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Euroscepticism and the Functioning of the Visegrad Group

(Master's thesis)

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**Author's Declaration**

Herewith I declare that I have written the Master's Thesis on my own and I have cited all sources.

Prague, 27 April 2018

.....  
*Author's Signature*

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## **Abstract**

The thesis is dedicated to the topic of Euroscepticism, especially in the countries of the Visegrad Group. The aim is to analyze how the level of Euroscepticism in these countries changed during the last years and how is it reflected into the political life of the countries as well as the public mood in Visegrad Group concerning the European Union membership and how it impacts the functioning of the Visegrad Group. The thesis is explaining what Euroscepticism means, what forms of it there are and what the sources of it are. The end of the thesis is dedicated to the expression of the Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group countries by showing the electoral result of Eurosceptic parties in the region as well as the public opinion surveys about citizens' approval of the EU membership of given countries.

**Key words:** Euroscepticism, European Union, Visegrad Group, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, European integration, political parties, public opinion

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## List of abbreviations

EU	European Union
V4	Visegrad Four
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
EPP	European People's Party
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
OVP	Austrian People's Party
EFSF	European Financial Stability Facility
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
MPs	Members of the parliament
PiS	Law and Justice
PO	Civic Platform
SDKU	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union
HZDS	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ZRS	Union of the Workers of Slovakia
SNS	Slovak National Party
SaS	Freedom and Solidarity
ODS	Civic Democratic Party
KSČM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
SPD	Freedom and Direct Democracy
ĽSNS	People's Party Our Slovakia

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## **Introduction**

Euroscepticism is nowadays a term that is widely used among journalists, experts, politicians but also public. It is a quite recent phenomenon, especially in the countries of the Visegrad Group. The term Euroscepticism itself began to be widely used in the United Kingdom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century already. British Euroscepticism is not a recent phenomenon, but it has a long tradition in the creation of national identity, political culture and economy. The United Kingdom was always unique, in terms of geographic position, the structure of markets, the orientation of the trade and so on. However, the focus of this master thesis is on the countries of the so called, Visegrad Group, as they became to be one of the youngest members of the European Union. The Visegrad Group was created mostly to help member states to integrate in the European and Transatlantic structures. After a bad experience with Soviet Russia, countries of Central Europe wanted to belong to the West and they set goals to achieve it. These goals were political and economic and they presumed that if they bring themselves together, it would be easier for them to persuade Western European powers to accept the eastern enlargement of the EU. It is very interesting to see how the enthusiasm from joining the EU slowly changed to quite strong Euroscepticism among the inhabitants and political parties of the V4 countries.

The thesis aim is to identify the level of Euroscepticism in the Visegrad Group and its members, by analysing the public opinion polls and the electoral programs of political parties in given countries. It also aims to find the reasons behind it. The thesis will try to find the connection of the rising Euroscepticism in the Visegrad Group with the development of macroeconomic, social and political indicators in the European Union. The research question is why did the Visegrad Group become one of the most Eurosceptic entities in the European Union during past few years and how is this Euroscepticism being reflected?

The first chapter gives the theoretical background for the term Euroscepticism itself. There is more than just one clear definition of what Euroscepticism is. In the first chapter, the reader can see two most famous theories and definitions of the concept. This chapter also contains the division of different types of Euroscepticism, in particular the public and party based ones but also economic Euroscepticism. This chapter helps to understand the basic things about Euroscepticism, what does it mean, how old is it and what exactly this term includes. The chapter is giving the theoretical background for understanding why some people are Eurosceptic and what does it mean to be Eurosceptic.

Euroscepticism is an older phenomenon, but the second chapter gives an answer on the question of the Euroscepticism in contemporary Europe. It is dealing with the sources of it. To make it simple, the second chapter answers the questions why there is such a thing as Euroscepticism nowadays, which countries are affected by it and how. The reasons are many reasons for it across the political and socio-economic spectre. But the first chapter created the basis for better understanding of the roots of Euroscepticism.

