

Annexes

Transcripts of the interviews with the key informants

Interview with the Respondent A

Stela Marcineková: How do you think migration, or the migration policy of countries, is affecting political parties in Europe?

Respondent A: If we are talking about migration, or the impact of migration on the behaviour of populist parties in Europe, then we should not talk about migration policy, because people rarely know what is actually part of migration policy, what is its content, but they certainly know that there are some migrants in their country, because they are, for example, visually distinguishable, or because they exhibit some other cultural patterns of behaviour, which may not entirely correspond to the idea of an ordinary person in a country. So, first of all, we need to talk about migration as such, because migration policy only manages and regulates migration processes, but I would not say that this policy has a direct influence on the policies of European populist parties.

Stela Marcineková: I understand. I am asking because I also have a question in my questionnaire about whether people think that the rise of far-right parties and migration policy are two areas that are connected, or whether they are two different issues that should be addressed separately. Now, you have just said to me that it is more about migration as such. I agree with that, but at the same time, migration influences how these parties express their views on the matter, for example, what they would like to change after the next elections, and that is what voters are responding to.

Respondent A: Yes, certainly yes, but if we are talking about a migration policy, that is a particular output of the government, but what

the political parties are presenting is not a migration policy, it is just their views on migration policy and migration. Some authors divide migration policy into 3 spheres, and these are: immigration policy, asylum policy and integration policy. And yes, if the state's approach to immigration policy is too liberal, that is, if, for example, the labour market or access to real estate is open to migrants, then this can influence the behaviour of populists, and populists then claim that they want to make this policy restrictive, that is, that we want to do everything we can to stop these migration processes, which I think is not possible, or at least to limit them at the very least. The question is to what extent does an ordinary person have an idea of how migration policy really works and what it really looks like. And if we are talking about asylum policy, that can also influence populist behaviour, because it can also be liberal or restrictive. In Slovakia, for example, we have a completely restrictive asylum policy, because it grants a maximum of 10 permits a year. At the same time, however, the interest of asylum seekers in Slovakia is also minimal, which is why the numbers are so low. So immigration and asylum policies influence populist behaviour, and even integration policies, and this can be seen in countries that have been focused on multiculturalism and have been too open to different cultures, even encouraging them to retain their original cultural patterns of behaviour. So, it is not only migration policy but migration as such that influences the behaviour of such parties. Populists are more influenced when a Muslim migrant commits a crime that is published in the media than by the fact that the government has formulated something into a law.

Stela Marcineková:

Everywhere, and therefore in Italy and Spain too, it is true that who shouts the loudest has the most influence. The current Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, also claims that they are not a far-right party, and certainly not a neo-fascist party, yet what they want to promote claims the opposite. So, I am trying to figure out what is behind this. Whether it is just the fact that people are more likely to go along with a simpler view or an idea that does not require too much thinking, such as the fact that they want to ban the arrival of more migrants from outside the EU because they already have too many of them there anyway.

Respondent A:

What is behind this is not just migrants. First of all, we need to understand the thinking of the populists - this thinking is based on the dichotomy of US and THEM. WE in the sense of friend

and THEY in the sense of enemy. The question is who the enemies are. They can be defined either in a horizontal form or in a vertical form. The typical populist is always critical of the political elite that governs. Even Meloni started out in opposition and criticised everything the government did - that is the vertical dimension, WE the people versus THEM, those who are up there, who, among other things, are making migration policy. And it is precisely that migration policy that is not in line with what we the people want. And then there is the horizontal dimension, where we are WE versus the others (THEM) - those others who differ from us in some way based on some traits (skin colour, religion, etc.) and these others disrupt the homogeneity of that WE. This can include, for example, the LGBTI+ community and also migrants, who are for populists an "excellent" category of enemy. Most of the time it is a person who is often from a different culture, behaves differently, has a different religion, a different skin colour, and his behaviour does not correspond with the behaviour of people who belong to the WE category. And when you realise this, the migrant is the other, and the populist is by definition the one who seeks the other (the enemy). And since migration has been quite publicised in recent years to the point where fears have been created about it, fears that migrants will harm us, that they will disrupt our patterns of behaviour, etc. So, to understand what's behind this, you must realise that populists think dichotomously in terms of US versus THEM - and therefore criticise everything that is not US. And when you link it all together, THEY - the ruling elite, create a migration policy that favours the other (migrants). The main communication tool of populists is to create fear and concern, because when a person is afraid it motivates him to act. In Italy and Spain, this is reinforced by the fact that these countries are directly confronted by migrants, mainly from Africa, and these migrants do not have it easy there, because many times they are below the poverty line and are dependent on the help of others. And when you are poor and you do not get that help, many times these people start committing crimes, which, again, is exploited by populist or far-right parties, and voters then tend to vote for them because they criticise this and proclaim that changes are needed that the current elite is not making.

