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MA Thesis

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**The Public Communication of the Estonian Government  
Regarding the Refugee Crisis in 2015: Discourse  
Analytical Approach**

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## Abstract

### **The Public Communication of the Estonian Government Regarding the Refugee Crisis in 2015: Discourse Analytical Approach**

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The aim of the MA thesis was to analyse the public communication of the Estonian government regarding the refugee crisis in 2015, namely whether the government has taken an active or passive role in the communication and which societal impacts the communication would have. More than one million refugees arriving by sea to EU during 2015 challenged the European unity and the solidarity in many ways. In Estonian society, the increasing polarization caused by the opinions regarding the refugee crisis has put the government under the pressure of different interest groups.

The discourse analysis of the government press releases and the news articles revealed the following:

The reaction of the government during the first months of the crisis was critical towards the allocation of refugees and the general communication was inconsistent. After the allocation was decided in July, the position of the government turned favorable towards solidarity with EU and the refugees. At the same time, those groups who oppose the allocation were depicted rather in a negative way from the end of July onwards. From the results one can conclude that the government took over the position of the EU and presented it to the domestic audience in a rational way. One can speculate that the initial passiveness of the communication such as the sudden change in the position makes the refugee problem distant for an ordinary person and might increase the distrust towards the government. In addition, one can speculate that not forming a position towards certain events could trigger off misconceptions in the society which in the later phase are harder to overcome.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth in the number of refugees crossing the borders of the European Union (EU) during 2015 have challenged many of the fundamental principals the EU is built on: solidarity, respect of human dignity, justice etc. Because of the unexpectedly big number of asylum seekers, many countries could not afford to accomodate them in their territories anymore. The biggest burden has fallen on the countries on the southern border of EU, mainly Hungary, Italy and Greece, which are mostly just the transit countries for the refugees on their way to wealthier EU member states. Additionally, countries, which previously were out of the main migrant routes, such as the Baltic states, have become more and more influenced by the crisis, since the wealthier member states, who receive the majority of the asylum seekers, have started calling for the resettlement of the refugees across EU.

Media has had a crucial role as well in shaping the way how the refugee crisis is perceived around Europe. The images all over the media about tragic accidents, which have happened with the refugees on their way to Europe, have called several governments into action to express solidarity with the refugees. On the other hand, governments in the Central and Eastern Europe have expressed more cautious up to hostile position towards letting more refugees into their countries. Estonia has maintained very conservative policy line towards the refugees and asylum seekers after the re-independence in 1991. However Estonia, as being part of EU, is inevitably influenced by the developments in the EU level as well. Moreover, the public opinion within the country is also not uniform and the opinions regarding the refugee crisis vary. The government in this regard is in the turmoil between the domestic opinion and the and escalating crisis in Europe, which calls the member states for joint actions to tackle the crisis.

The aim of the following MA thesis is to study the public communication of the Estonian government during the refugee crisis in 2015 and to assess the role the government has taken in the communication with the public. The thesis is structured as following: the first

chapter describes the background of the refugee crisis: the asylum statistics within EU and among the member states, the position of the European Commission, the Estonian government and the public opinion in Estonia regarding the refugee crisis. The chapter three introduces the theoretical framework, which is based on Christopher Pierson's concept of the modern state's functions, which he states in his book "The Modern State" (2004) and Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory, which is based on the book "The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (1991). The next chapter focuses on methodology and introduces the approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA based on Norman Fairclough, the analysis scheme and the research questions.

The next chapter introduces the selection of the sample. For the analysis, the press releases of the government and the articles from the newspapers Postimees, SL Õhtuleht and Eesti Päevaleht will be used, where the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Foreign Minister take a position about the refugee crisis. The thesis focuses on the time period starting from the 19/04/2015 up to 06/10/2015. The selection of the sample and the time frame will be further discussed in the chapter five.

The next chapter represents the results and the following chapter presents the conclusions and discussions based on the results. The final chapter concludes the MA thesis.

The selection of the topic is motivated mainly by the personal experience of the author. Making an internship in a human rights organisation in Budapest during summer 2015, working daily with the refugees in the Keleti Pályaudvar railway station, which was the hotspot of the crisis in 2015 and being a witness for some of the most crucial events during the refugee crisis in 2015, the author understands the significance of the crisis and the way how the lack of a proper communication from a government can worsen the degree of the crisis.

Since the refugee crisis in 2015 is evidently recent, there has not been any considerable research on that. Taavi Eilat has researched the role of the Estonian government and media in a political scandal in his BA thesis (Eilat 2013). Even though the refugee crisis and a political scandal are not directly comparable, Eilat gives an overview how the



government copes with an important issue in the society. Refugee crisis is an event, which influences the society even in a larger scale and has much more far-reaching consequences and thus forming a position in this topic is even a bigger responsibility for the government. Marit Valk and Merle Lust have researched the media representation of immigration in the Estonian newspapers. (Valk 2015, Lust 2015) Both conclude that the media representation of the immigrants has become more positive compared to a decade or even five years ago, also Valk points out the existence of certain stereotypes in the media, such as using immigrants as the “others” in the society. (Valk 2015: 54-74)

Valk finishes her research with 2014 and the current thesis is a temporal continuation for it. Valk also concludes her thesis that further studies could help to evaluate the media's effect on the debate getting more active on other agenda levels as well. (Valk 2015: 91-92) Although analyzing the government's role in the communication is just one part of the discussions about the crisis in media, it is an influential aspect, which amplifies further discussions in the society. Furthermore, the government's position can influence the public opinion and cause a chain of events within the society which has a broader effect.

The thesis aims to find an answer to the question, whether the Estonian government has taken an active or a passive role in the public communication regarding the refugee crisis – based on the theoretical framework, there are several ways the government of a modern state can act in the public communication which at the end influences the way the public perceives the crisis and how successful is the integration of the refugees into the society at the end.

Hereby I would like to thank a lot my supervisor Külliki Seppel, who helped me regarding finding relevant information and assisting in every step of writing the MA thesis. Also I would like to thank Hector Pagan and Louis, who gave valuable feedback to the draft of my thesis.

## 2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

### 2.1. The application statistics in EU

During the past decades, the number of asylum applications in the EU has been fluctuating, having a high point in 1992, when the EU-15 received around 672 thousand asylum applications and in 2001 when the EU-27 received 424 000. The period was followed by a relative stabilization until 2012 and then again, an increase year by year in the asylum applications: in 2013 the EU-28 received 431 000 asylum applications, in 2014 627 000 and in 2015 close to 1.3 million. (Eurostat 02/03/2016)

The main reason for the increasing number of the applications has been the ongoing war in Syria and the invasion of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, which has put the lives of many people in the Middle-East under a substantial threat and increased the number of people escaping from Syria and Iraq. This, on the other hand, has imposed increasing pressure on the overcrowded refugee camps in Turkey, from where the migrants are moving towards EU.<sup>1</sup> This is illustrated by the increase in the first time applications within EU, which was in the EU-28 in 2015 approximately 66 000 (about 5%) less than the entire number of applicants.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, the number of first time asylum applicants from Syria rose to 363 thousand in the EU-28, which was 29% of the total number. Afghanis accounted for 14% of the total number and Iraqis for 10%. (Eurostat 02/03/2016) The number of Syrian refugees has almost tripled in comparison with 2014 and 2015, the number of applicants

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, this has also increased the influx of migrants from other Middle-Eastern and African countries, among whom many are labelled as economic migrants.

<sup>2</sup> A first time applicant in terms of international protection is the one who has given in an application for asylum for the first time in a given EU Member State and therefore does not include repeat applicants in that Member State. Thus a first time applicant is a number, which indicates newly arrived persons applying for international protection in the given Member State. (Eurostat 02/03/2016)

from Iraq has risen almost eight times and the number of applicants from Afghanistan more than four times. (Appendix 1)

Looking closer at the dynamics of the migrants and refugees arriving to EU, one can see a rapid growth since March (Appendix 4), while the number of refugees and migrants arriving by sea to Europe rose by approximately 20,000 compared to April and March 2015, while the total number of migrants and refugees being in May already more than twice bigger than a year ago. The number continued to rise and reached to over 43,000 by June 2015, close to 80,000 in July, exceeded 130,000 in August, 160,000 in September and reached to the peak in October being more than 200,000. (UNHCR 03/2016) All in all it is estimated that during 2015 there were more than 1 million Mediterranean sea arrivals to Europe.

## **2.2. The asylum applications among EU member states**

The rapid increase in the number of the asylum applications has not resulted in even distribution of the applicants among the EU member states. The number of first time asylum applicants in Germany for instance rose from 173 thousand in 2014 to 442 thousand in 2015 (Appendix 2). Hungary, Sweden and Austria have also experienced a substantial increase in the number of the asylum applications. In relative terms, the biggest climb in the number of first time applicants were recorded in Finland (nine times), Hungary (more than four times) and Austria (more than three times). In Belgium, Spain, Germany, Luxembourg, Ireland and Sweden the number of first time asylum applicants has more than doubled during the same time period. By contrast in Romania, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Latvia the first time asylum applicants in 2015 has declined compared to that in 2014. (Eurostat 02/03/2016) In addition, there is a substantial number of migrants, who are not registered at all and thus does not reflect in the official

statistics. So, one can see that the pressure on the EU member states caused by the refugee crisis has been different, which is likely to cause different reactions by the member states.

### **2.3. The Dublin regulation (Dublin system) and its collapse**

The framework, in which the management of the asylum process within the EU member states and its close partners Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein is supposed to work, is defined through the Dublin regulation (EU-No 604/2013), which entered into force in July 2013. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles explains it as following: “The Dublin regulation works predominantly on the basis of family links followed by responsibility assigned on the basis of the State through which the asylum seeker first entered, or the State responsible for their entry into the territory of the EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. The aim of the Regulation is to ensure that one member state is responsible for the examination of an asylum application, to deter multiple asylum claims and to determine as quickly as possible the responsible Member State to ensure effective access to an asylum procedure.” (ECRE 2016)

Although the Dublin Regulation has been a target of criticism already since its foundation, its aim according to many experts has not been to equalize the burden of refugees among EU member states, but rather to assign responsibility for processing an individual asylum application to a single Member State. (Fratzke 2015: 5) However, throughout 2015 the failure of the Dublin system has been accused by many Eastern- and Central-European Member States and beyond on a political level, in media and etc. In June 2015 the Hungarian government announced to the Austrian media they are not able to cope with the immense and uncontrolled influx of migrants into its territory anymore and will suspend the Dublin Regulation. The government spokesman Zoltán Kovács

claimed: “We all wish for a European solution, but we need to protect Hungarian interests and our population.” (Euractive 06/2015) As the crisis escalated rapidly during the summer, the Western-European countries started to also take action in responding to the situation and finding alternatives to the Dublin system. In August, Germany announced that it will suspend the Dublin System for the Syrian refugees (Euractive 08/2015) in order to respond to the entrapment of the refugees in Budapest for days (Appendix 6). In September also the European Council admitted that the Dublin system has collapsed: “A Parliamentary Assembly Migration Committee report claims that the Dublin asylum application system has collapsed and must be reformed urgently.” (Council of Europe 10/09/2015)

## **2.4. The position of the European Commission**

It is difficult to say, when did the understanding on the EU level took place, that Europe is facing one of the biggest crisis in its recent history. However, already since the shipwreck close to Lampedusa, some solution was expected on the EU level and the EC, after realizing that the uncontrolled influx of migrants into Europe is challenging its unity, started to negotiate on a possible mechanism to tackle the crisis. The position of the Commission has been in favour of solidarity among the member states and with the refugees. Already at the end of April the EC reacted with establishing a plan to redistribute the refugees among the member states. On twenty-seventh of May the EC announced the First Implementation Package, which stated: “To trigger for the first time Article 78(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU in order to urgently relocate 40,000 asylum seekers for the benefit of Italy and Greece; a Recommendation for a resettlement scheme for 20,000 persons from outside the EU; an Action Plan on Smuggling; and the necessary amendments to the EU Budget to reinforce the Triton and Poseidon operations at sea so that more lives can be saved.” (EC 27/05/2015) The Second Implementation Package of the EC from September 2015 states further measures to tackle

the crisis: an emergency relocation proposal for 120,000 persons in clear need of international protection from Greece, Hungary and Italy was made.<sup>3</sup> (EC 09/09/2015)

## 2.5. The position of the Estonian Government

The asylum policy of Estonia after the re-independence in 1991 has been strict in comparison to the Western and Northern European countries. According to the yearbook of the Estonian Refugee Council from 2014, giving a protection to someone on the humanitarian basis is not possible according to Estonian legislation. In addition, Estonia has also not given temporary protection to anybody on the basis of a threat, when the person cannot return to his/her country of origin and there is a high probability that the refugee application cannot be proceeded at the moment. (Janson 2015) The legal basis for the latter procedure, however, exists in the Estonian legislation (VRKS, §5). According to the yearbook, the conservative position regarding giving asylum is illustrated also by the recognition percent in the asylum (the percent of the positive decisions among all decisions). While in Estonia the percent in 2014 was 36%<sup>4</sup>, the EU average was 45% and in the countries such as Sweden it was even 77%. (Janson 2015) Already in 2014 the UNHCR called upon States to provide resettlement or other forms of admission for up to 30,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees by the end of 2014, and for an additional

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<sup>3</sup> The Second Implementation package included the following: 1) A crisis relocation mechanism to be added to the Dublin Regulation;  
2) A common European list of Safe Countries of Origin to be created;  
3) Improving the return policy by creating a common Return Handbook and an EU Action Plan on Return;  
4) A Communication on Public Procurement rules for Refugee Support Measures;  
5) Improving the communication on the external dimension of the refugee crisis;  
6) Creating an Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

The package takes into account the population of the member state, its GDP, the average number of past asylum applicants and the unemployment rate. The new regulation states a mandatory distribution model among EU member states (mandatory quotas), which will be agreed among a particular EU member states and the EC taking into account the formentioned criterias.

<sup>4</sup> From the period 1997-2014 Estonia has worked through 614 asylum applications, from which 97 have been positive decisions, while in comparison with 2010 and 2014, the number of asylum applications has risen more than 5 times and in comparison with 2013 and 2014 1.6 times (Janson 2015).

100,000 Syrian refugees through 2016. (UNHCR 2014) However, according to the Estonian Refugee Council, Estonia has been repelling in participating in any of the UNHCR resettlement programs. (Janson 2015)

After the shipwreck in Lampedusa, which prompted EC to direct actions, the member states also had to react and take more concrete positions. According to the First Implementation plan Estonia's share to relocate the refugees was supposed to be 1064 persons, which included the persons relocated from Italy and Greece as the countries most affected by the crisis and those who would be relocated through resettlement from outside of EU. (EC 27/05/2015) After negotiations with the European MI-s the country finally agreed to accept 150 refugees through the first allocation period. (Estonian Government 20/07/2015) According to the second plan, Estonia had to take 373 asylum seekers from Italy, Greece and Hungary, which is added by 150 refugees that Estonia had agreed to accept after the negotiations about the First Implementation Package, since the second Implementation Agenda was additional to the Commission's proposal from May to relocate 40,000 people in clear need of international protection from Italy and Greece to other EU Member States from September. (EC 22/09/2015)

## **2.6. The public opinion in Estonia**

Before 2015 there was no comprehensive research on the public opinion about refugees in Estonia. TNS Emor conducted a survey in November 2015 to evaluate the public opinion in Estonia regarding the refugees and migrants. The results indicated that the 53% of the population claimed that admitting refugees is a threat to Estonian security and should not be done. (TNS Emor 2015)

In general the survey concluded an almost equal distribution of people who saw a threat in the refugees and those who did not. In addition, approximately 38% of the participants in the survey considered the information about the refugees inadequate. (TNS Emor 2015)

Thus one can conclude from the survey, that by the end of 2015, the Estonian society was divided among those more in favor and those who maintained a conservative stand regarding the refugees. The percentage of those against the refugee policy was even slightly bigger and thus represented a substantially large amount of people in the society. The survey was conducted at the end of 2015, approximately half a year after the crisis became relevant in the public discussions of Estonia. Because of the absence of comparative material, one cannot analyze the changes in the public opinion within the time period from April until October 2015, but since the survey was conducted at a time when the amount of information about the crisis had increased rapidly compared to April, one can assume that the percentage of people who had earlier considered the information inadequate about the refugee crisis was even bigger.

