

**The political influence of pro-EU and anti-EU parties in the Netherlands on EU
standpoints of the Dutch government**

by

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Abstract

In the past decade, the Dutch government has changed their standpoints regarding the EU many times. In this research three topics, the migration crisis, violations of the rule of law, and solidarity between EU member states, have been researched in order to see if the Dutch government's standpoints towards them have changed as a result of the influence of pro-EU and/or anti-EU political parties in the last 10 years. The phenomenon of catch-all parties, can be seen as the underlying theory throughout the whole research, explaining why changes in government standpoints have been made. According to the theory, catch-all parties moderate their ideological standpoints in order to be attractive to the majority of voters that often feel comfortable in the middle of the political spectrum. In this case, this applies to political parties that are part of the government coalitions in the Netherlands that change standpoints as a result of influence of pro-EU and anti-EU parties, in order to maintain their relationship with the majority of the voters. To illustrate this, the report contains overviews of changing standpoints of the past three Dutch governments and overviews of the standpoints of different political parties in the shape of scales, in order to make it easier to compare standpoints with each other. From there on, the analysis has been made to conclude what the influence is of pro-EU and/or anti-EU parties on the standpoints of the Dutch government concerning the EU.

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Theory	7
2.1	Literature study	7
2.2	Conceptual framework	11
2.3	Conceptualization	11
3	Methodology	13
3.1	Strategy and design	13
3.2	Operationalization	13
3.3	Data analysis	16
4	Migrant crisis	17
4.1	The Tunisian wave	17
4.2	The Syrian wave	18
4.3	Actions taken by the EU	20
4.4	Standpoints of the Dutch government	21
4.5	Overview of the political parties	26
4.6	Changes in standpoints over the past three cabinets	29
5	Rule of law	32
5.1	The Hungarian case	32
5.2	The Polish case	33
5.3	Standpoints of the Dutch government	35
5.4	Overview of the political parties	37
5.5	Changes in standpoints by the Dutch government	39
6	Solidarity	41
6.1	The Eurozone crisis	41
6.2	The COVID-19 crisis	42
6.3	Solidarity between member states	44
6.4	Standpoints of the Dutch government	45
6.5	Overview of the Political parties	47
6.6	Changes in standpoints by the Dutch government	50
7	Conclusion	52
	Appendices	55
	Bibliography	62

1 Introduction

Standpoints of governments change from time to time. The underlying reason for this is not always clear. Sometimes changes in standpoints are explained by the formation of new coalition, pressure by opposition parties, or societal pressure. In this research the possible influence of the pro-EU and anti-EU parties on government standpoints in the Netherlands towards the EU is being researched. The pro-EU and anti-EU parties cover the flanks in the different EU debates, and determine the limits of the public debate. In the past 10 years, the Netherlands has had three cabinets including Prime Minister Rutte and his political party VVD. In all of those years they have formed coalitions with parties of all political colours. Therefore, they have shown great flexibility.

The last 4 years, they formed a centre right coalition with CDA, D66, ChristenUnie. On issues regarding the EU, they have changed their opinion quite often due to foreign pressure but also because of domestic political pressure. This pressure often came from two corners: the progressive left (pro-EU) and the nationalistic right (anti-EU), as shown again in September where both sides criticize the fact that 100 refugees were taken in from the Greek refugee camp Moria (Boon, 2020).

Both sides have an opposite view in this situation, which is also applicable when it comes to other matters regarding the EU. When one of the two can increase media pressure to a certain extent in their favour, then sometimes the Dutch cabinet makes a U-turn, deciding something different as was their intention before. Over the past 10 years, this has happened multiple times, especially regarding measures on EU level. The Dutch word 'lenigheid', which comes close to the meaning of flexibility and agility, is often used when it comes to VVD and Mark Rutte to describe these U-turns. Some even claim that the VVD, a traditional right wing liberal party, has moved to the middle of the political spectrum (Hoedeman & van Soest, 2020). This is in line with the process of depolarizing where the parties move away from the extreme flanks (de Lange, Leyenaar, & de Jong, 2014).

The fact that VVD is changing some of their standpoints makes them more sensitive from pressure of the society. Therefore, it is even more interesting to see in what directions the U-turns have been made over the last 10 years. Especially in regard to EU decision making, progressive left and nationalistic right differ completely from each other. The progressive left wants more collaboration on EU level, while the nationalistic right wants to leave the EU (Hermetet & Pippel, 2019). The past three cabinets have been in between those two camps. Therefore, it is interesting to find out what the influence has been from both sides on major issues in the EU. Since the Dutch government only has direct influence in EU matters in the European council, that is where this research will focus on.

There is earlier research done on the standpoints of the Dutch government in the EU, but this is often aimed at one specific topic such as the Dutch view to the EU constitution (Schuck & de Vreese, 2008), or the Dutch view on the EU association agreement with Ukraine (Zhabotynska, 2019). However, research about the Dutch standpoints on multiple EU topics and the reasons for having these the standpoints is missing in the current academic field. Therefore, this research might be a valuable addition to existing Dutch party behaviour literature because relation between Dutch party behaviour and several EU topics is a unique one. The catch-all party principle, a principle that could be considered as a popular topic among scholars two decades ago but is barely applied in political literature nowadays, will also play a key role in this report. A detailed description will be given later, but it will explain how political parties can manage and moderate their standpoints in between the progressive and conservative flanks.

In this research the two flanks are defined as pro-EU parties (GroenLinks, D66 and to a lesser extent PVDA) and anti-EU parties (Forum for Democracy and PVV). The parties in between are categorized as moderate parties (VVD, CDA, ChristenUnie). The SP has been left out of this research because they differ on too many EU aspects of both the pro and the anti-EU parties.

Main research question:

What is the influence of the Dutch pro-EU and anti-EU political parties on the Dutch government's political standpoints towards the EU within the last 10 years (2011-2020)?

Empirical sub questions:

1. What are the standpoints of the past three cabinets towards the EU and their decision making?
2. What are the main differences in standpoints of the pro-EU and the anti-EU parties compared with the standpoints of the Dutch governments concerning EU policies?
3. To what extent are the changes in standpoints of the government towards the EU in the last 10 years in line with the standpoints of the political parties?

Relevancy for this research

Given the difficult coalition formulation after the 2021 elections in The Netherlands, it is valuable to see what influence the pro-EU and anti-EU parties have had over the past 10 years on the Dutch government when it comes to EU policy. The Dutch citizens deserve to know what the influence is of their national voting behaviour when it comes to EU issues.

Often in Dutch public debates pro-EU and anti-EU parties show signs of political polarization. They debate past each other, because they fail listen to what the opposite party has to say. They are so keen on pleasing their own followers, that they only summarise their most striking points during debates, without actually debating the opposing side. Remarkably enough, within a coalition country as the Netherlands it is practically impossible to get (extreme) ideas related to the EU through the parliament without making compromises. However, their presence can have indirect effect on EU policies of the Dutch government and that is exactly what will be investigated in this research. Examples of cases in which the Dutch government has made changes under public and political pressure are their standpoints on EU migration and the EU COVID-19 recovery fund.

The reason why the influence of pro-EU and anti-EU parties is chosen for this research, is because these sides often argue from opposite sides. Therefore, it seems like the public debate increasingly divided and intolerant. This is very visible in migration cases where the government originally was in favour of housing migrants from the Mediterranean crisis in neighbouring countries where they came from. However, after a while, the Dutch government agreed take in a small number of refugees, leading to irritation at the pro-EU side (because they wanted to help out more refugees) and the anti-EU side (because they didn't want to offer help) of the political spectrum. So directly or indirectly, there could be influence involved of those of both sides that made the cabinet choose for this strategy.

The Dutch government has the hard job to keep these extreme sides fairly satisfied, and not give cause to too many voters to feel unheard. Consequently, this might result in a larger divide in society and could lead to worse events than disagreements on political issues. Moreover, this also forces the Dutch government to make compromises or choices that they are not in favour of. But in order to keep the country united, these political offerings could be necessary.

The reason why a case study is likely to be conducted is because the current 'polder' climate in the Netherlands is unique in the world. With many different political flavours, but also the possibility to make compromises, the political situation in this country is unique in the world and almost impossible to compare. That makes the contradiction between progressive left (pro-EU) and nationalistic right (Anti-EU) even more rare, but could possibly explain why the Dutch government sometimes makes a rigorous in their opinion about certain European issues. Dutch citizens deserve an explanation for these sudden changes in vision of the Dutch government, which underlines the importance of this research.

2 Theory

2.1 Literature study

Party behaviour

The behaviour of political parties is often explained with regard to single level politics. However, in modern times the institutional environment is getting multi layered (Deschouwer, 2003), which is exactly the case when European citizens vote for national parties to represent them in the European Parliament. The reason why the current EU democracy is set up as it is, is understandable because voters are familiar with the national political parties. Unfortunately, that does result in the fact that the traditional single level models about the behaviour of political parties are outdated.

Party behaviour can be shaped by the political parties themselves. It can be explained as the political views, ideologies, and levels of participations of a political party in governing activities. In this research, the goal is whether to find out that (changes in) EU can be the result of influence of Dutch pro-EU or anti-EU parties. The pro-EU parties are in favour of economic equality, social security, transnational collaboration, and collective sustainable development (Overeem, 2019), while the anti-EU parties are in favour of low taxes, critical on migration and the EU, and stimulates individual development (de Koster, Achterberg, van der Waal, van Bohemen, & Kemmers, 2014).

The Dutch attitude towards the EU

Within the EU there is a clear divide visible between more wealthy northern member states (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands) and less wealthy southern member states (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain) in the EU. This was clearly shown at the time of the eurozone debt crisis (Matthijs & Merler, 2020) but is again visible in a similar way in times of the COVID pandemic (Lang & van Ordanza, 2020). From both events, it is clear that the southern 'debtor' member states want to increase the responsibilities of the EU, to give them the opportunity to profit (more) of the welfare of the northern member states. The northern 'creditor' member states on the other hand, are afraid that this will be a disadvantage for them and that it might have a negative economic impact (Pérez, 2019).

In the Netherlands the past three governments have followed the example of the Northern member states. The government followed a moderate conservative line when it came to EU proposals, which could be seen as Eurosceptical (Lubbers & Jaspers, 2011). The benefits of the EU were clear, but they didn't support the idea of handing over more power to Brussels, which was partly due to critical media framing the EU as something that could potentially harm the prosperity of the Netherlands (Leruth, Kutiyski, Krouwel, & Startin, 2017). A critical approach to the EU was very clear from the moment that VVD gained power in the Hague, but it was also clear that deals needed to be made with the opposition in order to be able to get policy proposals through parliament. After all, the past three governments didn't have a majority in the senate which made compromises necessary (Binnema & Vollaard, 2020).

Catch-all, cadre, and mass parties

In general, there are three main streams concerning the EU in the Dutch opposition. The political parties that want more cooperation on EU level, moderate political parties, and the parties that want to leave the EU. VVD and the CDA, the two largest parties in the current government, can be considered as moderate parties, but every now and then they need to make a step towards other parties to work out a compromise. While they do that, they need to make sure that they do it with the right balance. They don't want to lose voters because they take unpopular actions by leaning too much to the pro or anti EU parties.

On the other hand, it could also be seen as an opportunity to attract voters from rivalry parties, which is done by catch-all parties. Catch-all parties are parties that moderate their ideological standpoints in order to be attractive to the majority of the voters that often feel comfortable in the middle of the political spectrum (Krouwel, 2003). The earlier mentioned flexibility of VVD could be explained that the party operates as a catch-all party, making it easier to gain support from both pro and anti-EU parties. In this situation the VVD could choose to lean to the middle of the political spectrum and take votes from D66 and CDA. In practice, they could also choose to lean to the right where they could potentially seduce voters of Forum and the PVV to vote for them. The fact that the VVD can be considered as a catch-all party can also be underlined by the 2021 elections they were in the race for the most swinging votes, varying from the far right to progressive centre parties (Eenvandaag Opiniepanel, 2021).

There is no theory available claiming that the VVD should be seen as a catch-all party. According to various literature, the VVD, CDA, and PVDA have an organizational form that is closely related to a mass party, but the level of resemblance is of a cadre party (Koole, 1994; Wolinetz, 2002).

Cadre and mass parties, are the more traditional types of political parties, in which cadre parties represent economic higher- and middle-class people, while mass parties represent the economic lower class. Cadre parties are loosely structured, elite centred parties with minimal organization outside the legislature. Cadre parties are mainly visible when before elections occur, or when nominations or the party leadership is at stake (Wolinetz, 2002). Related to the Dutch parties, that is the level of resemblance of a cadre party such as is applicable to VVD, CDA and PVDA, where is referred to in the previous paragraph.

Within the literature about party behaviour, three party behaviour models are mentioned that have a lot in common with the earlier mentioned different types of political parties: cadre, mass and catch-all parties. The traditional party behaviour models are: vote-seeking parties, office-seeking parties, policy-seeking parties (Strom, 1990).

The vote-seeking parties are the parties that are seeking to maximize their electoral support for the purpose of controlling government. The office-seeking parties are trying to achieve similar control, but not by aiming for votes, but aiming for as much important positions within the governing process. Lastly, there are the policy-seeking parties looking to maximize its effect on public policy (Strom, 1990). It is obvious that the majority of (Dutch) political parties wants represent themselves to the public as a policy-seeking party, but that in reality office positions and decisions resulting in an increasing number of votes play a key role in most current decision-making processes. This underlines once more the relevance of this research.

The reason why many Dutch political parties have a lot of common with mass parties is because they often own besides a national office, also regional and local organizations. Furthermore, there is a detailed party program, which is debated by party members and accepted by a party congress (Wolinetz, 2002). The level of resemblance of members of mass parties, being visible outside election periods, is among mass parties much higher than among cadre parties, which explains why a full comparison between PVDA, CDA, VVD and mass integration parties is not possible.

Nevertheless, it does reflect how homogenous political parties were in the previous century, taking in account that VVD, CDA, and PVDA were the largest parties that owned more than 70% of the seats in the parliament. Some even claimed that in the 80's the Netherlands effectively had become a 'one party state' (Koole, 1994).

However, this is not entirely correct because of the rise of D66, a party that calls itself social-liberal or progressive liberal (Abbes, 1990), and is located somewhere at the left side of the middle of political spectrum in between VVD, CDA, and PVDA. D66 showed that with a less ideological program and a more

pragmatic look on politics, it was possible to gain a lot of votes from both sides of the political spectrum (Langbroek, 2017). Therefore, they can be considered as a catch-all party.

Kirchheimer, a political scientist that died in 1965, predicted that mass integration parties were transforming themselves into catch-all parties. This was before the rise of D66. And looking to the current Dutch political landscape, he could be right. Although he admitted that it is difficult to characterize political parties in terms of familiar distinction between mass-integration parties and catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966), there is no denial possible in claiming that the VVD, CDA, and PVDA haven't followed the example of D66 as a catch-all party by moderating their standpoints and moving slightly away from ideology.

Unfortunately, Kirchheimer died before he could finish his essay on catch-all parties (Safran, 2009) and therefore, much of his work can be interpreted in many ways. Depending on the point of view, a catch-all party can be seen as a highly, opportunistic vote-seeking party, a leader-centred party, a party tied to interest groups, or all of it combined (Wolinetz, 2002).

The large potential for catch-all parties

The fact that in 2017 almost 50% of the voters was still swinging two weeks before the elections (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2017), and in 2021 more than 60% was still swinging on election day (van der Laan, 2021), at least illustrates that the trend the decreasing loyalty of voters to a certain party continues (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002; Safran, 2009). This underlines the potential for catch-all parties to gain new voters and gives reason to support Kirchheimer's idea about mass parties transforming into catch-all parties.

The current reality is that most political parties in the Netherlands move to the left, as is shown in figure 1. Remarkably enough, only the liberal parties (the VVD and the D66) profit from mirroring the average the voter in the elections of 2021. The idea behind this is to decrease the gap between the right-wing parties and the left-wing parties, making it more difficult for left wing parties to distinguish themselves in order to gain new voters. In order to prevent this from happening, left wing parties have the option to move to the left. This is the result of the fact that political parties are starting to look more like each other (van Soest, 2021). However, this might cost them potential votes of median voters, who might consider left parties moving more to the left too extreme.

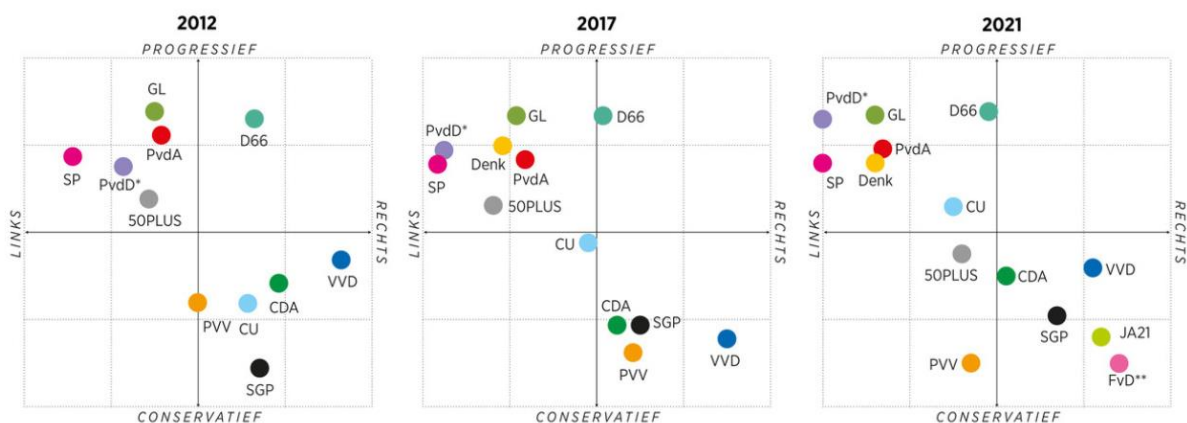


Figure 1: the positions of the Dutch parties in the political landscape in the past three election years (Boersma, 2021).

The different positions in the political landscape are clear. Remarkably enough, the four most progressive parties in 2021 can also be considered as pro-EU, and the three most conservative parties that also can be considered as anti-EU. In between, there are the current government parties the VVD, CDA, and ChristenUnie that aim for a moderate approach to the EU. So far, the 2021 political landscape aligns with

the pro and anti-EU divide among the political parties. The largest dissident in this overview is the SP, that originally was anti-EU, but came back from that. Currently, they don't take a clear standpoint regarding matters to the EU, and therefore they are left out of observation for the rest of this research.

This is also explanatory for left pro-EU parties that have struggled with their identity for a long time in the Netherlands. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a new social democratic course appeared, which can be seen as a middle way between social democracy and the neoliberal spectrum (Oudenampsen, 2020).

Especially after the financial crisis in 2008, the left wanted follow a new course. "The PvdA has to keep a sound distance to the liberal version of the Third Way, just like the PvdA shouldn't identify one hundred per cent with the policies of Purple. At the same time, we need to forcefully distance ourselves from the old-fashioned leftist agenda" (Oudenampsen, 2020).

While the parties on the left are searching for a new identity, CDA, the traditional catch-all party in the Netherlands (Otjes, 2021), is also trying to re-invent itself. The fact that the VVD and Mark Rutte have managed to lead three cabinets with totally different coalition parties (left, right, and progressive), shows their flexibility is very useful and explains why they should be seen as the leading catch-all party. Although, critics claim that the VVD lacks of ideology, it could possibly explain why they have been in power for the past 10 years (den Hartog & Kok, 2017).

The fact that political landscape in the Netherlands is very dynamic lately with many political parties changing their positions, doesn't only creates opportunities for catch-all parties, but also for the 'one-issue' parties. In the 2021 election a record number of 17 of parties made to the parliament. This is mainly the result from the one issue parties, that increased from one one-issue party (GroenLinks) more than 20 years ago, to seven one issue parties in the parliament in 2021. The overall explanation of this is that people have lost their faith in the traditional political parties (Valk, 2021), and that many minorities feel unheard. Because of that, two immigrant parties have risen (Denk and Bij1), a farmers' party (BBB), an animal party (PVdD), an elderly party (50PLUS), and an anti-covid measurement party (FVD). The fragmentation of the Dutch political landscape, once more proves that for a Dutch government is hasn't become easier to make compromises, while the need for it has increased. Nevertheless, VVD as a potential catch-all party hasn't suffered under the fragmentation in the political landscape during the past four Dutch national elections results.

