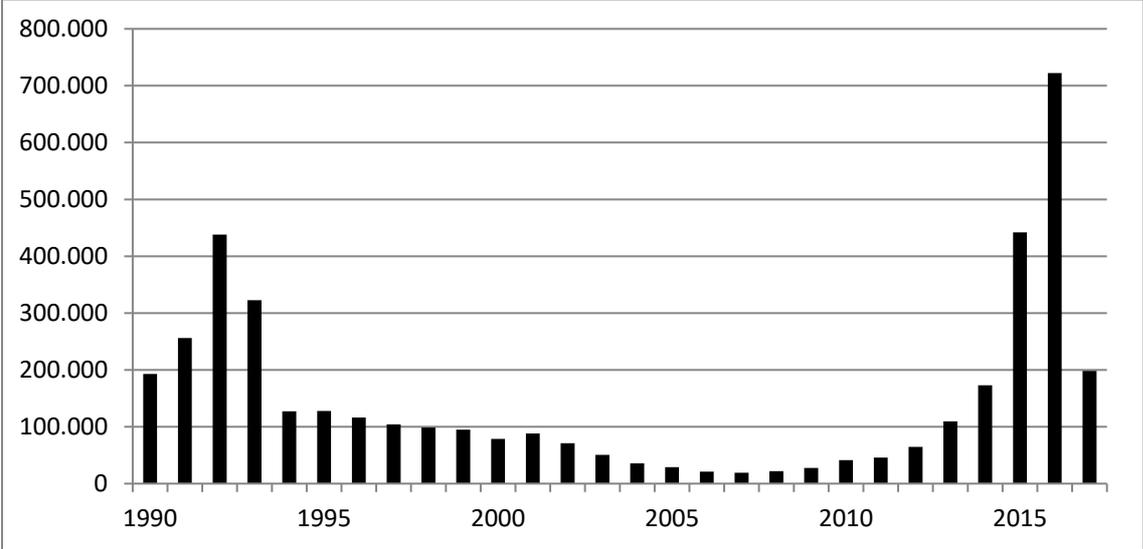
⁵ This topic is still highly politicized today. In political and public debates, this event is mostly referred to as the “Merkel’s opening of borders” even though the metaphor is wrong, as Germany as part of the Schengen system had open borders at that time. A typical rhetoric on this event can be observed in the following speech of parliamentarian Gunter Krichbaum (CDU/CSU) at the 130. Parliamentary session on 15 October 2015: *“It was a Friday night, when the Austrian chancellor Werner Faymann called and told us of the dramatic situation. There are certainly moments, where you have to make a decision and where you don’t have time to initiate a working group or such. Therefore, it was right to let the refugees in at the borders, as they already were in the European Union. This decision was courageous and deserves respect.”*

⁶ The border controls as an exception of Schengen regulations were prolonged since then and are ongoing at the time of writing (September 2018).

2016 and the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal. While in January 2016, more than 100,000 arrivals were registered, this number went down to 16,000 in April 2016 (BMI 2016b).

Already the early 1990s, following the disintegration of the Eastern bloc states and the former Soviet Union and the war in former Yugoslavia, Germany experienced periods with strong influxes of asylum seekers. (Fig. 1). As a consequence, the German Government under Helmut Kohl implemented the so-called „asylum-compromise“ in 1993, which introduced important restrictions into the formerly rather generous German asylum law, including well as the implementation of the “safe third country” regulation, a companion to the Dublin Regulation that was signed in 1990, but went into effect only in 1997. Reaching their high in 1992, Asylum application numbers strongly decreased after due to the introduction of these new regulations as well as the end of the Yugoslav wars and remained below 100,000 per year from 1998 until 2013.⁷ The general increase of asylum seeking migrants at the European shores since 2011 also reached Germany and produced the peak of about 1.1 million registered arrivals in 2015, which brought a peak of asylum applications as of 722,370 in the year 2016.⁸ After that, arrival numbers as well as formal asylum application decreased again, but are still higher than they have been since the implementation of the “asylum compromise”.

Figure 1: Development of Asylum Applications (First Applications) in Germany, 1990-2017



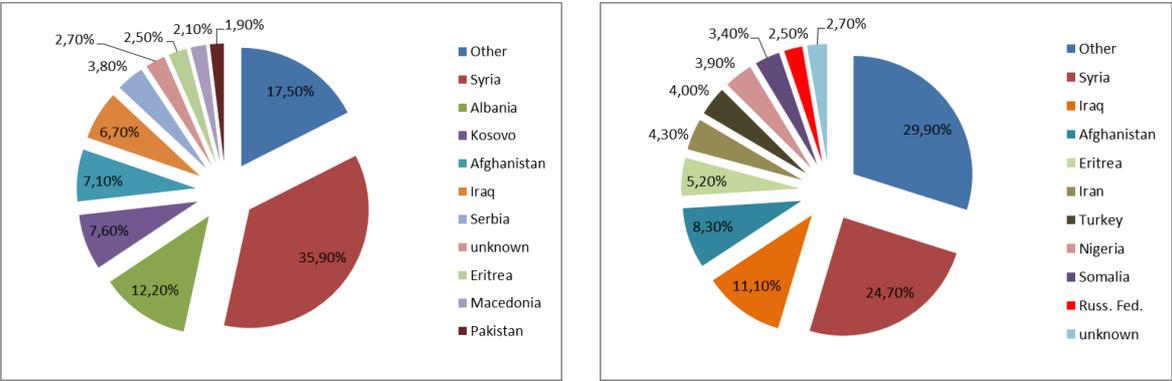
Source: Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees, Nuremberg

⁷ Based on numbers for first applications for asylum (BAMF, 2018b, p.15)

⁸ As the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees was ill-equipped to handle the large number of arriving asylum seekers, a considerable share of those who arrived in 2015 were only able to file their asylum application in 2016 (BMI 2016c).

Due to refugee movements and new regulations, the ethnic composition of asylum seekers in Germany has also changed significantly in the most recent years (fig. 2). Since 2016, Syria is the number 1 country of origin for asylum seekers in Germany followed by Afghanistan and Iraq. In And while the Syrians also were the strongest group among asylum applicants in 2014 and 2015, Serbs, Kosovars and Albanians were among the top nations from which asylum seekers came from in those years. However, following the declaration of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Macedonia as safe countries of origin in 2014 and 2015 and the closure of the Balkan route, numbers of asylum seekers from these states declined significantly⁹. Other prominent countries of origin since 2015 include Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, Russia, Pakistan and Turkey. Further, the group of asylum seekers without clearly identified country of origin remains high (rank 7 country of origin in 2015 and 2016, rank 10 in 2017; BAMF 2018b, 21).

Figure 2 a/b: Ten main source countries of asylum applicants (first application) in Germany, in % 2015 2016



Data Source: Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees, Nuremberg

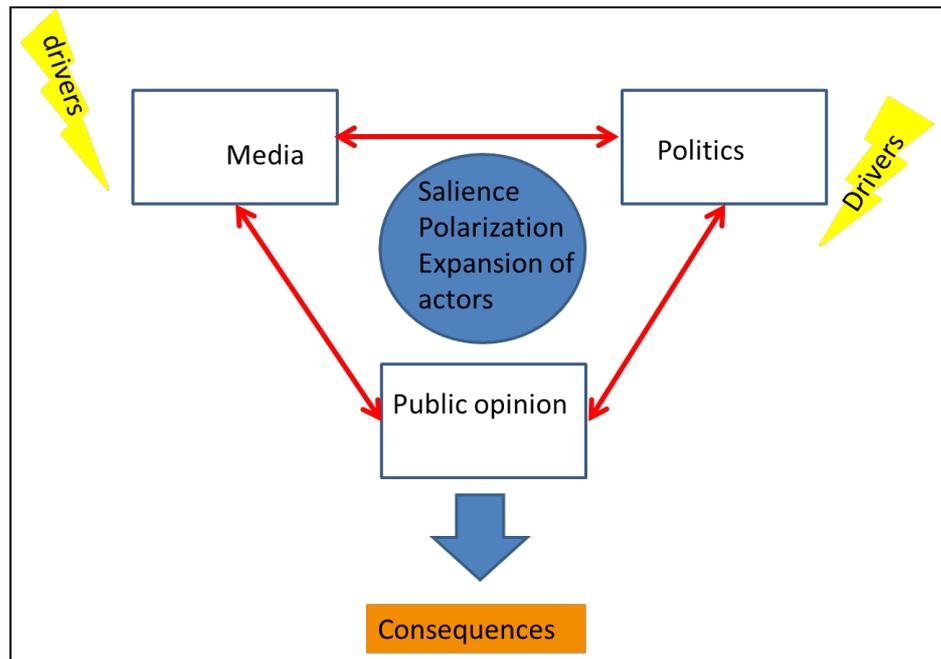
1.2 Key Research Questions and Methodology

The report analyses, to what extend and how responsibility vis-à-vis refugees in Europe has become an issue of politicization in Germany in the two periods under observation. Our guiding questions are: Who is considered to be responsible? To whom should they be responsible? What does it mean to be responsible?

In doing so, we will analyze relevant opinion polls, parliamentary debates and media reports, focusing on the question of relocation and responsibility sharing in the light of humanitarian obligations. With this, we aim to comparatively examine politicization processes among three different groups of actors: the public (through opinion polls), policy makers (through parliamentary debates) and the media (through media analysis). Further we attempt to identify drivers of politicization as well as interactions and mutual influences between those groups (fig. 3).

⁹ In 2017 no Western Balkan nation was among the top 10 countries of origin for asylum seekers. That is the first time since the Yugoslav wars.

Figure 3: Research concept for the investigation of politicization processes



Source: own design, Birgit Glorius 2018

1.2.1 The concept of politicization and communicative frames

Politicization is most commonly understood as “an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation” in a specific political entity, as for example the EU (De Wilde 2011, 560). The term politicization has been extensively used for the analysis of the European polity and governance processes (De Wilde 2011; De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Green-Pedersen 2012; Hutter and Grande 2014; Statham and Trenz 2013; Zürn et al. 2012). However, until today there is no established research concept for its analysis. Instead, as De Wilde (2011) points out, there are varying research concepts, based on varying disciplinary foci. For the empirical observation of politicization, De Wilde (2011) suggests to focus on three components: 1) an increase in salience of a specific issue, resulting from societal actors’ increasing attention to it, 2) a diversity of opinions on a specific societal topic, leading to the polarization of opinions, and 3) an expansion of actors and audiences engaging in the process of opinion formation (de Wilde 2016 et al., 4). Salience and polarization are two analytically independent but related components of politicization. Only if both occur with respect to a specific societal topic and moment in time, we can speak of politicization (see Consterdine 2018, 3). The expansion of public actors implies a multiplication and diversification of engagement, including direct participation, debate or public protest (De Wilde et al. 2016, 6). These manifestations of engagement are time and space specific, and they can be triggered by specific instances, so called “episodes of contention” (see Tilly and Tarrow 2017, in De Wilde 2011, 563, following Consterdine 2018, 4). Consterdine, in her overview of political science literature on public attitudes, concludes that public opinion sets boundaries within which policymakers shape their policy response (Consterdine 2018, 5, following Freeman, Hansen and Leal 2013).

Addressing the mutual relations between policy makers, the media and the public, we have to consider how public debates evolve and how different actors promote their specific interests. Framing theory suggests that public actors engage in a discursive contest in order to mobilize support for their argumentation and delegitimize opposing viewpoints. Frames in this context can be defined as

interpretive storylines that systematize information, reduce complexity and raise awareness of the issues at stake (Gamson and Modigliani 1987). As frames are used to highlight specific “aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman 1993, 52), they can play a crucial role in strategically structuring the social world. Also, as Lichtenstein et al. (2017) (referring to Reese 2001) point out, frames are closely related to culturally embedded values, beliefs and ideas and therefore have a high level of persistence over time.¹⁰ Thus, politicization processes, based on communicative action, are contingent in terms of time, place, and actor constellation, and result in different patterns “with respect to the relative strength of salience and polarization in various settings, the specific constellation of actors and audiences, the behavioral manifestation of politicization and its substantive content” (De Wilde et al. 2016, 6). Both, the framing theory and the politicization approach, will serve as a conceptual basis for our analysis.

1.2.2 Research Methodology

In order to answer the research questions outlined above, the report assesses the salience and polarization of opinions in among the public, in political debates and in the media. It will also point out indicators for the third category of politicization following De Wilde (2011), the expansion of actors. It will study the issue of responsibility and responsibility sharing in the three areas under observation, identifying the meaning of responsibility for the various groups of actors, and also analyzing the triggers and outcomes of discourses on responsibility and responsibility sharing, specifically in terms of policy changes. The report will use data from three sources:

- (1) Public opinion: In order to assess the development of public opinion on the topic of responsibility and responsibility sharing, several opinion polls were analyzed that deal with questions of migration and integration in a broad way, notably the Eurobarometer survey, which has already been exploited in a comparative research paper by Glorius (2018). Unfortunately, specific questions on responsibility and responsibility sharing are rarely addressed in opinion polls, therefore we need to use more indirect questions about perceptions on migration and migration politics among the public.
- (2) Parliamentary debates and electoral programs: For the analysis of the political discourse for both periods of contention those sessions of the parliamentary debates were selected for the corpus that dealt with relocation quotas, solidarity and responsibility sharing within Europe and within Germany. In addition, we analyzed the election programs of the six¹¹ parties which entered the 19th German Bundestag after the elections of 24 September 2017, focusing on asylum policy and Germany as immigration country. The selection of the single documents is explained in more detail in the respective subchapters.

¹⁰ Reflecting the historic development of the migration debate in Germany, Lichtenstein et al. (2017) define four communicative frames: 1) the economic frames, stressing the (perceived positive or negative) effects of immigration on the economy, 2) the cultural frames, ranging from “fears of migration due to cultural differences, on one hand, to welcoming a plurality of cultures as enriching society, on the other hand” (ibd., 111), 3) the xenophobic frames, which “perceive migrants and migration in general as threats to German society” and 4) the legal frames, which “highlight national and EU laws as the basis for adequate migration politics and suggest political definitions of asylum and appropriate legal regulations” (ibd., 112-113).

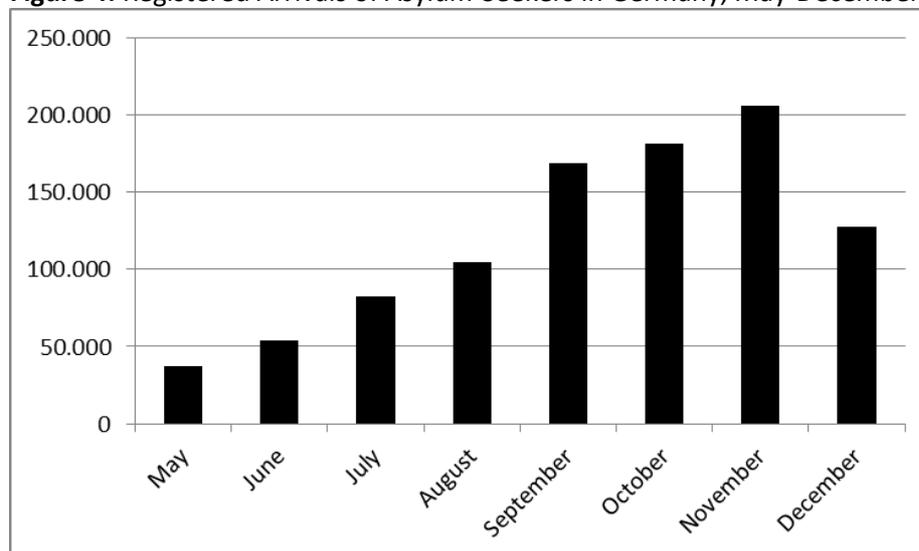
¹¹ The following parties entered the 19th German Bundestag: CDU, CSU, SPD, GREEN, LEFT, AfD. As CSU is only a regional party and acts jointly with CDU in the parliament, we did not include the CSU electoral program in our analysis.

(3) Media: For the media analysis the three online portals of print media with the biggest audience in Germany were chosen. These are: Spiegel online, Focus online and bild.de.¹² We searched for articles containing the term “relocation quota”. As there is not just one term for relocation quota in German, the following alternative search terms were entered to the search engine as well: *Verteilungsquote* (Distribution Quota), *Umverteilungsquote* (Redistribution Quota), *EU-Quote* (EU-Quota), *Flüchtlingsquote* (Refugee Quota), *Umverteilung* (Redistribution), *Verteilung Flüchtling* (Distribution Refugees), *Verteilungsschlüssel* (Distribution Key), further we looked for articles containing the words *Umverteilung* and *Quote* (Redistribution + Quota), as well as *Verteilung* and *Quote* (Distribution + Quota).