Although Estonia maintains out of the main migration routes in Europe and is not a popular country among refugees to ask for asylum in the EU context, being a Member State of the Union, it is obliged to participate in the common asylum policy of the EU. The Dublin regulation, which had been the basis of the asylum policy before, was more suitable to Estonia, but less favorable to the countries, which face the biggest influx of migrants in EU, such as Greece and Italy. The new resettlement scheme initiated by the EC designated the Estonian proportion of admitting the refugees on its territory to increase remarkably, remaining still much lower as among the main target countries of the EU (Germany and Sweden). However, this new resettlement scheme contradicted with the hostile public opinion in Estonia, which led the government to the turmoil between those two competing interests.

## **2.7. The political context in Estonia**

The previous elections to the Estonian Parliament Riigikogu took place on 01/03/2015, with the following parties ensuring a place in the Parliament: The Reform Party - 30 seats, The Central Party - 27 seats, SDP - 15 seats, IRL - 14 seats, Vabaerakond - 8 seats



and EKRE - 7 seats. (VVK 20.03.2015) While all the other parties except EKRE (Eestimaa Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond) are situated around the centre of the political spectrum, EKRE claims itself to be a national conservative party, while its political program clearly states “to stand against the mass migration to Estonia” and “to be preserve conservative values.” (EKRE homepage) EKRE has been labelled as a populist party by the other political parties, opposing liberal values, the immigration policy in Estonia and additionally putting strong critic on the other actions of the government. Obtaining 8.1% of the votes in the Parliament elections, the popularity of EKRE has risen throughout the time: if in September 2014 only 2% of the population claimed they would vote for EKRE in the Riigikogu elections, by February 2015 this number had risen to 9%. The support of EKRE was steady until September 2015 and then started to rise again. (TNS Emor 2016) Although there are multiple reasons for such a growth, at least part of it can be attributed to using the anti-migration rhetorics to appeal to the conservative minded population of Estonia.

The Reform Party, who got the biggest number of seats in the Parliament, was initiated to form the new government by the president. The new government, which started to operate on 09/04/2015, consists of the Reform Party, SDP and IRL. Although Vabaerakond was also invited to the negotiations round, their participation was soon rejected by the Reform Party. Unlike EKRE, the support of all the three government parties has declined after the elections: the most remarkably, the support of IRL has dropped by half by September 2015 compared to February. (TNS Emor 2016) At the same time, the support of the opposition parties has risen throughout 2015. Thus one can see that the support of the parties, which form the government and which are responsible for carrying actions at the refugee crisis, has declined and the support of the opposition parties, which do not have a direct responsibility in tackling the crisis, has stood steady or increased. One can thus assume that the position of the government throughout the crisis has been challenging – on the one hand to be expected to act in the crisis and form a position, on the other hand, to deal with the declining popularity and face hostile opinion regarding the immigration.

The most involved in tackling the refugee crisis are the following ministers: the Prime Minister as the head of the government and the representative of the country, the Foreign Minister whose aim is to represent the country in international relations, including in meetings on the EU level, the Minister of the Interior, whose responsibility is to organise the migration issues in Estonia and the Minister of Social Protection, whose aim is to organise the social care and social policy in Estonia, including the ones related to the resettlement of the refugees. (Republic of Estonia Government 2016) The following analysis will focus on the positions of the three ministers: the Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas (in office since 26.03.2014), the Minister of the Interior Hanno Pevkur (in office since 26.03.2014) and the Foreign Minister Keit Pentus-Rosimannus (in office since 17.11.2014). Because of an accusation to be part of the Autorollo political scandal (Äripäev 2016) however, she resigned on 01.07.2015 and was replaced with Marina Kaljurand on 16.07.2015. In addition to that, the government was also challenged with another political scandal: on 14/09/2015, the Minister of Entrepreneurship Urve Palo (SDP) resigned because of a corruption scandal in the Tallinn Port. (Einmann 2015) As a conclusion one can say, that in addition to facing the challenge of the refugee crisis and taking into account the solidarity among the EU member states, the government was also in a position, where it had to deal with political scandals, face the increase of the right populist party EKRE, deal with the decline of popularity among all of the government parties and take into account the negative public opinion regarding the immigration.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following chapter describes the theoretical framework that the research is based on. First of all, the chapter describes the Modern State theory of Christopher Pierson, which formulates the functions of the government in a modern state, especially those related to the immigration and public communication. Thereafter, the chapter continues with the public sphere theory of Jürgen Habermas, which states the concept of the modern (re-feudalized) public sphere, which describes contemporary societies and is opposed to the so-called authentic public sphere, which characterised the states in the nineteenth century. Both theories support the hypothesis formulated in the chapter one.

#### **3.1. Functions of modern state**

Christopher Pierson is the author of the influential book “The modern state” (2004). Within the frames of the modern state functions, he has brought various characteristics that the modern states possess. One of those qualities that characterizes the democratic modern state is the variety of opinions, which often compete with each other. If the government is democratically elected, it has to take into account the prevailing attitudes and interests within the society to maintain its position. (Pierson 2004: 56-57) The chapter two already discussed the diverging interests within the Estonian society regarding the refugee crisis, but also the external dimension, since Estonia is a member of the EU and thus influenced by the decisions taken on the supranational level. Thus, it is important to define the role of the governments in the democratic societies in responding to the variety of ideas and interests first.

One of the most influential theories in describing the functioning of the modern state is the theory of pluralism. Robert A. Dahl sees pluralism as a condition where various groups, be it political parties, business groups, non-profit organizations or other formations based on certain interests within society, compete with each other on the

political arena. The role of the state or more precisely, the ruling political parties forming the government, is to find a balance between those groups or harmonize plurality in some way. (Floyd; Dahl 1962: 517-519). The concept of pluralism is further developed by Christopher Pierson who describes the modern state an entity where the power is found in many places and different interest groups are able to mobilize various sorts of resources to materialize their interests. He also argues that the citizens in a pluralistic modern society share a consensus about the rules of the so-called *political game*, meaning not that the citizens must share any substantial amount of beliefs or agree on how the public policy should work, but rather that they are willing to agree or disagree with the politics and they accept that there should be a diversity of interests within the society. (Pierson 2004: 56-58)

Pierson claims that the situation where all the interests of those stakeholders are taken equally into account, is strongly idealistic and often some groups play a bigger role in the society than the others. Some scholars (such as Dahl and Lindblom) express strong criticism towards the pluralistic point of view, addressing that interest groups such as business interests stand out from the others (Dahl 1962), but those who still agree on the pluralistic point of view point out that those groups command different resources in addition to the financial ones to realize their interests. (Pierson 2004: 58)

Taking into account the complexity and diversity of interests and interest groups within society, Pierson places a strong emphasis on the state as an actor to balance or harmonize those interests. In this regard the function of the modern state is not only to reflect the pluralistic patterns of the society and remain a neutral actor, but also to contribute as a mediator to balance the forces and find a suitable compromise that best satisfies the needs of those competing interest groups or reflects the public interest in the best possible way. In an even more radical view, the state is not only a mediator and harmonizer, but it plays an active role in fulfilling its own political agenda. In this case the state, in addition to being a reconciliatory, can also take a decisive role in shifting public policy in one direction or another. In this case, politicians are capable of manipulating the cleavages and interests in civil society. (Pierson 2004: 58)

Although the role of action of the modern state among the opinions of different pluralists vary, Pierson still concludes that the state has a function in responding somehow to a variety of interests: in either taking a mediator or harmonizer role or in being more active and fulfilling its own political agenda. (ibid)

The competition among interest groups within and outside the state is described in the changing role of the modern state in terms of making or deciding on the migration/asylum policy. If migration itself by its nature is already an international issue, by the twenty-first century, the state has less and less say in deciding the patterns of the migration and asylum policy. Pierson describes that although the state seemingly decides whom to accept in the country or not, there is a substantial outside pressure, be it the international organisations, other countries, lobby groups of certain ethnicities etc. (Pierson 2004: 164-166) States in this sense have to make decisions on the immigration and asylum policy taking into account the humanitarian discourses<sup>5</sup> from the international arena, such as the domestic opinion<sup>6</sup>, which often tends to be cautious or negative. The humanitarian discourse however tends to consolidate also in the domestic arena, which has definitely been the case in some of the post communist countries. As already seen in the chapter two, the Estonian state has been in the case of immigration in the turmoil between the humanitarian position of the EC, which calls for solidarity with the migrants and on the other hand the large number of Estonian citizens who are critical or hostile towards the refugees.<sup>7</sup>

Small countries in EU such as Estonia have less power in changing the global trends, such as migration. Furthermore, being strongly influenced by the EU financial aid and the common defence of NATO, it is likely that the decisions made on the EU level have to be taken into account by the Estonian government as much as the domestic opinion

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<sup>5</sup> Expressing solidarity with people and addressing humane values.

<sup>6</sup> Public opinion within the country.

<sup>7</sup> Although the states often try to maintain a control over their immigration policy and challenge the pressure from the international level, it is hindered by the increasing demographic problems of the European population (and more broadly, modern societies), where labour force can be seen as a solution for the aging population and labour shortage. (Pierson 2004: 165)

regarding refugees. In order to maintain good relationship with the other EU countries but at the same time to preserve the trust of the electorate in the domestic arena, the government has to make sense of the variety of opinions prevailing in the society and in the international arena and communicate with the public.

### **3.2. Habermas and the authentic versus the re-feudalized public sphere**

When Pierson looks at the role of the state as rather a positive phenomenon, Jürgen Habermas, originally from the Frankfurt school, is more critical about the current role of the state. Habermas (1991) describes the structural transformation of the state and the public sphere from the mid nineteenth century (which he considers the ideal form of the public sphere) onwards, while the state takes a bigger role in the lives of its citizens with the emergence of the so-called social or the welfare state. The result of the emergence of the social state was the replacement of the critical and grounded debates with commercial interests, which started to dominate the media. The new mass culture which replaced the earlier bourgeois culture had to be adapted to the needs of the masses, which meant also less educated populace. This also meant that new means of media emerged which best fitted to the needs of the masses – the TV instead of radio, films etc, were easier to follow and helped to reach a larger audience with less effort (Habermas 1991; O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, & Fiske, 1983: 130).

The transformation of the public sphere also meant that private interests reached to media and they took over the previous public interests. The media commercialized and different groups started to lobby their interests through media, creating an impression that they actually represent the public interests. The aim of the media now was to “sell” private interests without any rational debates. This also meant that commercialization was adopted by the state or more precisely by political parties who were seen as representatives of some private interests. Thus, the aim of political parties was to find a

compromise between those private interests through the debates where important decisions are actually made in the backrooms. (Habermas 1991: 160-171).

Accordingly Habermas sees the role of the modern state a bit differently from that of Pierson. While Pierson sees the role of the state as a rather positive one, finding the best compromise among the interest groups and leading the communication into more rational tracks, Habermas sees this rationalization only as formality, where state actually just “sells” some interests – be it other interest groups or its own political agenda. However, whether seemingly or actually, in both cases the state’s role is to bring the debates into more rational tracks.

In addition to the option proposed by Habermas that the state advertises interests of some stakeholders or the theory of Pierson that the governments harmonize the interest groups and possibly lead the discussions into more rational tracks, it is also possible that the government acts according to its own political agenda, takes an expectant position or avoids taking a position at all.

### **3.3. Research questions**

The thesis aims to find an answer to the following question: has the Estonian government taken an active or a passive role in the public communication regarding the refugee crisis?

In order to answer the research question, the following sub-questions will be answered:

- 1) What were the triggering forces for the government to form a position in media or through press releases? (different events, stakeholders)
- 2) How did the position of the government change throughout the time period? (April-October)

3) Was the communication of the government consistent or occasional?

4) Which factors influenced the activeness/passivness of the government's position?



## 4. Methodology and sample

This chapter presents the analysis scheme, which is based on the Norman Fairclough's approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As following, the chapter will describe the selection of the sample and the time frame.

### 4.1. Theory of social constructivism

The social constructionism theory is an influential theory, being often combined with the method of discourse analysis, which aims to analyse the discourses behind the social interactions taking place in the society. The main scholars in the social sciences behind this concept are Berger and Luckmann and the basic argument behind it says that "reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs." (Berger, Luckmann 1966:13) However, the terms social constructionism and constructivism are often used interchangeably, while some scholars such as Charmaz use them under the single word constructivism. (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) Both social constructionists and social constructivists generally agree that the reality is not something of an objective truth, but rather that multiple realities exist and interact with each other. (Burr 2003)

Taking the position that the reality is socially constructed and the communication as an aspect of the social life takes place in the framework of the social constructs, the political parties which take part in public communication are also influenced by the social norms within the society and the social structures which lie behind them. Those social norms come from the common truths and knowledge about how the social roles should be divided, which in turn are also the result of the social interactions and construction. Gergen describes this as following: "Our ways of understanding the world are created and maintained by social processes." (Gergen 1985: 268 via Burr 1995:4) This also means

that knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false. This means that the social norms are changing over time through the interaction. Those norms are coded and conveyed in the language, which on the other hand is subject to the social norms themselves.

### **4.3. Normal Fairclough and the critical discourse analysis**

The methodology is based on the critical discourse analysis model (CDA), which originates from Norman Fairclough. CDA as an approach was chosen, because it is designed to analyse the textual structures in depth, which is the aim of the current research.

According to Fairclough, the usage of language and the social structures are interconnected and influence each other. Namely he claims that the existing social structures and power relations within a society impose restrictions on the usage of language and influence which way the words, grammar, or other components of a language are used. At the same time, he also claims that the language itself can reproduce the social norms and structures or create new patterns in the social structures. This is an important base to analyse, which components of the power relations and social structures can be decoded from the language the government uses in the communication, since according to Fairclough, the usage of language in this way influences the perception of the social norms and reproduce them and thus influences how the refugee crisis is perceived in public. (Fairclough 1996: 84-92)

The analysis focuses on three dimensions: first, looking at the description of the formal components of the text – grammar, vocabulary and other components of the text. Second, analyzing the connections between the text itself and the discursive practices – text in this sense is seen in a wider social context where the particular text was created, but also the

social context of the receivers of the text are taken into account – since the producer of the text takes into account the social context and social capabilities of the receiver of the text, it influences the usage of the language. Thirdly, the social interaction between the speaker and the receiver is seen in a wider social context, where the overall societal patterns are taken into account. (Titcher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter 2000: 152)

## **4.4. The methodological scheme based on N. Fairclough**

Taking into account the three dimensional analysis scheme, the following categories will be analyzed in regard of the governmental communication in Estonia.