Three topics of research

The plan for this thesis is to first map out three main European issues based upon the five priorities for the Netherlands in the EU: migration, security, a strong and sustainable economy, climate, and the defence of Dutch interests, norms and values (Rijksoverheid, 2021). Based upon those topics, the following topics will be discussed in this research: the migrant crisis, violations of the rule of law, and solidarity between member states in a pandemic. These three topics have been chosen because they had a great impact on international relations in the EU in the past 10 years, demand a common EU solution, and because of changing standpoints of the Dutch government towards each of the three topics.

2.2 Conceptual framework

In this report, the party behaviours towards the three topics are being explained. The goal of this research is to see if there is causal connection to be found between the pro-EU and/or anti-EU parties on the Dutch standpoints in the European Council in the past years. The expected standpoints on the three main topics in the research are given below:

Table 1: Expected standpoints on the three main topics

	<i>Migrant crisis</i>	<i>Rule of law</i>	<i>Solidarity</i>
<i>The Dutch government</i>	Housing migrants in the region close to their home countries.	Confront and indirectly force member states to align with the rule of law.	In favour of loans to help to rebuild EU economies of the consequences of the pandemic.
<i>Pro-EU parties</i>	Spreading the migrants over the EU and taking them into society.	Impose economic restrictions to countries that ignore the rule of law.	Wants to rebuild other EU economies by providing funds in the shape of gifts.
<i>Anti-EU parties</i>	Sending the migrants back.	Ignore issues related to the rule of law in other countries.	No financial aid for other EU countries.

2.3 Conceptualization

Catch all party strategy

VVD can be considered as a catch-all party and will continue to do that. According to the theory, catch-all parties moderate their ideological standpoints in order to be attractive to the majority of voters that often feel comfortable in the middle of the political spectrum. Because of the success of VVD during the last four Dutch elections, it could be an example for other parties to follow that them on that road. Looking to the result of the 2021 elections, this could be a trend since the second largest party D66 is ideologically classified as a catch-all party that supports themes that are broadly supported by society (van de Velde, 2015). Therefore, it could be suggested that the strategic position that a political party chooses is key for having successful elections result in the Netherlands.

Migrant crisis

'In 2015/16, Europe faced the largest inflow of refugees since World War II' (Niemann & Zaun, 2018). The reception facilities around the Mediterranean Sea were far from prepared for this, and couldn't provide the necessary shelter that was needed. Politicians could have seen this coming, because the flow of incoming refugees became larger and larger every summer. After long negotiations the EU decided that all member states should take over a number of refugees from the Southern member states. But in reality, most member states do not comply with agreement and take in too few refugees (Thielemann, 2017).

Rule of law

Poland and Hungary have in the past 5 to 10 years ignored some of the basic values of the European Union, such independent power checks in governing a country such as eliminating of judiciaries (Pech & Scheppele, 2017). The EU has tried reasoning with both countries multiple times, but they could not find themselves in the accusations. The EU has tried (led by the Dutch government) to force Hungary and Poland to comply with the basic values of the EU, but the attempt didn't cause the intended effect (Holesch & Kyriazy, 2021).

EU Solidarity among member states

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic many countries have suffered substantial losses, and all European economies have been seriously damaged. In order to guide all EU economies out of this crisis, plans have been made for a mutual fund in which the EU borrows 750 billion euros to encourage the recovery of the pandemic (European Council, 2021). This fund will consist of percentage of gifts and loans. The Dutch government was not in favour of gifts but had to bend in because of pressure of other EU member states (Ladi & Tsarouhas, 2020).

3 Methodology

3.1 Strategy and design

In this research three topics will be investigated to prove the influence of the pro-EU parties and/or the anti-EU parties on the Dutch governments the past 10 years. This will be done by applying process tracing, to explain change and causation within case analysis. This is similar to other researches that have been done called time series analysis (Brandt, Freeman, & Schrod, 2011). The only difference in this case is that the goal is not to predict the future, only to conclude a causal connection from the past.

Therefore, the reasoning of why the Dutch government has taken certain EU standpoints will be explained, and why they changed opinion over time. The EU decisions described in this research should just be seen as context. Then, the criticism and different ideas from the pro-EU and anti-EU side will be explained. By comparing the input from the pro-EU side and the anti-EU side with the formal standpoints and the revised standpoints of the Dutch government, it can be decided whether one of the two or the two independent variables has had influence. This is done before to empirically assess whether various patterns of strategic response actually exist and had influence on decision making (Goldstein & Pevehouse, 1997).

Data collection methods

In this research text analysis will be applied. Specifically, a context analysis in which qualitative content is being analysed to be able to execute process tracing. The idea is to find secondary research sources via desk research, to support the point summed up in the operationalization. Conclusions in this report will only be made when a second reliable source can confirm it. Findings in the report will once in the two weeks be discussed with the supervisor in order to make sure what is found is true, and whether the right interpretations have been made.

3.2 Operationalization

This is a research on the Dutch political system on the EU environment. The four different options that are given for the three selected topics are based upon the party programs of the Dutch political parties. In general, there are only multiple ways to approach each topic in this research. Therefore, for each topic different scales have been created. Those are given below, together with brief explanation to get an idea about how these options can be interpreted. Note that this might not be the exact standpoint that the Dutch political parties or the Dutch government may have, but it should be seen as a sketch of the context.

Options for the migration crisis:

1. Not allowing irregular migrants in.
2. Subsidizing shelter in neighbouring countries.
3. Dividing the migrants over EU member states.
4. Picking up any migrants that nobody wants

Option 1: Many migrants that enter the EU irregularly, should not be rewarded by granting them a residence permit. It will encourage more people to do the same, and therefore attracts more irregular migration. In order to stop this, the EU should increase the border security, and should allow member states to close their own national borders if they want to. The result of this will be that more irregular migrants

will be detected and can be sent back to their country of origin. In extreme situations such as the Mediterranean crisis, irregulars should be sent back immediately.

Option 2: If someone wants to enter the EU, they should do this via the official ways. Irregulars that try to bypass these official ways, need to be sent to a safe neighbouring country of the country of their origin. The EU will subsidize facilities in that country to make sure they the irregulars want to stay there, and not try again to reach the EU in an irregular way.

Option 3: Irregular migration can only be faced if all member states share an equal burden. They need to make sure that in times similar to the Mediterranean crisis, migrants are equally divided over the different member states. Only then, the EU will have an adequate response to a sudden increase in migration and will it prevent human suffering at EU borders.

Option 4: People that are desperate enough to take an extremely dangerous trip over the Mediterranean and gamble with their own lives and that of their children, deserve nothing but the best help. As a wealthy and privileged group of countries, the EU should do maximum effort to help these people, and offer all of them an opportunity to build a life for them in the EU. Therefore, every member state should make it a priority to take in as many refugees that arrived at the Mediterranean shores in, to finally make this crisis stop.

Options for enforcing the rule of law in the EU

1. Ignoring violations of the rule of law.
2. Putting pressure on other member states by publicly speaking out against rule of law abuse.
3. Implementing economic sanctions against member states.
4. Legal sanctions/ administrative conditions

Option 1: Countries are responsible for their own way of governing. The way countries are organized, the rule of law that they intend to follow or let go is the countries own responsibility. Other countries should not publicly speak out to internal matters concerning only one member state on related to the rule of law.

Option 2: The EU as whole, share basic set of western norms and values. These include a fair democratic system, freedom of speech, and freedom of media. If one or several member states do not respect those norms and values, other member states should speak out against them. This would damage the reputation of the particular member state(s), which might change their opinion on improving their democratic processes.

Option 3: Member states that violate democratic rights, freedom of speech, or freedom of media should be punished by economic sanctions. It cannot be accepted that some member states ignore these basic rights, and therefore sanctions such as freezing EU subsidies should be considered.

Option 4: Member states that do not respect the very principles that are at the core at the EU, should be officially warned and can face legal sanctions. As an example for the rest of the world, the EU can't accept any member state violating basic democratic rights of its citizens. If a situation appears in which a member

states doesn't show democratic improvement, the EU should be able sanction a member state with the heaviest legal punishment, terminating the EU membership of that specific member state.

Options for a solidarity within the EU

1. Anti-solidarity
2. Only mutually beneficial cooperation.
3. Increasing cooperation on transnational level.
4. Working towards a physical union/transferring more power to the EU

Option 1: every member state has its own responsibility and resources to take care of themselves. In times of a crisis or a pandemic, member states need to make sure that they are prepared for the worst.

Option 2: In times of crisis member states can think about a common way to fight it. However, the crisis response should be mutual beneficial for all member states. If this is not the case, the EU should offer the opportunity to member states to borrow resources to deal with the crisis. This opportunity should be seen as loan and not a gift.

Option 3: In times of crisis the EU should go far in getting the crisis resolved for the EU as a whole. If that means that subsidies are necessary to solve a crisis and get the EU economies started again, then the EU should arrange that. This should be gifts and not loans, because demanding a country in crisis to pay off a debt, will only continue the duration of a crisis or create a new one. The strongest shoulder in the EU should carry the heaviest burden in times of emerging situations. Therefore, it could be the case that the wealthier member states would be expected to contribute more resources to an emergency response than the less wealthy member states.

Option 4: In light of the successful common response to the Mediterranean crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU should work towards a situation in which the Union will take more responsibilities away from the national governments. By doing this, large problems global problems such as sustainability, tax avoidance by large companies, and world peace, can be more easily and effectively addressed as 27 member states alone. This can be seen as the ultimate way of solidarity, in which a Union is created with common budgets and one large economy.

All of these options presented above can be interpreted by a slightly different way, since the EU, the Dutch government, and other Dutch political parties, have divided approaches when it comes to each topic. Therefore, for each topic an overview will be presented in which the positions of the political parties are determined based upon their party program. Then, the position of the Dutch government will be determined, based upon interviews and press releases of (former) members of the Dutch Cabinet.

Once that position is clear, the moments on which it appears that the Dutch government is taking in other positions will be analysed. The explanation given by themselves will be critically examined, as will the possible strategic gains to maintain a positive position in the voters' perspective. If it can be concluded that the Dutch government has moved away from their original position, then the analysis will start to prove the connection between the influence of pro-EU and/or anti-EU political parties and the standpoints of the Dutch government towards the EU.

3.3 Data analysis

The motivations for the three topics explaining why choices have been made by the government, will be based upon scientific articles such as those provided in the 'Theory' section. The reliability in this research will be high, since no conclusion will be drawn if it can't be confirmed by a second reliable data source. The idea is to involve domestic data sources as foreign data sources, and to use (trans) governmental sources such as European Council (2021) as well as non-government sources such as Ladi & Tsarouhas (2020). The reason why the aim is to get input from varied data sources is to get proper balance in the data used for this qualitative research, to make sure that the conclusions drawn from this research are as reliable and as objective as possible.

The annual parliamentary reports written in the books of the Dutch parliamentary history, can be considered as the starting point for doing the research about the three topics that will be investigated in this report. They provide a clear overview of the highlights of the parliamentary year in the Dutch parliament. Those highlights can be seen as the starting point for finding scientific articles, news articles, reports, or opinion polls, related to one of the three topics that are researched in this report. Those can be considered as the objective sources of input for this report. However, for the standpoints of the political parties, the party programs of GroenLinks, the PVDA, D66, ChristenUnie, CDA, VVD, PVV, or Forum for Democracy will also be used. This data is will not always be objective but is necessary in order to determine the standpoints of the different political parties.

4 Migrant crisis

The migrant crisis or refugee crisis, is referring to a period between 2010 and the present, in which millions of people have tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea to build a new life in Europe. Thousands of people drowned in the sea, and after the survivors arrived the reception facilities of the southern member states couldn't foresee every migrant with water, food, and shelter, because of the extremely high number of people coming to shore.

The majority of the people that are taking this route have fled their country because of a war, or because they fear punishment from (local) regimes that do not approve their sexual preference, race, or ideology and way of living (The UN Refugee Agency, 2021). Therefore, they are taking large risks to be smuggled into Europe in search for safety and a better life. According to the 1951 refugee convention these people are called refugees. The reason why in this report is referred to a migrant crisis and not a refugee crisis is because there are also people crossing the Mediterranean that came to the Europe for economic reasons. The economic migrants are not refugees, but the refugees are also migrants.

Within the migrant crisis, there are two clear waves visible: the Tunisian wave and the Syrian wave. This is clearly visible in figure 3, where in 2010 the number of arrivals by sea of Tunisians increases drastically, and whereas the same issue applies with the number of Syrians in 2014.

4.1 The Tunisian wave

The Mediterranean border of the EU has always been one of the main entries to smuggle people into Europe. Until 2013, the annual average number of people smuggled into the EU by sea was 40.000 (Fargues & Bonfati, 2014). However, in 2011 suddenly more than 70.000 migrants were smuggled in via European shores, as is shown in figure 2.

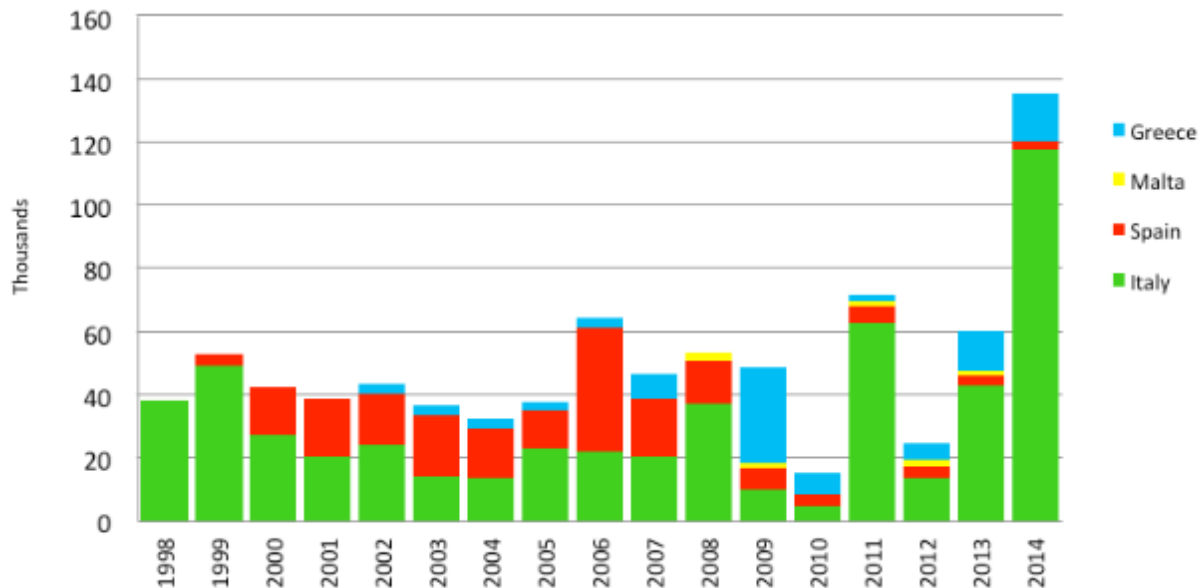


Figure 2: Migrants smuggled in by sea to the EU between 1998 and 2014 (Fargues & Bonfati, 2014).

The majority of the people smuggled into the EU by the Mediterranean Sea in 2011, arrived in Italy. Therefore, the registration of the Italian government gives a reliable view of what nationalities tried to enter the EU by sea. As is shown in figure 3, the majority of that were Tunisian citizens.

5a: Top seven Mediterranean nationalities

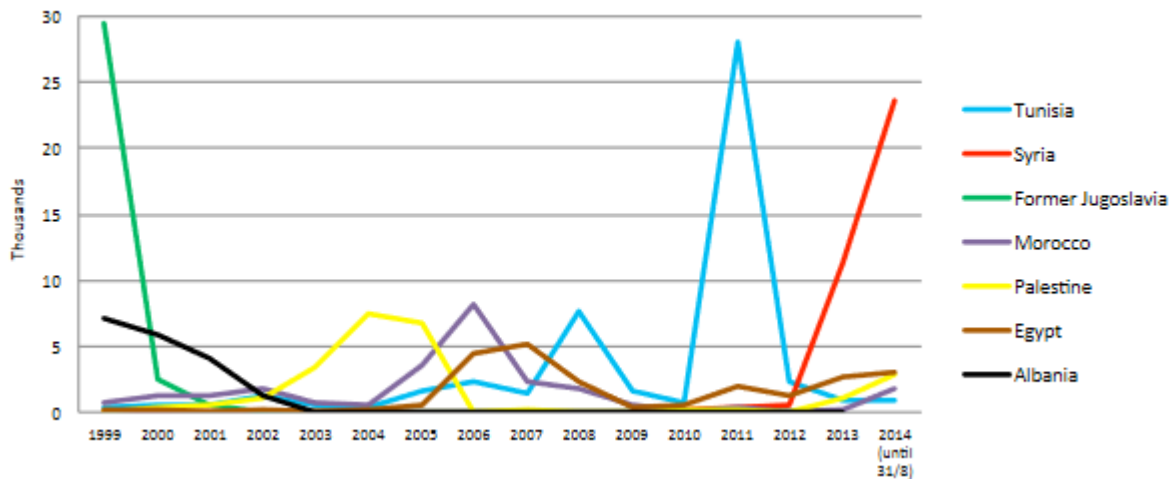


Figure 3: Arrivals by sea in Italy from 1999 until 2014 (Fargues & Bonfati, 2014).

This is the result of unrest the political unrest in Tunisia (Triandafyllidou & Amborsini, 2011), that started in December 2010. This was the start the Arabic Spring, in which many citizens of Arab countries started mass protest actions against their corrupt regimes. In Tunisia, ‘the dictatorship hermetically closed down all potential spaces for expression, such as the media, research centres and civil society organisations, and exercised terror as a privileged strategy of government’ (Ayeb, 2011).

After the fall of the regime, religious conservatism was on the rise, and gained influence via the Ennahda party in the reconstruction of the country (Wolf, 2013). Many secular Tunisians saw this party as a threat, fearing a return to the most conservative interpretations of Islamic law and practices (Allani, 2009). The political instability was the main reason for Tunisians to leave their country (Campesi, 2011), but the fear for a possible conservative religious regime also could have had an influence on that.

The result of this was that around 60.000 migrants came to shore in Italy, from which the majority, 51.753 migrants arrived on the Italian island Lampedusa (Cuttitta, 2014), that counts less than 6.000 inhabitants. This gives an indication of how chaotic the situation. Not only to shelter and feed all migrants, but also to process the asylum applications.

4.2 The Syrian wave

As the EU is a relatively young and resourceful organisation, the Tunisian wave should have been a clear warning that the EU asylum reception facilities are not capable of dealing with large numbers of migrants applying for asylum in a short period. Therefore, necessary action by the EU needed to be undertaken to prevent unhuman circumstances as in Lampedusa from happening. The EU as a group of wealthy member states, should be able to give the necessary amounts of food, shelter, and access to an asylum procedure to anyone that applies for asylum on the EU border. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the case.

According to table 2, the number of migrants arriving by sea have more than quadrupled from 225.000 in 2014 to more than one million in 2015. As mentioned before, this is the largest inflow of refugees since WWII. As is shown in appendix A and B, more than 800.000 of those migrants in 2015 came to Greek shores, while around 150.000 migrants arrived at Italian shores. Appendix D underlines that the majority of those migrants came from Syria.

Table 2: Sea arrivals in the EU

Previous years	Arrivals *	Dead and missing
2020	95,031	1,401
2019	123,663	1,335
2018	141,472	2,270
2017	185,139	3,139
2016	373,652	5,096
2015	1,032,408	3,771
2014	225,455	3,538

* Include sea arrivals to Italy, Cyprus, and Malta, and both sea and land arrivals to Greece and Spain (including the Canary Islands). Data are as of 31 December 2020 for all countries except Cyprus for which last available data are as of 31 August 2020.

(The Operational Data Portal, 2021).

Looking to these proportions of migrants, it is nearly impossible for member states alone to take care of them in a human way, while having to execute the EU border procedures. Every member is responsible for executing the asylum procedure themselves (source). For a crisis such as this, a different approach is necessary. Even though, the EU already reported in 2012 about Syrians fleeing their country (Fandrich & Fargues, 2012), they didn't sufficiently prepare for large possible large influx of refugees.