The third chapter is dealing with the Visegrad Group and its countries. To understand the Euroscepticism in so called V4, we should briefly analyse the history of these countries, especially in connection to the EU. As was already mentioned before, all the recent histories of the countries of Central Europe is marked by the transition from the totalitarianism towards democracy and also by the desire to join the EU. Both public and politicians were hoping to achieve this goal. The economic situation was being reformed in order to fulfil the criteria given by the EU. How it is then possible that there are openly Eurosceptic parties and political individuals on the rise in the countries of the Visegrad Group? This chapter tries to give answer on this by defining the roots of Euroscepticism in the V4.

The empirical part of the thesis is included in the fourth chapter. It is dealing with the expression of the Euroscepticism in the Visegrad Group. This chapter analyses the data concerning the topic of public trust towards the EU in the countries of V4 from year 2004 till the most recent polls. Chapter is also talking about the party based Euroscepticism, where political programs of different parties are analysed as well as their results in national elections to legislative bodies. In this chapter, the data from Eurobarometer are used as well as from different book sources. Chapter connects the previous theoretical chapters and gives answer on the issues of Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group, in terms of how it is expressed. To understand it, it is necessary to know the roots of Eurosceptic tendencies in central Europe, its path to the EU as well as the general sources of Euroscepticism across the Europe and the term Euroscepticism and its divisions itself. The last subchapter is dedicated to the impact of the Euroscepticism on the functioning of the Visegrad Group as an alliance. The aim of this subchapter is to find out if the Euroscepticism influence the cooperation on the V4 level and to what extent.

# 1 Theoretical reflection of Euroscepticism

First time the term Euroscepticism was used was in the 1980s in the UK. The Oxford English Dictionary gives us the definition of the word Eurosceptic or euro-sceptic as a person who is against or is not happy about the increasing powers of European Union. It is connected with the era of the plan for Monetary Union, which the British did not want because they could rely on their own currency. It was also connected to the name change from European Community to European Union, which led to politicisation of the European integration process. Together with following economic crisis, European leaders had problems with persuading some members, especially countries on the north like Denmark and in the Mediterranean like Italy, Spain or Greece. In particular, Southern European countries struggled a lot with financial crisis and their problems are lasting till today, especially unemployment of the youth or debt crisis. (FitzGibbon, Leruth, Startin, 2017)

First of all, Eurosceptic is a person, especially a politician who has doubts and reservations against the benefits of increasing cooperation between EU member states (Oxford English Dictionary 2015). Kaniok for example defines Euroscepticism as “*consistent resistance towards the European integration project and its current direction.*” (Kaniok, 2006, p. 1) Some writers say that Euroscepticism can be a feeling of doubt and disagreement with the EU as a whole, or with specific areas of EU policies. It means that there is no uniform and clear definition Euroscepticism. Moreover, it is not at all a coherent thinking system, ideology, but only a summary of critical attitudes towards the EU. (Hooghe and Marks, 2006) In the case of the United Kingdom, where this word was basically created, we understand it as a wider concept encompassing the whole a range of political, economic and cultural factors that differentiate the United Kingdom from continental Europe (Harmsen, Spiering, 2004).

Euroscepticism emerged in the 80s as an exclusively British phenomenon in journalistic circles and until then single market opponents and integration have been known as anti-marketers and anti-integrationists. Politically, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher introduced it in the year 1988 in a speech in Bruges, where she expressed her critical attitude towards centralization policies of the Delors' plan, which she later called “*socialism behind the door*” (Thatcher 1995, p. 634). She clearly stated that the aim of the European Communities should not be the increasing and more detailed regulation from the centre, but the deregulation and removal of market barriers. (Thatcher, 1988). Based on her criticism, we can perceive the essence of British Euroscepticism as a negative attitude towards a deeper

political integration that outstrips the economic one. Not only can the loss of states' sovereignty, but also decreasing benefits from economic integration lead to Euroscepticism.