### **4.4.1. The vocabulary**

The usage of synonyms: which words are used to define the refugees and the crisis. For example, are the refugees named with the word “migrant” or “refugee” and in which context will one or another word be used? Which words are used to define the crisis? For instance, is the crisis seen in a particular region or a European crisis? Analysing the usage of synonyms was chosen as a category, since the way how the refugees and the crisis are defined reflects the perceptions of them. Attributing names to the refugees can be subconscious but also intentional, aimed by changing the perception of the audience. For example, if the refugees are defined often by words which address humane dimension, it is probable that the speaker aims to induce compassion and solidarity in the reader. On the other hand, if the refugees are defined by impersonal features (for example through numbers), this can be subconscious but still have a societal impact – the reader starting to perceive the refugees in an abstract way. Analysing the antonyms and pronouns was also

intended to be included in the analysis, but since it did not reveal significantly important results, those categories were left out at the end.

#### 4.4.2. The grammatical structures

Contrasting: which interest groups/stakeholders are contrasted through the texts.

- 1) Whether the government opposes the opinion of the Estonian government with other competing opinions (other countries, EU)?
- 2) Whether the government opposes some groups within the Estonian society (for example the political parties, the different opinions among the population)?

If contrasting occurs, one can speculate, which are the reasons behind contrasting different groups. Does the government want to make a moral statement with it? For example, if the government opposes often the opinion of the Estonian government and the EU, one can assume it wants to appeal to the domestic audience.

Analysing the voice of the sentences (usage of active/passive voice) did not reveal relevant information to be used for the final conclusions and thus was left out from the analysis.

#### 4.4.3. Textual structures

Frames: In order to analyze the textual structures and more precisely, the patterns, which affect the presentation of the information in a particular way, the framing theory developed by Robert M. Entman offers a theoretical background. According to Entman, the individuals have a selective influence on how the meanings of the words are perceived, depending on various *frames in thought and in communication*. (Entman 1993)

The frames have four functions: they “1) define problems – determine what a casual agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values 2) diagnose causes - identify the forces creating the problem 3) make moral judgments- evaluate causal agents and their effects and 4) suggest remedies - offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects.” (Entman 1993: 52)

Frames at the same time have at least four locations in the communication process: first of all, the communicators who make either conscious or unconscious judgments on what to say. This judgment is guided by their frames of thought which influence their beliefs and perceptions about the world. Secondly, the frames appear in the text itself, which contain various key words, phrases, stereotypes and other sources of information, which at the same time reinforce those frames. Thirdly, the receiver, who’s thinking and perception of the text is also influenced by frames. However, those frames do not have to be the same frames (and often are not) that are coded in the text or originate from the communicator. Lastly, there is the culture, which is a set of different frames, which are accepted by most of the people in the society. (Entman 1993: 52-53) The current analysis takes mostly into account the frames presented by the communicator (the ministers) and the frames which affect the perception of the reader.

On the basis of the Entman’s framing theory, the existence of the frames in the text as the source of information between the communicator as the Estonian government and the receiver as the Estonian public audience will be analyzed. Taking into account the four main functions of the frames, the analysis tries to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which aspects of the crisis are defined by the Estonian government as relevant to talk about in the refugee crisis? – to define whether some issues are emphasized or some others missed out.
- 2) Which are the main forces that created the refugee crisis and are involved in the maintenance of it according to the Estonian government?

- 3) Which are the moral judgments that the Estonian government has made regarding the refugee crisis?
- 4) Which are the possible solutions that the Estonian government sees in tackling the refugee crisis?

Context:

- 1) The usage of interdiscursivity within the texts: which other discourses can be seen in the text? In other words: which other stakeholders are reflected through the texts: the EU institutions, the other EU countries, the Estonian diaspora, the Estonian citizens in Estonia etc? If for example the humanitarian discourse is prevailing in the texts, can one assume this comes from somewhere else (other interest group, such as EU etc)?
- 2) The cohesion in the opinions presented in the text: how much do the texts reflect competing opinions/cohesion within the government? – the existence of competing opinions can hinder taking firm positions and thus the government taking its role to mediate/rationalise the debate.

The aim of analysing the contextual structures is to see whether the text itself or its context reflects the existence of other discourses/interest groups, which position has to be taken into account by the government. It also gives a hint how does the government relate itself to those interest groups, how does it morally judge the crisis and which is the solution to the crisis taking into account the existence of the other interest groups.

## 4.5. The sample

The thesis will focus on the following sources:

- 1) Newspapers: Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht, SL Õhtuleht
- 2) The press releases of the Government Communication Unit (GCU), where the Prime Minister (PM in the analysis) Taavi Rõivas, the Minister of the Interior (MI in the analysis) Hanno Pevkur or the Foreign Minister (FM in the analysis) Keit Pentus-Rosimannus and Marina Kaljurand take a position

Those newspapers were chosen because they are among the most read daily newspapers in Estonia (by edition) according to the Estonian Newspapers Association and thus are likely to have a wider influence in the society. (Estonian Newspaper Association 02/2015) Taking more newspapers into consideration would have also remained too ambitious goal and outside the scope of the thesis. In addition, the press releases of the government represent the first sources where a government shares its positions in the public and one can speculate, which shape the ground for the further debate in the media and more broadly, in public. The PM, the FM and the MI were chosen, since they are the most involved in the refugee crisis – the PM and the FM as the representors of the government abroad and the MI who participates in the EU level meetings in regard of the allocation question of the refugees. In addition, during the debates, those three ministers were present more often, when government formed an opinion through media.

## 4.6. Time range and the collection of the Sampole

The data will be collected, taking into account the most important events from the time period of 19/04/2015 when a ship with hundreds of refugees sunk close to the island Lampedusa in the Mediterranean sea until 06/10/2015 when the Chanchellor of the German Federal Republic Angela Merkel and the president of the French Republic

Francois Hollande gave a symbolic speech in front of the European Parliament to address mutual solidarity in the refugee crisis. Those two events were chosen, since the shipwreck close to Lampedusa brought the refugee crisis more actively into the public discussions and influenced the EC to take an active position in the crisis. 06/10 was chosen as the end date for the analysis, since it can be seen as a climax of the humanitarian discourse in the crisis – the terror attacks in November in Paris changed the course of discussions around the refugee crisis. In between of the time frame mentioned before, the most important events were chosen (Appendix 7), which had an impact on the discussions through media (there was more than one article after the event in one of the newspapers or a government press release). The events were chosen by the following criteria: when some new measure was decided on the EU level, which affected Estonia (for instance the agreements on the implementation packages by EC), the ones, which had European wide influence (for example the closing of borders between Schengen states, tragic accidents with refugees, entrapment of refugees in Budapest etc), the ones which had an influence in Estonia (the fire in the Vao refugee centre) or media events which are expected to cause government reaction (for example the test calculation of extraordinarily large number of refugees that Estonia has to admit, written in „The Spiegel“). The full list of events is presented in Appendix 7.

The government press releases and articles from the newspapers (Postimees, Eesti Päevaleht, SL Õhtuleht), which were written up to one week after the chosen events, were taken into the analysis. The press releases were found online from the government homepage ([valitsus.ee/en](http://valitsus.ee/en)) and the newspapers were found in printed version, since not all articles, which exist in printed media can be found online. The articles and press releases had to meet three criteria: first, they had to be about the refugee crisis, second, they had to be within the mentioned timeframe and third, there had to be a position of the Foreign Minister, Minister of the Interior or the Prime Minister present. The positions of the ministers were considered only if they were direct quotations, since otherwise it is not possible to analyse the lexical patterns: when referring to the ministers, the journalists adapt the language and the lexical information gets missing. Analysing the journalistic



representation in the articles remains out of the scope of this thesis. All in all, 44 newspaper articles and 15 press releases were found eligible for the analysis.

In many articles there was just one or two sentences of quotations from the ministers, while in the others there was a long interview, thus the volume of the quotations between different articles and press releases varies greatly. Other categories such as the usage of pronouns and antonyms and the usage of passive/active voice was considered at first, but since this would have exceeded the scope of the analysis, the amount of categories had to be reduced. At the end, contrasting and the usage of synonyms were considered the most informative in order to answer the research question. Analysing the usage of passive/active voice and the usage of pronouns and antonyms did not reveal strong patterns.

A challenging aspect throughout the analysis was that the scope of the articles/press releases where the position of the ministers was present differed greatly among the ministers. While the position of the FM ministers was present only in a few articles, the PM and the MI were represented in most of the texts. Also some issues such as blaming Russia in the crisis or addressing the vagueness in the negotiations were singular cases and it is not possible to say if those present just the opinions of the ministers or the general position of the party/government. Since ministers from three ministries were taken into consideration, one cannot make conclusive remarks about the position of the entire government.

Another underlying challenge was the translation. Since the majority of the press releases and all news articles were in Estonian, part of the information through translation gets always missing. Thus the English translations should be taken with criticism. The original quotes are presented at the end of the text.

## 5. THE RESULTS

The following chapter will present the results. The chapter is made up of the following subchapters: the vocabulary, the grammar, the textual structures and the contextual structures. The discussions and the conclusions will follow in the next chapter.

### 5.1. The usage of synonyms

#### 5.1.1. Naming and defining refugees

The general attitude of the ministers about the migrants was either positive or neutral which was also reflected through the vocabulary used by the ministers. The word refugee (either *põgenik* or *pagulane*)<sup>8</sup> was used in the context when the ministers presented factual claims (for instance when elaborating about the allocated persons to Estonia from Greece and Italy in accordance to the Implementation Packages implemented by the EC, meaning those migrants who are already granted asylum and thus can be labeled as refugees with certainty), for example when the PM expressed the positive attitude of the entrepreneurs towards the arrival of refugees: “Several businesses have declared their readiness to offer employment to the refugees...” (GCU 16.09) or when it was necessary to make it explicit to draw a line between people who need to escape the war and those who are leaving their countries with other reasons. For instance, when explaining the position of Estonia to his Latvian colleague, the PM said: “Naturally, we should focus on helping war refugees during crisis.” (Tampere 11.09) Here the word *war* was made explicit to address the people who need help. In another example, the PM explained the measures Estonia has to take in addition to the resettlement: “While helping the war

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<sup>8</sup> Estonian language differentiates the words *pagulane* and *põgenik*, while in English there is only one word – *refugee*. While according to the yearbook of the ERG (Janson 2015) *põgenik* is a general term referring to both, those who have already granted asylum and those who have not, the word *pagulane* refers to those who have been already granted asylum according to the Geneva Convention (UN 1951 ('67)).

refugees closer to their homes, we reduce the migration pressure to Europe.”<sup>i</sup> (GCU 16.09) Here again, the word *war* was used to specify that certain group of people needs help. The word *human/person* was used when addressing the humane dimension of the crisis. For example, when talking about the shipwreck close to Lampedusa the FM said: “There are real people behind the numbers.”<sup>ii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 24.04, nr 79) She also used words *frightened* (*hirmunu*) and *desperate* (*meeleheitel*) in order to induce compassion in the reader. Also the PM emphasized the humane dimension of the crisis regarding the shipwreck, saying “In the situation when people drown tragically we have to really deal with the problem...”<sup>iii</sup> The word *human* (*inimene*) was also used when expressing that the refugees are the same as the Estonian people, for example when the PM claimed in the Vao refugee centre: “The Estonian state defends the rights of all the people living here.”<sup>iv</sup> (GCU 03.09) Although the word *refugee* (*põgenik/pagulane*) was used more often, it was so due to the context – the discussions were focused mostly around the allocation of the refugees.

### 5.1.2. Defining the crisis

The ministers used the words *refugee crisis* (*pagulaskriis*) and *migration crisis* (*migratsioonikriis*) intertwined, where it was not exactly clarified whether it was aimed by making a clear division between those two or not. For example when reflecting on the decisions made in European Council at the end of September, the PM said: “Today we agreed on specific steps that we can take quickly to alleviate the migrant crisis.” (Tampere 24.09). At the same time, when addressing the same issue, the PM used the word *refugee crisis*: “Resolving the refugee crisis will not happen quickly or easily but if we work on it together, with conscientiousness and solidarity, we can begin to alleviate the situation.” In this case the reader has an impression that the refugees and migrants are overlapping concepts which can evoke general confusion – in perceiving all migration as

a generalized phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>At different cases, the ministers made explicit the distinction between a refugee and a migrant (GCU 08.09), however, infrequently the usage of *refugee crisis* and *migration crisis* seemed random and not to follow a certain pattern, which created confusion.

In addition to calling it the *refugee crisis* and *migration crisis*, the PM also used the phrase *Mediterranean crisis* for a few times. For instance, prior to the European Council meeting at the end of June, the PM said: “Estonia understands that there is a crisis situation and is ready to contribute to solving the Mediterranean crisis...” (GCU 24.06) creating an impression that the crisis is only about the Mediterranean countries. The aim in this case was probably to address that the crisis is the deepest at the Mediterranean area, for example when talking about the opposition of Estonia to the quota system, the government (GCU) addressed: “Estonia is in the opinion that all Member States should contribute to alleviating the Mediterranean migrant crisis....” (GCU 27.05) Even if the intention was to raise awareness on the issue that the Mediterranean countries need some help from the other EU member states as well, this might create an impression to the reader, that the government sees the crisis primarily in the Mediterranean region and not as a European issue.

### 5.1.3. Impersonification of refugees

One underlying issue was creating an impersonal and abstract impression about the refugees with identifying them with the word *number/bulk of people* (*arv/inimmass*). For example when commenting on the initial proposal of the EC to allocate 1064 refugees to Estonia, the PM said: “We are not capable to cope with such a big bulk of people.”<sup>v</sup> (Postimees nr 133-7427) If the FM had addressed the need to see real people behind numbers, the main discussions were about numbers without humane dimension. For example the PM stated in June about the position of Estonia: “Right now we work on that

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<sup>9</sup> This has been the problem in the public perception in labeling all migrants under the same category and attributing characteristics to one or another group which are not relevant.

how to make it clear for the EC that those numbers are unfair.”<sup>vi</sup> (SL Õhtuleht, 10.06) At the same time, the PM himself made it clear that talking about people is more important than numbers. For example, when the second allocation was decided in September he claimed: “We do not have to argue anymore about the formulas, we can now focus on the root of the problem and get ready to help people.”<sup>vii</sup> (GCU 08.09) If, on the one hand, the ministers addressed the humane dimension and called to see real people behind the problems, being focused on numbers and formulas creates an impersonal impression about the refugees and the reader more likely identifies them with abstract numbers than personalities.

## 5.2. Contrasting

### 5.2.1. The opinion of EU and the Estonian government

The voluntarism approach: Throughout the articles and press releases the government used direct and indirect contrasting of different groups/stakeholders (direct contrasting was present in one or another form in every third text). During the first months (April-July) the opposition of the opinion of the Estonian government and the EC was present in almost every text. For example, the PM commented on the Estonian position that he had introduced to the EC as following: “We understand the need that all countries must contribute to solving the crisis, but we want the agreement to be voluntary and fair.” (Vaher 25.06) In this case the first half of the sentence *We understand the need that all countries must contribute to solving the crisis* refers to the opinion of the EC, while the second half *but we want the agreement to be voluntary and fair* to the general position of the government to oppose the mandatory quota system. The MI commented the Estonian position even more clearly saying “We have to manage to show to the sceptical countries who insisted on the duties and the quotas that one could also reach the results with a voluntary contribution.”<sup>viii</sup> (Postimees, nr 146-7440) Here the MI differentiated two groups of countries: the ones who believe in the voluntarism and those who are sceptical

towards the voluntarism and see mandatory distribution of refugees as the only possible solution for the crisis. The sentence creates an impression to the reader that those countries which support the voluntarism approach (including Estonia) are doing right while the others need to be convinced in the accuracy of the voluntarism approach.