Figure 4: Main Mediterranean migration routes (Yates, 2015).

In figure 4, the main routes of migration by sea to the EU are shown. During the Tunisian wave the Central route was mostly used while during the Syrian wave the Eastern route was mostly used. Remarkably enough, nowadays the Western route is getting more popular, while the Eastern and the Central route are drying up. This is supported by the numbers shown in appendix A, B, and C, in which the numbers of sea arrivals to Greece and Italy are declining, while in Spain the numbers are increasing.

4.3 Actions taken by the EU

The sudden decline in which migrants are trying to make it to the EU via the Mediterranean Sea could be the result of actions undertaken by the EU. In this paragraph the Emergency Trust Fund, the migration deal with Turkey, and the new pact are being discussed.

The Tunisian wave

In order to respond to the Tunisian wave, the EU has created in November 2015 the European Union Emergency Trust Fund, the EUTF, for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (European Commission, 2021).

According to a factsheet released by the EU, the EU has invested 4.9 billion euros in projects to support the development of sustainable economic growth in North-Africa, Sahel/Lake Chad, and the Horn of Africa and to prevent irregular migration. As a result, more than 132.000 jobs were created, 9.3 million people have an improved access to basic social services, and over 100,000 vulnerable migrants were assisted after their return (European Union, 2020). Especially the Central Mediterranean route has been tackled with this fund. As is shown in appendix B, the amount of sea arrivals decreased drastically in the period between 2016 and 2020.

The Syrian wave

In order to respond to the Tunisian wave, the EU has created a deal with Turkey to refuse Syrians further passage into the EU. Turkey receives in the period between 2016-2025 6 billion euros to offer refuge to the Syrians crossing the Turkish border. With the money receiving facilities are being expanded, education is being offered, and daily provisions are being purchased (European Commission, 2021).

All the new irregular Syrian migrants that after the deal arrive on Greek shores, will be transported to Turkey. However, for each Syrian that is transported back, the EU will take one Syrian asylum seeker back that has applied for asylum in Turkey (European Union, 2021).

“In 2019 arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean route were 90% lower than in 2015, and a further decline was observed in 2020” (European Union, 2021). Therefore, the impact of the work of the EU to bring down the number of migrants that try to access the EU irregularly. This view is also supported by figure 5.

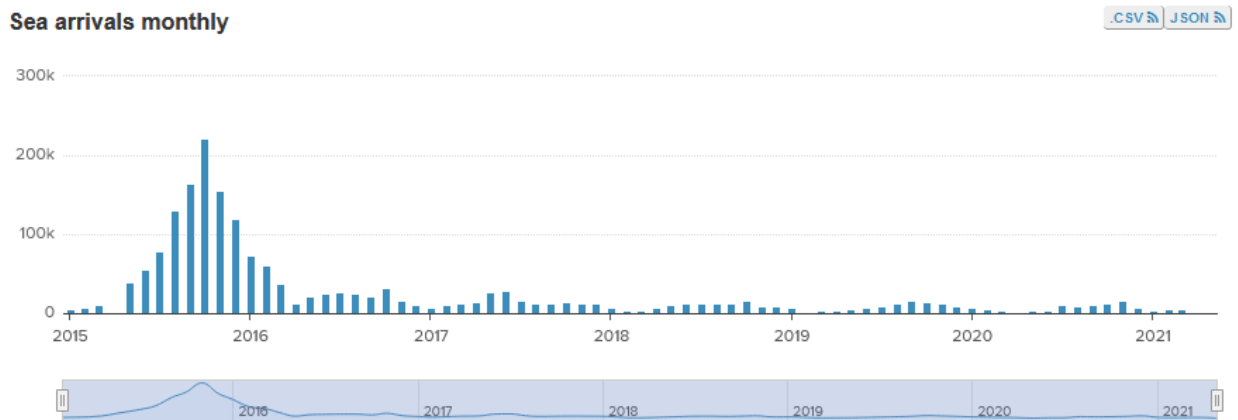


Figure 5: Monthly sea arrivals in the EU via the Mediterranean Sea (The Operational Data Portal, 2021).

The new pact

In order to prevent future humanitarian disasters such as the migrant crisis, the European Commission has proposed several changes in their asylum procedure. This includes a new solidarity mechanism for situations of search and rescue, pressure and crisis. In their concept plan they intend to design a system for burden sharing when it comes to migrants in a crisis situation. The proposal is that the number of refugees that have to be accepted by a member state depends 50% on the amount of people living in a country and 50% on the GDP of a member state (European Commission, 2020).

Although other member states are not directly responsible for burden sharing, all member states have signed the European Convention of Human Rights. The convention doesn't include any asylum rights, but by turning a blind eye to an individual by putting him at risk of torture or other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is prohibited by the principle of non-refoulement (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). This can be interpreted in a way that EU members are indirectly responsible for the physical and mental damages that happens to migrants that have not been given the necessary refuge of aid.

According to Ciara Bottomley, a spokesperson for the EU, negotiations in the parliament and the council about details in the new pact are still ongoing. She also states that on the political level there is large support for the idea. However, the implementation of the new pact might still need some time (see appendix E).

4.4 Standpoints of the Dutch government

4.4.1 Rutte I 2010-2012

This cabinet was created by two parties: VVD and CDA supported by PVV. As is shown in appendix F, VVD won these elections with minimum difference from runner up PVDA. After the cabinet negotiations between the two largest parties failed, an attempt was made between VVD, CDA, PVV (NPO, 2021). This succeeded, after a long time of negotiations.

The agreements on migration

Against PVV was a lot of resistance among the ranks of CDA and VVD, because of the extreme opinion of Wilders and his followers on migration and the Islam. Especially CDA had difficulty with this, also due to the fact that they had lost half the number of votes compared with the previous national elections (Ramakers, 2011).

Rutte was desperate to make a coalition succeed, since he would be the first liberal prime minister of the Netherlands since 1918 (NPO, 2021). Therefore, he created a unique construction in which VVD and CDA formed a minority cabinet, but counted on the support of opposition party PVV. Via this way, VVD and CDA could not be held accountable for the extreme comments of the PVV, but they could count on their support to get laws through the parliament.

To gain mutual understanding, VVD and CDA created a 'gedoogakkoord', a support agreement, with the PVV. In practice, the support agreement contains some key points of the coalition agreement on which both parties (Rijksoverheid, 2010), the coalition and PVV, agree on. In the support agreement, PVV wanted the cabinet to sharpen their immigration, integration and asylum policies, and wanted more money for homeland security and elderly care. In return for that, PVV would support the cabinet making cuts in the national budgets that were a necessary response to the financial crisis in 2008 (PDC, 2010).

Within the agreement of support, the most important point for the PVV is to lower the immigration from third world countries, that obviously is connected to possible disadvantages in integration and asylum. By signing this agreement, VVD and CDA committed themselves to a very extreme standpoint on migration.

This is underlined by the fact that the support agreements state that: 'they prefer refugees being offered shelter in the country or region of origin' and 'the cabinet aims for sufficient execution of the Dublin treaty' (PDC, 2010). The Dublin treaty refers in this case that each member state is responsible for processing the asylum application. Besides that, there are multiple other points in the support agreement that characterize the view of this cabinet on migration. Examples of that are: limiting the options of family migration, limiting grounds for appeals against a negative judgement for the asylum seekers, allocating the responsibility of the burden of proof more in the hands of the asylum seeker, and limiting the time for asylum seekers to build their case to make asylum procedures more 'efficient' (PDC, 2010).

Disadvantages of the support agreement

Practically, the way that this cabinet was structured was doomed to fail. By forming a coalition between CDA and VVD with support of PVV, the three most right-wing parties at that time, it was very hard for them to create compromises with the opposition. The three parties had a majority in the congress, but didn't had that in the senate. In fact, PVV didn't have any senators at the beginning of the cabinet, because it was a relatively new party.

This resulted in the fact that right wing cabinet needed give in on their liberal policies to satisfy (left) opposition. And where VVD and CDA thought that good compromises have been made with opposition parties, this caused dissatisfaction among PVV and its supporters.

The dissatisfaction increased during the time of cabinet Rutte I. Because in many other aspects in which the cabinet and PVV didn't agree on in the support agreement, the relationship between CDA, VVD and PVV worsened. In practice, it often came to heated discussions between ministers of the cabinet on one side and PVV parliamentarians on the other side.

In order to get other points that were in the coalition agreement but in the support agreement through the parliament, the cabinet received support from the second largest party in parliament at that time PVDA (Ramakers, 2011). However, this changes in January 2012, when Job Cohen leader of the PVDA tell at party congress to stop his support for the current coalition. The reason for this is that he blames the current government for cuts in national budgets, and the actions taken to deal with the consequences of the financial crisis (AD, 2012).

The consequence of this was the fact that the cabinet totally had to rely on the approval of the PVV to get a majority in the Dutch parliament. The cabinet falls, a couple of months later, when the coalition and PVV can't agree about how new budget cuts will be made, because Geert Wilders had too much demands on the decrease of foreign development aid, and an even more strict asylum policy (NPO, 2021).

Interview with Rutte concerning the Tunisian wave

During this rule of this cabinet, the Tunisian wave occurred in the Mediterranean Sea. When the consequences of irregular migrants arriving at Italian shores were visible, prime minister Mark Rutte gave an in-depth interview in journalistic program called 'Pauw & Witteman'. They showed him images and clips about the current situation the island of Lampedusa, which perfectly reflects on the position of the government at that time.

What does the EU need to do if all those refugees come our way?

Rutte: Try to prevent that from happening, by making sure that as many receiving facilities are being offered in the regions that they came from.

And what if this doesn't work out and these people reach the EU?

Rutte: That is the responsibility of the receiving member state.

Isn't that unfair? Because that is mainly a task for countries that are protecting an outside border, which is often Italy.

Rutte: That is true, but that is just bad luck for them. Countries have benefits and disadvantages because of their geographical location. Especially that island in the Mediterranean Sea, Lampedusa, is often the first place where people arrive.

(Smouter & Vanheste, 2013)

Within this interview, it once more underlined the fact that the Dutch government supports the idea to organise receiving facilities in the region of origin. The fact that he refers to the responsibility of the receiving member state, reflects that the Dutch government was not planning to help out Italy at the time of the Tunisian wave. This is supported by the fact that Rutte reacts quite laconic on the question that it is not unfair to let Italy do the work for the entire EU when it comes to asylum receivers.

4.4.2 Rutte II 2012-2017

After the fall of Rutte I, VVD and PVDA became by far the largest parties in the parliamentary elections (see appendix F). With 41 seats for VVD and 38 seats for PVDA, both parties had a majority in the congress, but not in the senate (see appendix G). Therefore, large compromises needed to be made to get legislation through the senate as well. However, despite the fact that both parties differed a lot, this cabinet can be considered as remarkably stable. It even turned out that this cabinet was the longest ruling government since the second world war (NOS, 2017).

The coalition agreement

Where in the previous cabinet, putting a halt to migration was a very important topic with a prominent place in the coalition agreement, that no longer seems the case in Rutte II. That might have to do with the content of the migration chapter. Whereas in the previous cabinet immigration was more pictured as a threat towards the Dutch society, now only some small changes in conditions for asylum are being sketched. It is clear that the presents of PVDA in the cabinet had influence on that. Remarkably enough, nothing has been mentioned in the coalition agreement about the Mediterranean crisis (Rijksoverheid, 2012). Perhaps because of the differences in standpoints. Nevertheless, both needed to come clean in 2015.

The Syrian wave

In 2015, most political parties started to realise that the Southern member states, Greece in particular, needed additional help with the irregular migrant streams through the Mediterranean Sea (Hampshire, 2016). In March 2015, an article comes out in Elsevier in which member of parliament Malik Azmani (VVD) expresses his doubts about the intentions of the migrants crossing the Mediterranean. He fears that it is a threat for national security, since ISIS is on the rise in Northern Africa and potential terrorists could be among the people crossing the Mediterranean. He also points out that smugglers get paid lots of money to do their work, and this could potentially be people with sympathies for the Islamic State (Reijner, 2015).

Azmani wants to stimulate more receiving facilities in the region, and wants the EU facilities to receive many EU refugees. He also underlines that he wants to stop people from drowning in the sea, but ends with the quote: "The Support for receiving asylum seekers is declining, it puts pressure on our social facilities, and we don't know who we are letting in: a real refugee, a luck seeker, or a terrorist' (Reijner, 2015).

In response to that member of parliament Attje Kuiken (PVDA) calls the plan unacceptable and unrealistic. She claims that the Netherlands should remain a safe haven for refugees that flee their country because of war, race, sexual preference or political preference. She confirms that we should look to ways to prevent human smugglers from doing their work, but sealing off the EU is unacceptable (Reijner, 2015).

There were more clashes between both fractions. In April 2015 the bed-bath-bread discussion came to light, in which both parties fundamentally differed in the question that whether people whose claim to asylum in the Netherlands was refused, but decided to stay in the Netherlands either way, should be offered access to receiving facilities for homeless people. It came to heated discussions between the coalition parties, and in the end, they reached an agreement that they were allowed to stay as long as they cooperated with their return to their country of origin (Lambie, 2015).

In the months after this, the pressure on Greek shores with new migrants coming in rises, and the EU is thinking about the common adoption of 120.000 refugees from which the majority comes from Italy and Greece (European Parliament, 2015). According to the EU's plan, The Netherlands should be taking 7.000 of them, what again led to difficulties between VVD and PVDA. PVDA fraction leader Diederik Samson explained in the Dutch parliament, that they are willing to welcome 7.000 migrants, while VVD fraction leader only sees this as an option as a last resource (NOS, 2015). Especially VVD and PVV underlined that the large input of asylum seekers would further pressure the receiving facilities, since they didn't have the capacity to deal with a large number of extra migrants coming in on a short notice (van der Molen-Kuipers, 2016).

Then, in September 2015, at the peak of migrant influx from the Mediterranean, a picture of a 3-year-old dead boy that washed up to shore, visualized for the whole world how bad the crisis was at the moment (Hampshire, 2016). The whole world was in shock, media paid an extraordinary amount of attention to it (van Teeffelen, 2016), and for the whole world it was clear that crisis had to stop immediately. Therefore, also the VVD acknowledged that immediate help for the migrants at Mediterranean shores was absolutely necessary, and they agreed with the PVDA plans for the short term to help out the migrants. For the long term, they expected the PVDA's support not let any other illegal migrants in, (Lambie, 2015) to prevent an additional pulling effect Africa and the Middle East from happening.

Also, on the rest of the EU and its member states it must have had influence on the willingness to accept the EU proposal to make a deal with Turkey about receiving Syrian refugees, and redistribute 120.000 migrants among the different member states. However, in March 2016 only 660 of the 120.000

migrants have been taken in by the member states so far from which only 98 were relocated to the Netherlands (Henley, 2016). The agreement was to make the relocation happen in two years, but given the urgency and size of crisis at that time, it is troubling that the EU member states couldn't do more in a timespan of almost half a year. Moreover, it even turns out that in October 2017, more than 2 years after the EU agreed to relocate 120.000 migrants, only 29,9% of them is allocated to a different member state (Šabić, 2017). Compared with other member states, The Netherlands did quite well with 41,1%, but it is still a disappointing result for one of the wealthiest countries in the world (see appendix H).

4.4.3 Rutte III 2017-2021

This cabinet was created by four parties: VVD, CDA, D66, and ChristenUnie. This is the period in which the deals made by the EU with Turkey and countries in North Africa, started to pay off (see appendix A, B, and C). Therefore, this paragraph is mainly aimed on the coalition agreement and new pact on migration. In other words, the aftermath of the migration crisis.

Coalition agreement

The coalition agreement is a bit more extended than the previous two. That also applies to the migration chapter. The first thing that appears is that this cabinet is increasing the foreign development aid to third world countries by 331 million euros. Furthermore, the cabinet is also spending an extra billion euros in order to try to tackle poverty in Africa and the Arabians to prevent people to come to the EU. Besides that, the government emphasizes again on subsidizing receiving facilities in the region. This time it highlights new potential agreement with two other countries: Jordan and Lebanon. Remarkably enough, is that in this coalition agreement for the first time is referred to the return of refugees to the country of their roots when it is safe. However, a 'how' or 'who' hasn't been explained (Rijksoverheid, 2017).

Regarding the control over the Southern EU border, the Dutch government has made a change in opinion. Where Mark Rutte in his first cabinet said that the migrant influx in Italy and Greece was their own responsibility to handle, in this coalition agreement the Dutch government said that it is going to support the Southern member states by deploying border control teams. On top of that, the Dutch government also recognizes that help from other member states is absolutely necessary in order to deal with the large amount of asylum processes and to expand their current receiving facilities (Rijksoverheid, 2017).

Then, there is a point that is very important for VVD and CDA: the return of migrants whose asylum applications has been disapproved. On this point the government remains very strict, and could even lead to 'forced return' to their country of origin. There are some cases known in which the country of origin doesn't want to cooperate with the return of migrants. According to the coalition agreement this could lead to sanctions to those countries, such as sending back governmental officials or freezing landing rights of flights going from the country of origin to the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2017). Others state that is remarkable that there is so much attention has been paid in the coalition agreement to this, since only 10% for the total immigration (260.000 new immigrants) to the Netherlands in 2016 can be seen as asylum seekers or refugees (Grütters, et al., 2021). The reason for this is that the divide of migrants wasn't an obligation, but just an intention.

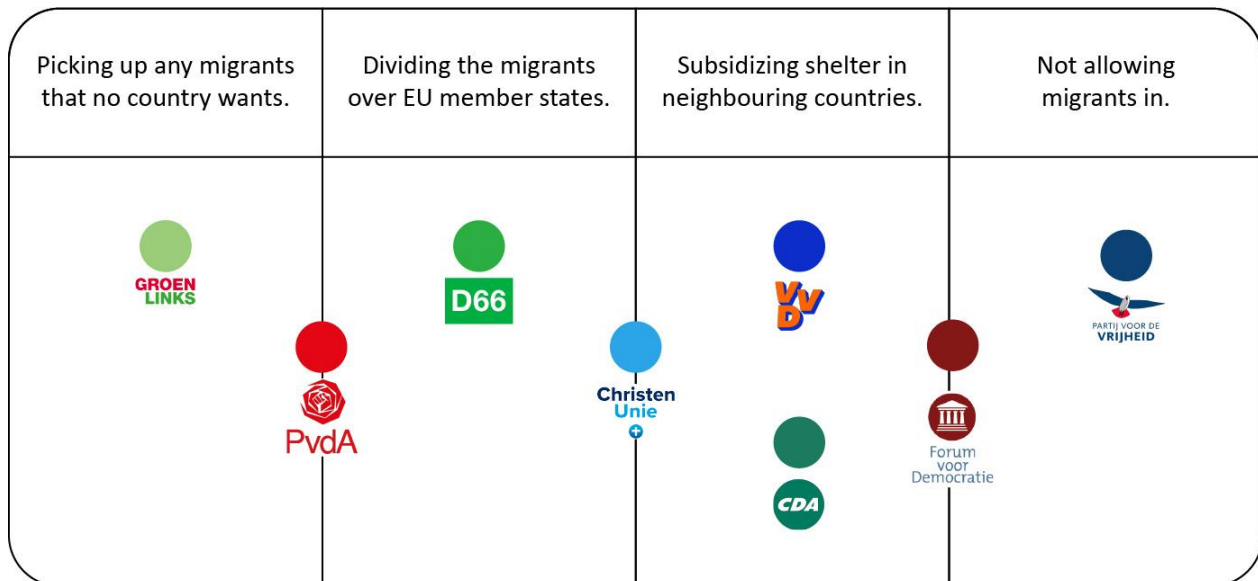
Support for the new pact on migration

The Dutch government fully supports the EU in their vision how to deal with the migrant crisis and how to prevent a new one (Rijksoverheid, 2021). By taking responsibility, the Netherlands also want to show solidarity with the regions where receiving facilities are being build or expanded. Therefore, the Netherlands increased its relocation plans, from taking in 500 migrants of facilities in the region to 750 (Harbers, 2018).