2. First Episode of Contention (May 2015 to November 2015)

The first episode of contention is characterized by the considerable increase of asylum seekers in Germany, especially during the months August to November 2015, when 660,499 asylum seekers entered the country (fig. 4). However, as established above, the increase of asylum migration had already started in 2014 when 173,072 asylum applications were filed, compared to 109,580 in 2013. Thus the effects on the municipalities and the public were already quite visible at the beginning of our first episode of contention. At that time (May 2015), the Federal Agency for Asylum and Refugees (BAMF) had estimated that about 400,000 asylum seeking migrants would arrive in 2015. At the end of 2015, about 1.1 million people were registered as asylum seekers by the EASY registration system. Therefore, practical concerns about proper registration, internal distribution and local reception dominated the public discourse, combined with considerations about the role of Germany and Europe in the global asylum crisis.

Figure 4: Registered Arrivals of Asylum-Seekers in Germany, May-December 2015



Source: EASY-Registration System

At the local level, pragmatic as well as emotionalized approaches to the reception of asylum seekers emerged. While all over Germany, civil society initiatives quickly developed reception and support structures for asylum seekers and thus bridged the initial gap of state provisions that became obvious

¹² The three online portals were selected according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 (Newman et al. 2017, 70-71).

in fall 2015, asylum-skeptical groups tried to prevent the establishment of asylum camps in their municipality through demonstrations, agitation in social media, and also direct attacks.¹³ Arguments by asylum-skeptical actors focused on the consequence of asylum seeker reception at the local level and the welfare state, but also extended to broader topics such as terrorism and security, sexual assault and gender issues, and culture and identity, claiming that the massive influx of strangers (especially male Muslims) would endanger the German culture, identity and way of living. Those debates were especially virulent in social media, where the number of anti-immigrant groups and the intensity of hate posts accelerated since 2015 (BKA 2018: 57).

The enormous arrival of asylum seekers, the public debates on the German role in the European reception context, as well as the local reactions and discourses inspired the development of new actors in the political field. The most important are the PEGIDA-movement and the new political party AfD. The political movement PEGIDA („*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*“/“Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the western world”), was initially founded as a Facebook group which criticized the immigration of Muslims to Germany. The movement organized weekly demonstrations (called “*Abendspaziergänge*”/ “evening strolls”) in the East German city of Dresden since fall 2014 to express their opposition against immigration and diversity in Germany, but also against the perceived “ruling elites” and the media (which are scandalized as “*Lügenpresse*”/ “fake news/ lying media”, combined with numerous direct attacks against journalists covering the demonstrations). Having started with only several hundred participants, the demonstrations reached a first peak in January 2015 after the Charlie Hebdo shooting with over 20,000 participants, and a second peak in October 2015 with 20-25,000 participants. Since then, participation and frequency of the walks have decreased. The two walks organized in 2018 were attended by 1,400 to 1,800 and 3,200 to 4,100 participants respectively. The PEGIDA movement and their leading personnel are part of a dense right-wing network, extends into Neo-Nazi- and Hooligan-groups as well as into more intellectual right-wing groups such as the “Identitarian movement” (“*Die Identitären*”) and the right-wing political party AfD (“*Alternative für Deutschland*” – Alternative for Germany”). Even though the origin of PEGIDA and the highest density of right-wing networks is in East Germany, there are also local branches in West German regions, such as “Dügida” in Dusseldorf and Fragida in Frankfurt/Main (see Bebnowsky 2015, Decker 2015, Häusler, A., Roeser 2015). The appearance of PEGIDA can be interpreted as a non-parliamentarian opposition, representing skeptical voices on migration politics which felt not represented by the current political elite.

The second new political actor is the political party AfD (“*Alternative für Deutschland*” – Alternative for Germany”), which was founded in February 2013 of a group of conservative intellectuals. Initially, the main issue of the party was Euro-criticism, but with the growth of the party, right-wing populism gained ground and promoted topics such as renationalization, anti-immigrant positions and the corresponding cultural, identity and xenophobic frames. After months of internal debate over the direction the party should take, it broke apart in July 2015. One of the founding members, Bernd Lucke, representing the fiscal-conservative fraction of the party, resigned from party leadership and left the AfD. Under the new leadership of Frauke Petry the party moved further to the right and established xenophobic, nationalist, racist, and revisionist positions. This shift proved successful: While the AfD had narrowly missed the 5% threshold to enter the Bundestag in 2013, it became more and more

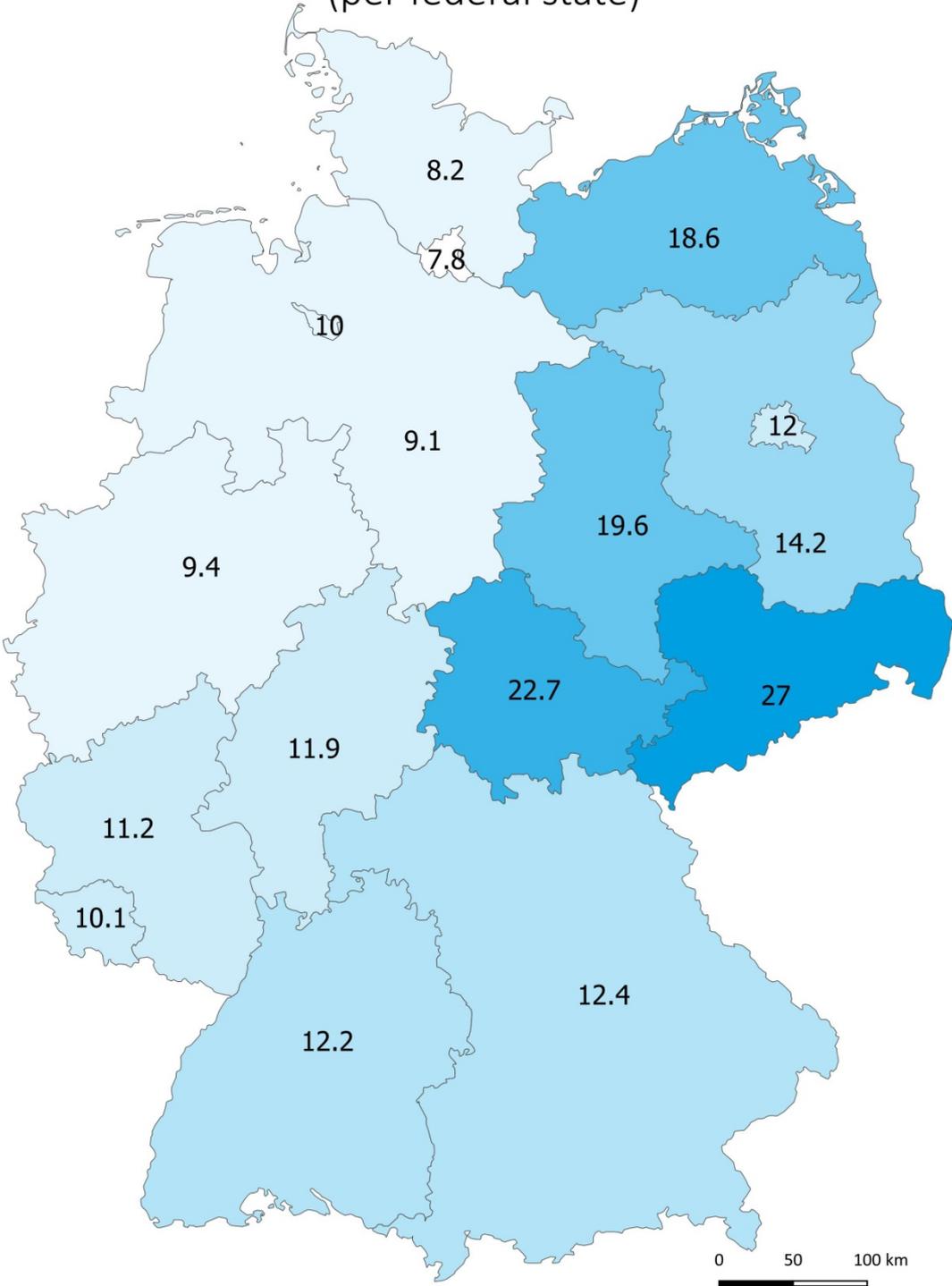
¹³ Attacks against asylum seeker accommodations increased more than quintupled in 2015 with 1,031 attacks, compared to 199 attacks in 2014. In 2016 and 2017, the numbers of attacks declined again (2016: 995; 2017: 312) (BKA 2018: 56).

popular after that and has since entered all German state parliaments. Further, in the Bundestag election of 2017, it became the third strongest party, receiving 12.6% of the national vote. As the two strongest party parliamentary groups CDU/CSU and SPD formed a government, the AfD became the strongest opposition party in national parliament, which comes with increased visibility and political privileges such as chairing the budget committee and being the first party allowed to respond to government statements in parliament. Electoral support in the Bundestag election strongly varied on a regional level. While it received 10.7 % in West Germany, it became second strongest party in East Germany, receiving 21.9%. And in Saxony it not only managed to receive three direct mandates, but it also was the party to receive the highest share of the popular party vote, albeit just narrowly (AfD 27.0%, CDU 26.9%; see Decker 2015, Geiges et al. 2015, Pfahl-Traughber 2015, Vorländer et al. 2016, Tagesschau 2017) (fig. 5).

This general framework to asylum and refugee reception in Germany needs to be considered, as our analysis will show, that the topic of responsibility and responsibility sharing was not at the core of public, political and media debates. However, as the analysis will reveal, the definition of responsibility and the question on *which* level of governance *what* kind of responsibility should be enacted is a crucial issue for the German debate.

Figure 5: Share of AfD votes, German parliamentary elections 2017 (per federal state)

Share of AfD votes, German parliamentary elections 2017 (per federal state)



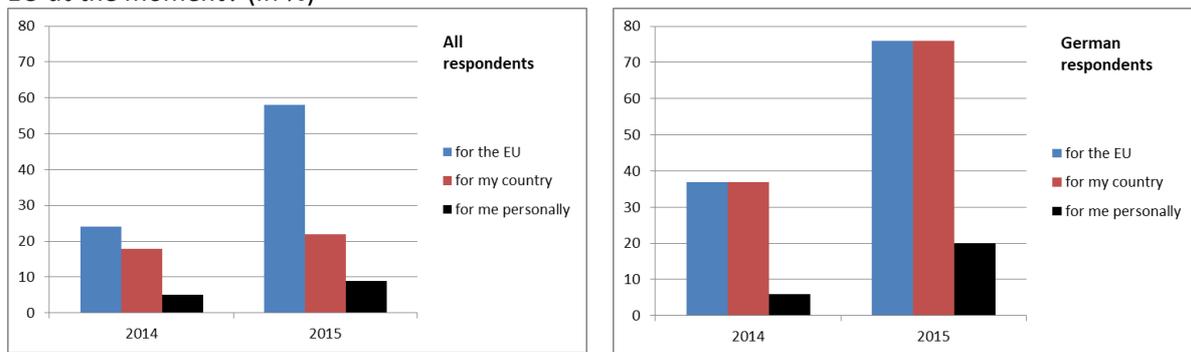
Editor: Stephan Schurig

Sources: Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy 2017 (<http://www.geodatenzentrum.de>);
The Federal Returning Officer 2017 (<https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de>)

2.1 Public opinion

The *salience* of “immigration” in public opinion can be analyzed with data of the Eurobarometer, where respondents are asked regularly about the two most important issues for them personally, for their country, and for the European Union, choosing from a list of various issues. For our first period of contention, we can see that the perception that “immigration” was an important issue dramatically increased in Germany between fall 2014 and fall 2015, both as a European and as a national issue, and also on the individual level (fig. 6a and b). In comparison to the EU28 (fig 6a) results, we can see that especially the relevance at the national level increased significantly. Comparing the salience of immigration among our case study countries, it is notable that Germany was the only country where immigration was named as most important issue on the national level between 2014 and 2015, while most other country respondents deemed unemployment and the economic situation most important (see Glorius 2018, 15). However, turning to the personal level, German respondents also were quite concerned about the stability of welfare state and costs of living as major aspect for their livelihood.

Figure 6a/b: Salience of “immigration” on EU, national and personal level, 2014-2015, all respondents and German respondents (Question: *What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?* (In %))

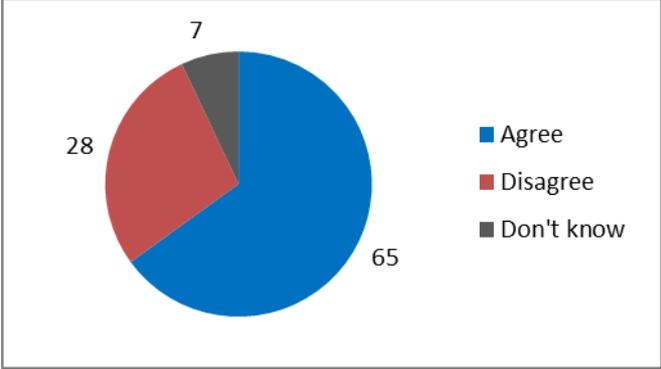


Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

Regarding the *polarization* of opinions on responsibility and how responsibility in migration and asylum politics can be implemented, we analyze two Eurobarometer questions asking about the role of one’s country for helping refugees, and on possible policies to fight illegal migration.

Asked whether Germany should help refugees, we can see that two thirds of German respondents agree in 2015, while 28% disagree and 7% have no clear opinion on this issue (fig. 7). While we see a certain polarization on this issue, we can still note that the majority of German respondents supports the humanitarian obligation to help refugees and accepts the responsibility of their own country for this task.

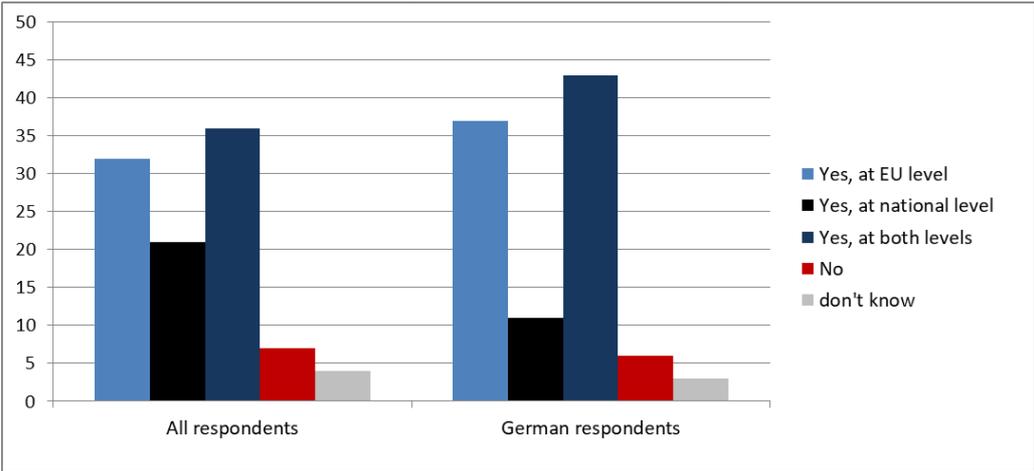
Figure 7: Opinions on the item: “Our country should help refugees”, 2015, in %



Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

However, this does not correspond with liberalized entry schemes into the EU. In Germany, as in all other countries under observation, there is a large majority for taking additional measures to fight illegal migration into the EU (fig. 8), and 80% see the responsibility for this aspect of migration politics at the EU or both, the EU and the national level.

Figure 8: In your opinion, should additional measures be taken to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU? 2015, all respondents and German respondents, in %



Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

2.2 Political Discourses

The first observation period from May to November falls into the 18th legislative period of the German Bundestag. It is Angela Merkel’s third term as chancellor leading a grand-coalition government.¹⁴ Of the 631 members of parliament, 311 mandates were held by CDU/CSU, 193 by SPD, 64 by the LEFT Party and 63 by the GREENS. In this four-party parliament, the governing grand coalition enjoys a rather comfortable majority of 80%, even though that the SPD is not the most preferred coalition partner of CDU/CSU, and a lot of compromise is needed for arriving at governance solutions within the ruling coalition. The strength of the ruling coalition and the relative weakness of the opposition parties should be kept in mind for the further analysis, as it influences the structure of debate, for example by the allocation of minutes of speech in relation to the size of the parliamentary party groups.

¹⁴ The grand coalition is formed by the conservative sister parties Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) together with the Social Democratic Party (SPD)

In the period from May to November 2015 asylum in Germany and Europe was intensively discussed in the German parliamentary debates. Of a total of 40 sessions, 18 sessions of the German Bundestag dealt with the issue, which represents a high salience and reflects the practical consequences of dealing with the arrival of altogether 890,000 asylum seekers during 2015. However, in only four out of these 18 parliamentary sessions, issues of responsibility and responsibility sharing were discussed. Two of them took place before the summer recess of the Bundestag on May 7 and on June 12, 2015 and two after the recess, on September 24 and October 15, 2015 (tab. 1). The analysis was based on the plenary minutes¹⁵ of those sessions. By analyzing the production of discourses and arguments, we will turn to the question of polarization during the first period of observation.