As the name Euroscepticism suggests, it is a kind of scepticism, which means the lack of trust or to some extent the lack of satisfaction towards the European Union. In news or among the journalists, we often hear different names as well, for example europessimism or europhobia. But as was already mentioned, the basis of this word is the word scepticism. *"Euroscepticism carries the meaning of doubt and distrust on the subject of European integration."* (Flood, 2002, p.73) Harmsen on the other hand describes it more precisely. He is saying that Euroscepticism is an opposition towards the EU but can be also directed to its particular parts – policies, for example the Common Agricultural Policy etc. He argues that the term is much more intensive in the UK and it is coming from the past. (Harmsen, Spiering, 2004)

## **1.1 Typologies of Euroscepticism**

We can say that the Euroscepticism is not very stable phenomenon; it changes all the time with new challenges within the EU. That is why most of the explanations are very broad and also they vary from author to author. We have some definitions that are more used or more preferred in among experts. For example Kopecky and Mudde definition focused on the structural aspects of Euroscepticism, or Taggart and Szczerbiak division into the hard and soft Euroscepticism. Based on the level of criticism and the sides they are criticizing, we also recognize economy or politically based Euroscepticism as well as public Euroscepticism, which are strongly connected and goes hand in hand.

### *1.1.1 Theory of hard and soft Euroscepticism*

We can divide Euroscepticism into hard and soft, where hard is originally defined as the principled opposition to the EU and European integration which, then leads to the party's request to leave the EU. On the contrary, the soft is so called qualified opposition, which is linked to the criticism of individual EU policies and the defense of national interests, not critique of the total membership (Taggart, Szczerbiak 2003). For hard Euroscepticism in the UK we consider UKIP, that was throughout the decades working on leaving the EU, while soft Euroscepticism represents the former British Conservative Premier David Cameron and

also current British Prime Minister Theresa May. Their aim is to negotiate for the UK better terms of membership (Cameron, 2013) and restoring justice in the immigration system. (Cameron 2015).

Taggart and Szczerbiak are the authors of this division into the hard and soft Euroscepticism. They say it is very important to distinguish between the types of oppositions. Contingent or also qualified opposition is according to them what represents the soft Euroscepticism. The hard one then would be a stronger opposition that rejects the European integration process and their opinions are often formed on the basis of feelings or populism. They define the hard Euroscepticism as *“a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties [or in the public] who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived”* (Taggart, Szczerbiak, 2002, p.4) On the other hand, the soft one is not based on the principled objection towards the membership in the EU or towards the project of European integration, but it is a set of concerns or reservations against some actions of the EU. To make it simple, people or parties who are according the definition considered to be a soft Eurosceptics, are against one or more European policies, because they believe it threatens the national interest and sovereignty of their country. In contrary with the hard Eurosceptics, the soft ones usually use sets of logical arguments and their aim is to reform, not to quit the EU. (Taggart, Szczerbiak, 2002)

This basic division of Euroscepticism has its criticism as well. Some experts say that this definition is too broad and vague. For example according to Kopecky with Mudde, there is much broader opposition against the EU and it varies too much to use just the definition of soft Euroscepticism. Because, especially nowadays, there is hardly any political party, group or just public who would not criticise at least one aspect of the European Union and its policies, after many crises we experienced. But we cannot say that every one of them is Eurosceptic. We have to distinguish between the soft Euroscepticism and constructive reasonable opposition, whose intentions are good and their aim is to improve and develop the European Union. (Kopecky, Mudde, 2002)

Professional public use much more different divisions of the Euroscepticism and also different theories. But they have many things in common. When it comes to the public we also recognize so called public Euroscepticism, which we understand as doubts in the questions of European integration within the public and we can link it to the low public support, negative perception of the EU membership and critical attitude towards the EU and

its different policies. We can get to know more about the level of public Euroscepticism from statistics and data, but also from the public opinion, elections and referendums in member states that is why the public Euroscepticism is also important. Danish scholar Sorensen has been dealing with public Euroscepticism and she has also defined the term economic Euroscepticism. She defines it as a criticism of the lack of economic benefit coming from the cooperation between the EU countries. That means that people expect more socio-economic benefit for them coming from the EU institutions and economic cooperation between EU members and some parts of public are now disappointed. (Sorensen, 2007)