The EU is working towards a system in which more easily data can be shared about (irregular) immigration, faster and more similar border procedures are being followed by different member states, and when shared responsibility will be quickly provided by other member states when another sudden significant increase in migrants going to one member state appears (European Commission, 2020). The largest disadvantage for the pact is that there is no binding asylum quota for specific member states, because the resistance of several East-EU member states, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, was too heavy (Peeperkorn, 2020). Therefore, criticsasters may be afraid that the same story repeats itself when member states promise to take in migrants, but in practice barely do so.

4.5 Overview of the political parties

In this paragraph, an overview is given of the standpoints of the Dutch political parties. It includes the coalition parties from the past 10 years, and the largest opposition parties. The SP has been left out of this, because they often changed standpoints towards the EU many times, and therefore it is very hard to prove their influence on government standpoints. The standpoints of the other parties have been given below. Take into account that the parties that are located on the line between two options, take in a standpoint that is located in between the two options.



Scale 1: Standpoints towards the migration crisis (PVDA, 2021; GroenLinks, 2021; D66, 2021; VVD, 2021; CDA, 2021; PVV, 2021; FVD, 2021; ChristenUnie, 2021).

The overview created in Scale 1 points out some interesting patterns. With the PVDA, GroenLinks, and D66 aiming for common solution with the EU as a whole, and with the PVV and Forum not willing to accept any migrants (from third world countries), it pictures a clear divide between the Pro-EU parties and the Anti-

EU parties. The visions between the two sides are that fundamentally different that creating new government with parties from both groups is nearly impossible. This can be explained only by looking at the different parties that formed the last three coalitions only. The remaining parties can be considered as moderate.

The moderate parties

VVD, CDA, and ChristenUnie are in the luxurious position that they find themselves in the political middle ground of the migrant crisis debate. This puts them in the position to make deals with almost all other parties in the Dutch party system. They stand for a strict but fair asylum policy, in which they would like to see the most refugees being received in facilities in the region. This was the case in Rutte I, and hasn't changed since then. Looking to the party programs, VVD hasn't changed much in their standpoints towards migration. They want to speed up asylum procedures, decrease the number of opportunities for asylum seekers to appeal, a forced return to the country of origin when an asylum application is disapproved, and direct return when people are detected that live without a residents permit in the Netherlands (VVD, 2021; VVD, 2017; VVD, 2012).

The CDA didn't present any remarkably different ideas, but the tone of their party programs is much more humane (CDA, 2021; CDA, 2017; CDA, 2012). The best example of this, instead of speaking often about illegals or illegal migrants, they speak about refugees and newcomers. VVD approaches it more as a danger, and focuses on the potential disadvantages. CDA doesn't emphasize on this point, but mentions it in some side sentences. Their aim is more at understanding and helping the new people integrate, where VVD often underlines that integration is the responsibility of the incoming migrants. This doesn't mean that both of their visions on the migrant crisis is very different, CDA has tried to profile themselves for a long time as middle party, where VVD has tried to do that as a right party (VVD, 2021).

The ChristenUnie has shared a similar vision with VVD and CDA towards the migration crisis. However, in their party program they insisted that the Netherlands should do more in burden sharing with the regions where most of refugees are being sheltered (ChristenUnie, 2017). In the coalition agreement of Rutte III, they managed to get increase the annual input of refugees that are officially registered in the region from 500 per year to 750. However, their most recent party program lacks the actual input of refugees during the last four years. They are now of the opinion that the Dutch asylum policies have been too strict, referring to a recent case in which the Dutch cabinet even didn't manage to arrange the transfer for only 100 young children from refugee camps to the Netherlands in a couple of months. For ChristenUnie this was a moment reflection, in which they definitely changed standpoints (ChristenUnie, 2021).

Pro-EU parties

PVDA, GroenLinks, and D66 can be considered as the pro-EU parties. Also, in their approaches how to handle the migration crisis lots of similarities are shown. Their visions on immigration go in hand in hand, by also explaining that with current greying population, the Netherlands partly depends on immigration. In many aspects they overlap, but this wasn't the case 10 years ago.

D66 was at that time more in line with the approach of VVD and CDA, by funding receiving facilities in the regions (D66, 2017; D66, 2012; D66, 2010). However, being in the past cabinet, D66 has also seen that giving money for other countries to deal with consequences of the migration crisis is not an issue, but for the Dutch government to make their hands dirty and take in (the promised amounts) of refugees was a bridge too far. Therefore, in their most recent party program, they included a radical difference in asylum

quota of people that the Dutch government intends to take in. According to new party program of D66 this should go from 500 to 5000 (D66, 2021). Whether this just a symbolic gesture or not depends on the coalition agreement of the next government. D66 aims for a common EU asylum system, whereas now 27 different asylum systems are following EU guidelines. This will help to prevent overloaded asylum facilities in one or a few member states, and divide the migrants more fairly over the different member states.

PVDA supports the idea for a common EU asylum system (PVDA, 2021), and share lots of standpoint with the migration policies of D66. The largest difference between those two parties, is that PVDA talks mainly about protecting the minorities and most vulnerable people in the refugee camps, by relocating them to the Netherlands. Examples of this are single women, children without parents, and LHBTI-refugees (PVDA, 2021). However, it is an understatement that PVDA has made a development in the last 10 years concerning migration. In their party program in 2010, they shared a quite conservative view on migration (PVDA, 2010), that had a lot in common with the view of VVD. But in their party program in 2012 and 2017, it visible that the physical and mental situation of the people in asylum centra or receiving facilities is becoming more and more important for PVDA. The best example of this is that they want people in asylum seekers to start integrating straight away, by finding work or an education within the society (PVDA, 2012). Apart from that, they are also striving to serve as a good example for relocating migrants in migrant facilities such as in Greece and Italy to facilities in the Netherlands (PVDA, 2017).

GroenLinks can be seen as the party with most radical social standpoints on the migration crisis. They see it as a priority to put an end to the 'temporary' camps in Greece, and points out that the Netherlands should makes this happen together with other well-willing member states (GroenLinks, 2021). GroenLinks was the only party before the Tunisian and Syrian wave, that were already in favour of revising the Dublin agreement, for fairer divide in refugees over the different member states (GroenLinks, 2010). Furthermore, they also insist on the Netherlands granting a residents permit to asylum seekers that are waiting 3 years or more for the final decision of their asylum. Also in that, they are the most radical party, where PVDA for example insists on doing this after 5 years.

Although, these three parties have differences, their common message is clear. The Netherlands should towards a more humane refugee policy in which they play a more active role in taking people in Greek and Italian refugee camps. The deals that have been made with Turkey and Northern African countries, are part of the solution but not the entire solution. Besides the fact that the EU should invest more resources in that, the general opinion of the pro-EU parties is that EU member states should do more to release the burden of the Southern member states.

Anti-EU parties

PVV and FVD have similar standpoints when it comes to matters related to the EU. Both are not in favour of immigration for Islamic countries, and both think that The Netherland benefit of leaving the EU (PVV, 2021; FVD, 2021). Remarkably enough, both parties are talking a lot about immigration in their party programs, but in the four party programs of VVD and the two party programs of FVD the word refugee hasn't been mentioned once. It illustrates the fact that they don't want to pay attention to the troubling situation that some migrants face. Not in the Netherlands, and not anywhere else in the EU. They simply point out the negative externalities of migrants that came to the Netherlands before. They zoom in on an aspect that worries a part of population, which is being highlighted by the media (van Teeffelen, 2016).

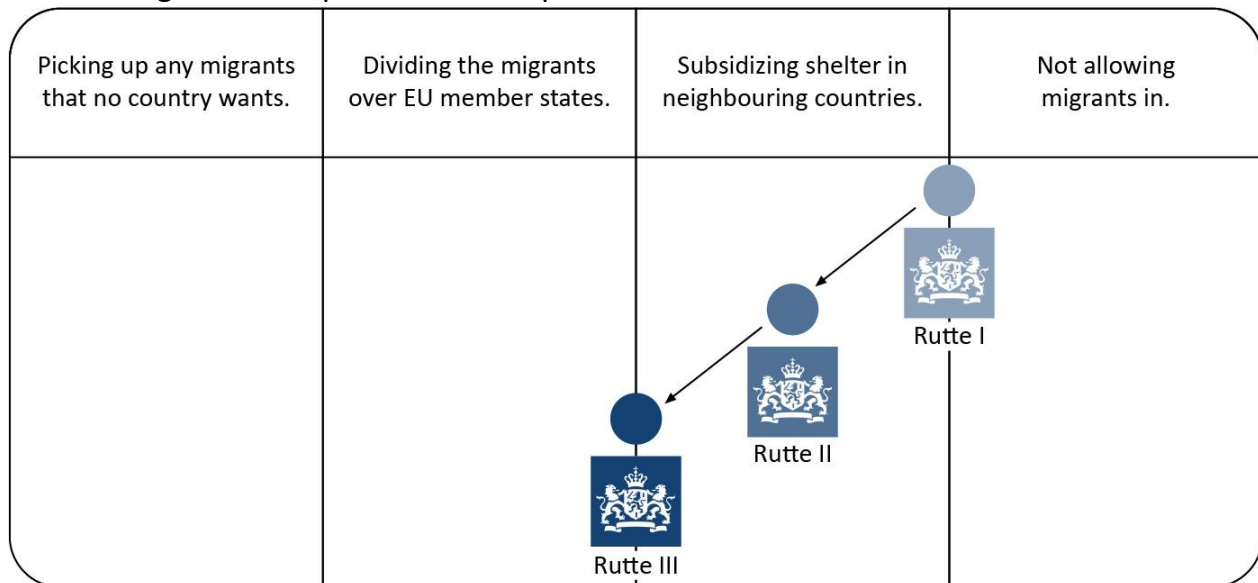
Their answer to the migration crisis is to send all people that came via the Mediterranean route. In theory this would be the proper approach, because it scares off other people that are thinking about taking the same route. However, it doesn't stop them to try it again. Furthermore, it could also be seen as

inhumane to intercept boat of people including women and children, and bring them back to African coast with no little to resources to survive.

PVV mixes up immigration and integration. They want to prevent more bad integration problems from happening by not allowing people from the same cultural background in (PVV, 2012). Cultural background might not even be the right word to describe it. PVV is mainly aiming at the immigration from Islamic country from the Arabian world or North Africa (PVV, 2010). The points where PVV goes further than other right parties, is the fact that by committing a criminal crime by people from an Islamic country, their residents permit or Dutch citizenship (in the case of a double passport) will be taken in, and send back to the country of origin (PVV, 2021).

FVD supports PVV in this (FVD, 2017), and had it in an earlier version of their party program than PVV. In contradiction to PVV, FVD does include an Alinea of subsidizing receiving facilities in the region. They highlight that between 1995 and 2019 immigration has costs 469 billion euros. They claim that this is a waste of money, could be invested much better. Also, the tone of party programs of FVD are less hostile than those of PVV. The focus of FVD on people that have should be denied residents in the Netherlands, is more on cultural background than on the Islam, compared with PVV. Nevertheless, in practice they stand for the same points: refusing most asylum applications of third world countries, taking control over Dutch borders, and leaving the EU (FVD, 2021; PVV, 2021).

4.6 Changes in standpoints over the past three cabinets



Scale 2: changes in standpoints of the Dutch cabinet towards the migration crisis the last 10 years.

Rutte I was a good lesson for VVD and CDA, in which it was hard to satisfy PVV and find common solution with the EU to respond to the Tunisian wave. Therefore, the position of Rutte I has been placed in between 'subsidizing shelter in neighbouring countries' (in line with a solution supported by VVD and CDA), and 'not allowing migrants in' (in line with the desires of PVV) in scale 2. PVV made it very difficult for the coalition by demanding to make extreme right choices on migration, that might have resulted in the fact that VVD and CDA didn't even think about getting into a coalition with PVV in Rutte II. After the elections in 2012, VVD didn't exclude PVV for a new cabinet, but all other parties did (NU.nl, 2012; Parool, 2012; RTL nieuws, 2012). Therefore, PVV has made it impossible for themselves to enter a new coalition. This was unfortunate from their perspective, because their extreme approach might have done more damage to a strict migration policy than good. Because instead, PVV ended up in the opposition, forcing VVD to rule

with PVDA, or face the threat of a possible completely leftist government. And because the VVD and PVDA eventually managed to form a coalition, it logically ended up in a less right (migration) approach than if PVV would have given in on their extreme desires, and continued their support for Rutte I.

For VVD and CDA was after this cabinet time for a moment of reflection about their strategic options. CDA and PVV lost a significant number of seats in the parliament, that they would be unable to form a new right cabinet. In contradiction to those parties, VVD won the elections. They knew if there wanted to continue ruling, they needed to moderate their point of views. Especially towards migration, otherwise a government with PVDA, would be impossible. Furthermore, looking to the results of the 2012 elections as given in appendix I, there was more potential of gaining new voters in the middle of the political spectrum than on the right.

In the time of Rutte II, the cabinet created together with other member states in the EU the foundation for decreasing number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. By working towards deals with Turkey and countries in North Africa, the influx of migrants has decreased significantly since 2016. The credits for this have to go to the VVD and PVDA, who have realized the urgency of the problem and given the necessary support to make this approach succeed, partly also due to pressure of the images that arrived from Italy and Greece. Therefore, the position of Rutte II is placed in the 'subsiding shelter in neighbouring countries' section in scale 2. However, they were also responsible for releasing the burden of the Italian and Greek shores, and have barely done that. Their defence that with 41,1% of their intended number, they did better as the EU average of 29,9%, sounds as a weak excuse considering the human circumstances in the receiving camps.

VVD should be afraid that if they allow too many migrants in, Forum and PVV could be potentially steal votes from the VVD support. By underlining how much troubles certain specific refugees have caused, PVV and FVD try to frighten the Dutch voters for more trouble if the mass integration continues. It works, but doesn't give a good reflection of reality. According to research advisor Peter Kanne, the silence majority doesn't get the same media attention compared with the people that are troubled about migration (van Teeffelen, 2016). Based upon his research, the people that were living close to an asylum seeker centre had less worries about them than the people that were not living close to one (I&O Research, 2015). Another researcher concludes that with the appearance of (boat) refugees from the Middle-East and North Africa, there are a lot of negativities around the topic in the news (de Genova, 2017), but that the actual support base for taking in refugees is high (van der Molen-Kuipers, 2016). By creating a coalition with PVDA, VVD put strict conditions for migration in the coalition agreement, which would satisfy the right-wing of their supporters. However, in order to compromise with PVDA, VVD moved towards a more moderate standpoint on migration during Rutte II. This could have been the reason why VVD attracted a significant number of median voters that made sure that VVD also won the next elections.

PVDA on the other hand, has made perhaps a little too much concessions when it comes to migration, because in the 2017 elections the party has lost 27 seats in parliament, leaving only 9 seats to remain. Obviously, there are also other reasons for the PVDA's largest loss ever, but the fact that they compromised too much with VVD in their coalition was definitely one of them.

The VVD also lost seats, but still remained the largest party in parliament. In order to form a coalition, they needed at least three other parties to have a majority in the parliament. Getting a majority on the right wasn't possible, meaning that VVD again needed to shift to the middle to find it. The experience for VVD with PVDA included many struggles, but they found out that the resistance of moving to middle was lower than when moving to the right with PVV. Moreover, they lasted 5 years in a cabinet with PVDA while with

PVV they didn't even last 2 years. Nevertheless, a coalition with CDA, D66, and ChristenUnie asked for new compromises, also regarding the migration crisis.

D66 and ChristenUnie often disagree on medical-ethical questions, but regarding their views on the migrant crisis they have a lot in common. Increasing the relocation plan from 500 refugees to 750 refugees was thanks to them. The fact that finally 100 children arrived in January 2021, that were 'stuck' at Greek shores (Rijksoverheid, 2021), was thanks to them as well. In return for this, D66 and ChristenUnie supported VVD and CDA in further deals with third world countries to dry up the smuggle routes through the Mediterranean Sea. In reality, the 100 children that arrived in January 2021, were only a small step in the direction of the demands of D66 and ChristenUnie. However, it illustrates how tactical moderate parties are but especially VVD, is working towards a compromise where it seems that different parties meet somewhere in middle ground, but where actually a very small step is being taken. This illustrative for the party behaviour of VVD in migration.

Nevertheless, looking to the numbers in appendix A, B and C, it can't be mistaken that the decrease in migrants coming to the EU was caused by the deals made by the EU, which were heavily supported by VVD as well. They didn't receive the credits for it, but they are well deserved. Based upon this information and the input of D66 and ChristenUnie, it is obvious that the position for Rutte III in scale 2 is located in between the 'dividing migrants over EU member states' section and the 'subsidizing shelter in neighbouring countries' section.

Looking to the election results in 2021, VVD will be happy about the course they have set regarding the migration policies. They won the elections and gained one extra seat, while CDA lost significantly after being in a coalition with VVD again. ChristenUnie didn't gain or lose any seats, while D66 crowned itself as the runner up of the elections of 2021. Looking to the parliamentary election results this was the fourth election in a row in which D66 increased their number of seats. The exact reason why that is the case isn't completely clear, but given the position of D66 in the political spectrum (Middle-left) they are at the perfect to mirror the median voter from the other corner than that the VVD is doing. Therefore, the earlier mentioned assumption that Langbroek (2017) made about D66 as a possible catch-all party could be right, and points in the direction that the possible catch-all strategy of VVD is working and has success.

5 Rule of law

Within this chapter the violations of the rule of law in two member states of the EU, Hungary and Poland, are being discussed. The two cases share similar elements, and also make it very difficult for the EU to do something about it.

5.1 The Hungarian case

Before 2010

After WWII, Hungary was a communistic satellite state of the Soviet Union for 40 years. In 1989, the ministers of foreign affairs of Hungary and Austria, started cutting the fence that separated their countries from each other, also known as the iron curtain. It was one of the historic events that led to the end of communism in Hungary. On March 25 1990, Hungary organized its first free elections, and Viktor Orbán, one of the founders of a new political party called Fidesz, won a seat in the national parliament and took part in the opposition (Koster, 2021).

Orbán is done with the ruling political elite, and is destined to change something about that. In the years that follow, Orbán is gaining more and more power in his party and steers his party from a centre-left liberal direction, more and more in the direction of a conservative right movement. By underlining the importance of Christian norms and values, and by keeping foreign investors out as much as possible to 'protect' the importance of the Hungarian people, Fidesz gains popularity among the Hungarian people. In the 90's, lots of corruption scandals in the left Hungarian government result in the fact that Orbán can position himself as opposition leader. By playing in on the distrust among the people towards the current government, Orbán wins the 1998 elections and becomes prime minister of Hungary (Koster, 2021).

Fidesz wins the absolute majority in parliament

In the 2010 elections, Fidesz won the majority (52%) in parliament. By connecting their list to the list of Christian Democrats, Fidesz has gained a two-third majority in parliament which is sufficient to change the constitution (Bogaards, 2018). This is a breaking point in the development of Hungarian democracy, that has made large progress since 1990. From these elections on, it went downhill with democratic rights in Hungary. In July 2011, Orbán installed a media watchdog that controls Hungarian media. If they wouldn't 'objective' enough, fines could be imposed. The constitutional court determined on December 9 2011, that the new media law was in contradiction with the Hungarian constitution. However, this didn't stop Orbán and his administration (PDC, 2021).

In April 2011, the parliament already passed a new constitution. It turned out that on three points, the constitution was not in line with EU law. Those points were: the independency of the national central bank, the threat to the independence of the data protection authority, and new regulations to send active judges to their retirement by moving the retirement from 70 to 62 (Koster, 2021; PDC, 2021). Especially the last point is a very sensitive one, because lots of judges needed to retire under the new rule, and replacements were appointed by the Fidesz chairman's wife (Reuters, 2019). Therefore, the EU gave Hungary the option to change their new constitution in line with EU law, within one month. However, even after giving another chance to Hungary to correct their constitution, Hungary has not done enough, concerning the appointment of new judges, to defend the freedom, and to respect privacy issues of their civilians. As a consequence of that, the European commission went to the European court of justice, and they decided that the early retirement of the judges wasn't legitimate (PDC, 2021).

Nevertheless, resistance from the EU didn't lead to democratic improvements. Instead, Orbán and his party reformed the election process which made it easier for his party to keep the absolute majority,

encouraged likeminded wealthy people to buy new stations and newspapers, and implemented additional rules for universities limiting the rules for their autonomy. Criticasters such Bogaards (2018) claims therefore that: 'Prime Minister Orbán has built a diffusely defective democracy, weakening democracy across the board but being careful, so far, not to cross the line with autocracy in any of democracy's partial regimes'. In other words, Orbán is actually looking for a creative way to stay in absolute control over the country, within the boundaries of a democracy as is defined by the EU. Orbán is looking how far he can go, challenges the EU on many points (van Hennekeler, 2021). This can be supported by former European Commissioner Jouravá claiming that Orbán is building a 'sick' democracy (Giesen, 2020).