Table 1: Agenda of parliamentary debates 103, 110, 124 and 130 and main issues

Agenda	Main issues of the debate
<p>Parliamentary Session 103, May 7, 2015</p> <p>Debate on the Petitions by DIE LINKE (Left Party): Refugees welcome – For a fundamental change in asylum policy and by BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (The Greens): For a fair sharing of financial responsibility of the reception and accommodation of refugees.</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU/member states</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To grant the right to asylum – Reception of refugees <p><i>Responsibility of Germany</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintaining a positive attitude towards asylum seekers – Integration of asylum seekers – Financing refugee reception: Responsibility sharing among the Federal Government, the federal states and the municipalities
<p>Parliamentary Session 110, 12 June 2015</p> <p>Debate on the Petitions by BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (The Greens): Sea rescue now – taking the appropriate action after refugee disasters in the Mediterranean and by DIE LINKE (The Left): The Mediterranean must not become a mass grave – for a change in the EU asylum policy.</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU/member states</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Respect of European Values and Human rights – Saving lives: Sea rescue in the Mediterranean – Fight against human traffickers – Uniform standards of reception
<p>Parliamentary Session 124, 24 September 2015</p> <p>Government statement of the Federal Chancellor on the results of the informal meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the European Union on 23 September 2015 in Brussels and on the UN Summit</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU/member states</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Common European solution for asylum seeker migration – Solidarity between the member states

¹⁵ The plenary minutes can be found on the homepage of the German Bundestag: Deutscher Bundestag (ed.) [2018]: Protokolle. Retrieved from: <https://www.bundestag.de/protokolle>; access on 05.09.2018.

<p>on Sustainable Development to be held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015;</p> <p>Plenary discussion of the draft on an asylum procedure acceleration law proposed by the government coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fight against causes of flight <p><i>Responsibility of Germany</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financing refugee reception: Responsibility sharing among the Federal Government, the federal states and the municipalities – Repatriation of asylum seekers in Germany
<p>Parliamentary Session 130, 15 October 2015</p> <p>Government statement of the Federal Chancellor on the European Council on 15/16 October 2015 in Brussels; Second and third reading of the draft of the Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act;</p> <p>Recommended resolution and report of the committee on internal affairs on the petitions of DIE LINKE (The Left): Refugees welcome – For a fundamental change in asylum policy, and All refugees welcome – Against a policy of exclusion and discrimination, and the petition of BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (The Greens): For a fair financial responsibility sharing in the reception and care of refugees;</p> <p>Second and Third Reading of the draft on the Law to Speed up the Discharge of the Federal States and Municipalities in Receiving and Accommodating Asylum Seekers (Discharge Acceleration Law), and the draft on the Law to Improve the Accommodation and Care of Foreign Children and Adolescents, proposed by the government coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD).</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU/member states</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Common European solution for asylum seeker migration – Fight against flight causes – Financial support of neighboring countries to Syria – Collaboration with transit states – Protection of the external borders and entry check – Fair distribution of refugees – Uniform standards of reception <p><i>Responsibility of Germany</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduction of migration: safe countries of origin; repatriation of asylum seekers in Germany – Responsibility only for persons that flee due to war and persecution (not for “economic migrants”) – Financing Refugee reception: Responsibility sharing among the Federal Government, the federal states and the municipalities

Source: Minutes of parliamentary sessions; own compilation and design

The question of responsibility and responsibility sharing with respect to refugees and asylum is addressed in the **parliamentary session on 7 May 2015**, via two petitions by the opposition parties LEFT and GREEN Party.

The debate is accompanied by a “refugee summit” of federal representatives, which took place in the Chancellors Office the day after the parliamentary session, focusing on the question of financing the

reception and integration of asylum seekers. The argumentation of the opposition parties concentrates on the question of responsibility sharing within the German federal system, notably the question if the reception costs are to be covered by the municipalities and federal states, or rather by the national government. The perspective of the opposition refers to the responsibility of the national government towards its municipalities, which are characterized as “most vulnerable part of the chain”, as Ulla Jelpke, speaker for the LEFT party, puts it:

“Ladies and gentlemen, we want a reception policy as clear responsibility of the national government. Refugee protection is an international obligation. We must not shift the responsibility to the weakest, which are the municipalities. The consequences of this policy are well known: the municipalities are overburdened. They place asylum seekers in degrading accommodations, often far in the periphery, in the woods or elsewhere.”¹⁶

A full reimbursement of municipal integration costs, she further argues, is considered necessary in order to safeguard the social peace on the ground, since financing the integration of refugees at the expense of the German population can stir up resentment against refugees.

The governing coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD) rather focusses on the global role of Germany in solving the humanitarian crisis, and stresses the burden the German government takes on in this respect. Speaking for CDU/CSU, parliamentarian Andrea Lindholz defends the national government against the accusation of not supporting the municipalities. She designates the civic level as important actor and addresses her respect for the extensive solidarity for refugees that is practiced by civil society actors throughout Germany. Her perspective on shared responsibility explicitly focuses on the German multilevel governance system, thus a full reimbursement by the national government would stand against the idea of shared responsibility in a federal system:

“Both petitions argue that coping with the refugee crisis is a national task. We fully agree with this point. At the same time, however, it is demanded that the federal government alone should bear all costs for the reception procedures, for the accommodation and for the care. This, ladies and gentlemen, is a contradiction. Relocating the responsibility unilaterally to the federal governments is not a distribution of national responsibility but rather a shifting of responsibility onto the federal governments. Our governance system consists of national government, federal states and local governments. They share responsibility, and that's how it should be.”¹⁷ (Parliamentary Session 18/103, 9822)

In her further argumentation, she recalls the support for municipalities which is already enacted by the national government by providing State real estate for the accommodation of refugees, changes

¹⁶ Original Quotation: “Meine Damen und Herren, wir wollen eine Aufnahmepolitik in maßgeblicher Verantwortung des Bundes. Flüchtlingsschutz ist eine internationale Verpflichtung. Da dürfen wir nicht die Verantwortung auf die Schwächsten, und zwar auf die Kommunen, abwälzen. Die Folgen dieser Politik sind bekannt: Die Kommunen sind überfordert und bringen Asylbewerberinnen und Asylbewerber in menschenunwürdigen Unterkünften unter. Oft sind es Liegenschaften, die in der Pampa, im Wald oder sonst wo liegen.“

¹⁷ “In beiden Anträgen wird davon gesprochen, dass die Bewältigung der Flüchtlingskrise eine gesamtstaatliche Aufgabe sei. Dem kann man uneingeschränkt zustimmen. Gleichzeitig wird aber gefordert, der Bund alleine solle sämtliche Kosten für die Verfahren, für die Unterbringung und für die Versorgung der Asylbewerber übernehmen. Das, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren, ist ein Widerspruch in sich. Die Verantwortung einseitig auf den Bund abzuwälzen, ist gerade keine Verteilung der gesamtstaatlichen Aufgabe, sondern das ist ein Wegschieben von Verantwortung auf den Bund. Unser föderaler Staat besteht aus Bund, Ländern und Kommunen. Sie tragen gemeinsam Verantwortung, und das ist auch gut so.“

of construction law to facilitate the construction of refugee accommodations, and the renewed *Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz* which foresees that the national government takes over accommodation and integration costs of 43 Mio. EUR per year. Furthermore, she stresses the responsibility of the federal states to support their municipalities and points out to the high divergence of federal support in this respect. Ms. Lindholz rounds up her argumentation by drawing a line between the global responsibility for solving the refugee crisis, the national and federal level, until the societal responsibility for this task. Her argumentation again defends the national policy and thus rejects the demand for increased state support as short-sighted:

“The global refugee crisis - let me remind you: more than 50 million people are on the flight - cannot be resolved with small-scale measures at national level. (...) Refugee protection has a constitutional status in Germany. The people in Germany take responsibility for the refugees, and the German government is doing the same. We try – without polemics, but with our constitutional means – to meet the manifold requirements and to solve the refugee problem, although we can never succeed completely. The refugee problem will continue to occupy us intensively this year. We should cooperate at all levels to ensure that we not only fight the symptoms, that we not only demand more money, that we do not limit ourselves to language courses, but that we also keep an eye on the global, that we also have Europe take even more responsibility and tackle the manifold causes of flight.”¹⁸

Also the second speaker for the government coalition, **Dr. Lars Castellucci** (SPD), focuses on the European dimension of the refugee crisis and argues for a broader understanding of responsibility on a European scale. He points out to the European tasks such as an effective migration management, border security, lifesaving and internal redistribution, and stresses the German responsibility as part of the European Common Asylum politics.

“The second level – and we should mention this at least briefly today – is Europe. We cannot, at least not meaningfully, talk about asylum policy without the European level, because our borders are in fact the external borders of the European Union; Europe is the place of refuge.”¹⁹
(Parliamentary Session 18/103, 9826)

Finally, Castellucci also turns to the question of internal asylum governance and the division of responsibility between the federal government, the federal states and the municipalities. He proposes improvements in the redistribution of asylum seekers and suggests the creation of common standards for the admission and integration of asylum seekers.

¹⁸ “Die globale Flüchtlingskrise – ich will daran erinnern: über 50 Millionen Menschen befinden sich auf der Flucht – kann man nicht mit kleinteiligen Maßnahmen auf nationaler Ebene lösen. Deutschland schottet sich auch nicht ab. 420 Millionen Europäer können bei uns problemlos einreisen. Der Flüchtlingsschutz genießt bei uns Verfassungsrang. Die Menschen in Deutschland übernehmen Verantwortung für die Flüchtlinge, und auch die Bundesregierung tut dies. Wir versuchen nicht mit Polemik, sondern mit rechtsstaatlichen Mitteln, den vielfältigen Anforderungen gerecht zu werden und die Flüchtlingsproblematik zu lösen, obgleich uns das nie vollständig gelingen kann. Die Flüchtlingsproblematik wird uns auch in diesem Jahr noch intensiv beschäftigen. Wir sollten gemeinsam auf allen Ebenen dafür Sorge tragen, dass wir nicht nur die Symptome bekämpfen, dass wir nicht nur mehr Geld fordern, dass wir uns nicht auf Sprachkurse beschränken, sondern dass wir auch das Globale im Auge behalten, dass wir auch Europa noch mehr mit in die Verantwortung nehmen und die vielfältigen Ursachen anpacken.”

¹⁹ “Die zweite Ebene – das muss heute auch noch einmal kurz Thema sein – ist Europa. Wir können ja nicht, jedenfalls nicht sinnvoll, isoliert über Asylpolitik sprechen, denn unsere Grenzen sind in Wahrheit die Außengrenzen der Europäischen Union; Europa ist der Zufluchtsort.”

In the **parliamentary session of 12 June 2015**, upon the discussion of two petitions brought in by the opposition parties GREEN and LEFT party touched upon the question of responsibility sharing, both addressing the humanitarian catastrophe in the Mediterranean Sea. The debate is centered around the question of humanitarian obligations as moral responsibility, the solidarity among EU member states in the question of asylum seeker reception and resettlement, and extends again to moral questions of saving lives at sea vs. fighting human trafficking, and to the question of how to reach a fair internal distribution of asylum seekers among the EU member states.

Ole Schröder, speaking for the Ministry of the Interior, stresses the leading role of Germany in conducting resettlement as example for fulfilling the moral obligation for humanitarian help. Based on this statement, he criticizes the unequal distribution of asylum seekers in Europe, with three quarters of asylum applications allocated in only five EU member states, and claims that further resettlement programs within the European Union to be based on a common understanding of responsibility sharing:

“A crucial precondition for the redistribution of asylum seekers is that the Member States apply the common European asylum system consistently and equally. So we need to offer to take over refugees – notably from Italy and Greece. In return, we also expect the implementation of European law. Hence it is relocation [of refugees] for the implementation [of European law].”²⁰ (Parliamentary Session 18/110, 10631-32)

In principle, all speakers during this debate share a common opinion on the humanitarian obligation to save lives in the Mediterranean, as well as the common European obligation to support member states which are – due to their geopolitical position – overburdened with arriving asylum seekers. As **Christina Kampmann (SPD)** argues:

“These are our coasts – it is not the coasts of the Italians, it is not the coasts of the Greeks and not those of the Maltese – because we Europeans decided that Europe should be more than a common internal market [and] because we decided to represent common values internally and externally, and we should do even against all odds; and we should implement what is important to us and what we believe in.”²¹ (Parliamentary Session 18/110, 10634)

In her speech, she refers to the declaration of the European council on the refugee disaster in the Mediterranean, expressing the common will to fight this humanitarian catastrophe by all means, and makes a number of detailed suggestions on specific measures, such as increasing financial support for the sea rescue initiatives Triton and Poseidon, reinforcement of international cooperation to fight human trafficking, and a rapid implementation of common European standards in the area of migration and asylum policy. All speakers during this debate stress common European values and the necessity that the EU member states jointly address the humanitarian question of saving lives and concomitant questions of a fair distribution of asylum seekers in Europe.

²⁰ “Voraussetzung für die Umverteilung von Asylbewerbern ist in jedem Fall, dass die Mitgliedstaaten das gemeinsame europäische Asylsystem auch konsequent und gleichwertig anwenden. Es geht also darum, dass wir anbieten – insbesondere Italien und Griechenland –, Flüchtlinge zu übernehmen. Im Gegenzug erwarten wir aber auch die Implementation des europäischen Rechts, das heißt Relocation gegen Implementation.”

²¹ “Ja, es sind *unsere* Küsten – es sind nicht die Küsten der Italiener, es sind nicht die Küsten der Griechen und auch nicht die der Malteser –, weil wir Europäerinnen und Europäer uns dazu entschieden haben, dass Europa mehr sein soll als ein gemeinsamer Binnenmarkt, weil wir uns entschieden haben, gemeinsame Werte nach innen und nach außen zu vertreten, gegen alle Widerstände und für das, was uns wichtig ist und woran wir glauben.“

The **parliamentary session of 24 September 2015** includes a government statement of Angela Merkel on the informal meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the European Union on 23 September 2015 in Brussels and on the UN Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015. In her statement, **Chancellor Merkel** frames the European refugee question as global challenge (just as the question of sustainable development) which has to be addressed on all levels of governance and in all EU member states alike. Regarding the responsibility of the EU member states, this means to provide common reception standards and to face all questions related to asylum and migration in a cooperative manner, based on common principles:

“The European Union is a community of values and of common rules and responsibilities. This must also be shown in practice. It also means that we must comply with the minimum standards for the housing of refugees and further provisions and for the implementation of asylum procedures, everywhere in Europe.”²² (Parliamentary Session 18/124, 11947)

Based on the argumentation of common values and responsibilities, she claims a joint effort for securing the EU external borders, and for returning those asylum seekers who were not found eligible for receiving protection. She mentions the recent proposal of the European Commission for (among others) the internal redistribution of asylum seekers and urges to speed up the decision making process and arrive at concrete measures, such as the preparation of a joint list of safe third states, or the redistribution of 120,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece. In this context, she expresses thanks to the European Parliament for having agreed on a list of measures and thus “having shown a high degree of responsibility”.

In geopolitical terms, chancellor Merkel points to the crucial role of several European buffer states, notably Turkey, but also Serbia and Macedonia, to tackle the question of controlling the EU external borders. She expresses thanks to the constructive role of Serbia and Macedonia in managing the migration on the Balkan route, and specifically points to the necessity to establish a good cooperation with Turkey. Thus from her perspective, the success of EU internal migration management depends on shared responsibility and cooperation with its neighboring states.

Speaking for the coalition party SPD, **Thomas Oppermann** criticizes the lack of solidarity of some EU member states in taking over responsibility for the asylum seekers, while profiting from EU funding. He thus connects the idea of moral obligations and common values with a factual “tit-for-tat” argumentation:

“There are still EU members who categorically refuse a solidary distribution of refugees among EU member states. This is especially true for those countries which profit the most from European solidarity. In 2013, the Czech Republic received 3.4 billion Euro more than it gave, and Hungary has a plus of 5 billion euros. Those who benefit so much from the EU must also take responsibility and help to avert humanitarian catastrophes.”²³

²² “Die Europäische Union ist eine Wertegemeinschaft und als solche eine Rechts- und Verantwortungsgemeinschaft. Sie muss in der Praxis zeigen, dass dieser Anspruch auch trägt. Dazu gehört, dass die Mindeststandards eingehalten werden müssen, die wir in Europa für die Unterbringung und Versorgung von Flüchtlingen und für die Durchführung von Asylverfahren festgelegt haben.”