### *1.1.2 Kopecky and Mudde typology*

Kopecky and Mudde widely criticized the theory of hard and soft Euroscepticism and based on this criticism they attempted to create more precise theory. It is based on the fact that political parties use ideological motives while acting. They formed their theory on the basis of famous distinction between diffuse and specific support by Easton. In that case, the diffuse support according to them means the general support for the process of European integration as an idea. Specific support is dealing with the practices of functioning of the EU. Based on this they give classification of party based Euroscepticism that can be also linked to the general public. (Kopecky, Mudde, 2002)

They divided parties and also public into four categories based on whether they support the EU integration or are against and whether they accept the EU itself or not. When it comes to the support for EU integration, they distinguish between europhiles and europhobes. First group accepts the EU integration and the second one is against, both based on the ideological reasons. Regarding the acceptance of the European Union, they divided people into Euro optimists and Euro pessimists. Optimists are happy about the way EU goes, but they can sometimes criticize few of the policies. Pessimists do not support the way EU is developing, but it does not mean they do not want to be the part of it anymore. They just demand reforms. Based on this division they created four categories – Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Europragmatists and Eurorejects as shown in the table below. (Kopecky, Mudde, 2002)



Figure 1: Position of Euroenthusiast, Europragmatist, Eurosceptics and Eurorejects

		Support for European Integration	
		Europhile	Europhobe
Support for EU	EU-optimist	<b>Euroenthusiast</b>	<b>Europragmatist</b>
	EU-pessimist	<b>Eurosceptics</b>	<b>Eurorejects</b>

Source: Kopecky and Mudde, 2002, p.303

Euroenthusiasts are ideologically in favour of the EU integration and fully support the EU. Europragmatists accept the EU as a necessary element but are very reserved towards the EU integration, while Eurorejects reject both the EU and therefore the EU integration. Eurosceptics in this definition are parties and people who support the very general idea of the European integration but are pessimistic or more suitable word here would be skeptical, towards the functioning of the EU. (Kopecky, Mudde, 2002)

## 1.2 Sources of Euroscepticism

In order to see what leads citizens to be Eurosceptic, it is necessary to analyze the sources of Euroscepticism. The basic division describes the public and party-based Euroscepticism. The first one comes from below; it expresses the opinions and positions of the citizens of the EU countries. It is connected with economic Euroscepticism, because people's primary aim is to benefit from the EU in the terms of economic values. Public Euroscepticism though is strongly connected with party-based. The results of Eurosceptic parties reflect the will of the people, because parties are elected by them. (Hooghe, Marks, 2007)

### *1.2.1 Public Euroscepticism*

The public has the opportunity to express scepticism towards the European integration or the European Union in particular by voting in elections to domestic political institutions as well as to European Parliament, by voting in referendums on the European Union, but also expressing their opinion in the context of regularly conducted public research judgments that determine satisfaction or, dissatisfaction with the membership of a country in the Union, as well as with its individual aspects. In the elections, other issues are usually highlighted. Although the electoral programs include the opinions of the party on the European issue, it is not usually crucial to the extent that it could win or lose the elections. Taking into account the frequency of the European referendums, meaning that they are so extraordinary that they cannot be considered as a reliable general public opinion, it seems that the most appropriate tool for monitoring the public opinion on the EU and European integration are on the regular basis conducted public opinion polls. Whatever indicator we choose, the public support for the European project has been declining for years. This leads to growing interest of not only European elites, who feel the need to legitimize their decisions, but also experts on the issue of Euroscepticism.

Public Euroscepticism seems to be much less sophisticated when it comes to the attempts to conceptualize it. In addition, authors work mainly with the concepts emerging from the conceptualization of the party based Euroscepticism. One of the experts who categorized public Euroscepticism is Sorensen. As well as in the party based one, according to her, public Euroscepticism can be both the principled opposition and the conditioned disagreement. This is the application of the typology of Szczerbiak and Taggart to the public Euroscepticism, while the hard is the principle refusal of cooperation and future continuation of the EU is debatable in this case; the soft is a conditional scepticism towards some aspects of cooperation (Sorensen, 2008). With reference to a great deal of research about public Euroscepticism, the author claims that their conclusions are often contradictory. For example, favourable domestic economic environment is associated with both positive and negative attitudes, as well as post material values or concrete socio-demographic variables (such as age and gender) are leading to support of the EU and sometimes to scepticism towards the European integration. So there is no coherent theory, since the particular authors are dealing only with some aspects and not with what Euroscepticism is or why, when and how it

manifests and develops itself. Sorenson divides public Euroscepticism into economic, Euroscepticism based on the sovereignty, where the membership in the EU is economically beneficial, but people are afraid of the loss of national sovereignty. Democratic Euroscepticism is the third one and it shows the nondemocratic aspects of the EU, people often have the feeling that their voice is not being heard. Social Euroscepticism is connected with the ability of the EU to protect social rights of citizens. (Sorensen, 2008)