Actions taken by the EU

From the moment that Viktor Orbán became prime minister again in 2010, the EU has followed the policy decision of his administration closely. When Hungary wanted to make changes to their constitution, the European Commission and parliament criticised that heavily. However, after several cases at the European court of justice, Hungary did adjust their constitutions additions in a way that the EU could live with it (PDC, 2021). The problem is that until then, the EU only had the option to do nothing, or take very drastic measures by starting an article 7 procedure, suspending the membership of a member state, in which their right to vote in the European council will be taken away. Unfortunately, there were no options in between.

Therefore, and because the Hungarian conflicts weren't the only cases in which the EU problems with not respecting their shared norms and values, the European Commission implemented in 2014 the rule of law-procedure. This procedure has been put in place to ensure that all member states respect the democratic norms and values that apply within the EU. It includes a way to early detect occasions in which member states take measures that might harm the rule of law, in order to inform the member state in question and the others in a timely manner. In case, this doesn't change anything, an article 7 procedure can still be started (PDC, 2021) or the European Commission can ask the EU court of justice to fine the member state in question (European Commission, 2021).

In 2017, the European Parliament granted the civil liberty committee with the mandate to see if Hungary should be facing further restrictions. A Dutch member of the European parliament, Judith Sargentini has done research about the state of the rule of law in Hungary. In April 2018, she presented the report to the European Parliament and concluded that there is risk of violation of EU norms and values, and advised to start an article 7 procedure (PDC, 2021). This advice has been taken over by a large two-third majority in the parliament, but the council of ministers hasn't taken a standpoint on this. In January 2020 a large majority in the European Parliament has demanded the European Commission to use all available instruments to make Hungary align with the norms and values of the EU.

5.2 The Polish case

Before 2015

Similar to the Hungarian case in 1989, after the fall of communism the switch to a parliamentary democracy has been made in Poland. The mistake that has been made in Poland was the transition between going from a communistic state to a democracy, has been done under too much influence of 'reformers' with communistic ideas. "Representatives of the old regime as unduly profited from the ensuing privatization of state assets" (Dujisin, 2021), didn't help the population to increase the trust in their new government. Partly because of this, the different coalitions since the fall of communism, have changed a lot every four years. From socialist governments to liberal-conservative governments, long have they been flipping the coin about who will be in charge in Poland. The main reason this can be explained by the anti-communist sentiment that lives among the people living in a country where the ways of a

communistic regimes are still present in the minds of the people (Dujisin, 2021). If after 4 years significant improvement isn't visible yet, then it is easy for people to vote for a totally different course.

PiS wins absolute majority in parliament

Andrzej Duda was chosen as the new president of the Republic of Poland August 2015. In the parliamentary elections of November in the same year, PiS, a conservative nationalistic party, won the absolute majority of seats in the parliament. From that moment on, lot of changes have happened in the Polish democracy. This already started one month later, when president Duda signed a law that limited the power and independence of the constitutional court, resulting in the fact that it could no longer function as control mechanism for the Polish government. Besides that, in the same month a new media law was filed, that allowed the Polish government to fire and hire the direction and writers of the public TV and radio channels. According to PiS, journalists of public media often sympathised publicly with 'anti-Polish opinions'. Despite, the criticism that the EU had on the new media law, president Duda signed it either way in January 2016 (PDC, 2021).

In July 2017, the Polish parliament voted for a reform of the judiciary. Under this reform, all the members of the Polish council of jurisprudence, would be named by the parliament. All current members would lose their seats, and they would be replaced immediately. This caused large commotion, because the council of jurisprudence appoints and fires judges. Furthermore, as second reforming proposal included the change in retirement age for judges at the supreme court. This would send 40% of the judges in the supreme court with retirement. The problem of this is that those judges would also be replaced by judges that are appointed by the Polish council of jurisprudence. This would indirectly mean that judges in Poland would lose any independence that they still had, and that the separation of power only continued to exist on paper (PDC, 2021).

In 2018, the situation worsened even more. President Duda signed a law making it easier to fire judges at the supreme court and to replace them. The law also includes that parliament will be the new organ appointing the new judges in the supreme court. However, the EU doesn't want the Polish government to get away with this.

Actions taken by the EU

In January 2016, the European Commission started an investigation about the controversial regarding the new media law and the new power limitations of the constitutional court in Poland. In June 2016, Poland received an official warning from the European Commission because of violation of the rule of law. Because Poland didn't do anything with the warning, in July the European Commission started the rule of law procedure (PDC, 2021). However, the Polish government didn't do enough to satisfy the European Commission. Based upon the facts in the previous paragraph, they even made the situation worse.

With the approval of the reform of the judiciary, the European Commission couldn't do much else than starting the article 7 procedure. This was approved by the European Parliament in March 2018. But in order to start sanctioning Poland, a unanimous approval is necessary in the European council. Getting a unanimous approval is difficult because that would mean that in this case Orbán needs to approve the article 7 procedure as well, whereas he has said that he would vote against it (PDC, 2021). This is not very strange, because if both member states keep supporting each other, an article 7 procedure could never be approved.

Therefore, the EU stood a little bit powerless for a long time. They had some success when they went to the European court of justice, but even after decision that the appointment of judges can't be

undone by the president of Poland, no substantial improvements of the rule of law have been shown so far (van Hennekeler, 2021). Therefore, the EU has tried to force some democratic changes in Poland and Hungary by only allowing access to the COVID-19 recovery fund (will be explained in chapter 6) if the common shared democratic norms and values are being honoured (van Assen, Iedereen door de bocht: EU-begroting goedgekeurd, 2020).

Hungary and Poland were against this idea in the beginning, but they agreed with the compromise that those sanctions can only be assigned after the European court of justice has determined that the violations of democratic norms and values are in place. The advantage of this for Poland and Hungary is that they win time. Time that they can use for a re-election before they face the possible financial consequences (van Assen, Iedereen door de bocht: EU-begroting goedgekeurd, 2020).

In order to prevent future rule of law abuses in the EU, the European Commission presented in 2019 a blueprint for strengthening the rule of law within the EU. There will be an examination process, to follow the development of the rule of law within the different member states, which will be supported by an annual report about the rule of law in the different member states. Furthermore, the European Commission wants to further develop the EU-scoreboard of the judiciary, meaning data about independency, quality and efficiency of the national legal systems will be expanded (PDC, 2021). It is clear that the EU is trying everything to protect the democratic rights of the EU citizens in Hungary and Poland, but so far “the EU seems unable effectively to assure the prevalence of its liberal democratic values” (Schmalenberger, 2020). The reason why the EU’s approach is not effective lies not within their strategy or good will, but it lies in the limitations of the tools that the EU has to solve their rule of law problems.

5.3 Standpoints of the Dutch government

5.3.1 Rutte I and II (2010-2012 & 2012-2017)

During the rule of cabinet Rutte I and II, the Hungarian and Polish rule of law violations have developed. Therefore, it could be argued that by the time that the coalition agreements were made in 2010 and 2012, there wasn’t a clear cause for the Dutch government to take a standpoint. But in 2017, a lot of the repeating violations of the rule of law were already known, and not even one word has been mentioned about that in the party programs of VVD or CDA (VVD, 2017; CDA, 2017) or in the next coalition agreement (Rijksoverheid, 2017). In June 2017, Rutte even sounded out Hungary and Poland to be the Netherlands’ new EU critical allies, since the UK was leaving the EU (NOS, 2017). Nevertheless, he did state that Poland should do something about their violations of the rule of law, but it was not important enough for Rutte to refuse to look to a common partnership with them.

PVDA on the other hand, coalition partner of VVD in Rutte II, did express their concerns about the rise of authoritarian leaders in the EU. Their standpoint was that the EU should do more to protect the rule of law in EU member states, by for example structural monitoring. Member states that move in the wrong direction should be sanctioned with exclusion of EU subsidies (PVDA, 2017).

This is a different standpoint than the one that PVDA minister of foreign affairs, Bert Koenders defended in the Dutch parliament in February 2017. He claimed that the Netherlands together with Belgium and Italy, were the precursors of starting a rule of law procedure against Poland. Towards specific sanctions the minister couldn’t make any comments, since the rule of law procedure was still ongoing and there was no conclusion drawn yet. However, the minister said that he was nevertheless worried about the developments concerning the rule of law in some member states (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 2017). Therefore, it is accurate to say that Rutte II was in favour of speaking out against violations towards the rule of law, but threatening with financial or administrative sanctions was still a bridge too far.

5.3.2 Rutte III (2017-2021)

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, not even a single sentence in the 2017 coalition agreement of 70 pages, has been directed to matters relating the rule of law in Poland or Hungary. The fact that the same applies to the party programs of VVD, CDA, and ChristenUnie, does say something about how important the rule of law issues in other member states were being regarded. For D66 this wasn't the case. In their 2017 party program, they stated that especially countries that are already a member of the EU, should stick to rules regarding democracy, rule of law, and civil liberties. In their program, they already pleaded for an annual report concerning the rule of law for different member states (D66, 2017), which was taken over by the EU in 2019.

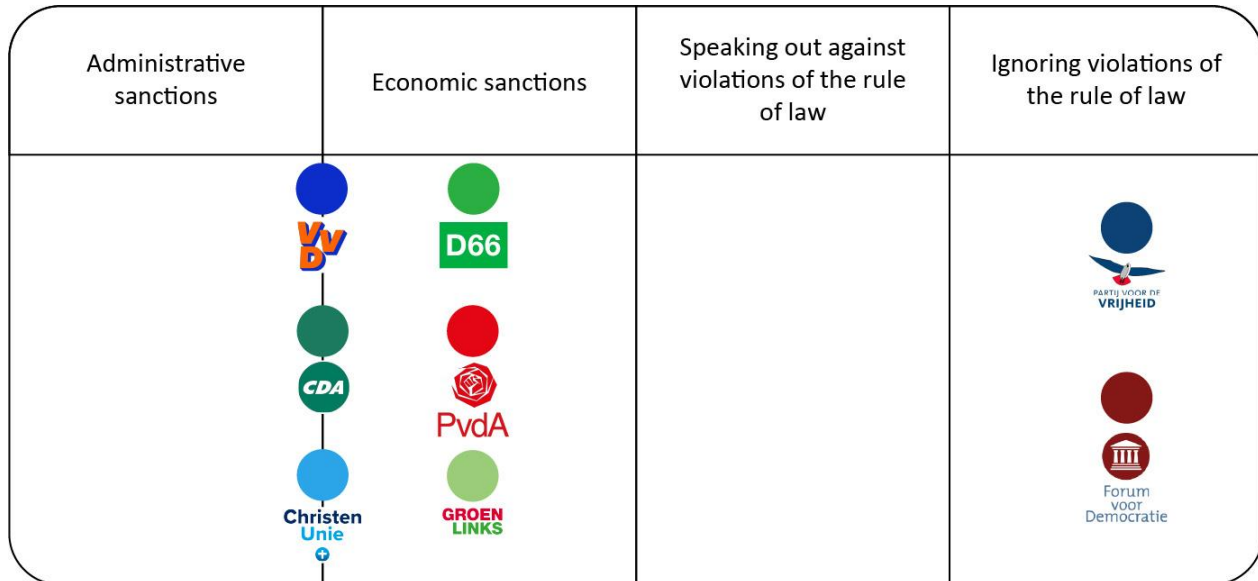
During Rutte III, the situations of the rule of law in Hungary and Poland received more and more media attention. Partly because the rule of law issues were a large theme in Brussels, but also because pro-EU opposition parties such as PVDA and GroenLinks, were asking more attention for it in the Dutch parliament (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 2017; Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, 2019; Tweede kamer der Staten Generaal, 2020). In several debates, they were asking the Dutch minister of foreign affairs about his strategy to deal with the rule of law violations. In short, in every debate the answer was that they are working on it on EU level, and that any possible Dutch measures would not be sufficient enough to change the situation. That doesn't mean that Dutch is not being open about their standpoint on the matter. On an international press conference in Berlin, Mark Rutte said: "in the EU we respect the rule of law, human rights, and other fundamental freedoms. In the EU media are free, women and men are equal, and anyone can have any sexual preference or religion" (Rijksoverheid, 2018). In the same speech he also claimed that those who say that the rule of law is national matter, are wrong, and that he has heard other people talking about sanctioning countries that think this way.

This visualizes the standpoint of the Dutch government at that time. But this changed when Poland and Hungary continued to violate the rule of law, increasing the pressure on the Dutch cabinet to do something. In January 2020, justices of the supreme court in Den Bosch made the following statement: "We support independent judges in Poland" (Dijkers, 2020). The fact that justices support a political statement concerning another country is very rare, but it underlines how bad the situation in Poland is.

Therefore, the Dutch government demanded the implementation of financial sanctions in the EU recovery fund, that if any violations of the rule of law occur, any member state can stop the subsidies given by the EU to the member states where the violations occurred (Schmidt, 2020). Looking at this fact, it could be argued that the Dutch government has changed its view on how to approach matters regarding the rule of law in the EU. This could be the result of a changing opinion, or the result of the fact that the measure is commonly shared under the Dutch population (Kester, 2019).

5.4 Overview of the political parties

Below here, the standpoints of the political parties are given about the violations against the rule of law in Hungary and Poland. As well as in the previous chapter, a position on the line between two options indicates that this specific party takes a standpoint that is in between the two options.



Scale 3: Standpoints towards the violations of the rule of law in different member states (PVDA, 2021; GroenLinks, 2021; D66, 2021; VVD, 2021; CDA, 2021; PVV, 2021; FVD, 2021; ChristenUnie, 2021).

Pro-EU parties

The pro-EU share common vision on how to deal with rule of law violations in Poland and Hungary. They all support the annual rule of law examination. If it turns out that a member state violates the rule of law, they would like them to be financially sanctioned. This is quite remarkable, because these three parties were in favour for the article 7 procedure, that can potentially punish member states harder than financial sanctions can. However, PVDA describes perfectly what could have moved the other parties as well to take this standpoint now. They compared the article 7 procedure with a 'blunt knife', illustrating the ineffectiveness of the article 7 procedures when it is aimed at more than one member state (PVDA, 2021).

It is important to mention that D66 is most revolutionary when it comes to taking measures against rule of law violations. D66 wants the Netherlands to look for potential allies in the EU, in order sentence countries that are violating the rule of law. Furthermore, they are strongly in favour of developing more instruments to sanction individual member states (D66, 2021). GroenLinks wants to realize something similar, but wants the authority to remain with the European court of justice (GroenLinks, 2021). Both standpoints have their benefits and disadvantages. The idea of D66 will not easily be adopted by the majority of member states of the EU, while European court of justice is a relatively slow decision-making organ. Nevertheless, the overall image is that because of the low feasibility of administrative sanctions, the pro-EU parties have taken the decision to focus on financial sanctions only. This might not be the hardest sanction possible, but it is the most realistic one.

Anti-EU parties

Even in 2021 PVV and FvD completely ignore the violations of the rule of law in party programs. Both parties underline the importance of sovereignty of national countries. This could be their reason for

ignoring the Polish and Hungarian situation. Geert Wilders visited Hungary in 2020, went on a picture with Victor Orbán, and called him a great politician. In a tweet he even praised Hungary as a country and said that they could be proud of their own culture and identity. In his eyes, the Netherlands could learn a lot from Hungary (Reijmerink, 2020).

When Thierry Baudet gets questions about the political situation in Hungary in 2018, he replies that it is a difficult discussion and doesn't know why he should be giving an opinion about this. In 2016 Baudet called Orbán a hero that everyone in the west should praise. A salient detail in this case, is the fact that Baudet's publication 'the significance of borders', has been translated into Hungarian reproduced by the publicity team of the think-tank of Fidesz (Holtland, 2020). Therefore, it is safe to say that PVV and FvD rather deny the violations of the rule of law than criticize it. Both have done this for a long time already, and nothing points to the fact that they might change their standpoints in the future.

Moderate parties

The moderate parties have ignored the problem for a long time. They had much criticism on potential new member states such as Turkey regarding the rule of law in their party programs, and therefore it is even more remarkable that until 2021 that VVD, CDA, and ChristenUnie have been silent about this in their party programs for a long time. VVD still doesn't speak of violations of the rule of law in other EU countries in their 2021 party program directly. Nevertheless, VVD does plead for economic sanctions as a first step after human right violations within the EU, and also to take away the veto right of a member state when it comes to other economic sanctions. By doing this, it will prevent situations in which Hungary and Poland support each other to prevent suffering under EU sanctions. If after economic sanctions, no significant improvements are shown, the general veto right has to be taken away by the particular member state according to VVD (VVD, 2021).

In contradiction to VVD, CDA does mention some specific measures for EU countries that thorn the rule of law. According to them, those countries should lose their right to vote in the EU council, and their claims on EU funds and subsidies. Whether this should all be done, directly after a violation of the rule of law isn't stated as clearly as in comparison with the VVD program (CDA, 2021).

ChristenUnie on the other hand, is very outspoken and specific in the changes they want to see in the EU. They see that many member states fail to honour agreements, when it comes to the rule of law, press freedom, and budget disciplines. They fear that the lack of actions in those areas puts the European solidarity under pressure. They are in favour of adding extra responsibilities to EU constitutional court, and state that: "independent rule of law is not an internal matter of the state, but a general basic principle in law, and is the central pillar in the fight against corruption" (ChristenUnie, 2021).

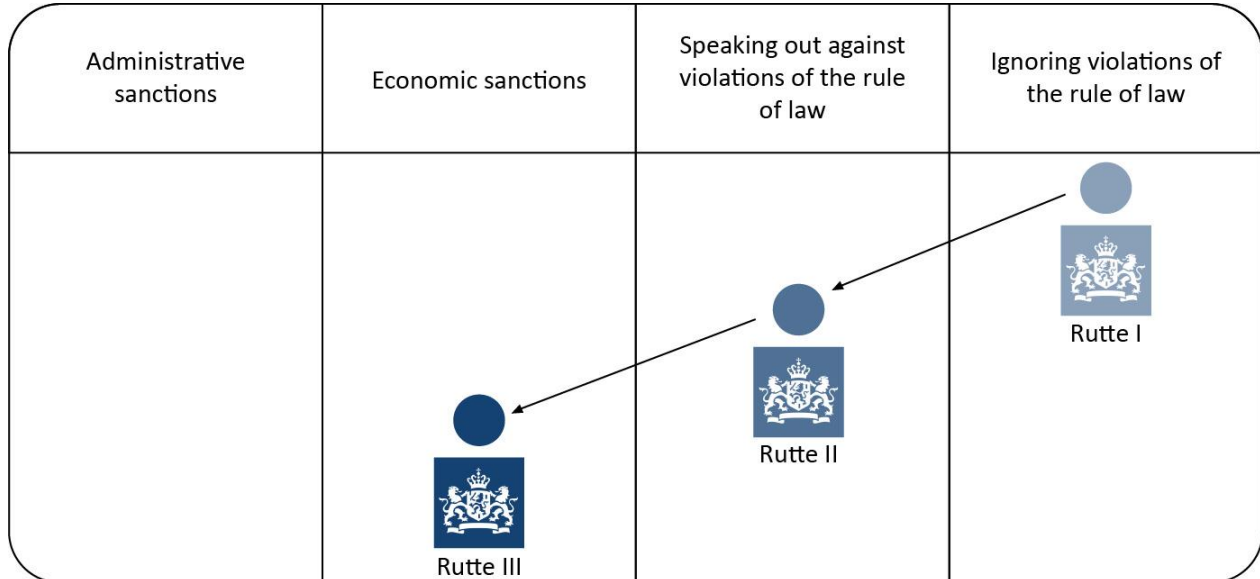
Apart from this, ChristenUnie also has the revolutionary view that the article 7 procedure can be approved if four-fifth of the EU decides whether the article 7 procedure can be executed (ChristenUnie, 2017). VVD sees for the Netherlands a special role in which they take the law-enforcement role over from the British, concerning sanctions for member states within the EU (VVD, 2021). Both of the initiatives might be a little opportunistic, but it reflects well how different these parties have started behaving after the rule of law violations in Poland and Hungary increased, and the attention for it did as well.