²³ “Noch immer gibt es EU-Mitglieder, die eine solidarische Verteilung der Flüchtlinge kategorisch ablehnen – ausgerechnet die Länder, die so sehr von der Solidarität der Europäischen Union profitieren. Tschechien bekam 2013 knapp 3,4 Milliarden Euro mehr, als es eingezahlt hat. Ungarn verbuchte ein Plus von 5 Milliarden Euro. Wer so viele Vorteile von der EU hat, der muss auch Verantwortung übernehmen und helfen, um humanitäre Katastrophen abzuwenden.”

During this debate, there is hardly any polarization of opinions. While the members of the four parties in parliament stress slightly varying aspects of “responsibility” (the LEFT: “redistributing money from the rich to the poor”, the GREENS “having responsibility for people who are forced to leave their country, because of missing global fairness”, the CSU “to take care that people can remain in their home countries” and the SPD “to watch our language and to act pragmatically”), they all agree on the necessity to take over and share responsibility on the national and global level.

The fourth and last parliamentary debate of the first period of contention is the **session of 15 October 2015**, with another Government statement of Chancellor Angela Merkel on the European Council on 15/16 October 2015 in Brussels, and with the debate and voting on the draft of the **Asylum Procedures Acceleration Act**.

Chancellor Merkel's government statement is in many ways similar to the statement she gave on September 24. She emphasizes that managing the refugee migration is at the responsibility of the whole of Europe and that it has to be applied at all governance levels: “in the municipalities, in the federal states, in the federal government as well as in Europe and globally in foreign and development policies.” Addressing the difficulties of international diplomacy, she details the Federal Government's efforts with talks in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and, above all, Turkey, which she considers to be the key for tackling the refugee crisis. Finally, she addresses the global dimension of the refugee crisis in an interdependent world and emphasizes the role of African countries of transit and origin in this context.

In her speech, she emphasizes the activities of various actors, such as German politicians or the European Parliament and her own bilateral diplomatic efforts. She thanks all these actors for their commitment. Numbers also play a major role in her statement, e.g. the short-term provision of 200 million EUR from the EU budget and planning of 300 million EUR in 2016, but also the increase of the German contribution by 100 million EUR. All this should help to provide additional support to international relief organizations with one billion EUR in total. The spokesman for the coalition partner SPD, Thomas Oppermann, is more critical of EU budgetary policy, which he believes is “outdated” because does not focus sufficiently on foreign policy tasks:

“In 2016, the European Union will spend 150 billion euros, 40 percent of it for agricultural subsidies. 34 percent goes to the Structural Funds. For migration and development aid, however, there are only peanuts left. Ladies and gentlemen, we need a budget that lives up to the global role of Europe, and for me that means more money for economic cooperation and more money to deal with the refugee crisis.”²⁴ (Parliamentary Session 18/130, 12563)

In response, there is no fundamental dissent from the opposition regarding the European dimension of responsibility for managing the refugee crisis. However, some policy approaches are criticized, first of all the planned cooperation with Turkey. For example, **Katrin Göring-Eckardt** (GREEN) emphasizes:

“Yes, this is a great challenge for Europe. We are the strongest country in Europe, and we will not be able to pass on fully the hundreds of thousands refugees towards poor and fragile states. By the way, a dirty deal with Mr. Erdoğan will not help anybody, especially not the

²⁴ “Im Jahr 2016 gibt die Europäische Union 150 Milliarden Euro aus, 40 Prozent davon für Agrarsubventionen. 34 Prozent fließen in die Strukturfonds. Für Migration und Entwicklungshilfe gibt es dagegen nur Kleckerbeträge. Meine Damen und Herren, wir brauchen einen Haushalt, der der weltpolitischen Rolle und Bedeutung Europas gerecht wird, und das heißt für mich: mehr Geld für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und mehr Geld für die Bewältigung der Flüchtlingskrise.”

refugees from Syria, Iraq and Turkey. The agreement is rather an electoral campaign gift for Mr. Erdoğan.”²⁵.” (Parliamentary Session 18/130, 12565)

Also Sahra Wagenknecht (LINKE) appeals to Chancellor Merkel to cancel her trip to Turkey.

In the further debate, parliamentarians from the coalition parties express their opinion, focusing on different aspects of responsibility. For example, **Norbert Spinrath** (SPD) expresses his understanding for the reluctance of some EU states to accept refugees. In his view, Germany should convince them that the current refugee crisis can only be solved jointly in the EU. However, he asks to be sensitive at this issue:

“Ladies and gentlemen, how can we demand urge Europe's solidarity when we ourselves have pushed our partners in the EU to agree on Dublin I, II and III, and we have benefited most in Germany? And when our Italian and Greek friends called for help in recent years and did not demand, but expected solidarity, we ignored them with reference to Dublin I, II and III?”²⁶ (Parliamentary Session 18/130, 12569)

Dr. Hans-Peter Friedrich (CDU/CSU), pleads for respecting the national sovereignty of the EU member states on the issue of refugee reception, and thus criticizes Germany for playing itself in the foreground as a positive role model:

“I always hear that the Germans say: You know, our history forces us to do this and keeps us from that. – But the others also have a history – the Hungarians, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Croats, the Slovenes, the Baltic countries and they decide with their mentality and their history how many they can take. That's European. They do not need our moralizing, but they have their own sovereignty.”²⁷ (Parliamentary Session 18/130, 12570)

Gunter Krichbaum (CDU/CSU) in turn criticizes the refusal of some EU states to accept refugee contingents, such as Slovakia, and refers to European and Christian values of mercy and solidarity, which should be practiced at the example of refugee reception:

"The European Union is a community of solidarity. However, we are experiencing a de-solidarization within the European Union, but also towards those in need. This is not acceptable! In fact, I would like to see even greater pressure from the European Commission; because dealing with the current crisis is, so to speak, the humanitarian litmus test for the

²⁵ “Ja, das ist eine große Herausforderung für Europa. Wir sind das stärkste Land in Europa, und wir werden die Hunderttausende, die auf der Flucht sind, nicht auf arme und fragile Staaten abwälzen können. Da hilft übrigens auch kein schmutziger Deal mit Herrn Erdoğan. Die Vereinbarungen mit der Türkei helfen den Flüchtlingen aus Syrien, dem Irak und der Türkei nicht. Sie sind ein Wahlkampfgeschenk für Herrn Erdoğan.”

²⁶ “Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen, wie klingt es aus unserem Mund, Europas Solidarität hart einzufordern, wenn wir selbst unseren Partnern in der EU Dublin I, II und III aufgedrängt haben und in Deutschland davon am meisten profitierten und genau dann, wenn in den letzten Jahren unsere italienischen und griechischen Freunde nach Hilfe gerufen haben und Solidarität nicht forderten, sondern erwarteten, mit der kalten Schulter auf Dublin I, II und III verwiesen haben?”

²⁷ “Ich höre immer, dass die Deutschen sagen: Wissen Sie, unsere Geschichte zwingt uns zu diesem und hält uns von jenem ab. – Aber auch die anderen haben eine Geschichte – die Ungarn, die Tschechen, die Slowaken, die Kroaten, die Slowenen, die baltischen Länder und sie entscheiden mit ihrer Mentalität und aus ihrer Geschichte heraus, wie viele aufgenommen werden können. Das ist europäisch. Sie brauchen nicht unseren moralischen Zeigefinger, sondern sie haben ihre eigene Souveränität.”

entire European Union. We are not a business club, we are a union based on values.”²⁸
(Parliamentary Session 18/130, 12575)

And **Thorsten Frei** (CDU/CSU), referring to the daily arrival of 9-10,000 refugees in Germany, expresses his expectation “that this summit in Brussels sends out the signal that all countries of the European Union are ready, to bear their share of responsibility according to their size and ability to perform.”

Another focus of the debate is the discussion of drafts of the **Asylum Procedure Acceleration Act**, the **Law to Speed up the Discharge of the Federal States and Municipalities in Receiving and Accommodating Asylum Seekers (Discharge Acceleration Law)**, and the draft on a **Law to Improve the Accommodation and Care of Foreign Children and Adolescents**, proposed by the governing coalition. Again, the debate is centered on the issue of responsibility sharing, this time between the State Administration, the federal governments and municipalities, as well as among the federal states. Representatives of the government coalition are campaigning for the bill, arguing that it is a signal from the government to its citizens, “that we take the concerns seriously and fulfill our responsibility to master the situation.”

Although the evaluation of the speeches shows a relatively low polarization, it should be noted that the opposition parties – according to their share of seats in the Bundestag – have a relatively small time quota for joining the debate. Therefore, the speeches of the governing coalition dominate the parliamentary protocols which form the corpus of our analysis. Nevertheless, it can be said that there is a consensus in the broad idea of responsibility sharing as a division of responsibilities at the supranational level as well as at the subnational level. The opinions only diverge on the details of how shared responsibility should be enacted. While at the supranational level, the governing coalition proposes cooperation with third countries and the need for border management measures to curb illegal migration, the opposition focuses on global inequalities and the role of the global north in producing those inequalities. Therefore, in their view, the global north has a moral obligation to support people searching for refuge due to unsustainable living conditions in their countries of origin. A particular critique of the opposition parties is directed to the negotiations with Turkish president Erdogan, as this will support his autocratic regime. A third divergence of opinions on responsibility regarding refugee migration deals with the planned extension of border security measures, notably at the sea borders, while the opposition parties stress the moral obligation to engage in maritime rescue operations.

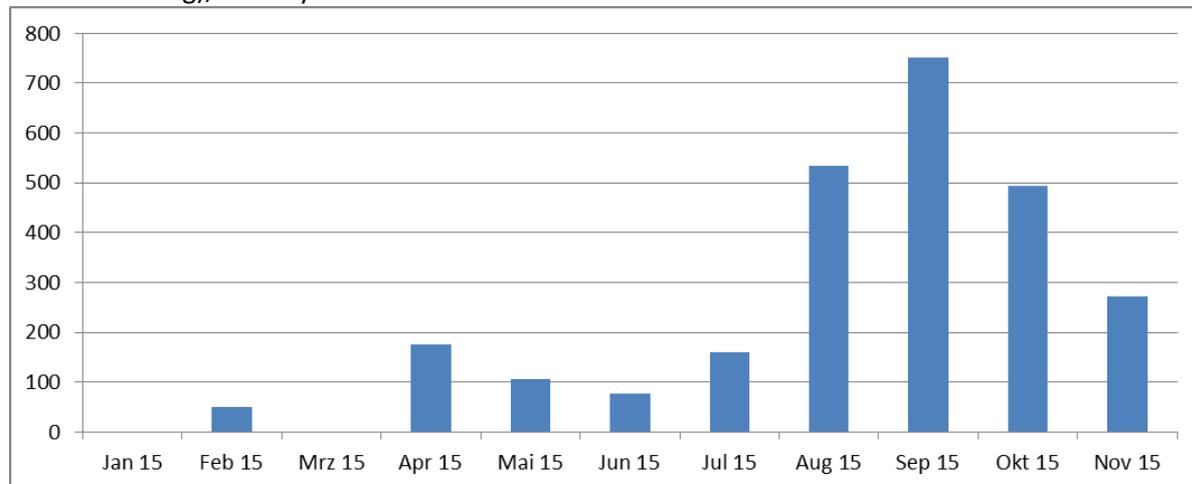
Regarding responsibility sharing on the sub-national level, there are also divergent opinions between the government coalition and the opposition parties on how to arrive at a fair share. This is reflected in the numerous change requests for the government proposal on the new asylum laws. These change requests are rejected by the governing coalition, while the bill is passed with the votes of the government coalition, with the opposition parties either abstaining or voting against.

2.3 Media Discourses

²⁸ “Die Europäische Union ist eine Solidargemeinschaft. Wir erleben hier jedoch eine Entsolidarisierung innerhalb der Europäischen Union, aber eben auch gegenüber den in Not geratenen Menschen. Das ist nicht akzeptabel, und das dürfen wir diesen Staaten auch nicht durchgehen lassen. Hier wünsche ich mir in der Tat einen noch stärkeren Druck der Europäischen Kommission; denn der Umgang mit der gegenwärtigen Krise ist gewissermaßen der humanitäre Lackmustest für die gesamte Europäische Union. Wir sind kein Wirtschaftsclub, wir sind eine Werteunion.”

Reflecting the results of political discourses, the issue of “responsibility” did not develop exceptional salience during the first period of contention. However, the massive influx of asylum seekers in Germany as well as the European migration crisis was broadly covered by the media, as is reflected by an analysis of topics during the main TV-news of four major news-channels (RTL aktuell; SAT 1 Nachrichten; heute; tagesschau) in Germany (fig. 9). Throughout the observation period, media reports on refugees and asylum dominated the news, starting with a first peak in April 2015, reflecting a major shipwrecking incident in the Mediterranean, but also protests and attacks against an asylum seeker accommodation and political representatives in a small town in East Germany (cp. tab. 2). With the increasing arrival of asylum seekers during the summer and fall 2015, the TV news almost exclusively reported on those developments and related issues (fig. 9). In September 2015 for example, the coverage of the refugee crisis in Germany and Europe reached 750 minutes, far ahead of the second most reported item (Volkswagen emission scandal/ “diesel gate”, 96 minutes) and the war in Syria (66 minutes). During summer 2015, the media largely took an emphatic stance towards refugee migration and mirrored humanitarian but also utilitarian arguments which were brought up by the government. The dominant visualizations of asylum seeker migration were pictures showing migrants as victims. Also, the German citizens welcoming migrants emphasized. Later in 2015, (self-critical) reports addressed the missing critical distance of the media towards refugee migration and asylum politics (cp. Hemmelmann Wegner 2016, 28). After the ISIS attacks on the concert hall Bataclan in Paris, concerns about security and terrorism started to be covered by the media as well.

Figure 9: Representation of refugee*-topics among the top ten topics in the main TV-news (in minutes of broadcasting), January 2015-November 2015



*The figure displays the representation of „asylum“ and „refugees“ with all possible connotations; sometimes, several relevant topics appeared among the Top Ten and were then summarized for this analysis; Data Source: <https://www.ifem.de/infomonitor>; Design: Birgit Glorius

Table 2: Contentious moments in the German refugee discourse as reflected by the media, April-November 2015

April 2015	Shipwrecking incident in the Mediterranean; public protest and attacks against asylum seeker accommodation and the Mayor of the small town of Tröglitz, East Germany
21 August 2015	Anti-Asylum demonstrations and attacks in the small town of Heidenau, East Germany
4 September 2015	Decision of Chancellor Merkel to suspend Dublin regulation for Syrian asylum seekers, followed by relocation of Syrian asylum seekers from Budapest to Germany via train
13 September 2015	Suspension of Schengen regulation and introduction of border controls at the Austrian-Bavarian border
October 2015	Declamation of Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro as safe states of origin
Fall/Winter 2015	State of crisis at the federal office for refugees in Berlin (LAGESO), with hundreds of migrants piling up day and night, without food and shelter, in order to register
13 November 2015	Terrorist attacks in Paris with 130 dead, conducted by perpetrators affiliated with ISIL (<u>Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant</u>). Some of the attackers had travelled to Europe via the Balkan route and were registered (under false identity) as asylum seekers

Source: own compilation, based on IFEM and own media documentation

2.3.1 Saliency of responsibility sharing, solidarity, and relocation

In order to assess the saliency of the issue we counted the number of articles dealing with relocation quota, solidarity and responsibility sharing and compared it to the number of articles on the topic asylum and migration policy in general. Then, articles were analyzed focusing on the main issues, the main arguments and the differences between discourse producers in order to find out more about the polarization of the topic. We selected articles from the online portals of the three newspapers/magazines with the biggest audience: Spiegel online, Focus online and bild.de.²⁹ Spiegel online is a news website and a subsidiary of the weekly news magazine DER SPIEGEL. While owned by the same parent company (Spiegel-Verlag), the news website is editorially independent. DER SPIEGEL is the weekly magazine with the highest circulation in Germany and Europe. Spiegel online focuses on news transfer but also contains an important amount of detailed commentaries.

Focus online is a news web portal published by BurdaForward, a subsidiary of Burda media who also publishes the weekly news magazine FOCUS. Next to DER SPIEGEL and STERN, FOCUS it is one of the most important weekly magazines in Germany. Focus online is editorially independent from the Focus magazine and focuses on news transfer.