She works with the data from Eurobarometer and her result is that for the different countries in the EU, one or more type of public Euroscepticism is typical or is prevailing. Euroscepticism then can be contra productive, because *“what population of one country wants from integration may be what another population fears will happen.”* (Sorenson, 2008, p.15) Gaining support for EU and its steps can be seen as an unattainable goal. When getting support for a specific contract or other type of collaboration, EU needs to target individual groups according to their nature of Euroscepticism, while bearing in mind some types of Euroscepticism are as old as the EU itself and they are therefore unlikely to disappear, just as it is unlikely that all citizens of the democratic state would stand behind the government. *“Not all EU-policies are likely to enjoy popular backing in all the Union’s member states; however, this is not pathology, but ‘merely’ an inherent feature of democracy.”* (Sorenson, 2008, p.19)

### *1.2.2 Economic Euroscepticism*

The EU is an economic and political union and its public support is based on economic and political advantages or disadvantages coming from its institutional layout. The creation of the European Communities was aimed to increase the efficiency of the European economies and also the increasing of a life standard of their inhabitants. As the main theoretical basis explaining the EU public support, we consider the utilitarianism. It is based on the so called *“tangible economic benefit”*. (Sorensen, 2007, p.79) In this theory then we can logically divide the attitude towards the European integration into the egotropic and sociotropic. Egotropic means that the individuals are forming their opinions based on the individual profit given from the EU, while sociotropic means that the individuals are supporting or denying the EU when their country benefits from being the part of it or not. (McLaren, 2010)

For example Professor Mathew Gabel supports the egotropic theory. He says that the citizens in different socio-economic situations feel different costs and benefits from the integration policy. The common market and common currency are beneficial for the individuals with higher human and financial capital and also citizens in the border areas. They benefit the most from the free flow of labour and capital and therefore they consider the EU to be a good project. (Gabel, 1998) In countries rich on capital would the less qualified labour force be Eurosceptic and highly qualified labour force would be in favour of the EU integration. (Hooghe, Marks, 2005) The polls conducted by the Pew Research in 2015 support this statement. The results show that the 72% of university educated people in the UK support the EU membership and only 20% is against, while 48% without higher education prefer the so called Brexit. (Stokes, 2015)

When it comes to the sociotropic costs and benefits, one of the EU advantages is mainly the profit from business and the support from the EU budget. McLaren argues that the citizens of countries that are net contributors to the EU budget are more Eurosceptic than the net receivers of the support. Good example would be the UK and Germany, where the less percentage of people evaluates the EU positively and at the same time they are the net contributors to the budget. And on the other hand we have Spain or Ireland, which are the net receivers and they have the highest percentage of pro-European inhabitants. (McLaren, 2010) The exception in this theory would be exactly the countries of the Visegrad Group nowadays, that are receiving the EU support for years and the Euroscepticism is on the rise. But we will deal with these countries later on in the thesis.

On the other hand, we can apply the economic voting theory and its main idea, that in the good economic times, the government is rewarded, in the bad times it is punished, on this case. (Lewis-Beck, Nadeau, 2010) It indeed explains the support of the national government, but for better understanding we can apply it as well on the transnational institution like the EU, where the citizens of the countries see the EU rather positively in economically good situation and in the times of crisis they blame the EU for the bad economic results. So based on this theory, we can say that the support of the European Union is based on the perception of economic situation of a country but also the perception of self-financial situation. The economic voting theory was also described by Eichenberg and Dalton, who say that the citizens of the economically prosperous countries are less Eurosceptic against the EU. (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993) According to the Eurobarometer polls from November 2015, this premise is true in the countries like Spain or Greece, where approximately one fourth of citizens are affected by unemployment but this trend seems to appear false in the countries

like the UK, Austria or Germany where the unemployment is the smallest in Europe. But it is understandable, as every nation is sensitive towards different economic conditions resulting from the history, for example German inflation or British unemployment. (Lewis-Beck, 1990)