What catches the eye in general, is that all moderate parties have ignored the Poland and Hungarian case completely in their party programs. Only in the time of Rutte III, they realized that there was a lot of attention for the specific cases, which made them decide not only to speak out against it, but even take a more critical standpoint (financial AND administrative sanctions) than the Pro-EU parties. Even though, administrative sanctions are not realistic option with other member states that can veto sanctions

such as the article 7 procedure, it sends a message to the outside world that the moderate parties are very concerned about rule of law violations.

5.5 Changes in standpoints by the Dutch government

In the past 10 years, the Dutch government has made some serious changes in standpoints. This could be due to the fact that the Polish and Hungarian case worsened, but could also be the result of new insights that changed the opinion of the Dutch government on the two cases. In scale 4, the changes in standpoints are visualized:



Scale 4: changes in standpoints of the Dutch cabinet on how to respond to violations of the rule of law in the EU in the last 10 years.

In the time of Rutte I, there was completely no attention from the Dutch government for the situation in Hungary. Even if it would be a large topic back then, it would be questionable if the Dutch government would have spoken out against the rule of law violations in Hungary, since Geert Wilders and his PVV have sympathies for prime minister Orbán. Therefore, the position of Rutte I is located in the ‘ignoring violations of the rule of law’ section. During Rutte II, the situation in Hungary started to worsen, and in Poland basic rule of law principles started to vague away as well. This was the time in which the Dutch government and other EU member states started criticizing Hungary and Poland for taking away checks and balances in their legal systems. As mentioned before, the change in standpoint could be the result of wrong developments in both countries, but also because of new insights.

As the situations in both countries worsened, more and more pressure has been put on EU level to deal with the violations of the rule of law. Mark Rutte, often spoke this out internally, and in 2017 he started doing this more and more in public. This could partly be seen as the result of pressure from coalition partner PVDA and other pro-EU parties, who were already longer critical on the two Eastern-EU regimes. Therefore, the position of Rutte II in this matter is located in the ‘speaking out against violations of the rule of law’ section. Nevertheless, from that period on, the media started getting more and more attention to political situations in Hungary and Poland. This didn’t go unnoticed by the moderate parties, VVD CDA and ChristenUnie. After being relatively silent before related to matters regarding the rule of law, they started speaking out more clearly and were even demanding for administrative sanctions in their 2021 programs. In fairness, this was only to send a message to the outside world that they completely disagree with rule of law violations. It should be seen more as a symbolic gesture, because in 2021 it was

already very clear that administrative sanctions are not going to happen, with Hungary and Poland supporting each other.

The pro-EU parties on the other hand, have a way more realistic vision upon the case by pleading for economic sanctions. The feasibility of those sanctions is much higher, which inspired the prime minister to ask for additional conditions when member states would apply for the COVID-19 recovery fund.

The only possible explanation of the moderate parties, but especially VVD, are calling out for hard administrative sanctions is to satisfy a large issue that lives among the voters of the Netherlands. It was not a new idea, because the EU already had put the article 7 procedure in motion at that time, and already communicated that Hungary and Poland used their veto to block it. It wasn't a new attempt, because the situation didn't change, and Dutch parties favouring administrative actions against other member states could only damage the international relationships of the Netherlands even more. The only possible win for the moderate parties to speak out in favour of administrative actions is to satisfy a large group of voters. By doing this, they moved away from other right parties such as PVV and FvD, and positioned themselves in a more centralistic position in the political spectrum. This is exactly in line with the findings of van Soest (2021), claiming that more parties starting to look more like each other, and also falls into the pattern that VVD has shown so far, by mirroring the median voter. Nevertheless, it should be seen a symbolic act rather than an act that will have large consequences for Hungary and Poland.

As what the position of the Dutch government during Rutte III concerned, their position is located in the 'economic sanctions' sections. The reason for this is because the Dutch government had a very outspoken opinion similar to the one of the pro-EU parties, when it comes to access to funds in the EU recovery fund in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further details about this topic will be given in the next chapter.

6 Solidarity

Solidarity in the EU can be found in many different aspects. Nevertheless, the extent of the solidarity between member states can only be tested when a crisis occurs. Therefore, two topics have been chosen to visualize the solidarity of the Netherlands (the Dutch government and the political parties) towards other member states. These topics are: the solidarity after the Eurozone (debt) crisis and the solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis.

6.1 The Eurozone crisis

The Eurozone crisis can be seen as an indirect result of the financial crisis. Between 1996 and 2006, the housing prices in the US increased by 80%, while between 1886-1986 housing prices only increase by 7,4%. The result of this was that houses were extremely overvalued, and the 'housing bubble' popped in 2006 (Kamalodin, 2012). As a result of this, all sub-prime mortgages, loans with a high interest rate for people with a low credit score and often a flexible interest rate, were becoming less valuable. In the case for people with a flexible rate, this meant that they were forced to pay a higher interest rate which they couldn't afford. As a result, people were forced to sell their houses for a low price, and were often left behind with a debt even after they sold the house. Because of this, financial institutions lost large amounts of money, financial institutions became more sceptical to give out loans, and interests rates increased even further (Rijksoverheid, 2021). This had a rolling snowball effect on financial markets and the world-wide economy, which ended up in a negative spiral.

The snowball alone wasn't the only cause to the Eurozone crisis. "The eurozone (debt) crisis was caused by the lack of a(n) (effective) mechanisms / institutions to prevent the build-up of macro-economic and, in some countries, fiscal imbalances and the lack of common eurozone institutions to effectively absorb shocks" (Wijffelaars & Loman, 2015). In other words, the financial crisis in America uncovered the lacks and shortages of checks and balances in the financial systems of the EU. The EU financial system wasn't capable of dealing with a large crisis, and therefore many banks and financial institutions needed financial support from national governments not to go bankrupt.

Unfortunately, many countries in the EU didn't have the financial reserves to prevent their financial institutions to go bankrupt. Examples of countries in bad financial situations during the crisis are: Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy. These countries couldn't afford borrowing money on the capital market (against a favourable interest rate), because the result of that would be more unrest of the financial markets (Bruinshoofd & Kamalodin, 2013). However, financial institutions going bankrupt would have the same effect. Because of this prisoners' dilemma, the EU came to the rescue.

Financial support for financially instable member states

As a response on the Eurozone crisis, the EU created in 2010 a temporary fund, the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), to fight the acute problems threatening the stability in the Eurozone. This fund consisted of an amount of 750 billion euros, and was made available by the EU, the European Commission, and the IMF (PDC, 2021). After it turned out that only financial support for acute problem wasn't going to be enough, The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) was created to replace the EFSF. The ESM was a permanent emergency fund that became operational in October 2012 and had a value of 500 billion euros, from which the Netherlands has paid 4,6 billion euros and guarantees for another 35,4 billion euros. In order to apply for a loan from this fund strict budgetary reforms were necessary to gain control over the financial position as soon as possible (PDC, 2021).

In total the EFSF provided loans together with the EU and the IMF for Greece containing 141,8 billion euros (ESM, 2021), Portugal received 78 billion (ESM, 2021), and Ireland received 67,5 billion (ESM,

2021). The ESM gave loans to Greece (€61,9 billion) and Spain (€41,3 billion) from 2012 onwards (ESM, 2021). Based on these numbers alone, it is clear that Greece was suffering the most under the Eurozone crisis. Therefore, the Greek situation is explained in further detail to get a better idea why it was necessary for the EU to help these countries through the crisis.

Greece

After the instalment of a new cabinet in Greece in October 2009, the new minister of finance revealed that his predecessors have lied about the national budget deficit, which was in fact 12,7% of the GDP instead of the 3,7% that was communicated before. By causing uncertainty about the financial position of the country, the value of Greek government bonds dropped rapidly. The increasing interests on Greek government bonds resulted in the fact that the Greek national debt increased rapidly as well, from 109,4% of the GDP in 2008 to 175,2% of the GDP in 2011 (Trading Economics, 2020), making the likelihood of Greece going bankrupt even larger (PDC, 2021).

The Greek situation harmed the general trust in the Euro, harming the stability of the shared currency. Other member states feared a domino effect, given the fact that there were more 'weak' Euro countries that could end up in the same situation. Greece itself only contributed a small part to the total economy of the EU, but when other member states would follow the Greek example, it could have a disastrous effect for the Eurozone and the EU as a whole. Therefore, the EU and the IMF agreed in 2010 on a rescue plan for Greece, totalling 109 billion euros consisting of loans of the IMF and the EU. In 2011, Greece even asked and received an additional loan against a low interest rate and an interest rate deduction of the first package of loans.

In return the Greek government needed to make heavy budget cuts, and report four times a year about the financial householding of the country. As a consequence of this, unemployment rates increased to 28% (youth unemployment even to more than 60%), pensions were being cut and the wages in the public sector decreased on average by 15%. This caused great dissatisfaction under the Greek population and explained why in 2015 Greek left radical party Syriza won the elections. Later that year, the financial support for Greece of the EFSF ended, meaning that Greece needed to be able to

6.2 The COVID-19 crisis

In the second quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a large impact on social lives and economies in the EU. In order to stop the spread of the virus, all member states have implemented different restrictions limiting the average amount of social contacts per person. As a most rigorous measure, member states have announced lock-downs, in which in principle people were forced to stay inside their homes and only allowed to leave for a hospital visit or to do grocery shopping. All of these measures have had a great impact on the EU economies. In figure 6, the decrease in GDP is visible as the result of the COVID-19 impact:

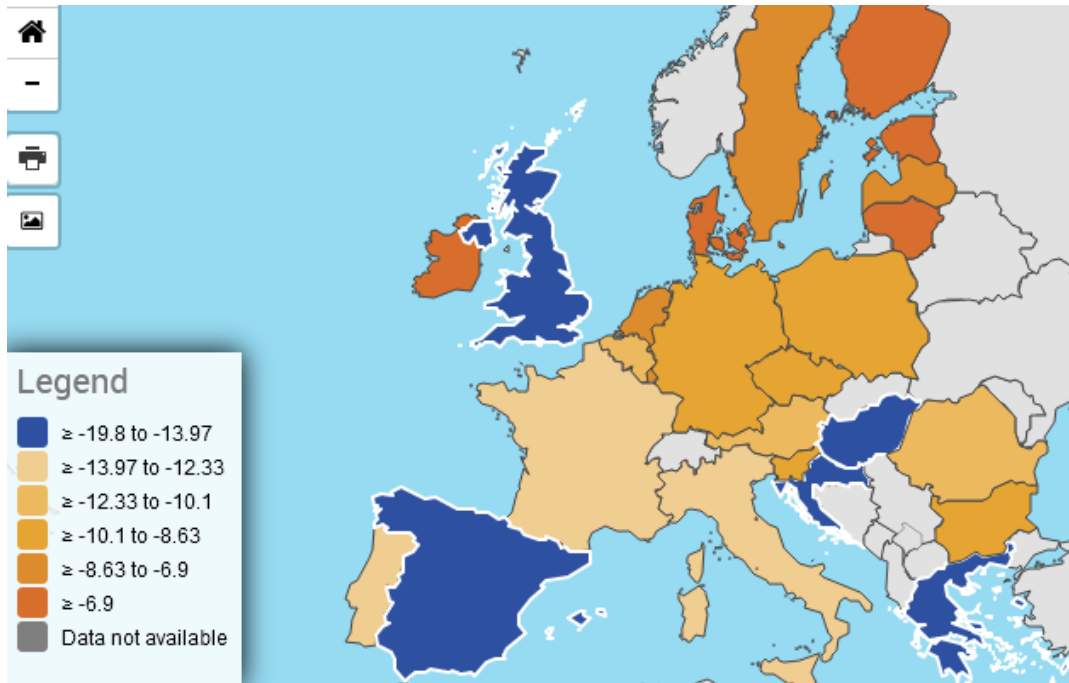


Figure 6: Decrease in GDP as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in quarter 2 of 2020 in percentages (Eurostat, 2021).

The most damage has occurred in the economies of Spain, Croatia, Greece, Hungary and the UK. For most countries this can be explained because their economies rely for a large part on sectors where the physical presence of people is vital, such as in the tourism sector (Dullien, Theobald, Tober, & Watt, 2020). Foreign tourists stayed home, companies lost a large part of their customer group, and many jobs in the tourism industry disappeared. In April 2020, the EU started to interfere to prevent a new financial crisis in the EU from happening. As is shown in figure 7, the EU made more than 4 trillion euros available to do this:

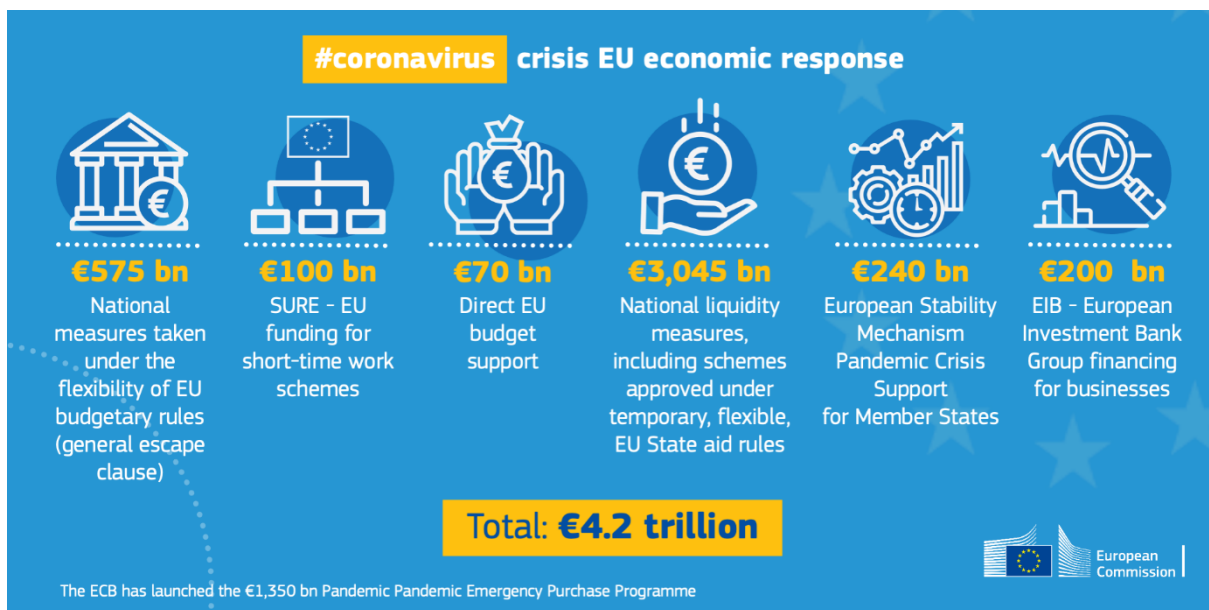


Figure 7: EU financial support to deal with direct consequences of the pandemic (European Commission, 2021).

Looking at the numbers presented above alone, it might give the impression that after this financial support should be sufficient for most member states to deal with the direct consequences of the pandemic, and support their businesses and working population. Nevertheless, the disadvantage of the financial support as illustrated above consisted of loans. Taking in mind, that several member states also still have to pay back loans for the recovery of the Eurozone crisis, might make their problems for the future only larger.

Therefore, the EU realized after a while that the financial support as given in figure 7 alone was not going to be enough and designed a new recovery fund called Next Generation EU. This fund contained 360 million euros of loans and 390 million euros of grants (European Commission, 2021).

The frugal four

The Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and Denmark were against the proposal for the EU recovery fund. They wanted the COVID-19 recovery fund to consist of only loans and no grants (Schoeller, 2020), and were therefore seen as the ‘frugal four’. Their reason for this was that mostly the southern and eastern member states profited from the recovery fund (Kahn & Peel, 2020), and it doesn’t reward countries that did have the necessary financial buffers in place for possible crisis response (Adler & Roos, 2020).

All of these countries had the option to veto the plan for the recovery fund, meaning that it was vital for the EU to come to a solution with the frugal four (Sedelmeier, 2017). Therefore, the EU made financial compromises with each member state individually, from which all four would benefit (Kahn & Peel, 2020). Furthermore, the frugal four managed to cut the grants in the recovery fund from 500 billion euros to 390 billion euros (Cicchi, Genschel, Hemerijck, & Nasr, 2020), but most importantly they included a clause in which member states that violate basic principles of the rule of law can be excluded from the recovery fund (Schoeller, 2020). Nevertheless, the whole situation resulted in a compromise, but also put the relationships between different member states under pressure. However, it is not clear right now if the new recovery fund suffices for complete recovery for all member states.

6.3 Solidarity between member states

Both the Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 crisis are challenges in which solidarity in the EU is being tested. The response to the migration crisis and matters related to the rule of law, can also be seen as forms of solidarity. However, in the Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 crisis the emphasis lies solely on financials. It is about the fact if wealthier (northern) member states, would contribute some of their welfare to improve the recovery process of the less wealthy (southern) member states. The response itself is a good example of solidarity for the rest of the world but also good for the unity inside the EU. However, not everyone agrees with this. Within every EU member state there are people living that are pro-EU and anti-EU. This is clearly illustrated by Armingeon & Cammer (2018) in figure 8:

	Negative orientation towards the EU	Positive orientation towards the EU
Positive orientation towards the national political system	<i>National sovereignist</i>	<i>Approving</i>
Negative orientation towards the national political system	<i>Detached</i>	<i>Escapist</i>

Figure 8: Orientations towards the national political system and the EU (Armingeon & Canmer, 2018).

In the process of the design of an EU response there are always discussions on transnational level, but also on national level. Within Northern member states, discussions often take place between National Sovereignists against Approving people, while in Southern member states it is often a discussion between

Detached people and Escapists (Adler & Roos, 2020; Kahn & Peel, 2020). In the Dutch case this means that the anti-EU parties should be seen as the National sovereigntists, and the pro-EU parties as the approving. But what does this mean for the solidarity between member states in the EU? Solidarity is national first and decreases with geographical remoteness" (Cicchi, Genschel, Hemerijck, & Nasr, 2020), and the reason why this is the case is because people can't recognize themselves in those situations.

However, the more discussions there are about EU solutions about a certain problem, the more likely it is that people get better informed beyond the borders of their own nation. Whereas, "Solidarity is costly, uneven, and breeds moral hazard" (Cicchi, Genschel, Hemerijck, & Nasr, 2020), the extra awareness that is being created around the solidarity topics, will result in a better understanding of the problems others. And because understanding is the first step to create (more) solidarity (Doreian & Fararo, 1998), more common EU response might lead to increased solidarity.

6.4 Standpoints of the Dutch government

6.4.1 Rutte I (2010-2012)

During the rule of this cabinet, nothing was included in support agreement or the coalition agreement about the ESFS. The Dutch government saw it as a necessary evil, since letting Greece go bankrupt would cause more economic damage. For matters involving the recovery of the Eurozone crisis VVD and CDA couldn't count on the support of PVV, and therefore needed to turn to the opposition parties for support. Often in matters relating the EU, the Dutch government could count on the support of PVDA (Ramakers, *Het parlementaire jaar 2010-2011*, 2011). However, in order to remain in the middle between PVV and PVDA, VVD fraction leader Blok demanded extra reforms for countries that applied for the emergency fund to get their financial situation in order.

This is a repeating pattern that not only applies to VVD but also to CDA. In 2011, this was clearly visible as well, when Greece needed additional loans not to go bankrupt. Finance minister de Jager (CDA) ensured the parliament that Greece would pay back their debts. It was known on beforehand de Jager wouldn't get any support from PVV, and he needed to prove to mostly left opposition parties that the conditions for the next set of loans would not be too strict. But at the same time, he also needed to make a strict statement towards the receiving member states to keep the right wing of CDA and VVD satisfied. Therefore, he wanted insurance companies and pensions funds to substantially contribute to the loans given to Greece. In the end, de Jager got a majority for approval of the Greek loans and the Netherlands guarantees for an amount of 98 billion euros for Greece.

PVV, the most rigorous opponent of this plan blamed VVD and CDA heavily for supporting it. Therefore, on the 21st of April they used it as the primary reason not approve the new budgetary proposal of the cabinet. Because budget cuts needed to made, the plan was to lower the income of the retired people. This was the breaking point for Geert Wilders. "We can't approve a plan in which our retired people need to pay the bills for Brussels". And based upon this argumentation, PVV made sure that the cabinet Rutte I fell.