The voluntary admittance of additional refugees: In one case, the MI contrasted those two groups of countries in the opposite way where the voluntary allocation of refugees was seen in a positive way. When commenting on the different opinions of countries which were addressed during the meeting of the MIs in June he commented about the countries to whom admitting refugees was not a problem: “They admit more refugees within a week than the number proposed by the EC for two years.”<sup>ix</sup>

### **5.2.2. Conservative and liberal domestic opinion**

The political parties in Estonia: From the end of July the position of the government changed. If previously the opposition of Estonia and EC was prevalent, from now on contrasting occurred between other groups. The government drew attention to the need of rationalism, opposing it to the demagogy and rumours. For instance, when commenting on the aftermigration myth<sup>10</sup>, the MI said: “The story of the Pandora box cannot be taken very seriously. We all understand that one needs to tackle the roots of the crisis so that people do not have to escape their homes.”<sup>x</sup> (Postimees, nr 168-7462) In this case, the MI opposed the rumour about the Pandora box phenomenon regarding the refugees spread by EKRE which is taken by large part of the population as a fact and on the other hand, everybody else (*kõik*) whom he claimed to be the normative. However, since the conservative attitude towards refugees was shared by approximately 50% of the population (chapter two), this claim in its current form can create an impression to the reader who shares the conservative stand that the speaker (MI in this case) sees himself as the expert on the truth, who educates the population.

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<sup>10</sup> The claim that the arrival of refugees will be followed with arrival of their relatives and family members which will end up in mass migration, mainly spread by right populist parties.

The municipalities of Estonia: In a similar case, the MI addressed after the meetings with the municipality leaders in Estonia: “There is too little information in the south of Estonia,”<sup>xi</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 22.07, nr 139) comparing it with the north-east part of the country.

In even a more direct form, the contrasting was present in the interview with the FM<sup>11</sup> in Postimees on 09.09. She contrasted in her interview the following groups:

- 1) Estonia and the Western-European countries: while commenting on the differences between the attitudes of the Estonian people and the Western-Europeans she said: “What differs the public opinion of Estonia and those countries (meaning Finland, Germany and France) is that there people have much more humanity.”<sup>xii</sup> (Postimees, 209-7503)
- 2) The responsible and the irresponsible politicians in Estonia: when commenting on where the polarization in the society comes from, she said: “We have a lot of irresponsible politicians – I am not going to say their names – who inflame hatred and hostility.”<sup>xiii</sup>
- 3) The people who are hostile and solidary with the refugees: She commented on the polarization of the society regarding the opinions: “Everybody saw the corp of the three-year old boy. How could one say something bad about refugees after this? Who are those people?...I invite all people who think normally: express your opinion in the social media!”<sup>xiv</sup>

On the one hand, she referred to the agents directly and made a clear and influential moral statement, while creating a role model for the people: to be more similar to the Western-European *humane* people. On the other hand, the contrasting of the population in this case can turn out to be countereffective. Especially the words “*people who think normally*”<sup>xv</sup>, “*irresponsible politicians who inflame hatred and hostility*”<sup>xvi</sup> and “*there people have*

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<sup>11</sup> Even though the text represented just one example, one can assume that it summarized the position of the FM and as a longer interview influenced the reader more than other shorter articles.

*much more humanity*”<sup>xvii</sup> express a normative position and can potentially increase the polarization among the people who are conservative towards the refugees and feel “unnatural” (see Darley 83: 20-33 on labelling people).

### **5.2.3. Discourse of solidarity and unity**

Regarding EU, instead of contrasting the ministers used words of solidarity and unity with the EU during the second half of July, August, September and October. For example, the PM commented on the decision on the Second Implementation Package as following: “Europe can overcome this crisis, if we manage to stand united and support one another” (Tampere 11.09) or the MI commented on the possible future allocations of refugees on the EU level as following: “Fortunately we have very good relationships with our colleagues and we can talk directly and openly.”<sup>xviii</sup> (Postimees nr 204-7498)

## **5.3. The agenda of the communication**

### **5.3.1. The quota system**

The consistency of communication: The pattern of the government’s communication was rather inconsistent: a position was formed in media or through a press release before or after the meetings of the ministers of the member states in the EU level – in this case there were articles and press releases with a minister’s position in three to four subsequential days, while in some days (after the allocation of refugees was decided between EU and Estonia) there was more than one article in one newspaper with a government’s position. At the same time, a position was missing in between - even if after some events (for instance the misleading article in Spiegel about the disproportionally huge number of refugees being resettled to Estonia or the escalating crisis in the Central Europe) one could logically expect a position from a minister. Some



issues such as the quotas and the need to tackle the external causes of the crisis got proportionally more attention during the first months, while the mutual solidarity among the EU member states was a priority topic from the end of July.

The concreteness of the positions: Often the position of the government was vague and ambiguous messages could be interpreted from the statements. For instance after the meeting of the EU MIs, the MI said to Eesti Päevaleht:

“Estonia defended its position, that we do not support the mandatory quotas and we would like to find a solution, where one can contribute on a voluntary basis. However, for example Sweden has said that they do not have a problem with the numbers proposed by the EC...Thus each country has its own problems.”<sup>xix</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 17.06, nr 116)

Here one can see that on the one hand the MI made clear the Estonian position, but on the other hand also expressed the message that there were countries, which were on a different opinion. This can indicate that since the outcome of the negotiations was not yet clear, he wanted to leave all options open and thus illustrated also other (even if unpopular) outcomes. The positions became more concrete after certain important events (see chapter four), such as the fire in the Vao refugee centre in the beginning of September and the decision on the number of refugees being taken to Estonia in July and September.

Maintaining the quotas low: The government mostly focused in the discussions on the distribution mechanism and the negotiations with the EC to lower or completely oppose the quotas and to express that the quota system is unfair for Estonia. For example, Rõivas said on 10.06 regarding the distribution of refugees: “We are ready to help, but the method cannot be the order of Brussels.”<sup>xx</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht, 10.06, nr 111) He also added as following: “The suggestion is unfair for Estonia and we are not capable to cope with such a big number of people. The unproportionally big quotas create problems instead of solving them.”<sup>xxi</sup> (Postimees, nr 133 (7427)

The need to maintain the quotas as low as possible also remained the main issue during June and July in the government’s positions. The ministers often mentioned that deciding on an exact number of refugees is not beneficial for Estonia. For instance, when talking

about the meeting of the EU MI-s in Brussels, the MI said: “I do not want to go to the European Council with an exact number. If we do have an exact number, we do not have space for negotiations.”<sup>“xxii</sup> (Postimees, nr 135 (7429))

Even though the government expressed clearly the position to be against the mandatory quotas, it also addressed readiness to participate in the resettlement programme if the quotas were proportional to the capabilities of Estonia. Also the need for resettlement on voluntary basis remained important. (GCU 27.05, Eesti Päevaleht 101, 110 etc)

The position of the government regarding the exact number of refugees that Estonia would be ready to resettle, remained vague. The ministers in general expressed often vague and ambiguous positions. For instance, the PM expressed after the meeting with the EU heads of states at the end of June: “The exact number of refugees needs to be clarified yet.” (Postimees, nr 146-7440) At the same time the MI expressed that the vagueness among the opinions of the member states was a problem. After the meeting with the MIs from the other EU member states, he claimed: “No agreement was reached in the meeting of the MIs. The debate was rather vague, a big number of states did not say whether they support the mandatory quotas.”<sup>“xxiii</sup> (Postimees nr 139-7433) At the same time, the government itself did not specify, what is the number of refugees which is fair for Estonia and proportional for its size and capabilities. The MI explained it as following: “If we go there with an exact number, we will lock up ourselves and won’t have much flexibility.”<sup>“xxiv</sup> (Postimees, nr 135 (7429)) At the same time, it is evident that the flexibility is not the only reason why the ministers kept the exact number of the refugees vague. Since the positions of the Estonian ministers are in general rather moderate and aimed not to be too conflicting with the mainstream opinion on the EU level, the concern about the image of Estonia in the international level probably plays a role. This is also reflected in a statement of the MI on 28.05. He says about deciding on an exact number of refugees for the negotiations with the EC as following: “If we go to ask for a too small number it might make an impression of a fake solidarity.”<sup>“xxv</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 28.05, nr 102)

### 5.3.2. Solidarity with the refugees and the EU

Helping refugees outside of Estonia: In addition to the quotas, the need for solidarity was addressed also a couple of times already in April-May. The FM addressed the need to mutually solve the problems which emerge in Europe (SL Õhtuleht 28.05). Also, the PM called for, in addition to fighting for the reduction of the number of refugees to be resettled to Estonia, to understand the difficult situation of the refugees and the need to help them. “We also need to understand the situation of those people who have escaped the war or other horrors. Taking into account our capabilities we have to be open to be part in finding a solution for the problem.”<sup>xxvi</sup> (Õhtuleht 10.06). However, expressing solidarity during the first months was rather an exception and was done to illustrate the position that relocation of refugees is not the only way to express solidarity with them.

The utility discourse of refugees: A change occurred at the end of July, when the number of refugees to be resettled to Estonia was decided between the Estonian government and the EC (chapter 2.5). If previously the main position was to hold the number of refugees as low as possible and to fight for the best possible solution for Estonia, the position turned a lot more favorable for the resettlement of refugees. The government emphasized that the resettlement is a possibility rather than a responsibility for the municipalities of Estonia. For example the PM claimed after the first decision on the relocation of the refugees was made: “The message is still that this is part of the European solidarity and I see here a possibility for the municipalities, not a responsibility.”<sup>xxvii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 21.07, nr 138)

Disproving the rumours about refugees: Additionally, the government focused on disproving the threats regarding the immigration and the misconceptions, such as “the refugees will be all put into one place” (Postimees nr 169-7463, Eesti Päevaleht nr 139), the migration of the families of the resettled person afterwards (Postimees nr 168-7462), the big number of refugees (Eesti Päevaleht nr 138). For example when referring to the tour of the ministers around Estonia to explain how the relocation of the refugees works in practice and to reduce the threats among the population, the MI stated: “They come here to live somewhere in a flat, having their ordinary life.”<sup>xxviii</sup> (Postimees nr 169-7463)

Also the MI – referring to the demagogy of EKRE to compare the arrival of refugees with the Pandora’s box, calms down the public: “Talking about the Box of Pandora does not make much sense to me. Everybody understands that we need to tackle the core reasons of the crisis so that people do not have to come away.”<sup>xxix</sup> (Postimees nr 168-7462) The position of the government, thus, had turned much more favorable towards the EU and critical towards the conservative groups of the country in its rhetorics.

The unity of Europe: After the escalation of the refugee crisis in August, the need for an additional resettlement program was foreseen. The possibility for additional number of refugees being resettled to Estonia also remained the core issue of discussion in the media. (Postimees nr 195-7489, nr 204-7498, GCU 08.09 etc) However, the position of the government remained vague and the position of the EC was expected before Estonian government forms its own opinion (Postimees nr 205-7499). The PM stated that the unity of Europe was addressed as being the most important issue: “Europe is in crisis and there is not a prompt solution for it. In this situation the unity of Europe is critically important to fulfill a complex and long-term plan.”<sup>xxx</sup> (GCU 08.09)

The responsibilities of Europe: In addition, the need to tackle the crisis in the countries of the origin of the refugees remained important. Commenting on the final decision on the Second Implementation Package, the PM stated: “EU has to, more than until now, tackle the core reasons in the countries of origin providing there the humanitarian aid, fighting with the human trafficking and participating in the peace keeping missions. The borders have to be brought under the control and one has to create the possibilities for the Syrian peace process.”<sup>xxxi</sup> (GCU 09.09)

The European values and solidarity with refugees: After the fire in the Vao refugee centre (Appendix 4), solidarity with the refugees and the need to share the European values became a prevailing position. For example when talking with the residents of the Vao refugee centre after the fire, the PM clearly stated that the refugees are integral part of Estonia: “I heard the stories of the people living in the refugee centre and the joint part of their stories was escaping from the war, a dream about home and employment and the

fear of xenophobia...Nobody should feel unsafe in Estonia!”<sup>xxxii</sup> (GCU 03.09) When commented on the sudden acceptance with the relocation program, the PM said: “Estonia is part of Europe and the European values are typical for us,<sup>xxxiii</sup> (GCU 08.09) using the claim of identity to belong to the west rather than east in explaining the sudden move from conservative stand towards solidarity with the EU and the refugees. At the same time the PM also claimed that the discussions about if the relocation of refugees was right or wrong decision does not make sense anymore, stating that it is inevitable anyway and Estonia has to focus on the future: „Now is the time to show solidarity when the distribution formula is not a question anymore.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> (GCU 09.09)

### **5.3.3. Other topics**

In the end of September, the main topics were about the additional number of refugees being resettled to Estonia and the readiness of the society to accept them (GCU 16.09, 24.09, Postimees nr 220-7514 etc), but also the need to help the war refugees closer to their homes (GCU 09.09, Postimees nr 205-7499). The need for the protection of the free movement of people and goods within EU was mentioned a couple of times (SL Õhtuleht 01.10, Postimees nr 227-7521, Eesti Päevaleht nr 185).

### **5.3.4. The absence of position**

One crucial issue in the communication of the government was the absence of the position. While the government reacted actively to the quota system and expressed solidarity with the EU countries and the refugees after the allocation of refugees was determined, some events where the government’s reaction would have been logical and necessary in order to provide adequate information in the case of rumours, the government did not express any position. This was the case with the initiative by the Estonian Human Rights Center to the Estonian society to express solidarity with the

refugees in late April (nr 99 – 7393), the misleading information about the plan to construct a new refugee centre to the Vägeva village (SL Õhtuleht 25.09), the idea that a country can participate in the refugee resettlement program with financial aid rather than the resettlement itself (SL Õhtuleht 10.09) etc. The government in those cases did neither confirm nor disprove those statements – in some cases the members of the Estonian Refugee Council commented on the claims, thus the government probably did not see it necessary to additionally make a statement, however the lack of response can also illustrate the general pattern of the government’s communication in the crisis: to form a position as little as possible and as much as necessary. When Postimees referred to the misleading article of “The Spiegel” on May twenty-six (Postimees nr 120-7414), which stated that Estonia has to admit more than 10 000 refugees and which turned out to be a test calculation, the FM and the MI formed a position in media about the need to participate in helping to find a solution in the crisis (Eesti Päevaleht 101, SL Õhtuleht 28.05), however, there was no clear reference to the Spiegel article nor an attempt to disprove the number or comment on it. The clarification was given from the Estonian Refugee Council (Postimees nr 121-7415) instead of the GCU or through a direct position in media through the PM or the MI. The formation of a position by the government in those cases would, however, have been crucial in order to prevent the spread of rumours and misconceptions.

#### **5.4. The creating and maintaining forces of the crisis**

The opinions regarding the main reasons which created and are involved in the maintenance of the refugee crisis varied among the ministers in the government. While the FM stated clearly that the European countries cannot be blamed in the maintenance of the crisis, the MI also saw fault in the Southern-European crisis. The PM avoided blaming anyone in particular from the EU, but addressed the causes from the outside.