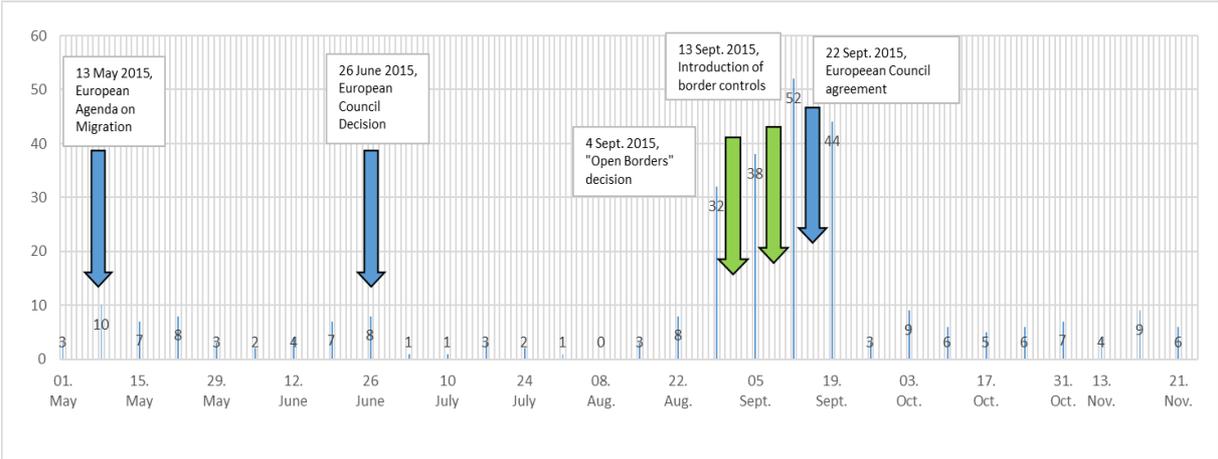
Bild.de is a news and entertainment outlet associated with Germany's most popular daily newspaper BILD. BILD, a tabloid newspaper, is owned by the Axel Springer AG. According to the Digital Report News report the audience of Focus online and bild.de tend to be more right-leaning ideologically, while

²⁹ The three online portals were selected according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 (Newman et al. 2017, 70-71).

Spiegel online’s audience tends to be leaning more towards the ideological left (Newman et al. 2017, 71).

From May to November 2015 Spiegel Online published 173 articles, Focus Online 85 articles and bild.de 34 articles containing the term “relocation quota”. Compared to the total amount of articles on asylum and refugees which appeared in this period (between 1000 and 5 000 articles per newspaper), the share of articles focusing on that topic is fairly small and salience of the issue rather modest. Figure 10 shows the total number of articles related to responsibility sharing or relocation during the first period of contention between May and November 2015. As can be seen, the first small increase of articles coincides with the presentation of the European Agenda on Migration by the European Commission on 13 May 2015. On this date, the European Commission outlined its four priorities on migration and referred to the possibility of a relocation quota. Also the agreement of the European Council to relocate 40,000 migrants from Greece and Italy is reflected in a moderate increase of media reports. Following the “opening of the borders” in Hungary on September 4th and the re-introduction of border controls between Germany and Austria on September 13, 2015 the number of articles discussing responsibility and responsibility sharing increased significantly (fig. 10) On 22 September 2015 the European Council decided a legally binding plan on relocation of 120,000 asylum seekers without the approval of Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. When looking at the corpus of the qualitative analysis however, it seems that the “border opening” and the reintroduction of border control in Germany is not much discussed in the context of relocation quota and responsibility sharing. The increase of the articles stems from the context of the discussions of European politicians before the meeting of the European Council. Even though there is an increase in articles on relocation quota and responsibility in September 2015, the number is rather small in comparison to the number of articles in Germany on asylum and refugees in general. Finally, when looking at politicization the topic “responsibility” in the three online portals Spiegel online, Focus online and bild.de did not develop much salience.

Figure 10: Quantitative Development of Media Discourse on Responsibility Sharing, weekly averages



Source: own data selection; own design

2.3.2 Stances towards responsibility and polarization of opinions

Regarding the polarization of opinion, we carried out a qualitative analysis, based on the prior selection for the quantitative analysis. The corpus for the qualitative analysis includes all commentaries and articles that deal with the topic relocation quota in more detail. Short reports which only gave notice of an event were excluded from the corpus. The corpus contains 31 articles and 4 commentaries from

Spiegel online, 31 articles and 1 commentary from Focus online, and 8 articles and 2 commentaries from bild.de for a total of 77 articles.

Articles discussing responsibility and responsibility sharing with respect to refugees and asylum do so by focusing on the fair distribution of refugees to all member states. The relocation of asylum seekers from Italy and Greece (first 40,000, then 120,000 people) and the establishment of a permanent distribution mechanism are also discussed. While the articles mostly present the different positions of member states and EU politicians, the sometimes also refer to the opinions from political and legal experts and quote spokespeople from different NGOs, such as PRO ASYL. Most of the articles describe that the European Commission, Germany, France, Austria and Italy are in favor of a fair distribution of asylum seekers and that especially Great Britain, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the Baltic States are against the relocation quota.

Those in favor of a fair distribution are often quoted criticizing member states such as Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic for not assuming responsibility with respect to refugee reception. The arguments presented include that all member states bear the common responsibility to take in refugees and that it is part of the European idea to show solidarity. For example, the German state minister for migration and refugees, Aydan Özoguz (SPD) is quoted in Focus online saying “A functioning Europe also requires a common refugee policy in which the burden is fairly shared among the Member States³⁰, (Focus online, anon. 27.05.2015b). It is stated that the issue of asylum and migration can only be solved jointly. The meaning of solidarity is also discussed, mentioning that solidarity does not only involve receiving money and support from the EU but also assuming obligations. The president of the European Parliament Martin Schulz (SPD) is quoted a few times: “Solidarity is no one-way street³¹ (e.g. Spiegel online, Becker 04.09.2015).

When it comes to opinions refusing the European approach of relocation quota, mostly arguments of the Eastern European states, namely Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and the Baltic states are presented. These arguments include that asylum seekers do not want to live in Eastern European states, but in Germany. Hungarian president Victor Orbán is quoted a few times arguing: “The problem is not a European problem. The problem is a German problem.”³² (e.g. Spiegel online, Hebel/Weiland 03.09.2015). Furthermore, many articles reflect the argumentation of Eastern European state leaders, who place the need of their own citizens, notably in terms of security and national identity above the idea of responsibility sharing. Further arguments cultural frames of migration, such as positions that present asylum seekers as economic migrants and especially the Muslim migrants as a threat to Christianity and security of the countries. Spiegel online for example quotes the Czech president Milos Zeman:

“According to Zeman, the vast majority of refugees are economic refugees who should not be accommodated in reception camps but immediately deported. In addition according to Zeman, there is a danger that 'sleepers' of the IS and other terrorists are among the refugees.”³³ (Spiegel online, Hebel/Weiland 03.09.2015)

³⁰ “Zu einem funktionierendem Europa gehört auch eine gemeinsame Flüchtlingspolitik, in der die Lasten unter den Mitgliedstaaten fair verteilt werden.”

³¹ “Solidarität ist keine Einbahnstraße.”

³² “Das Problem ist kein europäisches Problem. Das Problem ist ein deutsches Problem.”

³³ “Die Flüchtlinge, so Zeman, seien in ihrer überwiegenden Mehrheit Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge, die nicht in Auffanglagern untergebracht, sondern sofort abgeschoben gehörten. Zudem bestehe die Gefahr, dass sich unter ihnen 'Schläfer' des IS und andere Terroristen befänden.”

So regarding the topic responsibility there is a polarization of opinion within the voices presented in the media. One group (mainly European Commission, Germany, Austria, France, and Italy) is presented as supporter of the concept of responsibility sharing with respect to a common migration policy and the other group (mainly Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia) as opponents to the European idea of solidarity who only focus on national interests.

The three media portals present a lot of positions of politicians as mentioned above but also comment on some issues with respect to the topic responsibility for asylum seekers. It is mentioned in all three portals that Germany assumes responsibility and takes in the majority of asylum seekers in Europe (together with Sweden, Austria and Italy, which is partly mentioned). The countries that refuse the reception of asylum seekers and thus solidarity with the main receiving countries are criticized as for example on bild.de:

“While states such as Germany, Austria and Sweden are facing the challenge, showing a great willingness to accept refugees and a welcoming culture, EU states such as Hungary are presenting themselves from an ugly side, without compassion, insisting on a martial deterrence policy.”³⁴ (bild.de, anon. 22.09.2015a)

Some articles also criticize that the European Union is not able to come to an agreement with respect to a common asylum policy and the member states focus too much on national interests. The negotiations of the member states on the relocation quota are seen as unsuccessful:

“The result: disappointing! Instead of fixed quotas, only voluntary commitments were agreed upon. Only about 32,000 refugees were distributed among member states. A figure that seems almost ridiculous with regard to the continuing high influx of new refugees.”³⁵ (Focus online, anon. 03.09.2015)

The European Union is presented as institution with an ineffective structure that prevents it from acting with regard to a common migration system. This discussion especially takes place in the context of the dead Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi found on the beach in Turkey mentioning that a common action is needed in order to protect more people from dying. Furthermore, the responsibility of the member states to treat asylum seekers with dignity is dealt with and commented. Some articles on all portals denounce the bad treatment of refugees in some member states, especially in Hungary. Bild.de states for example on 4 September 2015: “The situation in Hungary is a disaster. Thousands of refugees, many of whom want to go to Germany, are trapped under terrible circumstances. Hungary reacts heartlessly...”³⁶ (bild.de, anon. 04.09.2015). Even though in some articles the management of asylum in Germany is criticized, in comparison to the other member states Germany is subliminally presented as role model that meets the humanitarian obligation of assuming responsibility for refugees.

There is only a slight polarization of positions in the media portals as Spiegel online and bild.de focus on different aspects next to the debate about the distribution of refugees in Europe. On bild.de there are two articles addressing the large number of more than 800,000 asylum seekers who arrived in

³⁴ “Während Staaten wie Deutschland, Österreich oder auch Schweden sich der Herausforderung stellen, eine große Aufnahmebereitschaft und Willkommenskultur zeigen, präsentieren sich EU-Staaten wie Ungarn von einer hässlichen Seite und setzen ohne Mitgefühl auf eine martialische Abschreckungspolitik.”

³⁵ “Das Ergebnis: enttäuschend! Statt fester Quoten blieb es bei freiwilligen Zusagen. Nur etwa 32.000 Flüchtlinge wurden auf Mitgliedstaaten verteilt. Eine Zahl, die angesichts der weiterhin starken Zuströme von neuen Flüchtlingen fast lächerlich wirkt.”

³⁶ “Die Situation in Ungarn ist katastrophal. Tausende Flüchtlinge, von denen viele nach Deutschland wollen, sitzen unter schlimmen Umständen fest. Ungarn reagiert herzlos...”

Germany in 2015, discussing the consequences of these developments for the years to come, as well as the limits of receptivity. In some articles on Spiegel online the European Union is partly held responsible for the refugee crisis and the fatalities in the Mediterranean. It is criticized that the EU keeps up to the concept of “fortress Europe” and does not introduce safe and legal entry routes to the European Union which is seen as the deception of its own values. A second reason why the politicians of the EU are considered to be responsible for the refugee crisis is the neglected support to the regions of crisis in form of peace-keeping measures in Syria and development aid.

All in all, the issues responsibility and responsibility sharing do not develop much salience in the three media portals from May to November 2015, but a polarization of opinions can be found especially among the different positions presented in the articles. The main topics discussed are the responsibility for reception of refugees, the responsibility for a fair distribution among the member states and the responsibility to care for refugees and meet the European standards of reception. Polarization of opinion is mainly attached to the question on who is regarded to be responsible and on the addresses of responsibility. The European Commission and some EU member states such as Germany, Austria, France and Italy consider all member states to be responsible, as it is stated in the analyzed media. Other member states such as Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic States and Great Britain refuse to be responsible for refugees, but see their obligation primarily in protecting the national population.

3. Second Episode of Contention (September to December 2017)

Since the first episode of contention, a number of turning points marked the development of public opinion and political debate on refugee migration and asylum politics in Germany. Concerning public opinion, critical voices increased who questioned the lawfulness of Chancellor Merkel’s decisions to abandon the Dublin regulations, and who criticized the effectiveness of asylum governance, the fairness of the regional distribution of asylum seekers throughout Germany, and local consequences such as increased public costs for social assistance and competition for social housing. Triggered by several incidents of sexual assault (the most prominent being the so-called Sylvester assaults in Cologne at New Year’s Eve 2015/16) and some cases of murder with asylum seekers as culprits and German females as victims (see tab. 3), the emotionalization of the topic increased in public debates, especially pointing to the cultural “otherness” of young, male asylum seekers from Islamic and patriarchic cultures. A series of terrorist attacks carried out by asylum seekers, the most devastating being the attack on the Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016, speeded up debates on security in the context of asylum migration. Again, cultural and gendered argumentations were on the rise, but there was also a strong voice that repeated its critique against the state administration, notably chancellor Merkel, for not having restricted and regulated the immigration of asylum seekers in fall 2015, when thousands of immigrants entered the country unregistered.

Table 3: Contentious moments in the German refugee discourse as reflected by the media, January 2016-August 2018

New Year’s Eve 2015/16	Massive sexual assaults in and around the train station in Cologne, mainly committed by asylum seekers from Maghreb states
January 2016	Fake news about a Russian-German immigrant child who allegedly was kidnapped and raped by asylum seekers. The incident became viral among the

	Russian-German community and triggered anti-refugee demonstrations in major German cities
March 2016	EU-Turkey deal, closure of the Balkan route
October 2016	Female German student found dead in the city of Freiburg, Afghan asylum seeker was found guilty of murder and sexual abuse
19 December 2016	Terrorist attack on Berlin Christmas market with 12 dead, committed by a terrorist who lived as asylum seeker with numerous identities in Germany
27 December 2016	15-year old German girl in the city of Kamel murdered by her Afghan boyfriend who lived as unaccompanied minor refugee in Germany
Mai 2018	14-year old German girl in the city Mainz murdered by an asylum seeker from Iraq
August 2018	German stabbed by three asylum seekers from Iraq and Syria in the city of Chemnitz

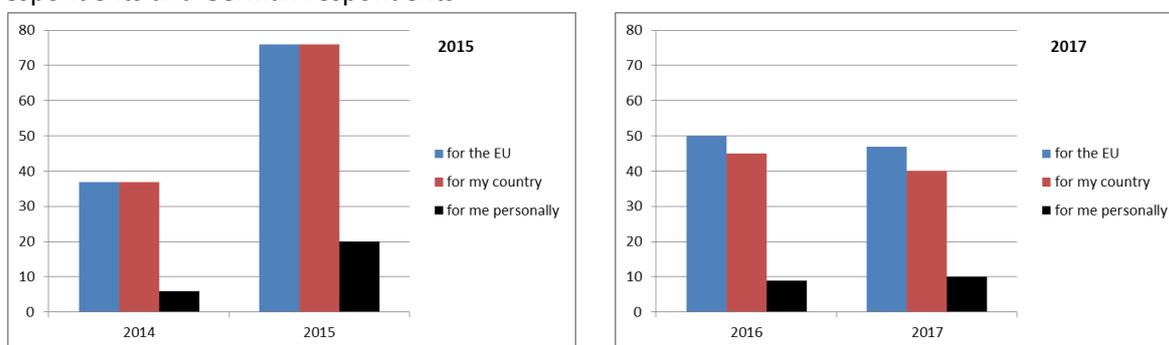
Source: own compilation, based on IFEM and own media documentation from 2015 to 2018

The debates were picked up by political actors of all relevant parties, which became most obvious in the preparations for the 2017 parliamentary elections and the long process of forming a government coalition until March 2018.

3.1 Public opinion

Concerning the *saliency* of “immigration” in public opinion, we again turn to the Eurobarometer item the two most important issues for the respondents with regards to them personally, to their country, and to the European Union. As figure 11 shows, the saliency of the issue has decreased after the peak year of 2015, and had reached about the level of pre-crisis year 2014. Regarding the governance levels, the EU level gained importance and outnumbered the saliency for the national level. This can give us a first clue that public opinion now turned to the European perspective of the “migration crisis”.

Figure 11 a/b: Saliency of “immigration” on EU, national and personal level, 2016-2017, all respondents and German respondents

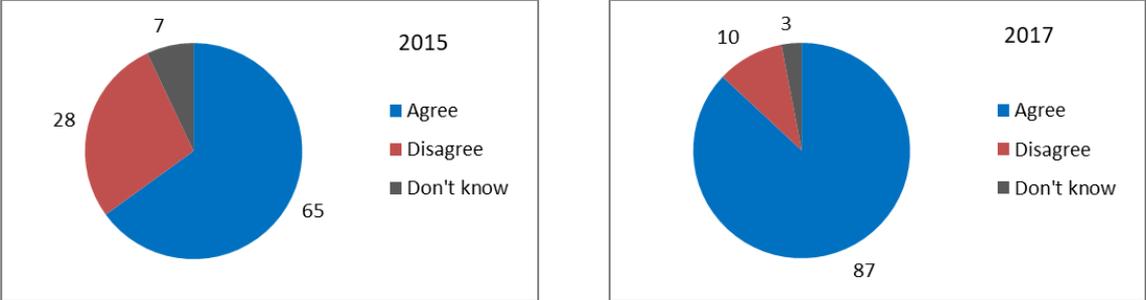


Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

Regarding the *polarization* of opinions on responsibility and how responsibility in migration and asylum politics can be implemented, we again refer to two Eurobarometer questions asking about the role of one’s country for helping refugees, and on possible policies to fight illegal migration.