6.4.2 Rutte II (2012-2017)

In the coalition agreement of Rutte II again some strict statements have been taken up concerning the receiving member states. They allow countries to take loans when they get their budgets in order, and strengthen their economy. The financial support that member states receive that show insufficient progress should be stopped. It can't be that member states do take responsibility and have their financial situation in order, should structurally pay for other member states that don't take their responsibility.

Furthermore, the coalition agreement states that the Dutch government is in favour that 'under strict conditions' banks could also apply for loans from the ESM (Rijksoverheid, 2012).

Remarkably enough, in the end of 2012 this cabinet already communicated that there is a possibility for remission for (some of) the loans given out to Greece (RTL nieuws, 2012). The new finance minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem (PVDA) said that there is a large risk that the financial support to Greece is going to cost the Netherlands money, in contradiction to his predecessor de Jager. This would be a doom scenario for VVD, who were together with CDA responsible for lending the money to Greece. This made the debate in 2015 about a possible third set of loans not easier, especially because Mark Rutte had promised in the election campaign not spend any euro more on the recovery of Greece (RTL nieuws, 2012). However, in 2015 Rutte needed to admit that he couldn't keep that promise because of the necessary third package of loans for Greece which would increase the amount of money that Greece indirectly borrows for the Netherlands, making the consequences of when Greece would go bankrupt even larger (Zuidervaat, 2015).

The opposition showed a lot of criticism on this point. Not only because of the new pack of loans and the fact that Rutte broke his promise not to give any more funds to Greece, but also because of the fact that Greece blackmailed the EU by holding a referendum to see if the Greek population was in favour of the strict conditions regarding a third set of loans. By doing this, the Greek governments showed that they were holding a strong mandate to say no to the strict conditions the EU demanded for a new set of loans (le Clerq, 2015). The criticism of the entire opposition lies them mostly in the fact that Greece was in need of much more financial support, than was communicated on beforehand. Therefore, many political parties have difficulty with approving the new Greek demands, and there are even political parties, PVV, SGP, ChristenUnie, and 50plus, in favour of a 'Grexit' at this point (Ramakers, 2015).

After the summer recess, the Dutch parliament needed to vote on the matter. Once more Mark Rutte was blamed by the entire opposition that he had won the 2012 elections based on the lie of spending not one single euro anymore on the recovery of Greece. Nevertheless, D66 did support the cabinet during the vote, which enabled the cabinet to approve the new package of loans for Greece (Ramakers, 2015).

6.4.3 Rutte III (2017-2021)

During the time of Rutte III, the issues related to the Eurozone crisis vaguely started to disappear. In the coalition agreement, there was still the strong tone that no debts will be taken over by other member states. The Dutch cabinet was of the opinion that when a member state comes into financial problems now, such as an unaffordable state debt, obligation holders and investors should pay the bill and the costs of the restructuring of their economy. Because of this, the chance for an application for the ESM will be narrowed down. Furthermore, the coalition agreement states that the EU shouldn't become a common debt community. The EU should not become a 'transfer union', also not by implementing a form of Eurobonds (Rijksoverheid, 2017).

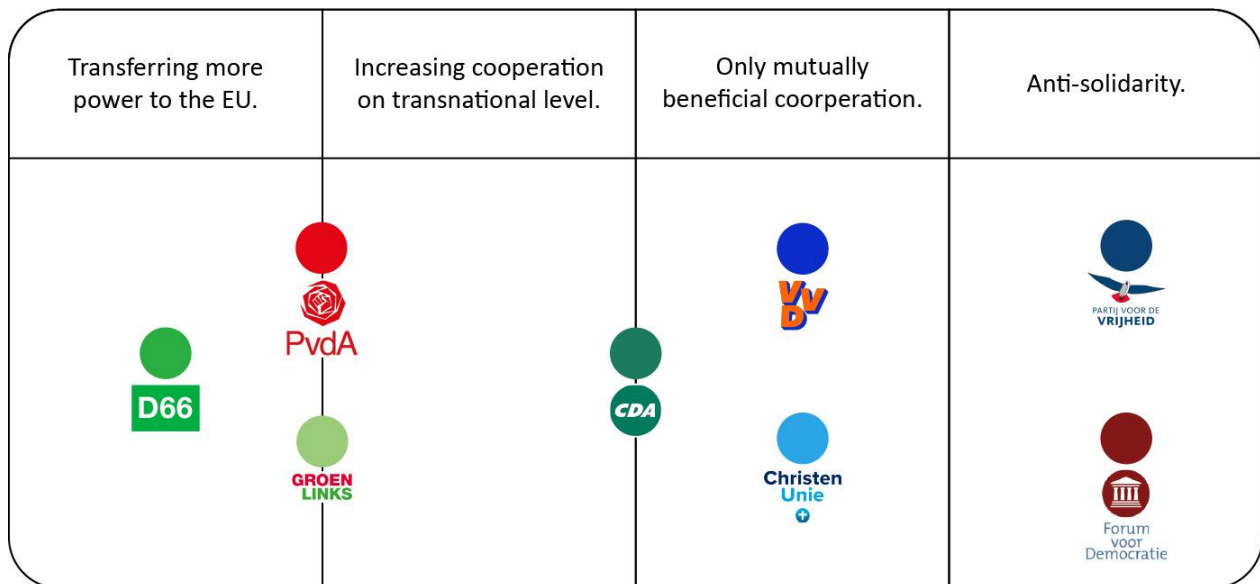
Especially the last quote is interesting, because a form of Eurobonds is exactly what the EU wanted to implement to fight the COVID-19 crisis. As mentioned before, The Netherlands was part of the frugal four, and because Rutte was the prime minister of the largest country of the frugal four, he was often seen at the captain of the team (Keultjes, 2020). The Dutch government was against grants to be taken up in the EU recovery fund. They saw it as a pity if the EU negotiations fail because of the standpoint of the Dutch government, but were willing to give in. PVV even demanded Rutte to speak out his veto straight away, because "Dutch people shouldn't have to pay for increasing the wages of the healthcare in France". Forum even said that it was disguised attempt for levelling financial differences in the EU (Kieskamp, 2020).

This in contradiction to PVDA, GroenLinks, and D66, that said that the Dutch government has asked enough critical questions and should approve the fact that grants were included (Kieskamp, 2020).

After Rutte received representatives of Spain, Portugal and Italy, to speak about reforms in their economy (Kieskamp, 2020), they came to a compromise in which the amount of grants will be lowered, and in which countries that violate the rule of law can be excluded from the recovery fund. In July 2020, it became official and the recovery fund was approved (Keultjes, 2020). According to Rutte it is a one-time deal, which is necessary for the recovery of the EU economy as a whole. He sees it as a good gesture of solidarity from the member states that not necessarily need recovery fund, but he also underlines that solidarity has two sides. The Netherlands provides funds, in return they ask reforms in other economies in order to be better prepared for a next crisis (van Assen, 2020).

6.5 Overview of the Political parties

Below here, the standpoints of the political parties are given about solidarity in the EU between different member states. As well as in the previous two chapters, a position on the line between two options indicates that this specific party takes a standpoint that is in between the two options.



Scale 5: Standpoints towards solidarity in the EU between different member states (PVDA, 2021; GroenLinks, 2021; D66, 2021; VVD, 2021; CDA, 2021; PVV, 2021; FVD, 2021; ChristenUnie, 2021).

Anti-EU parties

As could be expected, the anti-EU parties were not in favour EU solidarity as has been done in the Eurozone crisis and COVID-19 crisis. In 2010, they were already not in favour of the loans to Greece (PVV, 2010). In their 2012 party program they were asking themselves where the EU and Greece were when the ABN AMRO and other Dutch banks were close to bankruptcy? Was there back then an emergency fund for the Netherlands? Of course not. PVV claims that the essence of the EU dream is that our money is flowing eastwards or southwards and non the other way around (PVV, 2012). Wilders even went to court and filed a motion of distrust against finance minister de Jager, but both attempts failed to succeed (Ramakers, 2011). Regarding the COVID-19 recovery fund, PVV is also very clear. "Mark Rutte has put his signature under a 'megalomaniac' EU budget with a recovery fund of €1850 billion. The Dutch tax payer will pay

€100 billion of that. Why should we give billions to countries as Italy and Greece? Let them hold their pants themselves!" (PVV, 2021).

Forum sees it as an absolute scandal that the failed EU dream is being kept alive at the cost of the Dutch wallet, while Southern member states are being destroyed by it (FVD, 2017). The COVID-19 recovery fund is being seen as tool to cover up the failures of the monetary union. The recovery fund redistributes €750 billion, and makes the Netherlands a cash withdrawal machine for the rest of the EU (FVD, 2021). From statements such as this, it is clear that PVV and FVD both share equal standpoints when it comes to solidarity in the EU. Both parties are afraid that the Netherlands is being used as a cash cow for other member states. They leave little room for a different interpretation. Both parties also underline in their most recent party programs that it would be the best for the Netherlands to leave the euro and the EU (PVV, 2021; FVD, 2021).

Pro-EU parties

The pro-EU parties take a more social standpoint towards the solidarity issues in the EU. All party programs mention that all member states should get their financial situation in order, but all parties are also aware of the fact that Netherlands thanks most of their welfare to the EU (D66, 2012; GroenLinks, 2012; PVDA, 2012). D66 does this in the most concrete way claiming that the costs for the EU per Dutchmen are €230 but that the income that the EU generates per Dutchmen is €1750 (D66, 2012). Concrete, it means that the different parties agree on the fact that the EU helps member states that face bankruptcy (D66, 2012; GroenLinks, 2012; PVDA, 2012).

Not only do they support that, they are also in favour of expending the common budgets for the EU, to generate more common welfare and sustainable development. Each party has their own vision on how to realise this. D66 claims that governments that are not able to pay off their debt, debt restructuring should be possible. This would mean in concrete terms, that several loans might not be paid back, but it puts an end to a long period of uncertainty, and allows the EU to move on. For the future D66 sees Eurobonds as a solution to prevent financial disasters in certain member states (D66, 2012).

GroenLinks wants the ESM to be expended to fight two crises with same approach. They want extra conditions regarding sustainable development, for countries that apply for loans at the ESM. They want them not only use the money for structural financial solution, but also for the use of a sustainable reform of their economies (GroenLinks, 2012; GroenLinks, 2017). PVDA lies the emphasis on a common EU growth fund. They are in favour of the ESM but they think that it has its shortcomings (Ramakers, 2011). PVDA thinks that common wealth in the EU can be created by designing a common growth fund similar to the ESM, where countries with an unemployment rate higher than 5% can apply for long-term investments. Investments such as this but also future crisis response can also be done via Eurobonds according to PVDA. According to them it is the ideal way to enlarge the financial stability within the Eurozone (PVDA, 2012; PVDA, 2017). Besides this, PVDA is the only party that aims for easier and more transparent conditions for countries that are looking for financial support, to make countries not suffer under the financial aid but profit from it (PVDA, 2017). D66 does mention something related to this as well, but they are more in favour of an EU emergency response team that has a plan ready if another crisis appears (D66, 2017).

Looking to the EU recovery fund, it again underlines that D66, GroenLinks, and D66 share a similar solidarity standpoint. They are in favour of common solution to deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic (D66, 2021; GroenLinks, 2021; PVDA, 2021). Ironically enough, the COVID-19 crisis made sure that the aim of a common investment fund of the three pro-EU parties became reality, since the

largest part of recovery fund can be used to boost the most damaged economies in the EU again. As D66 described in 2012, the ‘we versus them’ thinking has been thrown overboard (D66, 2012), and resulted in a strong EU response on the consequences of the pandemic. Although D66 goes a little further in their standpoints of solidarity than GroenLinks and PVDA, it may be noted that all three parties have done great effort to realise the Dutch participation in the EU recovery fund (Keultjes, 2020).

Moderate parties

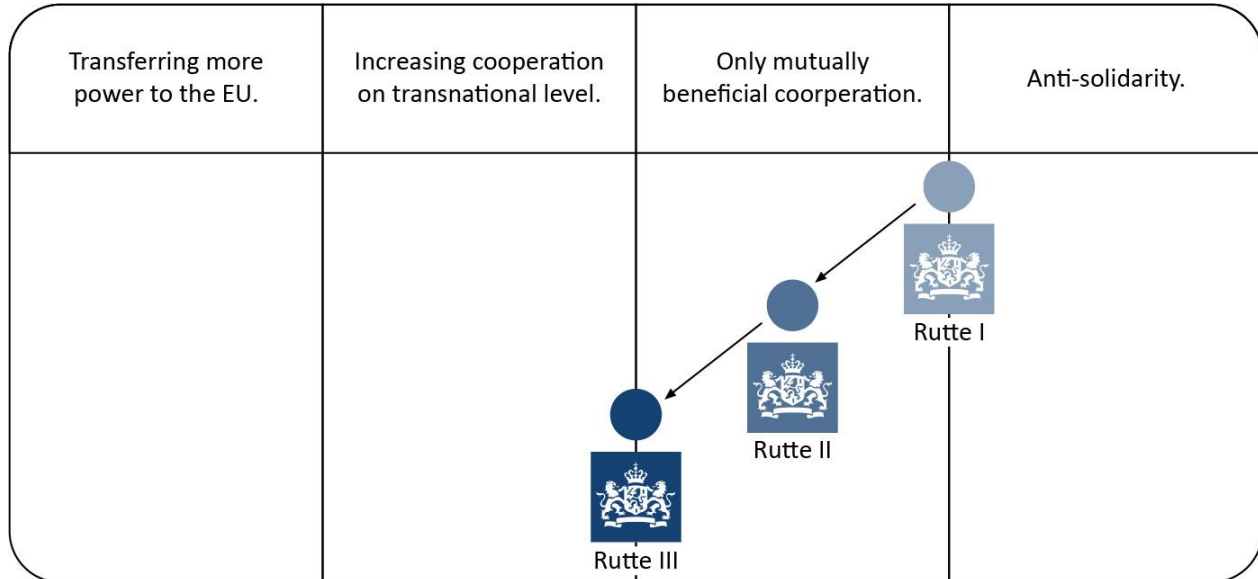
VVD has always seen the EU as tool that cooperation between sovereign member states improves, and doesn’t want to make any moves in the direction of a supranational state (VVD, 2012). CDA and ChristenUnie have a similar vision, but they are less outspoken about it. VVD zooms in, in its party program on the costs of the EU, for which the Dutch contribution needs to be decreased. Nevertheless, they do see that the EU response to the Eurozone crisis was necessary to prevent further financial damage, also for the Netherlands (VVD, 2017). They can’t express it often enough that VVD is of the opinion that every member state should keep up their own pants when it comes to their financial situation. Agreements are at the core of European collaboration, and therefore they need to be honoured (VVD, 2017).

VVD sees the importance of the ESM, but also feels uncomfortable with countries refusing to pay back loans such as Greece. They even felt blackmailed by Italy during the COVID-19 crisis (Keultjes, 2020). Therefore, there is often the call from within the party for sanctions against those countries (VVD, 2017). CDA often support those calls from VVD, but their tone is often less strict (CDA, 2012). Where VVD is complaining in their party programs often how expensive VVD is, CDA comes concrete ideas how to get the most out of the EU as it is. Examples of this are: increasing sanctions budget disciplines, create a stronger independency of the ECB, more EU control on banks and financial markets, and active policy to increase the economic strength of weaker economic member states (CDA, 2012).

The ChristenUnie is also in favour of a decrease in Dutch contribution to the EU (ChristenUnie, 2012). Similar to VVD, they want to go back to the basics of the EU, and doesn’t see any future in transferring more power to Brussels, and to a more project-based structure (ChristenUnie, 2017). Also, they were in favour of dealing with the Eurozone crisis collectively, but they were against creating a permanent EU solution for crisis situation, the ESM (Ramakers, 2011). Furthermore, Eurobonds is something that ChristenUnie doesn’t like to see happening in the EU (ChristenUnie, 2021), which is completely in line with the visions of CDA and VVD during Rutte III. Nevertheless, in the COVID-19 crisis they all saw no other option.

6.6 Changes in standpoints by the Dutch government

Below here, the positions of the three different governments are given towards EU solidarity. The positions of Rutte I and Rutte III are located on the line between two options. As was also the case in the previous scales, this means that the standpoint of that specific cabinet is located somewhere in between those options.



Scale 6: changes in standpoints of the Dutch cabinet towards EU solidarity in the last 10 years.

During Rutte I, the government has been the most anti-solidarity the last 10 years. A poll from Maurice de Hond among the Dutch population stated that a majority of Dutch population (58%) was not in favour of any additional financial support to Greece (Het Parool, 2011). Indirectly because of this and because of pressure of PVV, VVD and CDA needed to sound even more critical on financial support for Greece than was even necessary for the wings of parties. The presence of PVV should not be seen as the reason why the Dutch government's attitude towards loans to other member states was very sceptical, but more as the reason why it became more extreme. The view of VVD and CDA itself was already sceptical, in which VVD expressed themselves most clearly. Nevertheless, both parties agreed with the support of PVDA on the approval of the Greek loans in 2011 and 2012, based upon internal pressure in the Netherlands from the pro-EU side, and also because of pressure of other EU member states. Therefore, the position of Rutte I in scale 6, is located between the sections 'anti-solidarity' and 'only mutual beneficial cooperation'. The Netherlands could by saying no to the Greek loans, shoot itself in their own foot, by letting Greece go bankrupt and having to face negative economic consequences of a possible domino effect of EU member states going bankrupt. As mentioned before, for PVV this was the reason for them let the administration of Rutte I fall.

VVD and CDA felt betrayed, and it had much influence on the Netherlands' EU standpoints. If Geert Wilders would have continued the support for Rutte I, it would have been possible that it never came to negotiations a possible third package of loans to Greece, or a first package to Spain. Instead, VVD, the winner of the 2012 elections, was forced to form a coalition with PVDA. As a result of this, the Dutch government became already a little less sceptical towards new loans to other EU member states.

During Rutte II, a familiar pattern was shown in their policy to the migration crisis in the same period. A strict VVD tone, in which they wanted to send the message across that the Netherlands had done enough to help out other countries. Nevertheless, the urgency of the situation itself combined with the

influence of PVDA (supported by other pro-EU parties) resulted in the fact that the Netherlands did approve the new loans and changed the conditions of the old loans in a favourable way for Greece. Furthermore, also a possible remission for loans of Greece came to the table, something that would have never happened in Rutte I.

Coincident or not, by leaning towards the standpoints of PVDA, VVD follows also on the issue of the Eurozone crises exactly the pattern of what the majority of the people think. In January 2015, 6 out of 10 Dutch people would be in favour of decreasing interest rates of the loans for Greece, or by increasing the period for paying back the loans (Eenvandaag Opiniepanel, 2015). This would ease the pressure on Greece and its population, and is exactly what VVD was 'suddenly' prepared to do. This explains the position of Rutte II in scale 6 in the 'only mutual beneficial cooperation' section.

During Rutte III, it could be stated that the Dutch government has moved towards the solidarity standpoint towards other member states. Looking to the EU recovery fund for dealing with economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, €390 billion of grants have been included against €360 billion of loans. Compared with the economic response to the Eurozone crisis that consisted only out of loans, this is a large step in the development of EU solidarity. The fact that the Dutch government agreed with this, is besides the pressure from other member states, also the influence of D66 who value EU solidarity more than any other party in the Netherlands. Therefore, the standpoint of Rutte III is located in between the 'only mutual beneficial cooperation' section and the 'increasing cooperation on transnational level' section. As is written before, the rest of the coalition partners weren't in favour of the grants included in the recovery fund. Nevertheless, the Dutch government managed (with help of the other countries from the frugal four) to decrease the amount of grants from €500 billion to €390 billion. The majority of the Dutch population (52%) was dissatisfied about the grants (Eenvandaag Opiniepanel, 2020) as well as VVD. This means that VVD has taken for third time the same standpoint as the majority of the Dutch voters in the solidarity section, and indicates that VVD stays close to their original ideas but that there is room for negotiations.