#### 5.4.1. Fighting with the core reasons of the crisis

As already mentioned in point one, one of the main arguments of the government was the need to fight with the core reasons of the crisis. In most of the articles, which mentioned the reasons of the crisis, the invasion of ISIS in Syria and Iraq was mentioned as the core reason of the crisis (GCU 08.09, 09.09, 24.09 etc). The FM pointed out already shortly after the shipwreck in Lampedusa (Eesti Päevaleht nr 79), that it would be wrong to blame the other European countries in the crisis and that every country should contribute to solving the crisis. She also added that the instable situation in Libya, the activities of the human smugglers and the uncontrolled borders of EU remain a problem. Also, the PM addressed the human smugglers to be one of the core problems of the crisis (Postimees nr 133-7427). The MI also saw some responsibility in other EU member states, especially Greece and Italy, who are unable to control their borders (Eesti Päevaleht nr 138).

#### 5.4.2. Scaremongering

Alternatively, the domestic policy, especially the scaremongering among “one political party” (referred to as EKRE) was seen as a problem to hinder the management of the crisis, especially during the end of July when the first allocation of refugees to Estonia was decided. For example after claiming that 1064 refugees is too big number for Estonia, the PM also opposed the demagogy of EKRE and called for rationalism: “I also find irresponsible if one Parliament party spreads the hysteria about the approaching mass migration in Riigikogu. This is unacceptable – we will definitely not have a mass migration.”<sup>xxxv</sup> (SL Õhtuleht 10.06). Similar positions were reflected through other interviews with the PM and the MI, which is driven by the increasing polarization in the society and the scaremongering regarding the arrival of refugees.

### 5.4.3. Russia

In addition to the conventional reasons of the crisis, some unconventional issues were also pointed out. Russia was mentioned as a threat in the crisis once. The MI claimed: “Russia has not given the mandate for the UN that far, which the latter has applied for in order to intervene in Syria. We can only imagine why Russia has vetoed it.”<sup>«xxxvi</sup> (Postimees nr 205-7499).

### 5.4.4. The information shadowing

As referred to in the previous chapter, the absence of the government’s position was an underlying issue regarding the communication in topics where the formation of the position by the government would have been not only logical, but important in order to avoid the spread of rumours in the society. The ministers (the MI), however, did refer to the expectation of a more comprehensive communication through media only once. After the Second Implementation Package was decided, the MI explained the additional number of refugees being relocated to Estonia as following: “If Junkcer came out with his plan in spring, the situation was all not that bad yet. Only in August, 112 000 refugees came to EU. Even the EC did not expect so rapid escalation of the situation.”<sup>«xxxvii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht nr 173). This is the time, when the government had changed its hostile position regarding the quota system and had to explain the sudden decision for the allocation of refugees to the domestic audience.

### 5.4.5. The European Commission

In addition to directly referring to some actors, who cause and maintain the crisis, the EC was referred to indirectly in many cases to mismanage the crisis or causing additional problems. For example the PM when expressing the unfair quotas for Estonia said: “The



unproportionally big quotas create problems instead of solving them.<sup>“xxxviii</sup> (Postimees 133-7427) The disproportionately big number of refugees proposed on Estonia was seen as unfair and rather being counterproductive, since it increases the cleavage in the society. According to the PM “The unproportionally big quotas create opposition even in those people who otherwise would be ready to help the refugees.<sup>“xxxix</sup> (Postimees 133-7427)

## 5.5. The moral judgement of the crisis

As already pointed out, the general attitude of the Estonian government was to express an existence of a moral duty for participating in solving the refugee crisis on the basis of solidarity with the other EU member states as far as this does not harm the interests of Estonia, mainly if the quotas proposed by the EC are not too harsh for the country. However, the moral judgement about the need to help the other EU member states in sharing the burden in solving the crisis such as the need to express solidarity with the refugees in the crisis and the actual practical solutions proposed by the government were often contradicting each other.

### 5.5.1. Expressing ambiguity

Expectation to form an opinion: After the shipwreck in Lampedusa, there was no immediate response on the tragedy by the government in media. Already within the first days after the shipwreck, many European heads of states expressed their opinion and formed a moral position, which were referred to also in the Estonian media (Postimees nr 95-7389). Additionally, at the end of April, the head of the Estonian Human Rights Center formed a position in media and called for mutual solidarity with the refugees (Postimees nr 99-7393). However, this did not meet with a government response to form an unambiguous position stating the moral responsibilities of Estonia in the crisis. At the same time, there was an expectation for the government to form a clear position from the

other political parties. The oppositional Central Party for instance initiated the government to form a clearer position (Postimees nr 122-7416).

### 5.5.2. Helping refugees without allocation

The PM gave an ambiguous position on 22/04/2015: “Estonia has not supported the quotas in order to allocate the refugees between the member states. However, when looking at the world’s crisis in a broader sense and the Estonian position, we decided to help in the Ukrainian crisis and to give asylum.”<sup>xli</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht nr 77). Thus, one can see that on the one hand the PM expressed the Estonian position until then of not supporting the quota system, on the other hand pointing out that exceptions are possible and leaving both options open. Two days later, the FM formed a more concrete moral stand, which expressed more compassion with the refugees and called to see real people behind each number: “Talking about the subsequent horrible tragedy which happened on the Mediterranean sea, the numbers are used: 28 saved, more than 800 drowned. There is real person behind each number. Terrified person. Someone fleeing the violence. A desperate person.”<sup>xlii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 24.04, nr 79)

Thus one can see that the position of the FM was aimed to induce sympathy in the reader and express the Estonian moral responsibility to help in the crisis, however the following is more ambiguous. Talking about whether the countries which carry bigger burden in the crisis need to be helped out, she stated: “Helping the countries which carry too big burden – this needs further analysis yet...It is true that some countries carry unproportionally big burden...of course one has to find ways to support those countries...this is our common concern, which applies to all European countries regardless of their geographic location...however, sometimes it turns out from the media coverage, that the so-called allocation of the refugees on solidarity basis is really the main solution for the crisis..”<sup>xliii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht 24.04, nr 79)

On the one hand, the FM claimed that every country regardless of their location has to help in the crisis, at the same time, she did not state clearly that sharing the burden with

the allocation system was the best solution. The position of the PM was even more ambiguous – while stating the previous experience of Estonia of not participating in the allocation system, he also left open the possibility to do so in the future. Thus, there was no clear unambiguous statement and the reader might be rather confused in what the ministers want to say exactly.

### 5.5.3. Solidarity with the refugees and the EU

After reaching an agreement about the number of refugees to be resettled to Estonia between the Estonian government and the EC in July, the position of the government took a more concrete form. If previously only the FM formed some moral position on the crisis and even then it was rather ambiguous, from the second half of July the position of the PM and the MI, which previously had been ambiguous, expressed now more concretely solidarity with the refugees: similar positions that the Western-European heads of states (especially the position of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the position of the French president Francois Hollande).

Already on 22/07/2015, after the decision about the exact number of refugees to be resettled to Estonia was decided, the PM expressed: “Estonian society and authorities have the necessary capacity to integrate refugees. How well they will manage in our country depends on whether or not we are willing to give them a chance.” (GCU 20.07). The media announced the exact number of refugees, which were to be resettled to Estonia on 21/07/2015 (Postimees nr 166-7460). The MI, expressed the day later about the decision with the EC about the allocation of refugees to Estonia: “I do not want you to take it as a responsibility but so that you can show solidarity with Europe.”<sup>“xliviii”</sup> (Postimees nr 167 -7461). For a reader this sends out confusing messages: if during the previous months the government ministers had clearly expressed that the quota system was unfair for Estonia and the country should rather find alternative ways to help in the crisis, after the agreement had been reached with the EC about the allocation of refugees, the sudden position was that Estonia has the capability to integrate refugees and this should be an

opportunity for Estonia. The sudden change in the position makes an impression that the government's initial ambiguous position was driven by the attempt to, on the one hand, not irritate the conservative domestic reader while sending out messages that the quota system is unfair for Estonia. On the other hand, while understanding that the government's hands are tied (see Pierson, chapter three) and the allocation of refugees might be inevitable at the end, it is logical that the ministers sent out messages which talk about the solidarity with the other member states and leave the allocation option open.

Integrity of refugees with the Estonian people: During the next events, the driving forces for the government to form a moral judgement about the crisis seemed to be the fire in the Vao refugee centre at the beginning of September and the escalation of the crisis during August and September. After the fire in Vao, the PM expressed clearly sympathy with the residents of the Vao refugee center, stating: "Nobody should feel fear in Estonia."<sup>xliv</sup> (GCU 03.09). This statement expresses that the refugees are seen as an integral part of Estonia.

Solidarity with EU: Regarding the escalation of the crisis and the discussions around the additional resettlement programme of the refugees, the moral position of the government was firm. When answering to the question of the journalist, whether Estonia can refuse admitting refugees on its territory, the PM claimed: "Definitely Estonia cannot close its eyes for the people who are in trouble and to be solely the consumer of solidarity. The EU is not only a wallet, but first of all a union based on values. Taking into account our capabilities we can and have to help."<sup>xlv</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht nr 174). The latter statement defines clearly that EU is built on values and Estonian role is to look further from one's own benefits and to help in the crisis, meaning here that allocation of refugees is seen as a natural action. In addition to advertising the solidarity to the domestic audience, the PM also expresses the European unity now when meeting with its European partners. For example, when meeting with the PM of Latvia, the PM of Estonia introduces the Estonian position on solidarity: "Europe can overcome this crisis, if we manage to stand united and support one another. It is important that all member states contribute proportionally to their size. European solidarity is not a one-way street." (GCU, 11.09) Thus, the European

values and the unity of Europe had become an important moral issue in the rhetoric of the government, which replaced the previous voluntarism approach.

## **5.6. Solutions for the crisis**

Similarly as avoiding to take a clear moral position about the crisis at the beginning of the analysis period (from April to July), the government also took an ambiguous position about how to tackle the crisis until the end of July. As already seen, the PM gave an ambiguous position at the end of April, stating that Estonia should find a balanced compromise with the EC how to tackle the situation and that Estonia had not supported the mandatory quotas of the EC that far (Eesti Päevaleht nr 77). However, he also gave an example about how Estonia had given asylum to the Ukrainian refugees during the crisis. The position did not include a clear stand and sent out various messages: on the one hand Estonian hostility towards the quotas, on the other hand its previous practice to give asylum to the Ukrainian refugees.

The FM offered more clear position regarding the solutions to tackle the crisis already from the very beginning. According to her, the most important methods were defending the borders of the EU collectively, finding a sustainable solution in Libya and fighting against human trafficking on the Mediterranean Sea (Eesti Päevaleht nr 79).

### **5.6.1. Opposition to the quota system**

Incohesion between three government parties: Some position was formed by the end of May (Päevaleht nr 101), when the three governing parties (Reform Party, SDP and IRL) agreed that Estonia has to help the refugees in some way, however, the contribution of the state differed among the three parties. The position of IRL was the most conservative, opposing the allocation of refugees completely. A leading politician Margus Tsahkna from IRL commented about the contribution of Estonia in tackling the crisis as following: “How many refugees will we take, this has to be voluntary. There are methods agreed on

the EU-level how to solve the crisis. This does not have to be the resettlement of the refugees.... We have joined the EU based on the treaties and if some duties will be pushed on us now based on the qualified majority method – that would definitely be a precedent.”<sup>xlvi</sup> The Reform Party was more moderate in its position. The MI explained it as following: “The Estonian position in the EC should be that the quotas are not suitable for Estonia, but on the voluntary basis we can accept that Italy and Greece need our help in the current situation. We have to be based on our current capability to admit refugees. This year it is very limited.”<sup>xlvi</sup> The SDP at the same time was the most favorable towards the EC proposal. The head of SDP Sven Mikser explained the position of the party as following: “Estonia has to help the refugees and to take into account the suggestions of the EC and the capabilities of the country when admitting them.”<sup>xlvi</sup> In addition to that, all government parties agreed that an effort should be made to tackle the core reasons of the crisis: the war in the Middle-East, the human smugglers and the uncontrolled borders of the EU.

So, one can see a clear division between the government parties regarding the contribution of Estonia in tackling the crisis and finding a solution to it: IRL being the most conservative and opposing the relocation of refugees completely, SDP being in favor of the relocation and the suggestions of the EC, but also taking into account the Estonian capability to admit them and the Reform Party somewhere in the middle, opposing the quotas to be mandatory, but being ready to help on the voluntary basis.

The unfairness of the quotas: Also, during June, the position of the government had not changed and the main discussion went around the quotas. The PM saw the quotas not helping in solving the crisis but rather deepening it, since it would create a cleavage within the Estonian society. He commented on the quota system proposed by the EC as following: “The proposal is unfair for Estonia and we are not capable to cope with such a big number of people. Unproportionally big quotas create problems, not solve them.”<sup>xlix</sup> (Postimees nr 133-7427). The MI also addressed the same solutions already pointed out during the previous months in April and May: “One has to deepen the civil- and military

cooperation. One should focus on the core reasons of the crisis, which means the actions in the third countries, where the refugees are coming from.”<sup>1</sup>(SL Õhtuleht 10.06).

### 5.6.2. Resettlement of refugees

Similarly like in the case of forming a clearer moral position about the crisis from the end of July, the government also changed its position regarding how to tackle the crisis in most efficient way.

Additional resettlement programs: If previously the main position was to keep the quotas for Estonia as low as possible and fight with the core reasons of the crisis, the resettlement as an important measure to tackle the crisis had increased its importance. The MI mentioned the need for a new resettlement program, where also Estonia would have its part (Postimees nr 204-7498). He also admitted that Estonia would have the capability to admit more refugees: “If the proposal of the EC is 100 000, then we can take into account that this is an extra 200 people.”<sup>li</sup> (Postimees nr 205-7499) At the same time he also defended the old position that Estonia has to keep the quotas in the range that they suit the capabilities of Estonia: “...and we are not under pressure if our arguments are right...Fortunately we have good relationships with our colleagues and we can talk openly and directly.”<sup>liii</sup> In this way it looks like the ministers on the one hand, defends the position of the EC seeing it as inevitable that an additional number of refugees will be allocated to Estonia (and possibly keeping the way open for future allocations, thus not setting certain limits), but at the same time, coming back with the old argument to find a suitable option for Estonia while keeping the quotas low.

Calming down the local authorities: In addition to the quota system, the ministers also calmed down the local authorities, claiming that the government will help them with the allocation of refugees. According to the MI “The country will help the local municipalities, so that their burden is as low as possible.”<sup>liiii</sup> (Eesti Päevaleht nr 147).

### 5.6.3. European unity

The PM addressed even more clearly that Estonia as being part of Europe and sharing European values has to help in the resettlement, while he put the European integrity as more important than the number of refugees being resettled to Estonia (5.3. 1); GCU 09.09). At the same time, the need to tackle the core reasons of the problems in the origin countries of the refugees and the EU to act unanimously were pointed out. When talking about the meeting of the EU heads of states in Brussels at the end of May, the PM claimed: “Resolving the refugee crisis will not happen quickly or easily but if we work on it together, with conscientiousness and solidarity, we can begin to alleviate the situation”. (GCU 24.09)

## 5.7. The usage of interdiscursivity/intertextuality<sup>12</sup>

### 5.7.1. Reference to different agents

European Commission: The most frequently the government referred directly to the EC or Brussels – in approximately half of the cases when some actor was referred to. (Eesti Päevaleht nr 111 etc). When opposing the position of the Commission in terms of the mandatory quotas, the government also referred to other texts such as the founding documents of the EU (5.3.; Eesti Päevaleht nr 101), while the main idea in this case was to illustrate the logic behind opposing the mandatory quotas.