Gabel and Whitten on the other hand show that EU public support is determined by evaluation of the financial situation and the positive financial situation of the population should lead to positive opinions towards the EU. (Gabel, Whitten, 1997) But according to the Eurobarometer results of 2015, positive perceptions of the individual financial situation does not indicate a lower level of mistrust in the EU, as only 16% British and German respondents consider their financial terms to be unfavourable in comparison with for example 76% of Greek citizens. Just as in the first case, we can also observe the same sample of countries with a favourable situation in the domestic economy as well as personal financial but above the level of distrust in the EU.

A study conducted by the European Central Bank in 2015 confirms that the financial crisis has brought other determinants of EU public support. Worsening economic and fiscal conditions in other member states lead to public concerns about a possible spill over effect, which means the overflow of negative impacts on the domestic economy, and the ability of the EU to address these issues (Ioannou, Jamet, Kleib 2015). Therefore stable domestic economy and fiscal perspectives do not adequately explain the growing Euroscepticism in the countries mentioned above, such as Germany or the UK, whose citizens are likely to be affected by the negative effects of EU membership in other countries.

### *1.2.3 Party based Euroscepticism*

Party based Euroscepticism, as the title suggests, is Euroscepticism based on the opinions and attitudes of political parties. The expression was firstly used by Paul Taggart in year 1998. He tried to divide political parties into four groups according to the strength of their Euroscepticism. First group are single issue Eurosceptic parties and they are widely criticizing the EU. Their aim is to target voters by this rhetoric. The second group are Eurosceptic protest based parties, which are being fundamentally against the political system as such and being Eurosceptic is for them just an addition. (Taggart, 1998) There are parties also parties who are Eurosceptic because of the strategy. Some of them also change their opinions according to current political situation. European integration is very dynamic process which is being developed all the time. The opinions of particular parties against the EU can

therefore be just based on the current level of European integration. (Hyncica, Maskarinec, Novotny, 2016)

EU public support to a large extent determines the relationship between political elites and the public. Political elites tend to be the key in shaping public opinion in a top-down approach; which means that information about the EU primarily flows from political elites towards the public. The opinion about the EU is created on the basis of attitudes and ideologies of individual political parties and therefore in the long run voters of the preferred political party follow its Eurosceptic and pro-European attitudes. On the other hand, in the bottom-up approach, the public opinion may influence the attitude of the political parties towards the European integration. In this case, the issue of European integration divides the political parties and voters tend to change their ideological preferences (Evans and Butt, 2007) In addition, EU public support often depends on the current popularity of the governments and the citizens are creating an image of the EU based on the domestic political situation, not the European matters (McLaren, 2010).

On the other hand, EU public support is determined by the institutional arrangement and political system. Citizens of countries with low levels of corruption, valid legislation and a large welfare state trust in European institutions less than citizens of countries with high levels of corruption, low social benefits and a weak legislative framework (McLaren, 2010). According to Hooghe and Marks, the type of capitalism affects the degree of Euroscepticism and citizens in the liberal and social-democratic system tend to be more Eurosceptic. (Hooghe, Marks, 2005) The UK belongs to the Anglo-Saxon type of capitalism, which relies on the weak state, low taxation and limited regulation. The EU represents the continental model of the dirigisme and the state interventions that are fundamentally different from the liberal British model, and therefore the question of sovereignty is often a determinant of Euroscepticism not only in within the political parties. The British devotion to the weak state and free international the market simply does not correspond to the European model of government and the British Euroscepticism stems from the rejection of the idea of European integration in favor of Anglo-Saxon independence. (Forster, 2002)

As was already mentioned, we distinguish also between so called soft and hard Euroscepticism. It also can have variety of different expressions. Some Eurosceptic people refuse broader integration of the EU that would lead to federation. They just want the EU to stay the community of independent countries and not leading to federative or centralistic structure. Some people refuse European integration as a whole, in general. It also depends on the level of political culture, especially within the EU opposition. “*Euroscepticism expresses*

*the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration”* (Taggart, Szczerbiak, 2003, p.6) The EU opposition is on the growing level since the 1990s.