Stela Marcineková:

In my opinion, if these parties would put more energy into coming up with some specific solutions, for example, in the framework of integration, instead of just rejecting migrants out loud and creating the fear associated with their arrival, maybe something could change, and it would probably change the

general opinion of the population as well. Migration cannot be stopped anymore. And I seriously think that this is something that even the populists are aware of. So why don't they take some steps to change it for the better?

Respondent A:

Because that would solve the problem and they don't want to solve the problem because it would disappear. They want to feed the problem because they want to gain voters. Political parties were never there to solve problems, but rather to make a big fuss. As long as that particular conflict exists, so will their political party.

Stela Marcineková:

In doing so, they feed what they fight against the most. This is completely a paradox.

Respondent A:

You said it well that migration cannot be stopped. We do not need to talk about how to stop it, but about how to integrate these people. Since Italy and Spain have been confronted with migration for years, they know better how to deal with it. Migrants arrive there who are advantageous to them because they do jobs that their population is no longer willing to do (cleaners, waiters, dishwashers, etc.). And that's why, on the one hand, the population sees them positively and generally has no problem with them as long as they are beneficial to them and to the system. Integration is key - if you exclude someone, they become radicalised. The other interesting thing about migrants is that they may be going through an identity crisis by virtue of exclusion. This mostly affects second-generation migrants who were born in a different country than their parents but were often brought up in the native environment of the country from which their parents emigrated. These people may feel that they belong to the country of their birth, but they may, for example, be different in appearance and thus not be seen as equals by the native population. But the native population must understand and accept that these people were born in the same country as them, they work there, they pay taxes, they can vote, they are part of society - so the integration policy must be reciprocal, and they cannot be excluded.

Stela Marcineková:

As for my experience in Italy, I know people who are accepted by the society, even working, and studying, but because of the

bureaucracy, they have been waiting for more than a year for permits.

Respondent A:

Now imagine their situation - how are they supposed to integrate into society if the state rejects them in this way and creates obstacles for them. If a migrant has a negative experience of the system of the country, he or she has come to in the first place, his or her idea of that country's society is also negative, and he or she may automatically feel excluded. This can then, after all, demotivate him or her to integrate into that society and bring some benefits with their arrival. A good example of integration is Germany, where they understood that the alpha omega is to teach immigrants the language and started to offer them free language courses. This, too, is one of the paths that other countries can follow.

Stela Marcineková:

That's a very good point, I also ask in my questionnaire what people perceive as the biggest drawbacks or obstacles when it comes to the arrival of migrants, and almost all of them choose the language barrier. Another factor that is important is the economic situation of the country, and the political parties should also be aware of this, that the state can benefit from migrants, as you said, for example, by doing professions that may be inferior to the locals.

Respondent A:

Not just economic factors, but also demographic factors. The populations of countries are ageing, and managed migration is the solution. Countries can choose to recruit doctors or IT specialists, young people who are fit and who are expected to contribute to the social system. And then this social system can be generous to pensioners and other groups. Therefore, economic and demographic factors are directly linked.

Stela Marcineková:

Exactly.

Respondent A:

The populists are spreading the general opinion that migrants are expensive and that the money that the state would invest in them can be invested, for example, in education. It is important to realise here that the migrant only costs the state money up to the point at which the state integrates him or her. In the end, the migrant costs less money than a person who decides to leave

his/her native country at the age of 25, after being supported by the state from the moment of birth (parental allowance, maternity leave, free schools, etc.). This is a loss for the state. And then there is the migrant, in whom the system of the country where he comes has invested nothing in his whole life, he is ready to get a job and contribute to the system, and the state decides to create barriers for him/her and rejects him/her.

Stela Marcineková: I agree. The state should create suitable conditions for both groups.

Respondent A: Yes, but people will always leave. The difference is that a wise state will realise that those people who leave must be replaced by someone else. The state, led by populist parties, will say that we don't want anyone else here because they are stealing our jobs.

Stela Marcineková: This is exactly what they claim - they steal jobs from the native population, cost the state a lot of money, don't know the language, have a different culture and religion, and then instil this into the subconscious of the nation.

Respondent A: That is why we need to talk more about it in general.

Stela Marcineková: Thank you very much for your time and information provided.

Interview with the Respondent B

Stela Marcineková: What type of visa or residence permit are you applying for, and what is the purpose of your stay in Italy?

Respondent B: I have applied for student visa and for student residence permit in Italy.