Regarding the perception of Germany’s role in taking in and helping refugees (fig. 12), we can see that the positive response even increased since 2015. In 2017, 87% of German respondents see a national obligation to help refugee, compared to 65% in 2015. Thus, the polarization on this issue has decreased.

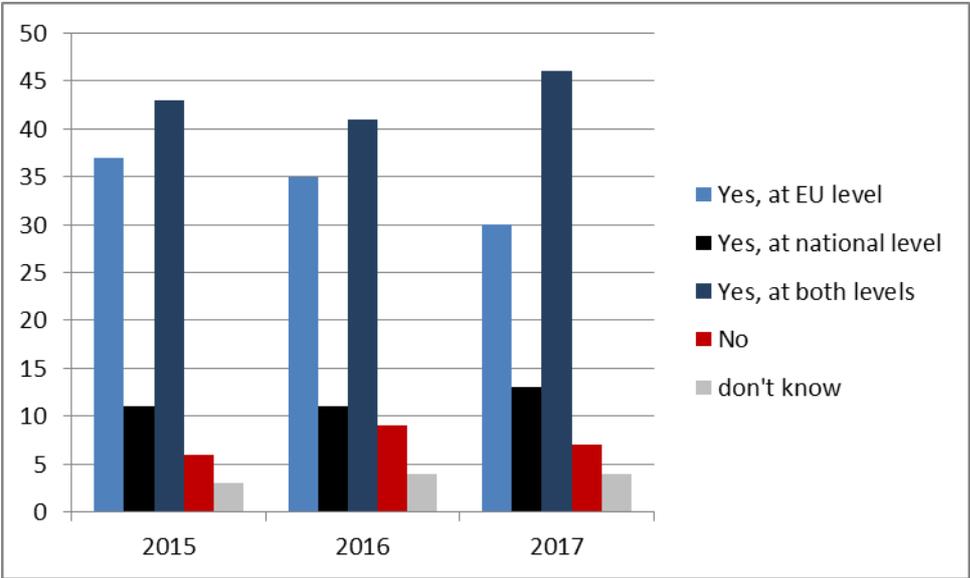
Figure 12 a/b: Opinions on the item: “Our country should help refugees”, 2015 and 2017, in %



Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

Regarding the question of migration management and especially the question of border controls, there is a growing majority of German respondents who not only see the EU as responsible actor, but the national government (fig. 13). This might reflect the successful politicization of security and border control, which is most visible in the ongoing abandonment of the Schengen regime and the implementation of border controls at the German border to Bavaria. Although highly contested in the local population, the Bavarian government under then federal president Horst Seehofer (Minister of Interior since March 2018) successfully managed to place this issue on the political agenda and steer public discourses.

Figure 13: In your opinion, should additional measures be taken to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU? 2015-2017, in %



Data Source: Eurobarometer; own design

3.2 Political Discourses

The core of our second episode of contention are the parliamentary elections, which took place on 24 September 2017. Already during the electoral campaigns, it became clear that the issue of migration and asylum with all related topics would become the crucial factor for the voting behavior. Notably, major losses of the ruling coalition of CDU and SPD were expected, as well as large gains of the new

right-wing opposition party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany), fishing votes among right-wing and conservative voters and all those who were not content with the migration management of the German government and skeptical towards the major societal changes which were brought about by the reception of around 890,000 asylum seekers during 2015.

3.2.1 Electoral Programs

Thus, the salience and polarization of migration and asylum can already be seen in the electoral programs of the political parties which rallied for the elections (tab. 4). Every program included the issues of migration and asylum. It was one of the big issues treated next to security in Germany, education and pension policy. The analysis focused on the chapters dealing with responsibility and responsibility sharing in the context of migration and asylum policy but also on other chapters that were linked to the topic such as security. The issue responsibility is addressed by all parties quite extensively so that the topic did develop salience in the election programs of 2017. The following election programs were analyzed:

Table 4: Electoral programs for the 2017 Bundestag elections

Party	Title	Pages
SPD	Time for more justice. Our government program for Germany.	116
FDP	Let's think new. The program of the Free Democrats for the 2017 federal elections: "Let us stop watching	158
CDU/CSU	For a Germany where we live well and enjoy living. Government Program 2017-2021.	76
LEFT party	Social. Just. Peace. For everyone. The future we fight for!	144
Coalition 90/GREEN party	The future is made of courage. Bundestag Election Program 2017.	248
AfD	Program for Germany. Election Program of the Alternative for Germany for the election to the German Bundestag on 24 September 2017	76

To structure the topic responsibility and responsibility sharing the election programs were analyzed according to the following guiding questions: Who is considered to be responsible? To whom should they be responsible? What does it mean to be responsible?

The election programs identify three main actors considered to be responsible regarding asylum and migration: the European Union, the member states of the EU and Germany. However, the responsibility of the European Union and the member states cannot always be clearly separated. The main issues discussed with regard to assuming responsibility are presented below according to the actors European Union/EU member states and Germany.

Responsibility of the European Union/EU member states

The responsibilities of the EU and its member states addressed in the election programs include the compliance with the legal framework and the values of the European Union as well as the joint effort to solve the so-called refugee crisis. Regarding the *responsibility to comply to the EU's treaties and laws* all parties except for the AfD agree that the EU and the member states have the common

obligation to respect the Geneva Convention on Refugees and thus have the responsibility to take in refugees. The Green party states in its election program:

“We are fighting for a European asylum policy that conforms to human rights and the rule of law that is characterized by fair access to the asylum procedure and implements the Geneva Convention on Refugees. The member states of the EU must share responsibility for people seeking protection fairly and in solidarity, so that states on the EU's external borders such as Italy and Greece are relieved of their burdens.”³⁷ (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN 2017, 102)

The quote also addresses the aspect of keeping to the European values of solidarity and responsibility sharing. The SPD, FDP and the LEFT agree with the necessity of a fair and solidary system of refugee reception and responsibility sharing. They argue that some member states fail to assume their responsibilities and ask for a financial compensation if member states refuse to take in refugees. The CDU/CSU does not comment the issue. The AfD mainly opposes the reception of refugees and migrants and constructs a threat of mass migration in the election program stating that “the population in Africa and the Arab-Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East [explodes]” (Alternative für Deutschland 2017, 28).³⁸ It is argued that according to socio-geographical experts there are 350 million people willing to migrate in the Arab world and in Africa and that numbers will increase to 950 million in 2050. The AfD argues that mass migration destabilizes the German state and the European continent (Alternative für Deutschland 2017, 28). The construction of danger and the claim of abuse of asylum are used to legitimate the call to change international treaties like the Geneva Convention on Refugees and the right to asylum in the German basic law (Alternative für Deutschland 2017, 30).

Another responsibility attributed to the EU and the member states in the election program is to *jointly manage asylum seekers' movement to the European Union*. This approach includes two measures: the reduction of migration to Europe and the handling of asylum seekers already present in the member states. In order to reduce migration, there are three main aspects: to fight against the causes of flight, border control, and migration agreements with third countries. All parties comment in their election programs the common responsibility to fight causes of flight. Except for the AfD that only aims to avoid economic reasons of flight without further explanation, all parties discuss the topic in detail. CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the LEFT and the GREEN mention the fight against conflicts, hunger and poverty and consider it as important to support development cooperation to enable most of all African countries to establish educational programs, a solid economy and structures for peace. The importance of establishing fair structures of trade between the EU and the so-called developing countries is also debated as well as the European responsibility for climate protection. With regard to support conflict management the CDU/CSU focusses on the commitment to operations of the NATO and the aim to increase the defense budget to 2 percent of the GDP in 2024. The GREENs, the LEFT, FDP and SPD criticize armament and demand to stop weapon exports to crisis regions which the CDU/CSU does not mention at all. The LEFT states on this:

³⁷ “Wir kämpfen für eine menschenrechtskonforme und rechtsstaatliche EU-Flüchtlingspolitik, die sich durch einen fairen Zugang zum Asylverfahren auszeichnet und die Gewährleistungen der Genfer Flüchtlingskonvention umsetzt. Die Mitgliedstaaten der EU müssen sich die Verantwortung für schutzsuchende Menschen fair und solidarisch teilen, damit Staaten an den EU-Außengrenzen wie Italien und Griechenland entlastet werden.”

³⁸ “[...] explodiert die Bevölkerungszahl in Afrika [und in den arabisch-muslimischen Ländern des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens.]”

“We want to disarm and ban arms exports. In Europe and around the world, we need a new policy of détente and peace. We will never resign ourselves to people drowning in the Mediterranean or being deported to death and torture. We know: We must fight the causes, not the symptoms.”³⁹ (DIE LINKE 2017, 8)

Compared to the discourse of 2015 the stop weapon exports to conflict regions is much more present in 2017. All in all, the actions stated are labelled on the one hand as humanitarian responsibility and on the other hand as the fight against causes of flight that in the end reduces migration. The responsibility to establish a common European border control is agreed upon by almost all parties. The LEFT is the only party in favor of open borders. All other parties support border control at the European borders in order to monitor who is entering the European Union. In the election programs of the SPD, CDU/CSU and the AfD, entry control of migrants is linked to the warranty of security. The CDU/CSU argues as follows:

“Europe must be an effective security guarantor for the internal and external security of its Member States. In a globalized world, no country in Europe can protect its interests alone and without the support of others. Europe must effectively protect its external borders against illegal migration, strengthen the Frontex border management agency and complete the European asylum system.”⁴⁰ (CDU/CSU 2017, 56)

The argumentation of the CDU/CSU and SPD shifts quickly between humanitarian commitment for refugees and the warranty of Germany’s security linked to the fight against terrorism. Asylum seekers are presented either as victims in need of protection or as safety risk. The AfD in many cases presents migrants as menace and as persons abusing the German social welfare systems. The GREENs, the LEFT and the FDP also deal with the issue of terrorism, but not in the context of migration. The third measure to reduce migration discussed is the migration agreements with third countries. The CDU/CSU and SPD are in favor of migration agreements in order to keep the number of refugees low and in order to reduce “illegal migration”. The LEFT and the GREEN on the other hand criticize the deal between the EU and Turkey and planned agreements with third countries that in their eyes do not respect human rights. In addition, the responsibility to support international organizations and countries outside Europe that host a great number of refugees is favored by all parties except of the AfD in order to reduce migration to Europe.

Additionally to the question of the management of refugees already present in Europe, the election programs also discuss the *responsibility for a joint management of asylum seekers’ movements to the European Union, albeit not as detailed*. Most of the election programs present a strong relation to the European Union. The European Union is often seen as the solution to the refugee crisis. Except for the AfD all parties are in favor of the further development of the CEAS including a fair distribution, consistent admission standards and decision-making practices within the EU. The AfD opposes the Common European Asylum System, arguing that migration policy is a question of national sovereignty

³⁹ “Wir wollen abrüsten und Waffenexporte verbieten. Wir brauchen in Europa und weltweit eine neue Entspannungs- und Friedenspolitik. Wir werden uns niemals damit abfinden, dass Menschen im Mittelmeer ertrinken oder in Tod und Folter abgeschoben werden. Wir wissen: Wir müssen die Ursachen bekämpfen, nicht die Symptome.”

⁴⁰ “Europa muss eine wirksame Sicherheitsgarantie für die innere und äußere Sicherheit seiner Mitgliedstaaten sein. In einer zunehmend globalisierten Welt kann kein Land in Europa seine Interessen alleine und ohne Unterstützung durch andere wahren. Europa muss seine Außengrenzen wirksam gegen illegale Migration schützen, die Grenzschutzagentur Frontex stärken und das Europäische Asylsystem vollenden.”

and that European cooperation ought to concentrate only on securing European borders (Alternative für Deutschland 2017, 30).

Responsibility of Germany

The main issues discussed in the election programs concerning the responsibility of Germany include the humane treatment of refugees and their integration into German society. These two measures involve the provision of appropriate locations for housing, the acceleration of asylum proceedings, the support of traumatized refugees and the offer of language and integration courses, educational offers, labor integration, and the transfer of the “German” values. It is also discussed to what extent family reunion should take place.

Another important debate that appears in the election program deals with the question: to whom Germany is responsible. Four of the six parties, namely CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and the GREENs, agree in their elections programs to only assume responsibility for people who are persecuted in accordance with the Geneva Convention on Refugees or the Article 16a I GG or who flee due to war in their countries. Labor Migrants or economic refugees are excluded from the right to asylum and need to return to their countries. Or, as the SPD puts it in the election program:

“Protection against persecution and human rights violations must never be a question of economic advantage. The asylum system is the wrong way for people who are primarily looking for work in our country. With an immigration law, we regulate transparently and comprehensibly who may immigrate to Germany for economic reasons. The immigration of qualified specialists depends on the interests of our country.”⁴¹ (SPD 2017, 77)

This quote demonstrates that migration is subject to certain conditions. Migrants need to be in need of protection or useful for the German state in order to be hosted. An image is created that there is always a clear separation between asylum seekers and “economic migrants”. The diverse and complex reasons of escape are reduced pretending that it is always clear whether a person has the right to stay. Not considering for example the fact that the acceptance rate varies between the member states and also between the federal states. The argument that not everyone has a right to asylum is used to justify measures to reduce the number of asylum seekers. Migration control in Germany is declared a responsibility towards the German population. Migration control in many cases is presented as necessary element to grant the stability of the German state and its ability to act. The AfD considers Germany to be responsible exclusively for the stability of the German state and population and for the German welfare systems. Contrary to that and representing a very liberal migration policy, the LEFT argues to abolish the restrictive residence law and to also allow migrants to live in Germany who have not fled persecution or war (DIE LINKE 2017, 65).

Reflecting the results with regard to the politicization of responsibility all three components are given in the election programs. Responsibility and responsibility sharing are addressed by all parties so that a salience of the issue can be observed. Furthermore, a polarization of opinions takes place mainly due to the expansion of actors in the German Bundestag, namely the entry of the AfD. While CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, the GREENs and the LEFT usually agree upon the obligation to take in refugees the AfD

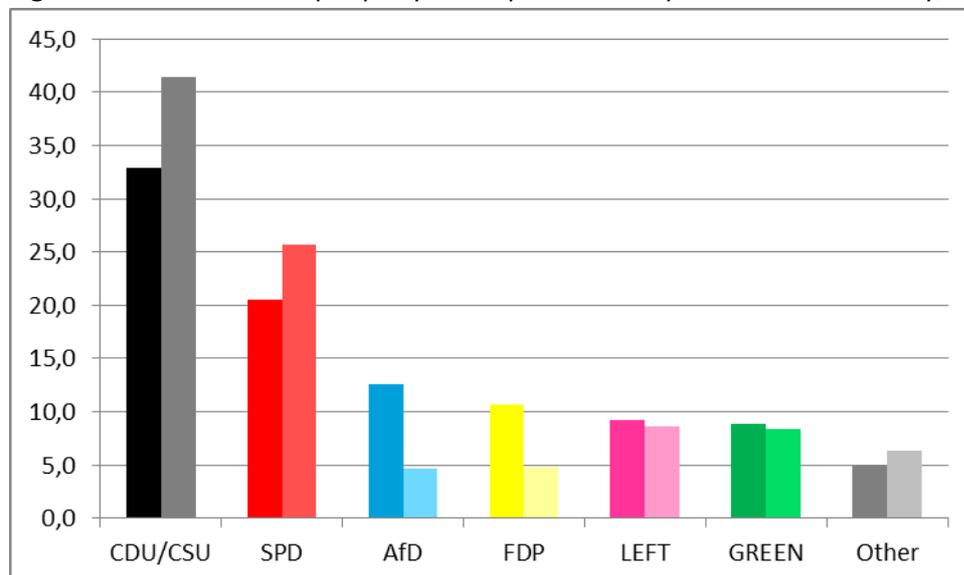
⁴¹ “Der Schutz vor Verfolgung und Menschenrechtsverletzungen darf niemals eine Frage des wirtschaftlichen Vorteils sein. Für Menschen, die bei uns in erster Linie Arbeit suchen, ist das Asylsystem der falsche Weg. Mit einem Einwanderungsgesetz regeln wir transparent und verständlich, wer aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen nach Deutschland einwandern darf. Die Einwanderung qualifizierter Fachkräfte richtet sich nach den Interessen unseres Landes.”

refuses the reception of asylum seekers. The other parties are in favor of a common European asylum policy and responsibility sharing among the member states including the further development of the CEAS, a fair distribution and a common border control. Except for the border control the AfD rejects common actions concerning asylum seekers in Europe. Migrants are constructed as danger and national interests are considered as the most important. This is a position that in the media discourse is attributed to the Eastern European states and opposed to the German position. A polarization of opinions among the SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP, the GREENs and the LEFT can be observed when it comes to the responsibility of migration control and the measures of reducing migration. Usually the GREENs and the LEFT are opposed to measures such as migration agreements and asylum camps outside the EU as they are seen in contradiction to human rights. In a next step we will analyze the parliamentary debates from September to December 2017.