7 Conclusion

In the past five months, I have researched into the influence of pro-EU and anti-EU political parties on the Dutch government's political standpoints towards the EU in the last 10 years. Three topics have been chosen: the migration crisis, violations of the rule of law, and solidarity between EU member states. The reason for choosing these topics is because they had a great impact on international relations in the EU in the past 10 years, demand a common EU solution, and because of changing standpoints of the Dutch government towards each of the three topics.

For this research, multiple party programs, coalition agreements, scientific articles, news articles, and opinion polls, have been read to come to this conclusion. After an explanation of each of the three topics was given, I started summing up important events related to each individual topic based on the annual parliamentary reports of J. Ramakers. Based upon those bullet points, I started to research events that were related to three topics. That is how I did the literature study, and how I came to the chronological overview of events that happened under the three different cabinet periods in the last 10 years. The standpoints of the political parties have been determined by reading their party programs in the last 10 years, and other input has also been given from the parliamentary reports. That is how the different positions of the political parties on the three different topics have been determined in scale 1, 3, and 5. Those scales combined with the different standpoints of the three different coalitions, were the starting point of the analysis that is supposed to provide the answer on the main research question: *What is the influence of the Dutch pro-EU and anti-EU political parties on the Dutch government's political standpoints towards the EU within the last 10 years (2011-2020)?*

In order to answer this question, I dived into the theory of catch-all parties. Catch-all parties are parties that moderate their ideological standpoints in order to be attractive to the majority of the voters that often feel comfortable in the middle of the political spectrum. The reason why this theory is chosen, is because multiple data sources seen a trend of several political parties, moving to the middle of the political spectrum. Especially VVD showed a pattern indicating that they apply the catch-all principle successfully in all three topics that were researched in this study, by giving the median voter the feeling that they moved from the right to the middle of the political spectrum. This is where most compromises in Dutch politics are made, and where the majority of the Dutch voters feels comfortable. The middle of the political spectrum is determined by the flanks of the political spectrum. For the three selected topics in this research, the flanks should be seen as the pro-EU flank and the anti-EU flank. The pro-EU parties and the anti-EU parties were responsible for determining the playing field in which catch-all parties such as VVD can operate successfully.

The limitations for this research lie within the fact that the political parties themselves haven't been asked to give input. Therefore, possible standpoints of political parties can be slightly differently interpreted as they were intended. Nevertheless, all information about the standpoints come directly from party programs that the political parties published themselves the past 10 years. On the other hand, the positive side of this is that political parties didn't get the opportunity to 'spin' or justify their actions, and everything is written down from an objective point of view. A possible point of improvement could be to include more material from debates in the Dutch parliament. However, I only had limited time and limited manpower available to go through all the debates regarding the three topics in the report. If this would have been possible, I am confident that an even more substantiated report would be the result of this research. Nevertheless, given the limitations of time and manpower, I am confident that the report is well underpinned.

In the migration crisis the options the scale ranged from receiving and housing migrants that no other country accepts in the Netherlands to not allowing any migrants in. Rutte I leaned a lot to the side of not allowing any migrants in, because CDA and VVD were sceptical towards the irregular migrants, which was being strengthened by their support of anti-EU party PVV. During the time of the Tunisian wave, the Dutch government didn't show any initiative to release the burden of the Mediterranean shores, and even said that Italy was just unlucky because of their geographical location. The tone and the actions of the cabinet were very strict, but this changed when PVV decided to pull the plug from Rutte I.

As a consequence of PVV turning their back on Rutte I, VVD did not see any other option than to form a coalition with PVDA. A coalition with PVDA resulted in less strict migration policies than in the previous cabinet. The tone was still strict, maybe to make it act as it were a real deterrent, but this government was definitely determined to find a common solution for the migration crisis. Therefore, the Dutch government fully interacted to find a long-term solution to make deals with countries in the region, to organize receiving facilities. However, this did not solve the issue of the migrants that had already arrived at Mediterranean shores. The willingness to do this changed because of the picture of the Syrian boy that washed up to shore. That was the moment that the EU decided to divide the numbers of migrants that were still at the border, and VVD agreed under the pressure of PVDA to take in 7000 people. Although, it could also have to do with fact that a large majority of the Dutch population was in favour fair burden sharing when it came to the divide of the migrants at Mediterranean shores.

During Rutte III, it became clear that the burden sharing principle hasn't been entirely honoured by all member states, including the Netherlands itself. Partly because of that, D66 and ChristenUnie, demanded that the relocation plan to take in 500 refugees per year would be increased to 750. Furthermore, they arranged the relocation of 100 children who were stuck in the camps in Greece, made the new Rutte III move a little more to the left on the scale, where each EU member should take a fair share of migrants from the refugee crisis.

The second topic, the rule of law violations of Hungary and Poland, was completely ignored by cabinet Rutte I. In their defence, the development of Hungary violating the rule only started in 2010. Nevertheless, it took Mark Rutte several years before cabinet Rutte II started criticising the rule of law violations as well. Before that, the EU was doing research into possible violations to the rule of law in Poland and Hungary, but the Dutch prime minister only started criticizing the rule of law violations openly in the last two years of Rutte II. But whereas Mark Rutte decided only to speak out, his PVDA colleague and minister of foreign affairs, was already in favour of sanctions.

After the 2017 elections, the media intentions increased related to violations of the rule of law in Eastern Europe. VVD and CDA, suddenly moved from being critical to threatening with the article 7 procedure, in other words: administrative actions. This was some time after the pro-EU actions already wanted administrative sanctions, and tried to arrange this via the EU. Nevertheless, their attempt failed because Hungary and Poland used their veto, blocking the article 7 procedure. This made the move of VVD and CDA to call for strict administrative sanctions very remarkable, since there was not much sense in making a new attempt. The only explanation for this is because they wanted say what the median voter wanted to hear. The call from pro-EU parties to ask for financial sanctions was more realistic, and Rutte made this happen by including extra conditions for the EU COVID-19 recovery fund, that were aimed against the rule of law violations.

The third topic, solidarity between EU member states, was something were cabinet Rutte I was sceptical about. They didn't have the support from anti-EU party PVV for giving loans to Greece, so they needed to deals with pro-EU opposition. VVD and CDA themselves were not in favour of it, but saw it as a

necessary evil. If the Netherlands would decline, there would a possibility that Greece would go bankrupt, resulting in a larger economic recession. Therefore, they agreed with the loans, which was in 2012 the reason that Geert Wilders chose let cabinet Rutte I fall.

And similar to the situation in the migrant crisis, Wilders did not do himself a pleasure, because VVD and CDA didn't want to go in a coalition with PVV again, resulting in a coalition Rutte II with a more solidary view on the EU. Nevertheless, Rutte II still expressed strict tone and remained critical when new loans were asked by other member states. However, the actions definitely became more solidary in Rutte II than in Rutte I, by offering better conditions to member states that borrowed money from the Dutch state and leaving the option of debt remission open. Remarkably enough, 6 of 10 Dutch people were in favour of better terms and conditions for the Greek loans, and again VVD made this happen.

During Rutte III, when the negotiations for the COVID-19 recovery fund took place, VVD, CDA, and ChristenUnie, were not in favour of grants being included, as well as 52% of the Dutch population. Even though, after some difficult negotiations and some internal pressure of D66 and other pro-EU parties, a compromise was made. This is again the repeating story that VVD represents majority of the Dutch voting population. Therefore, there are lots of clues pointing in the direction that VVD could be seen as a catch-all party. It might the reason why they have won the election four times in a row now. But what is the influence of the Dutch pro-EU and anti-EU political parties on the Dutch government's political standpoints towards the EU within the last 10 years (2011-2020)?

The pro-EU parties and the anti-EU parties determine the limits of the playing field in which the Dutch government operates. The Dutch political landscape is ideal for a catch-all party such as VVD to operate in. In all three topics, the same general pattern appears. VVD takes in a certain (right wing) standpoint, but once they find out that the majority of the Dutch population has an alternative opinion, VVD takes a step towards the alternative opinion. In reality this is often a very small step, and has more the looks of a symbolic gesture, than a resolute action to compromise the alternative opinion.

Other moderate parties such as CDA and ChristenUnie also follow a similar pattern, but they are by far not as successful as VVD. Nevertheless, they have ended up in one or two of the past three governments as well, and are likely to do so in the future. Looking to the past four election results, it is crystal clear that the Dutch elections are very likely to be won by catch-all parties. Therefore, it could be seen as a valuable strategy to be adopted by other Dutch parties as well. As mentioned before, Langbroek (2017) claimed that D66 already had shown characteristics of a catch-all party, with a less ideological program and a more pragmatic look on politics, which could possibly explain the reason behind their success in the 2021 elections. However, to draw that conclusion, further research is necessary because this conclusion cannot be drawn over a period of four years. Nevertheless, D66 has a good strategic position and if they would choose to adapt their strategy (even more) in line of a catch-all party, they have the potential to win the next Dutch elections.

Catch-all theories could be seen as a popular topic in literature more than 20 years ago, but it is very relevant in Dutch politics nowadays. Following the middle road in the political spectrum, has turned out to be the election winning course in the Netherlands, which is a fact that is not mentioned in political literature explicitly, but can be easily concluded by looking at the election results of the past 10 years alone. It would be highly recommended to other political parties to adapt their strategies to the catch-all principle. If they refuse to do this, and the political landscape stays the same consisting from the same pro-EU, anti-EU, and moderate parties, nobody can be surprised that VVD, the moderate party that applies the catch-all principle as the best, will win the next elections again.

Appendices

Appendix A: Greek statistics about the inflow of migrants

Previous years	Sea arrivals	Land arrivals	Dead and missing
2020	9,714	5,982	102
2019	59,726	14,887	71
2018	32,494	18,014	174
2017	29,718	6,592	59
2016	173,450	3,784	441
2015	856,723	4,907	799
2014	41,038	2,280	405

(The Operational Data Portal, 2021)

Appendix B: Italian statistics about the inflow of migrants

Previous years	Sea arrivals	Dead and missing
2020	34,154	955
2019	11,471	754
2018	23,370	1,311
2017	119,369	2,873
2016	181,436	4,578
2015	153,842	2,913
2014	170,100	3,093

(The Operational Data Portal, 2021)

Appendix C: Spanish statistics about the migrant inflow

Previous years	Sea arrivals*	Land arrivals	Dead and missing**
2020	40,326	1,535	329
2019	26,168	6,345	510
2018	58,569	6,814	811
2017	22,103	6,246	202
2016	8,162	6,443	77
2015	5,312	11,624	59

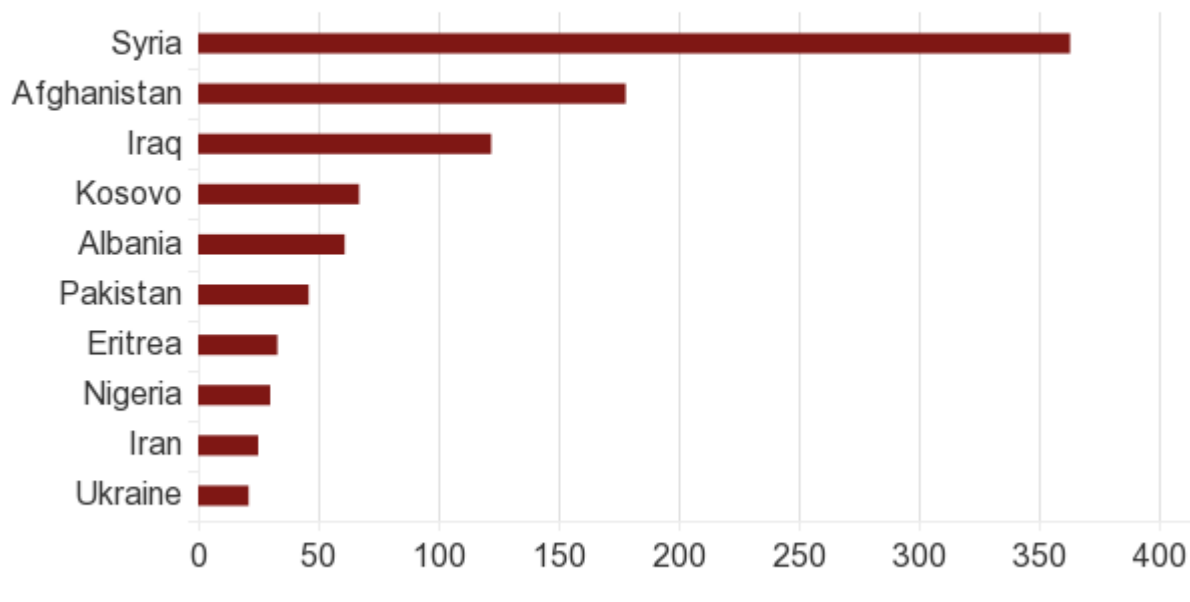
* Including the sea arrivals to Canary Islands. Data are as of 31 December 2020. ** Incidents occurred along the Canary Islands route are not included.

(The Operational Data Portal, 2021)

Appendix D: Origins of migrants going to Greece or Italy in the first 9 months of 2015

Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU


First-time applications in 2015, in thousands



Source: Eurostat

(BBC, 2016)

Appendix E: E-mail conversation with EU communication spokeswoman Ciara Bottomley

 **Ramon Melis** <r.melis@student.utwente.nl>
to ciara.bottomley

Apr 20, 2021, 3:21 PM (5 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Mrs Bottomley,


I am a master student at the University of Twente, and I am writing my master thesis at the moment. I was curious if the new pact has already been examined by parliament yet, and if not, when is this going to happen?

You would be a great help if you could let me know.

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,

Ramon Melis

 **BOTTOMLEY Ciara**
to me

Apr 23, 2021, 5:00 PM (2 days ago) ☆ ↶ ⋮

Hey Ramon,

Negotiations in the both the Parliament and the Council are ongoing. Rapporteurs have been appointed in the EP. Work on the technical level is ongoing with regard to the internal dimension of migration. The Blue Card Directive negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council are already at an advanced stage.

On the political level, there was wide support for the Pact proposals relating to the external dimension of migration at the recent meeting of Foreign and Home Affairs Ministers (in March). All Ministers supported developing comprehensive and tailor-made partnerships with key countries of origin, transit and destination, using all the necessary policy instruments available, including on matters of return and readmission, full implementation of the new Visa Code, opportunities for legal migration and funding.

The Commission is now working with Member States on the follow up to the first report assessing third countries' level of cooperation on readmission.

Hope this helps as a brief state of play?

All the best,

Ciara

xxx

Appendix F: Results of national Dutch elections between 2006 and 2017

Partijen	2006 ⁱ	2010 ⁱ	2012 ⁱ	2017 ⁱ
CDA ⁱ	41	21	13	19
PvdA ⁱ	33	30	38	9
SP ⁱ	25	15	15	14
VVD ⁱ	22	31	41	33
PVV ⁱ	9	24	15	20
GroenLinks ⁱ	7	10	4	14
ChristenUnie ⁱ	6	5	5	5
D66 ⁱ	3	10	12	19
SGP ⁱ	2	2	3	3
PvdD ⁱ	2	2	2	5
50PLUS ⁱ	-	-	2	4
DENK ⁱ	-	-	-	3
FvD ⁱ	-	-	-	2

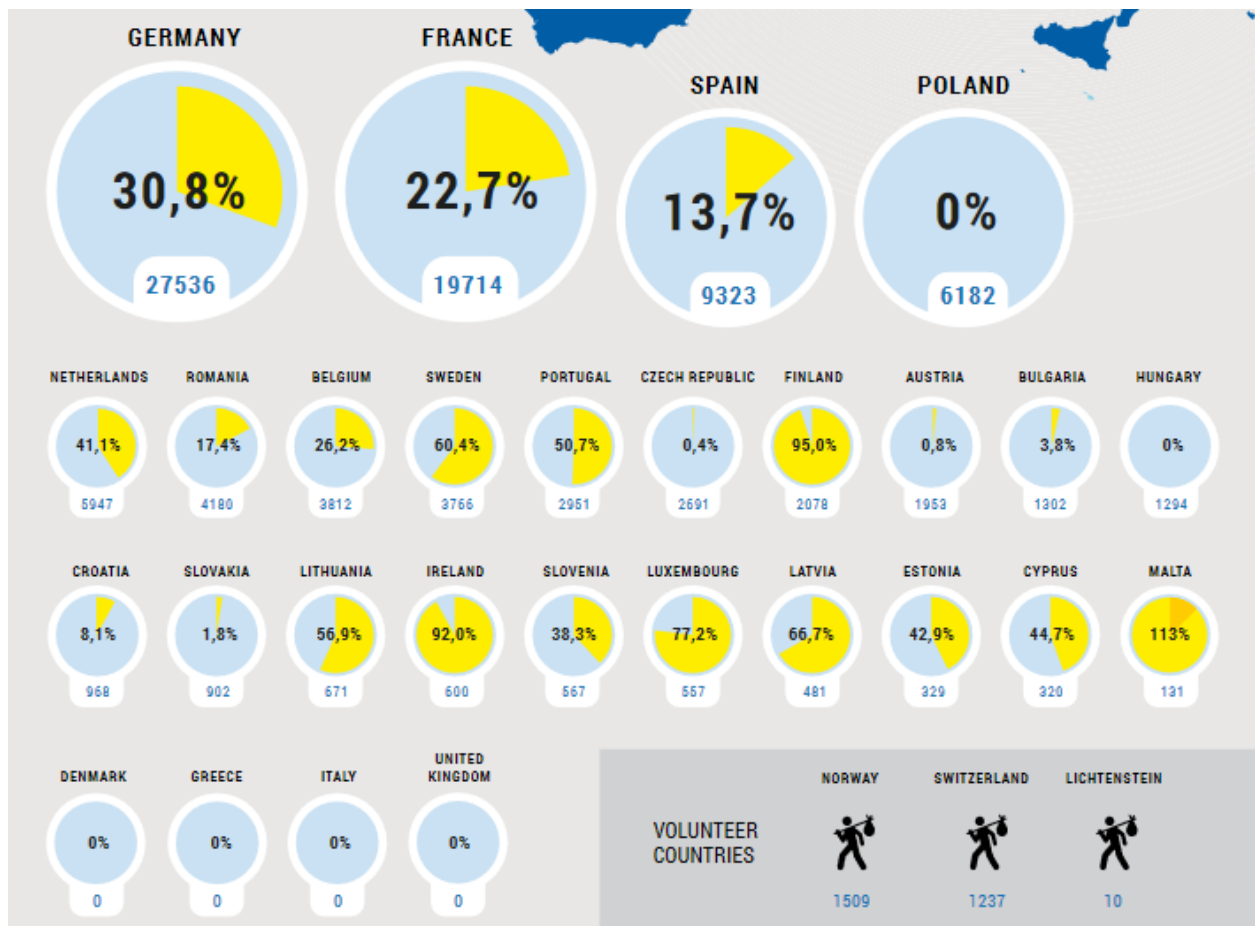
(PDC, 2021)

Appendix G: Number of seats per political party in the Dutch senate

Partijen	2019 ⁱ	2015 ⁱ	2011 ⁱ	2007 ⁱ
CDAⁱ	9	12	11	21
PvdAⁱ	6	8	14	19
VVDⁱ	12	13	16	14
GroenLinksⁱ	8	4	5	4
SPⁱ	4	9	8	12
D66ⁱ	7	10	5	2
ChristenUnieⁱ	4	3	2	4
SGPⁱ	2	2	1	2
OSFⁱ	1	1	1	1
PvdDⁱ	3	2	1	1
50PLUSⁱ	2	2	1	-
PVVⁱ	5	9	10	-
FvDⁱ	12	-	-	-

(PDC, 2021)

Appendix H: Allocation of irregular migrants decided by the EU vs actual allocation of irregular migrants



(Šabić, 2017)

Appendix I: VVD potential in the Dutch political spectrum

	2006	2010	2012	2017	2021
CDA	41	21	13	19	15
PVDA	33	30	38	9	9
SP	25	15	15	14	9
VVD	22	31	41	33	34
PVV	9	24	15	20	17
GL	7	10	4	14	8
CU	6	5	5	5	5
D66	3	10	12	19	24
SGP	2	2	3	3	3
PvdD	2	2	2	5	6
50PLUS			2	4	1
DENK				3	3
FVD				2	8
JA21					3
VOLT					3
BBB					1
BIJ1					1
Total:	150	150	150	150	150
Left parties:	67	57	59	45	36
Middle parties:	50	36	32	47	49
right parties:	11	26	18	25	31
Total:	128	119	109	117	116

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