Domestic politics: The government also referred to the domestic conservative party EKRE, warning that frightening with the refugee-threat is counterproductive. EKRE is not directly mentioned, but it was clear whom is the government talking about (Postimees nr 146 -7440). In some other cases the government referred to misconceptions and rumours about the refugee crisis, which need to be disproved. For instance “the

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<sup>12</sup> Referring to (either directly or indirectly) to other texts via the given text.



aftermigration is a big myth that is spread” (Postimees nr 168-7462). The distributor of the rumour was EKRE in this case again.

### 5.7.2. Presence of discourses

Solidarity: Throughout the positions of the government, the most common prevailing discourse was the solidarity discourse<sup>13</sup>, which was becoming stronger when the crisis escalated and the resettlement of the refugees to Estonia became sure. The ministers referred to similar positions as the Western European heads of states for example drawing parallels with the refugee status of Europeans in the history (SL Õhtuleht 28.04) or the need to understand the difficulties of the people who escape the war, when the PM stated: “We also need to understand the destiny of those people, who have escaped the war and other horrors.”<sup>liv</sup> (SL Õhtuleht 10.06). The MI also referred to the proportionally small number of refugees being resettled to Europe compared to countries, which are close to Syria, which was also one of the main argument used by the Western European ministers: “In Lebanon 4.5. million people have to cope with 1.5 million refugees. In EU lives 500 million people and right now the helping of 100 000-160 000 refugees is speculated. In this light, to help 160 000 people compared to 500 million...”<sup>lv</sup> The need to show solidarity among EU member states (GCU 09.09, Tampere 11.09) and the tradition to solve problems in EU via negotiations and compromises (Eesti Päevaleht nr 174) was also present. Those positions were reflected after the meetings of the Estonian ministers with their European colleagues and can be assumed the solidarity discourse came from the Western European countries. Although other stakeholders, such as the Estonian diaspora abroad, the employers in Estonia and the Human Rights Organisations expressed their opinions through media, the government in most cases did not refer to them directly.

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<sup>13</sup> Addressing solidarity with the refugees and the other EU member states.

Utility: The position, which was reflected often by the employers, that the refugees can be beneficial for Estonia, were sometimes reflected through the positions of the government. (5.3.; Postimees nr 167-7461), representing the so-called utility discourse.<sup>14</sup> The increase of the utility discourse in media was also mentioned by Marit Valk (Valk 2015: 78) The PM explained the arrival of refugees as a possibility for the municipalities to express solidarity with Europe, however, it seems likely that it actually meant possibility in broader sense, since the negotiations with the municipalities were based on whether particular municipalities have vacant jobs or not and the possibility to deal with the shortage of labour was present in the public discussions. In one case, the PM also directly mentioned the employers and drew a direct parallel with the population problems of Estonia: "Several businesses have declared their readiness to offer employment to the refugees as soon as they arrive in Estonia," Rõivas said, adding that this strengthens his faith that Estonian society can adequately deal with the migrant crisis. "The government aims to ensure that the ratio of public to private employment corresponds to the changes in the working-age population of Estonia." (GCU 16.09) As the shrinking population has been a popular topic in public discussions already for longer time, it is likely that this plays also a role in the perception of the migration trends in broader sense and the enterprises which are in need of labour play a role here as well.

More generally, since all of the formentioned stakeholders adressed the need to express solidarity with the refugees and this became also the dominant position of the government at the end of the summer, one can assume that those positions in addition to the pressure from the EC played some role in shaping the government's position into more solidary direction.

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<sup>14</sup> The claim that the refugees are economically beneficial for Estonia.

## 5.8. The cohesion of the opinions presented in the text

### 5.8.1. Among the government parties

As already seen in chapter 5.3, the ministers within the government presented different opinions regarding the crisis at the first half of the analysis period. While the SDP was the most favorable towards the refugees and IRL the most conservative, the Reform Party maintained a middle stand. This can be probably a cause of the Reform Party to lie more in the middle in the political spectrum but also the Reform Party to be the party of the PM, while the PM is expected to balance opinions within the government. From the end of July, when the allocation of refugees was decided, the positions of the three government parties also inevitably changed and became closer to each other. IRL which previously had opposed the quota system as whole, had to now adjust its position to the changed situation, however it still maintained the most cautious line. Tsahkna summarized the position of the party as following: “We live in an open world and all this which is present in Europe sooner or later also reaches to Estonia. Thus, we have the duty to first discuss the problems related to immigration first among ourselves and if needed, also to establish necessary rules.”<sup>lvi</sup> (Postimees nr 195-7489)

### 5.8.2. Among the ministers

What applies to the Reform Party, the opinions between the ministers varied remarkably. The MI maintained the most conservative line. Even though, his positions also expressed more solidarity compared to the beginning of summer, he remained quite critical about the possible additional allocations in the future. For example, when commenting on the upcoming meeting of the EU MIs: he claimed “I really hope that the EC will not come back again with such a position which is already rejected by the heads of states.”<sup>lvii</sup> (Postimees nr 205-7499) At the same time, the FMs (both Pentus-Rosimannus and Kaljurand) were more open for even bigger solidarity with the refugees. When Pentus-

Rosimannus expressed already in April the need to be more humane in perceiving the crisis (chapter 5.3; Eesti Päevaleht 24.04, nr 79), Kaljurand expressed that unlike the MI, she would see the distribution mechanism of refugees as more flexible. When commenting on the claim of the MI that Estonia has a limit in the number of refugees it can admit, Kaljurand claimed: “For sure the MI is acknowledgeable to say that. However, I cannot exclude the possibility that also we can have one day the case when we need to admit more people.” (Postimees nr 207-7501)

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As a general conclusion, it turned out from the analysis that the government's communication can be divided into two periods: the first period from the end of April until the end of July when the main topic was the allocation of refugees between the member states and the negotiations with the EC regarding the mandatory quota system. The position of the government was to oppose the obligatory distribution between the member states and to stand for voluntarism regarding the solidarity with the refugees. At the same time, the need to tackle the crisis somehow was addressed, while all ministers agreed that Estonia does not have the capability to allocate the initial number of refugees proposed by the EC (1064). At the same time, the opinions within the ministers were not coherent and they sent out ambiguous and confusing messages. If the FM Pentus-Rosimannus addressed more the humane dimension of the crisis, the MI and the PM mainly focused on the numbers and how to convince the EC that the quotas for Estonia are unfair. In this regard, they identified the Estonian position with the position of other Central and Eastern European countries, while the role of the government was seen to convince the sceptical Western-European countries in the accuracy of the Estonian position. Meanwhile, the MI and the PM also sent out messages, which took the Western European countries as examples in participating more into solidarity as was proposed by the EC. At the same time, it was visible that the sentences expressed uncertainty while sending out ambiguous messages. From the end of July - after the first number of refugees to be sent to Estonia was clear - there occurred a change in the communication patterns. The sentences expressed more confidence and instead of opposing Estonian and EU position, expressed the unity and solidarity of the European countries, seeing the European solution as the only feasible one. Although the refugees were depicted as victims of war and innocent sufferers also before the end of July, the solidarity with the refugees increased after the number of refugees being resettled to Estonia was clear. After the fire in Vao, the PM sent out unambiguous messages while declaring that the refugees are an integral part of Estonia. Instead, opposing the irresponsible politicians (mainly

EKRE), people who are hostile with refugees and the difference between Estonian people and humane Western European people occurred. The ministers called people for rationalism, opposing the scaremongering and the rumours in the society and defining what is the normative opinion.

The analysis revealed a few important aspects which are relevant regarding the possible societal impact of the communication.

- 1) The ministers did not react to many of the events (including media events) which would have needed comments from the government such as the misleading article of Spiegel about the allocation of 10,000 refugees to Estonia, the construction of refugee centre to Vägeva etc. The ministers formed an official position when there was an important meeting on the EU level. Only the fire in Vao refugee centre resulted in the reaction from the government, other events which happened on EU level and could have been commented also by ministers, were not. At the same time, the opposition parties, human rights organisations, Estonian diaspora, employers and other interest groups took the role in commenting on those events and thus provoking the media discussion. For the public, this can send out a message that the government forms positions only when some new decision is made on the EU level and the government itself has no strong personal agenda.
- 2) The ministers changed their position suddenly: while during the first months, the leading position of the ministers was to oppose the mandatory quotas and to convince the EU in the accuracy of the voluntarism, the position changed after the First Implementation Package was agreed on. Although the ministers claimed that a good solution was reached for Estonia, the MI and the FM claimed later that a permanent allocation mechanism can happen. At the same time, strongly emphasizing on the European solidarity and contrasting people inside Estonian society, while labeling which is the normative action actually probably increases the cleavages in the society. (see Darley on labelling: 83: 20-33) On the one hand, it is logical that the crisis escalated quickly throughout the year and thus nobody could expect in April which methods are needed in September to tackle the crisis.

It is also probable that the government understood in July that since the allocation of refugees to Estonia is inevitable, addressing the solidarity would be more productive in order to reduce the tensions in the society. On the other hand, one can also speculate that the sudden change in the position and the contrasting manner in communication can induce more distrust towards the government and increase the polarization further, since part of the people feel not corresponding to the normative. At the same time, the communication of the government can create an impression that the solidarity is imposed by EU and the government solely follows the more influential European solidarity discourse, which supports the Habermas's theory (Habermas 1991) of the state as an advocate of interest groups.

- 3) The incohesion of the opinions inside the government probably hindered forming a strong position and being an influential role model in the society. As already seen, the opinions of the three government parties differed. While all three parties eventually agreed on the allocation system, the differences of opinions existed also between ministers inside one political party (Pevkur, Kaljurand). At the same time, the political scandals, the increase of the right wing party EKRE and the shrinking popularity of the government parties probably also contributed to the weak position. Even though the ministers started being more proactive in the communication from the end of July (taking as an example the tour around Estonia by the MI and the MSA) to introduce to the municipalities the allocation system of refugees and to decrease the threats, one can assume that this is already the time when the cleavage in the society had increased and providing accurate information, as well as forming concrete and strong positions, one could argue, would have been needed earlier when the allocation of refugees was already foreseen, even if not certain.

As a general conclusion one can argue that the government had a rather weak role in shifting the public communication, being in an expectant position, waiting for the final decision from the EU level. If some positions were sent out, they were rather ambiguous and confusing and did not probably convince the reader. If Pierson (2004) claimed that

the aim of the government in a modern state is to mediate between different stakeholders one can claim that the Estonian government did so up to certain extent, but this was rather marginal and not persistent. From the end of July, however (some signs already showed that from the end of June), the government had taken much more proactive role in supporting the European solidarity while for a reader this can create an impression that the solidarity is an interest which originates from the Western European states and was solely tried to be sold off to the Estonian population. This can support the argument of Pierson (2004) that the hands of the governments in regard of immigration are tied and the main decisions are made outside the country – this is certainly the case regarding the allocation of refugees since the decisions are made on the EU level and once decided, the national governments have to implement them while explaining to the domestic audience the necessity of such solution. Although the allocation of refugees, decided in the European Council on 20/07 needed a consensus of all member states (EU-2015/1601), there was inevitably pressure from the Western European states to change the sceptical opinion of the Central-Eastern European states, which was evident during the negotiation process. In this case one can argue that the Estonian government who was critical at first regarding the quota system, agreed with it since the opposition to it would have been with too high cost – for example the references of the Western-European heads of states to the possible collapse of the Schengen system were highly anticipated options by the Estonian government. (Tampere 23.09) Thus, it is logical that the Estonian state accepted the allocation of refugees as a less costly option as would be other alternatives (worsening the relations with the Western European partners, the collapse of the Schengen system etc). At the same, the analysis revealed an accuracy of the the theory of Habermas (1991), namely that the government tried to sell off the interest of EU (primarily the Western European states) while creating an impression that this was the public interest – weather the Western European states convinced the Estonian politicians in it or accepting this conception was just inevitable outcome. This can be seen when looking at the dynamics of the communication where the initial hostility towards the allocation system changed when the decision about allocation was made on the EU level at the end of July, when the position of the ministers turned a lot more favorable towards solidarity, while the possible



additional allocation was mentioned as a feasible option even by more conservative ministers such as the MI. (Postimees nr 205-7499) This indicates that the positions which in April-May would have seemed radical, turned to be favored arguments by the ministers in the perception of solutions for the crisis, while the change of the position clearly correlated in this sense with the decision about the allocation.

At the same time, what applies to the communication of the government during the first months, one can argue that the ministers were rather entrapped with the conservative public opinion and tried to appeal to it, while at the same time, cautiously also addressing the solidarity. One can also speculate that this was probably aimed by leaving all options open while balancing the confronting interests in some way. In general, however, the government was relatively inactive during the first months and one can assume that the lack of information facilitated the spread of rumours and misconceptions in the society and increased the cleavage which in a later face is harder to overcome. In addition, since the government's main position during the first months was to oppose the quota system, the contrasting of the opponents of the quota system in the later phase is most probably countereffective and might increase the distrust with the government and the allocation system in general.

## 7. Conclusion

The present MA thesis analysed the public communication of the Estonian government regarding the refugee crisis during the period 19/04-06/10 2015. The positions of the Foreign Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Prime Minister in the government press releases and the most read daily newspapers in Estonia were taken into consideration.

Taking into account the research questions, the analysis revealed the following:

1) The main triggering forces for the government to form a public position were the decisions of the meetings on the EU level, while other events – such as media events or other crucial events which triggered public discussion got a reaction from the government only in exceptional cases (one of such example was the fire in the Vao refugee centre).

2) The communication from April until the end of July was infrequent and the moral position of the government was rather weak. The main position of all the three ministers was to oppose the mandatory quota system and the need to convince the European Commission in the accuracy of the voluntarism. From the end of July, the position changed and solidarity was addressed with EU and the refugees. The ministers contrasted from the end of July the conservative and the liberal population, responsible and irresponsible politicians, Estonia and the Western European countries. The moral position, which previously was to help the refugees without allocation, turned in favour of the allocation and addressed the integrity of people in the Estonian society regardless of their background. The change in the discourse can be attributed to the fact that the government's hands are tied regarding the immigration, supporting the immigration theory of Pierson (2004). The government most likely took over the more influential EU discourse and advertised it to the domestic audience, supporting the modern state functions theory of Habermas (1991).