- Stela Marcineková:* What documentation do you need to provide in order to apply for the visa or residence permit, and how can you obtain these documents?
- Respondent B:* First, for coming to Italy, I had to show documents proving that I got my acceptance from the university Master program in Italy. I also had to prove my personal income and bank status, together with documents about my parents – information about their job and financial documents such as bank status. Documents about my graduation from Bachelor program and high school were also needed. I had to write a motivational letter and explain why I want to come to Italy, where will I live, how long do I want to stay and what is my purpose for the application. I collected these documents while I still lived in Turkey, and I had to officially translate them to Italian language. That was for my first visa application that allowed me to arrive to Italy. After I arrived in Italy, I applied for residence permit card for 1 year and I sent the same documents to the Immigration office, together with filled application form for the residence permit with duration of 1 year. 6 months later I went to the Immigration office, and they collected my fingerprints. 45 days later I got my residence permit card for 1 year and I have to follow this process every year again.
- Stela Marcineková:* How long does the application process typically take?
- Respondent B:* Visa process took just 2 weeks. Stay permit processes are taking 6-8 months.
- Stela Marcineková:* Are there any specific requirements or restrictions that you need to be aware of when applying for a visa or residence permit in Italy?
- Respondent B:* When I came to Italy, I had to apply for residence permit in 10 days. I was able to get all of the documents needed in the offices of Italian Post so I could have sent my application. I received a document saying that I am in the process of getting residence permit in Italy. With this document, I was allowed to only stay in Italy and no other countries of the EU, until I got my official residence permit papers. After getting it, there are no restrictions.

- Stela Marcineková:* How are visa and residence permit applications processed, and what criteria are used to evaluate them?
- Respondent B:* I do not know, but I think they evaluate you based on the documents provided. You must have a valid reason to get a residence permit.
- Stela Marcineková:* What are the potential consequences of providing false information or documentation during the visa or residence permit application process?
- Respondent B:* I am not sure, but I would probably not have a chance to get different type of visa or residence permit, I would not be able to enter the country, or I would have to leave immediately.
- Stela Marcineková:* What types of support services are available to you as an immigrant or visa applicant in Italy?
- Respondent B:* I think there is no service like that. I did not get any support, I did the online research and applied.
- Stela Marcineková:* How can you access information and resources to help you navigate the immigration process in Italy?
- Respondent B:* As I said, I did the online research and I read information available on official websites. I received a lot of information and help in student WhatsApp groups from people who already went through this process, especially Turkish nationals like me.
- Stela Marcineková:* What are some of the cultural and social norms in Italy that you should be aware of as an immigrant or visa applicant?
- Respondent B:* I think there are no special norms to be aware of. You just need to follow the application process and provide correct documents on time.

Stela Marcineková: Do you think that current policies are in favour of people migrating to Italy, or do you think the opposite?

Respondent B: I believe that these processes are necessary, because the government needs to protect the borders and fight with problems regarding illegal immigrants, so I did not feel that those rules are against me. Only problem is that the processes are taking so much time, especially when your initial permit expires and you have to wait, for example, for the fingerprint appointment at the police station. While waiting I was not allowed to travel to different countries and that felt bad.

Stela Marcineková: Did you notice any change from the previous government – maybe the process of obtaining permit became more difficult?

Respondent B: I am not aware of the past procedures. I am still new in this country.

Stela Marcineková: Do you feel culturally accepted in the country where you currently live?

Respondent B: Yes, especially when I try to speak Italian, people are very helpful and nice. I did not have any culture shock or serious problems.

Stela Marcineková: Feel free to express any further opinion on the topic.

Respondent B: For summary I can say that if the application process took less time, I would not have any problem. On the other hand, I understand that if the immigrant application process was not that strict, safety problems could arise, and it can affect lives of other citizens. That is why I believe that collecting documents, proving that I can live in Italy and that I do not have any criminal record is really important.

Stela Marcineková: Thank you very much for your time.

Interview with the Respondent C

Stela Marcineková: What type of visa or residence permit are you applying for, and what is the purpose of your stay in Italy?

Respondent C: I have a student residence permit and visa.

Stela Marcineková: What documentation do you need to provide in order to apply for the visa or residence permit?

Respondent C: For the visa application, I needed to show the acceptance letter that I got from the university. I also needed to show the bachelor's degree graduation certificate and high school graduation certificate. I had to show where I will stay after I arrive to Italy, either a hotel reservation or house contract. Additionally, I needed to show my personal income, bank status and passport. At the same time, I had to add the documents proving my family's financial situation. I had to explain the purpose of my stay in a motivational letter. For the residence permit, my student document, credit card information, house contract, health insurance, and passport were needed. I gave all the documents with the application form to the Italian post office, and I paid the application fee. I went to immigration office to give my fingerprints 2 weeks after I sent my application. 2 months later I got my residence permit from the police station.