3.2.2 The parliamentary elections of 2017

As expected, the parliamentary elections brought a major shift of the political landscape, reflecting the change and polarization of opinions which took place since 2015. The ruling coalition of the 18th Bundestag (2013-2017) lost 13.7% of votes, ending with 32.9% (CDU/CSU) and 20.5% (SPD). The largest increase in votes (+7.9%) was seen with the AfD, which won 12.6% of electoral votes and entered the Bundestag for the first time, while during their first participation in national elections it did not reach the 5% minimum of votes (fig. 14). While the 18. Bundestag during its electoral period 2013-2017 consisted of four parties, the 19th Bundestag was inhabited by six parties: Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), Social Democratic Party (SPD), Alternative for Germany (AfD), Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) and Green Party (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN).

Figure 14: Share of votes per party in the parliamentary elections in Germany, 2017 and 2013*



*results from 2017 are represented in the first column, results from 2013 in the second.

Source: BTW 2017, BTW 2013; own design

The coalition formation was lengthy and complicated. As the major loss of votes for CDU/CSU and SPD was interpreted that the voters would like to end the big coalition, CDU/CSU first decided to negotiate a coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) and the Green Party (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN). When those negotiations failed in November 2017, the only option which was considered was the

continuation of the big coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD. However, the coalition talks went until February 2018 and the new Government was only formed in March 2018.

The second observation period from September to December 2017 covers the parliamentary debates of the end of the 18th parliamentary term and the beginning of the 19th parliamentary term of the German Bundestag. The inaugural meeting of the new parliament took place on 24 October 2017. Compared to the previous legislative period, the number of parliamentary party groups increased from four to six, with the FDP re-entering the Federal Assembly and the right-wing populist party AfD entering the parliament for the first time. Of the 709 members of parliament, 246 mandates are held by CDU/CSU, 153 by SPD, 92 by the AfD, 80 by FDP, 69 by DIE LINKE (Left), and 67 by BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN (Green). In comparison to the 18th legislative period, the ruling coalition CDU/CSU and SPD lost 105 mandates, their majority dropped from 80% in 2013 to 56% in 2017. The right-wing populist party AfD became the biggest opposition party. Together with the liberal democrats of FDP, the post-communist party DIE LINKE and the GREEN party with its ecological, pacifistic and modernistic profile, the parliamentary opposition is bigger but also more ideologically diverse than in the 18th legislative period, representing the diversification and also polarization of opinions in the public.

3.2.3 Parliamentary debates

Due to the lengthy government formation, there were only six parliamentary debates from September to December 2017. The first session of the 19th parliamentary term being the constituent session was not integrated in the corpus as it contains no substantive debates. The corpus contains the last session of the 18th legislative period (September 5, 2017) and the first sessions of the 19th legislative period until the end of 2017 (tab. 5). All sessions cover at some point responsibility and responsibility sharing in the context of asylum, however not to a very substantial extent. While in the election programs, asylum and migration was a major topic, in the parliamentary sessions it is hardly dealt with. This mismatch could be due to the fact, that during our period of observation, the coalitions have not yet been formed, so that the parties rather debated their divergent approaches towards migration and asylum in coalition negotiations than in parliament. Also, all ministries were led by the former ministers on a provisional basis, as the new ministers had not yet been assigned. Thus, the political process in those months entered a stage of limbo, which was only left when the new government started its work in March 2018.⁴²

The last session of the 18th legislative period reflects on the situation in Germany. The main topics are labor market and social policy, defense and armament policy, education policy, and economic policy. These are mostly not linked to migration and asylum policy. Only 8 out of 19 speeches mention asylum and migration. And only 3 out of those 8 speeches deal with the subject in more detail. Even in the sessions after the election, asylum policy, and related to that responsibility and solidarity, are hardly discussed. So, the salience of responsibility and responsibility sharing was very low in the parliamentary debates from September to December 2018.

⁴² However, also after the new government took up its work, the political process was frequently put on hold due to internal conflicts in the ruling coalition. At the time of writing, Chancellor Merkel has announced to resign as a leader of the CDU, and there are already speculations going on that the 19. Bundestag will not serve until the end of the governing period (2021).

Table 5: Agenda of parliamentary debates 18/245, 19/2, 19/3, 19/4, 19/5 and main issues

Agenda	Main issues of the debate
<p>Parliamentary Session 245, 5 September 2017</p> <p>Debate on the situation in Germany.</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU/Germany</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fight against causes of flight – Development aid in Africa – Sea rescue in the Mediterranean – Reduction of migration: migration agreements with third countries
<p>Parliamentary Session 2, 21 November 2017</p> <p>Debate on the Petitions of the Federal Government: Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the NATO-led Maritime Security Operation SEA GUARDIAN in the Mediterranean; Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the UN-led peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)</p>	<p><i>Germany's responsibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sea rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean – diplomacy and development in the world supporting peace and stability – fight against terrorism, organized crime, smugglers, and human traffickers.
<p>Parliamentary Session 3, 22 November 2017</p> <p>Debate on the Petition of the AfD: Six-point plan – Agreement to promote the return of Syrian refugees.</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of Germany</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Giving asylum: protecting people from criminal regimes
<p>Parliamentary Session 4, 12 December 2017</p> <p>Debate on the recommendation for a resolution and the report of the Steering Committee on the proposal of the Federal Government: Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the NATO-led Maritime Security Operation SEA GUARDIAN in the Mediterranean.</p>	<p><i>Germany's responsibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sea rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean – fight against terrorism, organized crime, smugglers, and human traffickers.
<p>Parliamentary Session 5, 13 December 2017</p> <p>Debate on the Petition of the AfD: Immediate introduction of comprehensive border controls – Rejection in the case of unauthorized border crossing;</p> <p>Debate on the recommendation for a resolution and the report of the Steering Committee on the proposal of the Federal Government: Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the AU/UN Hybrid Operation</p>	<p><i>Responsibility of the EU</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – control of the external borders – European Free Movement <p><i>Germany's responsibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – diplomacy and development in the world supporting peace and stability

<p>in Darfur (UNAMID); Continuation of the participation of armed German forces in the UN-led peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).</p>	<p>– fight against causes of flight</p>
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Source: Minutes of parliamentary sessions; own compilation and design

As mentioned above responsibility and responsibility sharing in the context of asylum are hardly addressed in the parliamentary session on **5 September 2017**. Only three speakers refer to the topic in more detail.

The Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU/CSU) in her speech points to the global responsibility to manage the situation of refugees. In her speech she focuses on development aid for Africa and the necessity of the collaboration with African states and African state leaders, even though they might not be perceived as acting on democratic ground:

“There's no point in believing that by the condemnation [of those countries] in the German Bundestag the world becomes a better place. Rather we need to keep the people in mind: People who flee through the Sahara, people walking through Niger, people coming to Libya. All these countries are certainly not democracies, like we imagine them, and yet we have to talk to these countries and build up partnerships with them.”⁴³ (Parliamentary Session 18/245, 25265)

She implicitly criticizes that the opposition condemned consultations and agreements with third countries, like Libya, Niger, and Chad. The critique can be observed in the speech of Katrin Göring-Eckardt from the GREEN party. She addresses human rights abuses in Libya, violence towards refugees, the rape of women and opposes migration deals with these countries.

“These are human rights violations, this is a disaster! I say to you: With such a country, with Libya, there must be no refugee deal. The deal with Turkey has already failed. Trying to pursue a policy of isolation with a country that has no government at all, to make deals with autocratic countries and to want to supply them with weapons so that Europe's borders are moved to the center of Africa is not a realistic refugee policy, it is the opposite of that! It has nothing to do with humanity, and it has nothing to do with planning. You want these people to be out of sight and out of mind.”⁴⁴ (Parliamentary Session 18/245, 25284)

⁴³ “Es hat keinen Sinn, zu glauben, dass durch simple Verurteilung im Deutschen Bundestag die Welt sich zum Besseren ändert, sondern wir müssen Menschen im Blick haben: Menschen, die durch die Sahara fliehen, Menschen, die durch Niger gehen, Menschen, die nach Libyen kommen. All diese Länder sind sicherlich nicht Demokratien, wie wir sie uns vorstellen, und trotzdem müssen wir mit diesen Ländern reden und Partnerschaft mit ihnen aufbauen.”

⁴⁴ “Das sind Menschenrechtsverletzungen, das ist eine Katastrophe! Ich sage Ihnen: Mit einem solchen Land, mit Libyen, darf es keinen Flüchtlingsdeal geben. Der Deal mit der Türkei ist ohnehin schon gescheitert. Zu versuchen, mit einem Land, das gar keine Regierung hat, weiter Abschottungspolitik zu betreiben, mit autokratischen Ländern Deals zu machen und ihnen Waffen liefern zu wollen, damit die Grenzen Europas in die Mitte Afrikas verlegt werden, das ist doch keine realistische Flüchtlingspolitik, das ist das Gegenteil davon! Das hat mit Menschlichkeit nichts zu tun, und das hat mit Planbarkeit nichts zu tun. Sie wollen, dass diese Menschen aus den Augen und aus dem Sinn sind.”

Göring-Eckardt points out the responsibility of Germany to respect the values of the European Union and human rights. She sees a contradiction between the obligation to care for refugees and the goal to reduce migration flows to Europe.

The third speaker dealing with responsibility is the Federal Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU/CSU). As Merkel he also asks for Germany's responsibility to control migration and supports the measures of development aid in Africa and the collaboration with African countries. Even though there is not much salience in this debate we can observe a polarization of opinions. This polarization contains the dilemma between Germany's and the EU's responsibility to keep to the European treaties and values such as refugee reception and human rights on the one hand and a common solution of the refugee crisis in form of migration reduction on the other hand. The members of the CDU/CSU in this debate intend to integrate third countries to this process.

Three parliamentary sessions on **November 21st, 2017, December 12th and 13th, 2017** deal with various deployments of Germany's Armed Forces (Bundeswehr), such as SEA GUARDIAN in the Mediterranean and UNAMID and UNMISS in Sudan. The debate links to Germany's responsibility for sea rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean as well as diplomacy and development in the world supporting peace and stability in other countries and fighting terrorism, organized crime, smugglers, and human traffickers. These activities could also contribute to the reduction of flight causes and the preservation of security in Germany and Europe. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (FDP) states in the context of the deployment UNAMID: "When we talk about refugee policy, it is urgently advisable to also talk about combating the causes of flight. Our participation means that we are making an active contribution to stabilization."⁴⁵ (Parliamentary Session 19/2, 72). Not all parties agree that the deployments of the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) help to stabilize the regions and consolidate peace. The members of the CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP mostly agree to the necessity of the deployments. The members of the GREENS argue in favor of the deployment SEA GUARDIAN, but criticize the deployments to Sudan and the collaboration with its president al-Bashir⁴⁶. They argue that the terrorist regime produces refugees and that there should not be collaboration. The members of the LEFT generally detest deployments of the German Armed Forces and categorize them as refugee defense and imperial policy. Kathrin Vogler of the LEFT party argues:

"This federal government cooperates with the Sudanese regime and with dictator al-Baschir to prevent people from leaving a country where people are starving and in which there are brutal human rights violations every day. Unfortunately, it is not only the case in Sudan, but also in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan or Libya that the Federal Government and the EU discard all European and humanist values o when it comes to preventing people from fleeing their dreadful living conditions. Ladies and gentlemen of the Federal Government, you are constantly confusing the fight against the causes of flight with the fight against refugees. We will not let you get away with that."⁴⁷ (Parliamentary Session 19/2, 73)

⁴⁵ "Wenn wir über Flüchtlingspolitik sprechen, ist es dringend ratsam, auch über die Bekämpfung von Fluchtursachen zu reden. Mit der Beteiligung leisten wir einen aktiven Beitrag zur Stabilisierung."

⁴⁶ The Sudanese president al-Bashir was indicted by the International Criminal Court for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Dafur in 2009.

⁴⁷ "Diese Bundesregierung kooperiert mit dem sudanesischen Regime und mit Diktator al-Baschir, um Menschen daran zu hindern, ein Land zu verlassen, in dem viele Hunger leiden und in dem es täglich brutale Menschenrechtsverletzungen gibt. Es ist leider nicht nur im Sudan so, sondern auch in Eritrea, in Äthiopien, im

Members of the LEFT petition to use the money instead for sea rescue without military intervention, financial support of the civil society and the creation of legal entry routes. The members of the AfD argue in favor of *Bundeswehr* deployments in the vicinity of Europe, but reject worldwide operations. They consider Marine rescue operations in the Mediterranean as support of human traffickers and as production of a surplus of asylum seekers who are brought into the European Union. The debate shows clearly a polarization of opinions with respect to the interpretation of military operations as rescue or defense operations and regarding the respect of human rights.

The responsibility of Germany to protect people from persecution is dealt with in the parliamentary session of **22 November 2017**. Basis for this debate is a petition of the AfD to promote the return of Syrian refugees. Bernd Baumann of the AfD argues as follows:

“The security in large parts of Syria has improved substantially during the last months. The ‘Islamic state’ has practically been defeated.”⁴⁸ (Parliamentary Session 19/3, 180).

Furthermore, it is stated that 60,000 Syrians already returned to Syria combined with the suggestion to enter into an agreement with the regime that guarantees Syrian refugees amnesty when they return. The members of all other parties criticize the statements of the AfD and argue that there is no peace in Syria and therefore Germany has to maintain its responsibility for Syrian refugees. The parliamentarians discuss the German government’s humanitarian responsibility, which includes the protection from violent regimes. In opposition to the AfD, the other parties reject negotiations with the Syrian regime and advocate a diplomatic solution in cooperation with the United Nations, as well as humanitarian aid for Syria and its neighboring states.

The parliamentary session on **13 December 2017** deals with the subject of responsibility for refugees during a debate on an AfD petition which demands the extension of border controls at the German borders. Since 13 September 2015, border controls have been reinstated at the German-Austrian border. The AfD demands extensive border controls and the rejection of asylum seekers at the borders, based on security considerations. The members of the AfD construct scenarios of millions of migrants arriving at the European shores and threatening the German population. They argue that Germany is only responsible for the German population and thus needs to introduce comprehensive border protection. The members of all other parties argue against the AfD and seem to be more united than before, criticizing the production of horror scenarios and the cynical argumentation of the AfD. They emphasize the importance of keeping up European principles such as open borders and freedom of movement. Only the CDU/CSU argues for the continuation of border controls at the German-Austrian border as long as the protection of the external European borders is not guaranteed.

Summarizing politicization in the political discourse we find that responsibility and responsibility sharing with regard to refugees and asylum hardly develop any salience. However, polarization of opinions can be found, notably concerning the responsibility of the German government to control and reduce migration flows to Germany. The LEFT and the GREEN party oppose the measures proposed by the governing coalition, as they might not conform to the EU’s/Germany’s responsibility to respect

Südsudan oder in Libyen, dass die Bundesregierung und die EU alle europäischen und humanistischen Werte über Bord werfen, wenn es darum geht, Menschen die Flucht vor haltlosen Zuständen zu verwehren. Meine Damen und Herren von der Bundesregierung, Sie verwechseln ständig die Bekämpfung der Fluchtursachen mit der Bekämpfung der Flüchtlinge. Das lassen wir Ihnen nicht durchgehen.”

⁴⁸ “Die Sicherheitslage in großen Teilen Syriens hat sich in den vergangenen Monaten substantiell verbessert. Der ‚Islamische Staat‘ ist praktisch besiegt.”

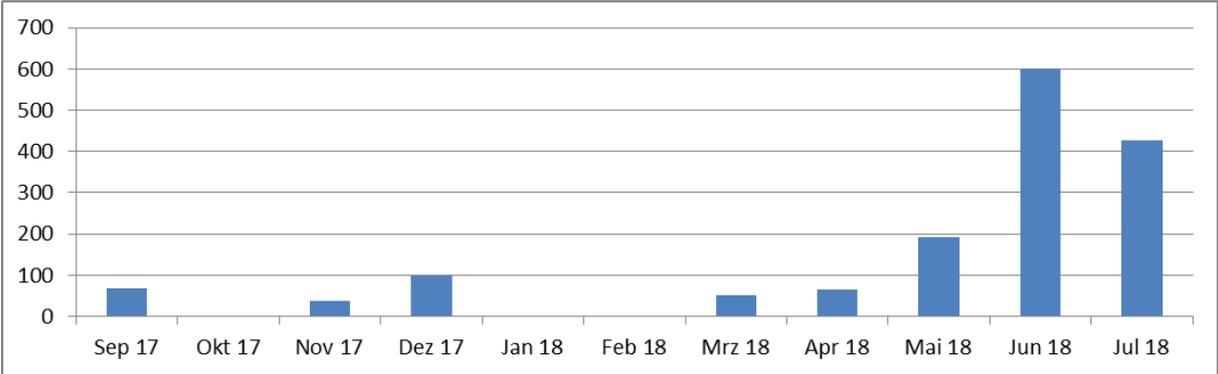
European values and treaties. Furthermore, they criticize the collaboration with a terrorist regime and the disrespect of asylum seekers' need for protection.