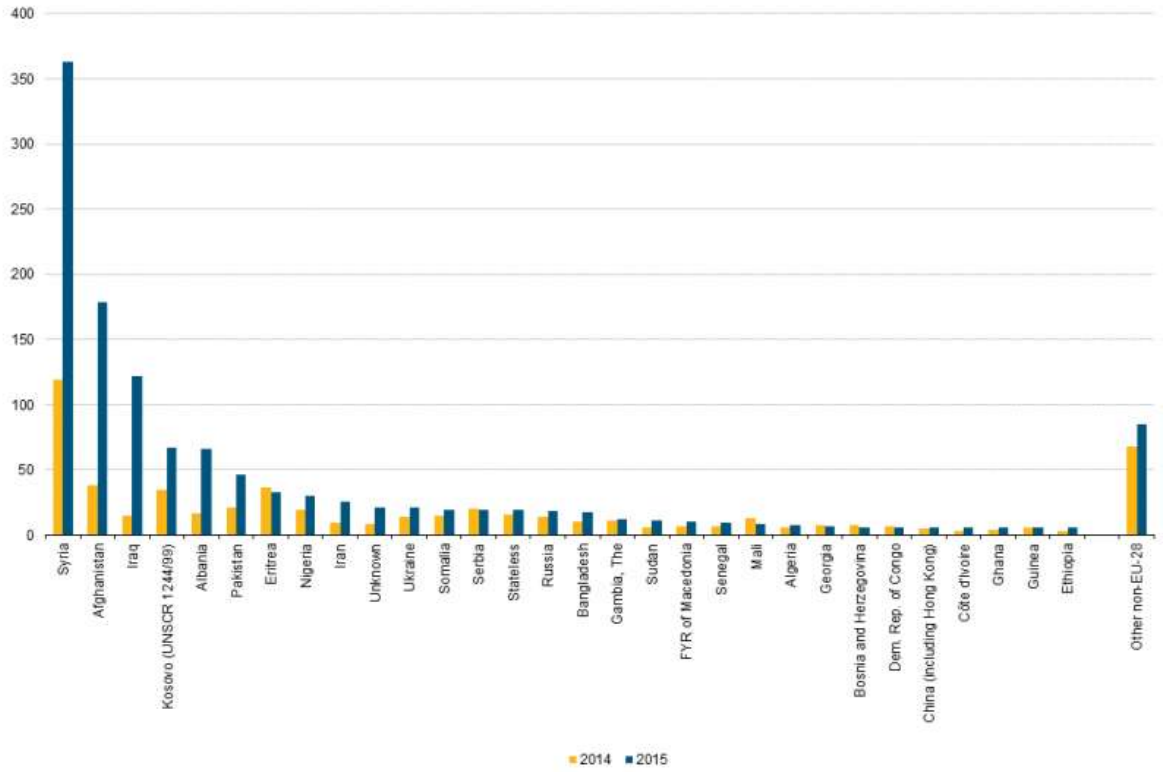
3) The communication of the government was inconsistent during the first months – around the meetings of the ministers on the EU level, there were several articles/press releases in three to four subsequent days while in between there were periods when there was no article/press release for several weeks. From the end of July the communication was more consistent, however, this is probably due to the fact that there were more regular meetings on the EU level and the crisis itself had escalated.

4) It can be speculate that the initial passivness of the communication was due to the uncertainty in the society – the government was in an expectant positions and did not want to take an active role before the allocation of refugees was certain. From the end of July, the allocation was certain and possible future allocations were forseen, thus the government acted based on the current situation and took more active role in the public communication.

In general one can say that the government's initial passive role in the communication turned active in the middle of the summer and this can be attributed to the fining of the allocation on the EU level. However, one can speculate that taking a more active role in the communication from the beginning would have prevented the spread of misconceptions in the society and would have facilitated the later explanation of the allocation of refugees to Estonia for the domestic audience. An additional value for the future research would be to comparatively analyse the self-interpretation of the communication by the Estonian government which remained out of the scope of the current thesis.

# Appendix 1

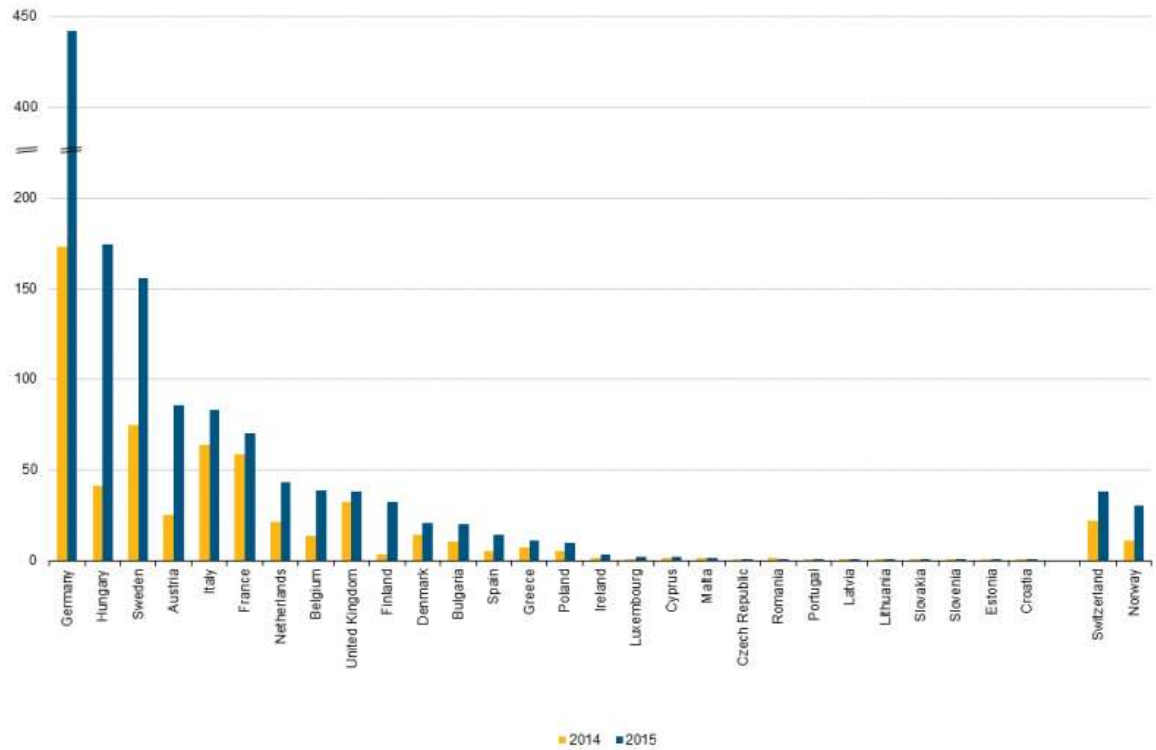
EU asylum statistic: the origin country of the asylum applicants among member state  
 (Source: Eurostat Last Modified: 3/03/2016)



## Appendix 2

Number of asylum applications per EU country 2014/2015

(Source: Eurostat; LastModified: 03/03/2016)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)

## Appendix 3

The Western Balkan route

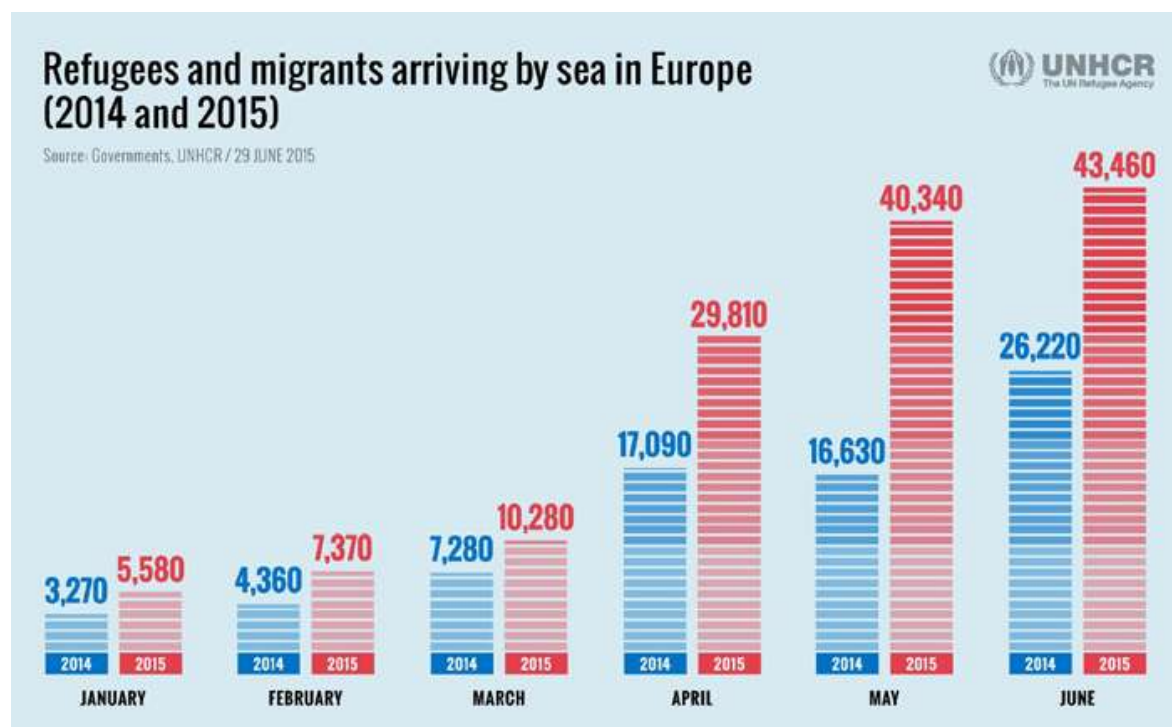
(Source: Frontex 2015)



## Appendix 4

Refugees and Migrants arriving by sea in Europe (2014 and 2015)

(Source: UNHCR 29/06/2015)



## Appendix 5

### **The list of abbreviations:**

CDA – critical discourse analysis

EKRE – Eestimaa Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

FM – Foreign Minister

GCU – Government Communication Unit

IRL – Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit

MI – Minister of the Interior

PM – Prime Minister

SDP – Social Democratic Party



## Appendix 6

### List of articles and press releases used

#### POSTIMEES

Mellik, J. „Euroopa annab põgenike päästmiseks raha juurde“; 25.04 nr 95 (7389)

Eslas, U. „Eesti peab pagulasi aitama!"; 30.04 nr 99 (7393)

Tagel, L. „Euroliit tahab umber jagada 40 000 pagulast"; 28.05 nr 122 (7416)

Einmann, A. „Der Spiegel: Eesti peaks kvoodi järgi vastu võtma kuni 10 000 põgenikku!“ 26.05.2015

„Eesti võtab esimeses etapis vastu 150 pagulast“; 21.07nr 166 (7460)

„Ministrid otsisid pagulasküsimuses abikäsi“; 22. 07, nr 167 (7461)

Ammas, A. „Pagulaste vastuvõtuks käib kompav ettevalmistus“; 23. 07, nr 168 (7462)

Pevkur, H. „Pevkur lubas, et pagulasi ei paigutata ühte kohta kokku“; 24. 07 nr 169 (7463)

Einmann, A. „Valitsus pole nõus seni nimetatud kvootidega“; 10.06, nr 133 (7427)

Pevkur, H. „Eesti suudab kahe aastaga vastu võtta 156 põgenikku“; 12.06, nr 135 (7429)

Pevkur, H. „Siseministrid ei langetanud pagulasküsimuses otsuseid“; 17.06, nr 139 (7433)

Kaldoja, E. „Pagulaste vastuvõtmine jääb vabatahtlikuks“; 27.06, nr 146 (7440)

Mihelson, H. „326 „Pagulase vastuvõtmine näib Eestile üle jõu käivat“; 15.05, nr 111 (7405)

Tsahkna, M. „Tsahkna sõnul tuleb kehtestada pagulastele reeglid“; 25.08.2015 nr 195 (7489)

Pevkur, H. „Pevkur ei välista uut pagulaste jaotuse ettepanekut“; 4.09 nr 204 (7498)

Ehrlich, K.; Pulver, A.; Herm, T; „Kuri inimene süütas pagulaste maja Vaol“; 4.09 nr 204 (7498)

Sinikalda, M. „Eesti suudaks vastu võtta veel 200 põgenikku“; 05.09 nr 205 (7499)

Kund, O. „Eestil tuleb muutuda humaansemaks.“ 08.09. nr 207 (7501)

Pevkur, H. „EL-i sise- ja justiitsministrid jõudsid kokkuleppele“; 23.09 nr 220 (7514)

Rõivas, T. „Eesti ei taasta piirikontrolli“; 01.10. nr 227 (7521)

## **EESTI PÄEVALEHT**

Poom, R. „Euroopa Liidul pole inimrände laine vastu ühtki uut ja head ideed“; 22. 04, nr 77

Pentus-Rosimannus, K. „Tähelepanu põhjustele, mitte ainult tagajärgedele“; 24.04, nr 79

Jaagant, U. „Valitsus on pagulaste aitamises üksmeelel“; 27.05, nr 101

Jaagant, U. „Eesti on pagulaste kahvliis, komisjoni pakutud kvoot ületab võimet kümme korda“; 28.05, nr 102

Jaagant, U. „Eesti läheb küsima sadakonda pagulast“; 09.06, nr 110

Pöld, A. „Pevkur: nii emotsionaalset kohtumist pole ma veel näinud“; 21.07, nr 138

Maran, K. „Ministrite Tsahkna ja Pevkuri „pagulastuur“ läks tuliseks küll Tartus, aga mitte Ida-Virumaal“; 22.07, nr 139

Jaagant, U. „ÜRO esindaja: eestlased ei paneks tuhandet pagulast tänavatel tähelegi“; 10.06, nr 111

Jaagant, U. „Eesti võimud valmistuvad pagulaste vastuvõtmiseks peamiselt ootamisega“; 16.06, nr 115

Pevkur, H. „Pagulaste arv ilmselt ülemkogul ei selgu“; 17.06, nr 116

Pöld, A. „Missugune on pagulaste teekond Eestisse?“ 3.08 (nr 147)

Kruuse, M. „Vao keskuse elanik: hirm on, ei tea, mis juhtub järgmisel korral,“ 4.09 (nr 170)

Jaagant, U. “150 pagulast, 373 pagulast...Unustage need arvud. Juncker plaanib automaatset jaotamist.” 9.09 (nr 173)

Jaagant, U. „150 pagulast pole piir, pm Rõivas tahab Eesti vastuvõtuvõimet arendada,”

10.09 (nr 174)

Poom, R. „Sakslased Eesti piiri valvama?” 25. 09 (nr 185)

## **SL ÕHTULEHT**

Haravee, J. „Euroopa Komisjon kasvatas Eestisse saata tahetavate põgenike arvu üleöö tuhandeni“; 28.04

Haravee, J. „Suur saladus: mitu pagulast siis Eestisse ära mahuks“; 10.05

Randla, S. „Umbmäärase tulnukavoolu pimesi vastuvõtuga ei tohiks keegi nõus olla. See ei peaks olema Eestisse Elama äriplaan“, 29.05

Suviste, M. „Kirik aitab. Kogudused valmistuvad pagulasi vastu võtma.“ 29.07

„Vao elanik: süütaja ohustab ka meid!“, 04.09

Rõivas, T. „Eesti võtab vastu 523 pagulast“, 09.09

Tohver, A. „Eesti saab end pagulastest vabaks osta?“, 10.09

Tohver, A. „Vägevale võib kerkida pagulaskeskus,” 25.09

„Rõivas: Eesti ei taasta piirikontrolli Läti ja Soomega!“ 01.10

„Valitsus: Eesti on pagulaste vastuvõtmiseks valmis!“ 09.10

## **PRESS RELEASES**

“Prime Minister Rõivas: Member States should have the right to decide the number of refugees” (GCU), Stockholm, 27.05.2015

Vaher, H. “Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas en route to the European Council meeting,” 24.06.2015

Vaher, H. “Rõivas introduced Estonia’s positions concerning refugees to the President of the European Parliament,” 25.06.2015