Stela Marcineková: How long does the application process typically take, and what are the steps involved?

Respondent C: I got my visa in one week and permit in 2 months. However, the renewal process of permit takes 6-8 months in general.

Stela Marcineková: Are there any specific requirements or restrictions that you need to be aware of when applying for a visa or residence permit in Spain?

Respondent C: I had to apply for the residence permit in 10 days after my arrival to Italy. Besides, Until I got my permit card, I was not able to travel out of the country. When I started the renewal process of my permit, the post office sent me a “ricevuta” document, which allowed me to go to my home country and back to Italy. However, it is not possible to travel elsewhere with this document.

Stela Marcineková: What types of support services are available to you as an immigrant or visa applicant in Spain?

Respondent C: The only service I know is that there was a person at the university, who was helping students with collecting the documents needed and filling the application form.

Stela Marcineková: How can you access information and resources to help you navigate the immigration process in Spain?

Respondent C: I checked the official websites, and I got all the information online.

Stela Marcineková: Do you think that current policies are in favour of people migrating to Spain, or do you think the opposite?

Respondent C: I think there is no problem with the application process. It is a normal process to protect the country and I understand that the office wants to know the person that is arriving to the country. The only problem was the time when I needed to wait for the application result. Waiting 6 to 8 months for having a permit and not be able to go to other countries are the negative sides. They may be improved with a better organisation.

Stela Marcineková: Do you feel culturally accepted in the country where you currently live?

Respondent C: Yes, I feel 100% accepted.

Stela Marcineková: Feel free to express any further opinion on the topic.

Respondent C: In general, everything is fine about the application process and collecting documents as I am aware of the negative effects of not asking to provide the detailed documents from a potential immigrant. The only problem is the waiting time. If the application process would be completed in a short time, then there will not be any problem. Besides, I feel that Italian people are not against the immigrants, especially if I try to learn their culture and language.

Interview with the Respondent D

Stela Marcineková: What type of visa or residence permit are you applying for, and what is the purpose of your stay in Spain?

Respondent D: I applied for student visa type D and residency. I am doing my Master studies at the university in Spain. I could have also applied for the family regrouping visa, since my relatives live in Spain, but they are not the direct family, so in this way it was more convenient.

Stela Marcineková: What documentation do you need to provide in order to apply for the visa or residence permit?

Respondent D: First, I applied for the permit in my country, in the Spanish embassy in order to be able to travel to Spain. You can also do it during the first 2 months after entering the country, but this way was easier for me. I had to provide my criminal records, a proof that I am enrolled to the university – a course must take at least 20 hours per week – and I also had to show them the bank statement. It is obligatory to have a minimum of 10.000€ in your account, and the bank statements of the parents are sometimes needed too. Valid passport is, of course, a must.

Stela Marcineková: How long does the application process typically take, and what are the steps involved?

Respondent D: In my case it was around 2 weeks. I do not know about the procedure, but they are probably proving if all the documents provided are correct.

Stela Marcineková: Are there any specific requirements or restrictions that you need to be aware of when applying for a visa or residence permit in Spain?

Respondent D: Only the specific requirements regarding the documents that I was already talking about. Plus, in my case, my student visa can be renewed only if I keep studying at the same university. So, if I decided to change the university, I guess I would have to apply and go through the whole process again.

Stela Marcineková: What are the consequences of overstaying your visa or residence permit in Spain, and what steps can you take to avoid these consequences?

Respondent D: There is definitely some kind of fine and if it is serious and you overstayed for a very long time, they might order you to leave the country. In order to avoid such situation, everyone has to be punctual with renewing visa.

Stela Marcineková: What types of support services are available to you as an immigrant or visa applicant in Spain?

Respondent D: I actually do not know. My biggest help was my family that knew exactly what I have to do and when.

Stela Marcineková: How can you access information and resources to help you navigate the immigration process in Spain?

Respondent D: As I said, if you have someone who is already living in Spain, it is the best for you. Besides that, you can find everything online, or you can ask your university office for help.

Stela Marcineková: Do you think that current policies are in favour of people migrating to Spain, or do you think the opposite?

Respondent D: I would say it depends. Policies are in favour of those that come to work or study. I think that better integration of refugees is needed, they need help, and they cannot be ignored. If they were integrated, they can also contribute to the system. It is very complicated topic.

Stela Marcineková: Do you feel culturally accepted in the country where you currently live?

Respondent D: Most of the time yes, sometimes I see people looking at me and they are probably thinking that I should not be here, but I do not take it personally. In the beginning I felt a bit lost because everything was new. But I got used to it and I found new friends, especially at the university. And now it is the opposite – I cannot imagine leaving Spain.

Stela Marcineková: Thank you very much for your time and honesty. It was nice talking to you.