The appearance of a new actor in the political field, the right-wing AfD, caused a shift in discursive coalitions. It unified all other parties in the Bundestag in resisting the AfD's petitions and stressing the German responsibility for people in need of protection. It also led to the governing coalition joining the Left's and the Green's condemnation of collaboration with violent regimes (i.e. Syria)⁴⁹.

3.3 Media Discourses

Since 2016, media reports on the (then called) "refugee crisis" concentrated on questions of asylum politics, in Germany but also in the EU. The salience of the topic was only halted by outstanding events such as the soccer European championships in July 2016 or the U.S. elections in November 2016. In 2017, the salience of refugee issues decreased, especially between April and June 2017 and during the months after the German parliamentary elections of September 2017 (fig. 15). The following increase of salience since March 2018 reflects the installation of a new minister of interior from the Christian Social Party, Mr. Seehofer, and his attempt to introduce more restrictive asylum regulations with regards to accommodation, family reunification and return, accompanied by his successor as Bavarian prime minister, Mr. Söder, who initiated debates on the enforcements of border controls along the Austrian border and new policies towards push-backs of migrants.

Figure 15: Representation of refugee*-topics among the top ten topics in the main TV-news (in minutes), September 2017-July 2018



Data Source: IFEM; Design: Birgit Glorius

3.3.1 Salience of responsibility sharing, solidarity, and relocation

As mentioned above the discussions about asylum and refugees decreased in the media after the election in September 2017. This is also true for debates on responsibility and responsibility sharing in about relocation of refugees, which has hardly developed salience on the three media portals analyzed. Between September and December 2017, only 48 articles in total covered the topic, even less than in 2015. In order to find the material for the media discourse analysis the same search term as for the first period of contention "relocation quota" was entered to the online portals Spiegel online, Focus online and bild.de. On Spiegel online there were 24 articles dealing with the topic relocation quota, on Focus online 20 articles and on bild.de only 4 articles. Spiegel online presented 18 rather long articles, 4 commentaries, 2 short articles and one interview. There were 5 short articles and 15 articles of medium length on Focus online, and one short article and 3 articles of medium length on

⁴⁹ Given that the governing coalition is much less critical of its own collaboration with the Sudanese president for instance, this seems to be quite contradictory.

bild.de. All were included into the analysis. The articles relate to a European Court of Justice decision from 6 September 2017 on the actions of Hungary and Slovakia against the relocation of refugees decided in 2015, and in the context of the EU summit on 14/15 December 2017. The statement on migration policy of the president of the European Council Donald Tusk in December 2017 before the summit is also often mentioned in the articles. The document refers to the approach of mandatory quotas and states that it has been highly divisive and ineffective (European Council 2017, 1).

3.3.2 Stances towards responsibility and polarization of opinions

When it comes to responsibility regarding refugees the media articles discuss the responsibility of the European Union and the EU member states to solve the refugee crisis and to control migration. This includes the organization of the reception of asylum seekers and the reduction of further migration through the protection of the external borders of the EU. Looking at refugee reception in the EU it is discussed whether all member states should be responsible to take care of refugees and if they should show solidarity to those member states that host a big amount of asylum seekers such as Italy, Germany and Sweden. The main issue discussed regarding the fair distribution of refugees on the one hand is the relocation of 120,000 people from Italy and Greece that was decided in 2015 and has yet not been completely realized. On the other hand the discussion is focused on a fixed quota to distribute asylum seekers to all EU member states in the case of crisis to be integrated in the European asylum reform. The European Union is presented as divided on whether all member states should engage in the reception of asylum seekers. The claimed division of the European Union concerning the European asylum policy is emphasized by presenting two opposed parties similar to the discourse in 2015: the Eastern European countries also referred to as the Visegrád group led by Viktor Orbán versus the rest of the European Union led by the European Commission and the German Government. The articles largely focus on reporting on these discussions hardly ever comment on relocation, responsibility and solidarity. Mostly some information is given on the current situation of relocation, the judgement of the European Court of Justice denying the actions of Hungary and Slovakia against the relocation of refugees, the statement of Donald Tusk on migration policy or the topics of the EU summit in December 2017. Then mainly different positions of politicians are juxtaposed often using quotes. Concerning the responsibility of the member states to take in refugees, the Visegrád Countries are presented as opposed to any obligation regarding refugee reception. Arguments why they refuse the relocation quota are not always cited. If they are cited, they contain the argument that Eastern European states refuse migration because they feel responsible for the safety of their countries and thus want to decide who enters the country. In this argumentation, migrations appear as a threat to the national security. Therefore, in the statements of the Visegrád Countries the fight against illegal migration is considered as most important and with that the financing of border protection instead of quotas. Similar to the discourse of 2015 it is also argued that the quota is no solution because the migrants do not want to stay in Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland, but rather in Germany and Sweden.

As to the relocation of the 120,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece it is stated in many articles that Slovakia reluctantly accepts the judgement of the European Court of Justice, but that Hungary refuses the judgement and is not willing to host asylum seekers. The Hungarian foreign minister Péter Sijjártó is often quoted, such as in Spiegel online: "This decision threatens the security and future of Europe as a whole."⁵⁰ (Spiegel online, anon. 06.09.2017b). Why it threatens the security of Europe is

⁵⁰ "Diese Entscheidung gefährdet die Sicherheit und die Zukunft ganz Europas."

usually not further explained. Hungary's refusal of the judgement of the European Court of Justice evokes discussions of the European Commission and the German Government about the responsibility of each member state to keep to fundamental European values which contain the protection of refugees, solidarity towards the other member states and the respect of the European institutions such as the judgements of the European Court of Justice. "The member states have a legal, political and even moral obligation to do their share"⁵¹, the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos is quoted (Focus online, anon. 06.09.2017). Furthermore, as in the discourse of 2015, it is argued by the party in favor of the relocation quota that solidarity is no one-way street, that the Eastern European countries receive a lot of solidarity by the European Union in form of financial support and that in return they have to show solidarity by taking in asylum seekers in order to relieve those countries that host a big amount of asylum seekers. Or as the Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern puts it on bild.de: "If you don't follow the rules, you can't be a net recipient of 14 or 6 billion euros."⁵² (bild.de, anon. 06.09.2017).

Another debate presented is about responsibility sharing in the context of protection of the external borders. It is stated that the Visegrád Countries prefer to contribute to the border protection rather than to refugee reception. Germany and the European Commission are presented in favor of this commitment, but especially the German Chancellor Angela Merkel criticizes that "flexible solidarity" as not enough: "Solidarity must not only exist in the external dimension, it must also exist internally." (bild.de, anon. 15.12.2017). This internal dimension, as it is stated in many articles, also includes a fair distribution of refugees. Therefore, many articles discuss possible consequences for EU member states that refuse responsibility sharing and the decisions of European institutions such as infringement procedures and the limitation of financial support from the EU budget. Another issue discussed with regard to the responsibility of the protection of the European external borders is the construction of a border fence in Hungary. This action is mostly criticized by the European Commission and Germany. The articles present Viktor Orbán's argumentation, that Hungary enacts solidarity towards the other member states by building a fence at the Schengen border and thus protect the whole of Europe from migrants.

All in all, when we look at the politicization of responsibility and responsibility sharing with respect to refugees and asylum in the media debate from September to December 2017 we can observe even less salience than in 2015. However, there are polarizing positions presented in the articles just like in the discourse of 2015. The focus of the two opposed parties in 2017 is on the European Commission/Germany and the so called Visegrád Countries. It is presented that they fight about the significance of responsibility sharing in the context of the solution of the refugee crisis. As stated in the articles, responsibility sharing with regard to refugee reception by the European Commission and Germany is understood as political and moral obligation of all member states including a fair distribution and the control of the external borders. The Visegrád Countries are presented as supporters of solidarity in border protection but as opponents of solidarity in refugee reception. Responsibility sharing regarding a fair distribution of asylum seekers to all member states is stated as coercion and menace to the national population. The positions of the online portals are relatively similar. If there are comments or commenting phrases in the articles, usually Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (sometimes in combination with other Visegrád Countries) is criticized for his behavior,

⁵¹ "Die Mitgliedstaaten sind rechtlich und politisch, ja sogar moralisch verpflichtet, ihren Anteil zu leisten."

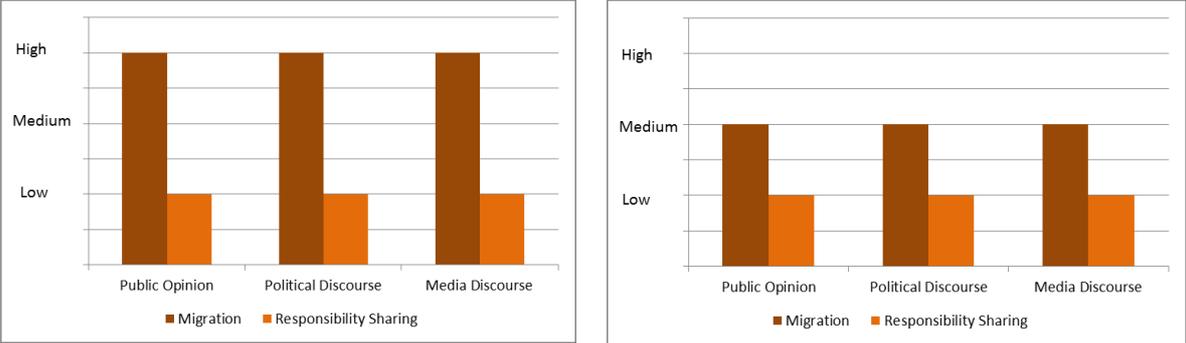
⁵² "Wer sich nicht an die Regeln hält, der kann nicht Nettoempfänger von 14 oder 6 Milliarden Euro sein."

more specifically for receiving money from the EU and at the same time refusing solidarity in refugee reception.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this report, we analyzed the development of debates on migration and responsibility sharing in Germany between 2015 and 2017. We examined the development of public opinion and of political and media discourses, regarding the salience of debates and the polarization of opinion. As a first and major result, we can conclude that *migration* and related issues showed a much higher salience than the question of *responsibility sharing* in all three sections of observation and over the whole observation period (fig. 16). Second, we saw that the topic of migration, which was at the heart of the German discourse landscape notably in 2015, comprises *manifold and changing connotations*. While in 2015, many discourses dealt with human tragedies in the context of flight and the necessity to become active and show solidarity via humanitarian engagement, the terms “migration” and “migrants” in 2017 had adopted connotations of “strangeness” and “security threat”, and had triggered debates on deservingness of individuals regarding their causes of flight, and limits of solidarity in terms of immigration numbers and integration efforts.

Figure 16a/b: Salience of “Migration” and “Responsibility Sharing” in Public opinion, Political discourse and media discourse in Germany, 2015 and 2017



Source: own compilation; own design

Notwithstanding that a large majority of the population and their political representatives fully support the humanitarian obligation to help people who are politically persecuted or flee from crisis areas, the question *who* should act *how* and with reference to *whom* developed considerable polarization in the political discourse between the first and the second episode of contention. While parliamentary debates in 2015 on those issues did not develop a high degree of polarization, the non-parliamentary political discourse, represented by new actors such as the party AfD or the PEGIDA-movement, gained momentum, and finally led to a major shift of the political landscape in Germany which became visible during the 2017 parliamentary elections. This shift triggered a polarization of opinions also within parliamentary debates in 2017. In the media discourse, there is no polarization between the first and second episode of contention. The positions on responsibility sharing presented in the media are very similar in 2015 and 2017.

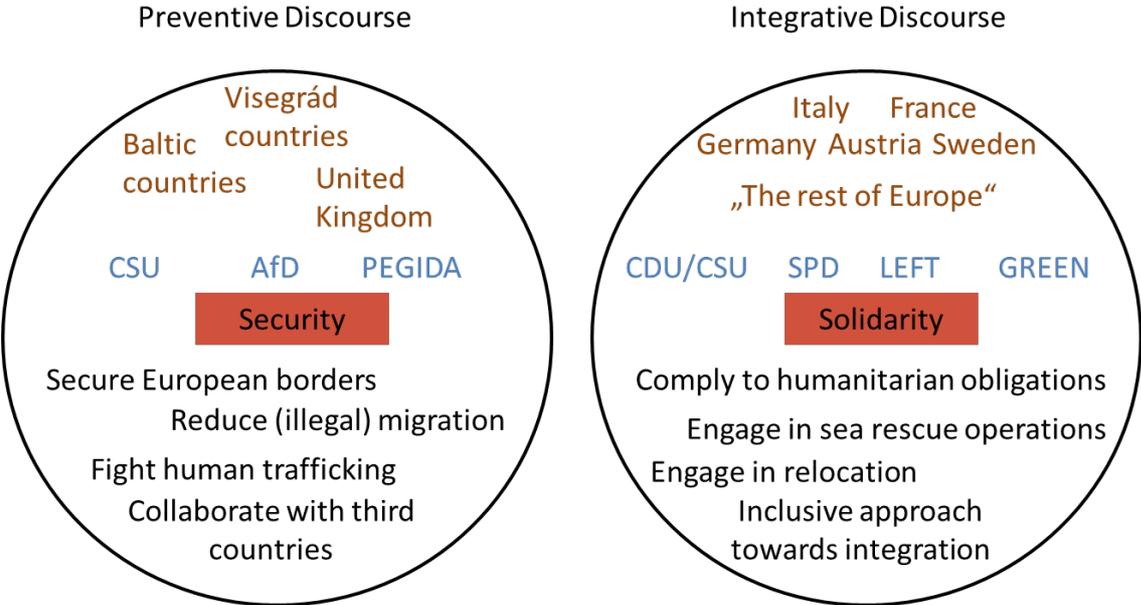
As two major discourse lines, we can differentiate integrative versus preventive argumentations (fig. 17). Integrative argumentations petition for keeping European values of solidarity and responsibility sharing and comply with humanitarian obligations as set out in the Geneva Convention and the European treaties and laws. This includes the engagement in rescue operations in the Mediterranean and in relocation operations to relieve the European first reception countries along the Mediterranean

coastline. Regarding the internal governance of refugee reception and integration, the integrative positions support integration programs for all asylum seekers and resist segregation and social exclusion. The obligation to enact solidarity with migrants is supported by arguments which emphasize the global inequality.

The preventive positions, on the other hand, focus on the issue of security in the context of immigration, but also on the reduction of migration flows to Europe and Germany. Specific measures debated in this context are joint European operations to secure the European borders and fight human trafficking, but also the collaboration with third countries, including authoritarian regimes, in order to hold people back from leaving those countries. Both streams of argumentation can be found with respect to Germany as a global player, but also with reference to Germany as EU member state and likewise for the other EU member states and the European institutions.

On the EU level, the two discursive streams are clearly geographically related to the Visegrád Countries, the Baltic States and the UK as representatives of the preventive discourse on the one hand, and “the rest of Europe”, representing the integrative discourse on the other hand, notably the countries of Germany, France, Austria, Italy and Sweden, who either received the largest numbers of asylum seekers in 2015 and/or show the highest willingness to engage in relocation operations.

Figure 17: Major Discourse Figures in the German Discourse



Source: own compilation; own design

Finally, we want to highlight the internal specifics for the German discourse on solidarity and responsibility sharing: First, we need to stress the high salience of these issues with respect to the multilevel governance system in the political discourse. There was an intensive debate on internal burden sharing between the national, the federal and the municipal levels in terms of budget distribution, and burden sharing among federal states and municipalities in terms of allocation of asylum seekers. As there is strong variation in terms of population density, economic structure and wealth among the 16 federal states, the question of solidarity and responsibility sharing is of high virulence not only in the context of flight and asylum. Second, and ultimately related to the previous argument, the internal diversity of Germany and its society is still clearly linked to its divided past. Even today, almost thirty years after the fall of the “Berlin Wall”, there are major divergences of living conditions, experiences, and perceptions between the “post-socialist” part of German society and the

former inhabitants of the FRG. This is of utmost relevance for topics such as immigration and diversity, but also for questions of responsibility and solidarity, and those diverging opinions are clearly reflected by the electoral vote. Thus, if we want to understand the major divergences between European countries' positions to immigration and solidarity, we might need to take a closer look at Germany, as we find representations of both parts of Post-War European history here.

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6. Appendix

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