Vaher, H. “The heads of state and government reached an agreement to implement a voluntary approach when accepting refugees,” 26.06.2015

“Valitsus sai ülevaate Euroopa Ülemkogul kokku lepitud tegevuskavast pagulaskriisi lahendamisel” (GCU), 30.06.2015

“Prime Minister Rõivas: the meeting of EU Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs provided the required clarity” (GCU), 20.07.2015

Vaher, H. “Peaminister Rõivas: Mitte keegi ei peaks end Eestis ebaturvaliselt tundma,” 09.09.2015

“Valitsus arutas Euroopa rändekriisi ja tegevusi pagulaste vastuvõtmisel” (GCU),  
08.09.2015

Vaher, H. “Rõivas: Eesti on valmis Euroopa rändekriisi lahendamisse solidaarselt  
panustama,” 09.09.2015

Tampere, A. “Prime Ministers of Estonia and Latvia discuss Juncker’s proposals to solve  
European Migrant Crisis,” 11.09.2015

“Prime Minister Rõivas to employers: I appreciate your contribution towards solving the  
migrant crisis” (GCU), 16.09.2015

“Peaminister Rõivas Jean-Claude Junckerile: Euroopa Liit peab rohkem tegema Süüria  
naabruses” (GCU), 16.09.2015

Tampere, A. “Prime Minister Rõivas: The EU must support the neighbouring countries of  
Syria to reduce the migration pressure on Europe,” 23.09.2015

Tampere, A. “Prime Minister Rõivas in Brussels: European Council achieved consensus  
on next steps in solving migrant crisis,” 24.09.2015

“Prime Minister Rõivas: Luxembourg’s EU Presidency has done a good job during the  
migrant crisis” (GCU), 25.09.2015

## Appendix 7

### Refugee crisis timeline

**19/04/2015** – A ship with more than 800 migrants drowns near the island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean Sea

**20/04/2015** – European Commission proposed a 10-point plan to tackle the crisis

**23/04/2015** – Emergency Summit of EU heads of states

**30/04/2015** – The head of the Estonian Human Rights Centre Kari Käsper calls for solidarity with the refugees in media

**26/05/2015** – “The Spiege” publishes a test calculation of the European Commission which states that Estonia has to resettle over 10,000 refugees on its territory, which spreads in Estonian media distorted as “Estonia has to take 10,000 refugees”

**16/06/2015** – The meeting of the EU Ministers of the Interior regarding the refugee crisis

**27/05/2015** - The European Commission agrees on the First Implementaion Pact on the distribution of the refugees among the EU member states. The Estonian share is 1064 according to the plan.

**26-27/06/2015** – The European Council meeting regarding the refugee crisis

**09/06/2015** – The Estonian government decided not to agree with the resettlement plan proposed by the European Commission

**13/07/2015** – The Hungarian Government announces that the country starts erecting a fence on its border with Serbia to tackle the uncontrolled influx of migrants to its terroitry

**20/07/2015** – The EU member states reach to an agreement with the European Commission regarding the number of the refugees to be resettled among the Member States. The Estonian share will be 150 refugees.

**24/08/2015** – Germany announces it will suspend the Dublin regulation and will not set limits to the Syrian refugees to enter the country. The statement immediately receives critic across Europe and beyond

**27/08/2015** – Austria announces more than 70 refugees found dead in a truck found from its territory.

**End of august-beginning of September** – thousands of refugees are stuck in the Keleti Palyaudvar railway station of Budapest, since the Hungary denies their right to exit the country, referring to the Dublin regulation

**02/09/2015** – pictures of a drown Syrian boy found from the Turkish coast spread virally in the world media, creating reactions like “Refugees welcome” all over the world

**03/09/2015** – fire in the Vao refugee centre in Estonia

**04/09/2015** – more than thousand of migrants start marching from Hungary towards Austria, after being trapped in Keleti Palyaudvar railway station for days

**09/09/2015** – The second Implementation Package is decided on the EU level. The Estonian share is additional 373 refugees in addition to the 150 previously agreed. An initiative that a country can contribute financially to the refugee crisis instead of participating in the distribution program of the refugees

**13/09/2015** – Germany reintroduces border control with Austria. Several countries introduce border controls after that within EU

**23/09/2015** – The French President Francois Hollande warns the Central- and Eastern European countries, who are critical towards the mandatory distribution system, that if



they question solidarity, they should also question their place as the receivers of the EU funds

**06/10/2015** – The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Angela Merkel and the President of the French Republic, Francois Hollande give a public speech in front of the European Parliament calling for mutual solidarity among EU member states to solve the crisis together

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## Endnotes

- <sup>i</sup> Aidates sõjapõgenikke nende kodule lähemal, vähendame me rändesurvet Euroopale
- <sup>ii</sup> Arvude taga on päris inimesed.
- <sup>iii</sup> Olukorras, kus inimesed upuvad traagiliselt peame tegelema just selle küsimuse lahendamisega...
- <sup>iv</sup> Eesti riik kaitseb kõigi siin elavate inimeste õigusi.
- <sup>v</sup> me pole võimelised nii suurte inimhulkadega toime tulema.
- <sup>vi</sup> Hetkel panustamegi sellele, kuidas saaks EK-le selgeks teha, et need numbrid on ebaõiglased
- <sup>vii</sup> Me ei pea enam vaidlema valemite üle, saame keskenduda probleemi tuumale ning valmistada inimeste aitamiseks.
- <sup>viii</sup> Me peame suutma näidata skeptilisele maadele, kes nõudsid kohustust ja kvoote, et ka vabatahtlikult on võimalik tulemust saavutada.
- <sup>ix</sup> Nad võtavad nädalaga rohkem pagulasi vastu kui Komisjoni pakutud arv kahe aasta peale.
- <sup>x</sup> Pandora laeka jutt ei ole minu jaoks väga sisukas jutt. Kõik mõistavad, et on vaja tegeleda tekkepõhjusega, et inimestel ei oleks vaja kodust ära tulla.
- <sup>xi</sup> Lõuna-Eestis on tunda ikka, et infot on vähe.
- <sup>xii</sup> Mis aga eristan Eesti avalikku arvamust nende riikide omast, on see, et sealsetel inimestel on inimlikkust palju rohkem.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Meil on vastutustundetuid poliitikuid – ma ei hakka nimesid nimetama, kes kütavad vaenu ja vihkamist.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Kõik nägid kolmeaastase poisi surnukeha. Kuidas saab pärast seda veel sõjapõgenike kohta midagi halvasti öelda? Ma ei saa aru, mis inimesed need on. Ma kutsun üles kõiki normaalselt mõtlemaid inimesi: avaldage oma arvamust näiteks sotsiaalmeedias.
- <sup>xv</sup> Normaalselt mõtlemaid inimesi
- <sup>xvi</sup> vastutustundetuid poliitikuid, kes külvavad vihkamist ja vaenu
- <sup>xvii</sup> sealsetel inimestel on inimlikkust palju rohkem
- <sup>xviii</sup> Õnneks on meil oma kolleegidega head suhted, saame otse ja avatult rääkida.
- <sup>xix</sup> Eesti kaitstes oma seisukohta, et me ei toeta kohustuslikke kvoote ja soovime leida lahendust vabatahtlikult panustades. Kuid näiteks Rootsi ütles, et neil pole Komisjoni pakutud numbritega probleemi...Seega on erinevatel riikidel erinevad mured.
- <sup>xx</sup> Oleme valmis aitama, aga meetod selleks ei saa olla Brüsseli käsk.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Ettepanek on Eesti suhtes ebaõiglane ja me pole võimelised nii suurte inimhulkadega toime tulema. Ebaproportsionaalselt suured kvoodid tekitavad probleeme juurde, mitte ei lahenda neid.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Ma ei tahaks ülemkogule minna kindla numbriga. Kui meil on kindel number, ei ole meil ruumi läbirääkimiseks.“
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Siseministrite kohtumisel ei jõutud ühise otsuseni. Debatt oli kohati laialivalguv, suur hulk riike jätsid välja ütlemata, kas nad toetavad kohustuslikke kvoote.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Kui me läheme sinna kaasas üks number, siis see paneb meid endid väga lukku ja meil ei ole mänguruumi.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Kui minnakse küsima liiga väikest hulka, jääb mulje võltssolidaarsusest.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Mõista tuleb ka nende inimeste saatust, kes on põgenenud sõja või teistsuguste koleduste eest. Oma võimaluste piires tuleb meilgi leida endas avastust, et probleemi lahendamisele kaasa rääkida.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Sõnum on endiselt see, et see on üks osa Euroopa solidaarsusest ja ma näen siin omavalitsuste jaoks võimalust, mitte kohustust.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Nad tulevad siia kusagile korterisse, hakkavad elama oma tavapärasel elul. Nad kindlasti ei ole kõik ühes kohas.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Pandora laeka jutt ei ole minu jaoks väga sisukas jutt. Kõik mõistavad, et on vaja tegeleda tekkepõhjusega, et inimestel ei oleks vaja kodust ära tulla.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Euroopa on kriisis, millele ei ole loota kiiret lahendust. Sellises olukorras on Euroopa ühtsus kriitilise tähtsusega, et ellu viia kompleksset ja pikaajalist plaani.

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<sup>xxxi</sup> Euroopa Liit peab senisest oluliselt jõulisemalt tegelema rändelaine algpõhjustega päritoluriikides, suunates sinna humanitaarabi, võideldes inimkaubandusega ja osaledes rahutagamissmissioonidel. Piirid tuleb saada kontrolli alla ning luua võimalused Süüria rahuprotsessiks.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ma kuulasin majutuskeskuses elavate inimeste lugusid ja nende lugude ühisosa on põgenemine sõja eest, unistus oma kodust ja töökohast ning hirm võõraviha ees...Mitte keegi ei peaks end Eestis ebatavaliselt tundma.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Eesti on osa Euroopast ja meile on omased euroopalikud väärtused.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Praegu on aeg näidata üles solidaarsust, kus põgenike jaotusvalem ei ole enam vaidlusküsimus.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Vastutustundetuks pean ma aga ka seda, kui üks parlamendi erakond lubab endale Riigikogu kõnetoolist külvata hüsteeriat lähenevast massirändest. See on lubamatu – mingit massirännet meil kindlasti oodata ei ole, rahustab valitsusjuht avalikkust.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Venemaa tõttu pole tulnud ÜRO-lt seni mandaati EL-le, mida viimane on taotlenud sekkumiseks Süürias. Võime vaid ette kujutada, miks Vmaa on vetostanud või olnud poolt ÜRO mandaadi andmisel.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Kui Juncker oma plaaniga kevadel välja tuli, polnud olukord veel nii hull. Ainuüksi augustis tuli EL-l 112 000 pagulast. Nii kiiret olukorra eskaleerumist ei ennustanud ka EK.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Ebaoproportsionaalselt suured kvoodid tekitavad probleeme juurde, mitte ei lahenda neid.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Kohustuslikud kvoodid tekitavad Eestis vastuseisu isegi neis inimestes, kes muidu oleksid nõus pagulasi abistama.

<sup>xl</sup> Eesti pole toetanud kvote, mille alusel pagulased liikmesriikide vahel ära jaotada. „aga vaadates maailma kriise laiemalt ja Eesti seisukohti, otsustasime Ukraina puhul tulla vastu ja pakkuda varjupaigavõimalusi.

<sup>xli</sup> Nädalavahetusel Vahemerel toimunud järjekordest kohutavast tragöödiast rääkides kasutatakse arvude keelt: 28 pääsenut, üle 800 uppunu. Iga arvu taga on päris inimene. Hirmunu. Vägivalla eest põgenev. Meeleheitel.

<sup>xlii</sup> Liiga suurt koormat kandvate riikide aitamine vajab enne põhjalikku analüüsi. On tõsi, et osad riigid kannavad ebaoproportsionaalselt suurt koormat...muidugi tuleb otsida viise, kuidas toetada nende riikide pingutusi...see on meie ühine mure, mis puudutab kõiki Euroopa riike, sõltumata nende geograafilisest asukohast...meediakajastusest tundub aga teinekord, et põgenike nii-öelda solidaarne laialijagamine liikmesriikide vahel ongi kogu selle probleemistiku peamine teema.”

<sup>xliii</sup> Ma ei taha, et te võtaksite seda kohustusena, vaid et see oleks võimalus näidata üles solidaarsust Euroopaga.

<sup>xliiv</sup> Mitte keegi ei peaks end Eestis ebatavaliselt tundma.

<sup>xliv</sup> Kindlasti ei saa Eesti sulgeda silmi hätta sattunud liikmesriikide ees ja olla vaid solidaarsuse tarbija. El ei ole pelgalt rahakott, vaid ennekõike väärtustel põhinev liit. Oma võimaluste piires saame ja peame aitama.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Kui palju me siia pagulasi võtame, peab olema vabatahtlik. EL-i tasemel on vastu võetud meetmed, kuidas saab seda probleemi lahendada. Selleks ei pea olema nende riiki vastuvõtmine. Oleme EL-iga liitunud oma aluslepingute alusel. Kui nüüd pannakse kvalifitseeritud häälteenamuse tulemusel meile mingid kohustused, siis see oleks kindlasti pretsedent.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Euroopa Komisjoni ees võiks Eesti pakutav lahendus olla, et kvoodid meile ei sobi, aga vabatahtlikult oleme valmis aktsepteerima, et Itaalia ja Kreeka vajavad praeguses olukorras meie abi...Lähtuda tuleb meie hetkevõimekusest pagulasi vastu võtta. Sel aastal on see väga piiratud.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Eesti peab aitama pagulasi ja neid vastu võttes arvestama Euroopa Komisjoni soovitude ja meie võimalustega.“

<sup>xlix</sup> Ettepanek on Eesti suhtes ebaõiglane ja me pole võimelised nii suurte inimhulkadega toime tulema. Ebaoproportsionaalselt suured kvoodid tekitavad probleeme juurde, mitte ei lahenda neid.

<sup>l</sup> Tugevdada tuleks tsiviil- ja militaarkoostööd. Keskenduma peaks probleemi algpõhjustele ehk tegevustele kolmandates riikides, kust põgenikud tulevad.

<sup>li</sup> Kui EK ettepanek on 100 000, siis võime arvestada, et see on ligikaudu 200 inimest veel

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<sup>lii</sup> Ja me pole surve all, kui meie argumendid on õiged...ja õnneks on meil oma kolleegidega head suhted ning saame rääkida otse ja avatult.

<sup>liii</sup> Riik läheb omavalitsustele appi, et omavalitsuste koormus oleks nii väike kui võimalik.

<sup>liv</sup> Mõista tuleb ka nende inimeste saatust, kes on põgenenud sõja või teistsuguste koleduste eest.

<sup>lv</sup> Liibanonis peavad 4.5 milj inimest hakkama saama 1.5 milj põgenikuga. EL-s elab 500 milj inimest ja praegu spekuleeritakse 100 000 kuni 160 000 põgeniku aitamisest. Selles valguses 500 milj inimese peale aidata 100 000 inimest...

<sup>lvi</sup> Elame avatud maailmas ja kõik see, mis on Euroopas, jõuab varem või hiljem ka Eestisse. Seepärast on meil kohustus ennetavalt sissērändega seonduvad probleemid omakeskis läbi arutada ja vajadusel ka vastavad reeglid kehtestada

<sup>lvii</sup> Ma väga loodan, et EK ei tule uuesti tagasi sellise ideega, mis on korra valitsusjuhtide poolt tagasi lükatud.