Vasilopoulou in her article called Varieties of Euroscepticism, about the Euroscepticism connected to the political parties, describes three types of party-based Euroscepticism. It comes from the so called conceptualisation of European integration or cooperation. She suggests three-dimensional conceptualisation based on the principle, practice and future. Principle in this case would be the willingness and desire for cooperation at the European international level. Practice is the status quo when it comes to European policymaking and institutionalization and the future predicts the deepening of European integration. Based on the position of particular political parties towards individual concepts of this conceptualisation, we recognize different types of Euroscepticism – rejecting, conditional and compromising. Rejecting Euroscepticism means that the parties are completely against any of the aspect of European integration. To be more precise in the terms of three-dimensional conceptualisation, the parties *“reject the principle of European cooperation, the practice of institutional and policy arrangements at EU level and they do not foresee any value from future cooperation.”* (Vasilopoulou, 2009, p.5) Then the conditional Euroscepticism is against the practice and future meaning the deepening of EU integration. Parties do not support any decision making process by the supranational bodies, because they cannot provide benefit connected to the national interest of particular member states. They admit that the EU is not strictly a bad project and demand the reforms. Therefore we can say that they agree with the principle of cooperation and they believe that the EU was created on the basis of great ideas, although it went to the wrong direction. They believe that European integration was created to be beneficial for nation states, but they also think that this unification is harmful to the sovereignty of the countries. The compromising Euroscepticism is the softest one. Parties usually agree with the principle the integration and European cooperation and what is also important is the fact that they agree, or at least accept the status quo in practice of European institutions. They do not demand any strict reforms or anything similar. They agree with European integration, especially when it comes to the economic aspects of it. They state that the EU should exist in the same model as it does all the time, but it should guarantee the benefit for member states. But these parties do not agree with the future expressed by the closer union and future integration. (Vasilopoulou, 2009) For a better understanding, let’s see the Table of the typology of Euroscepticism.

Figure 2: Party positions on European integration

	<b>Rejecting</b>	<b>Conditional</b>	<b>Compromising</b>
<b>Principle of EU integration</b>	Against	In favour	In favour
<b>Practice of EU integration</b>	Against	Against	In favour
<b>Future of EU integration</b>	Against	Against	Against

Source: Vasilopoulou, S. *Varieties of Euroscepticism*. 2004. p.6

Ideology is very important in defining Euroscepticism, as was already mentioned. Depending on our ideological background, we can support or we can deny almost every policy coming from the EU decision making process. Naturally, there are some well-known characteristic differences between the left-wing and right-wing oriented parties in Europe. But there are also differences within the left and within the right. The EU itself produces ideological discourse. (Bostanci, 2013) We can say that the reality when it comes to party ideology is, that radical parties, like national and populists parties on the radical right, and socialist parties who link themselves to the Marxist ideology are usually more Eurosceptic. Parties coming from the centre to the mild left and mild right or so called mainstream left and right express less criticism towards the EU. (Leruth, Startin, Usherwood, 2018)

When we look at the level of diversity within the same ideologically oriented party groups, it is quite significant. For example British Conservative Party throughout many decades shows, in some positions towards the EU integration, common signs with national and populist parties of the radical right. But as a Conservative Party, we would expect them to have similar opinions with the conservative mainstream or to show more positive opinions towards the EU, as most of the conservative parties, as well as Christian democratic parties throughout the Europe do. European Parliament's fraction called European People's Party (EPP) is a fraction associating conservative and Christian democratic parties throughout the European Union. Many well established mainstream conservative parties, like German CDU and Austrian OVP are members of EPP, but so is the British Conservative Party. Together with for example Irish Fianna Fáil or Polish party called Law and Justice, whose version of conservatism is Catholic nationalism. All those parties are very different from German CDU when it comes to the position towards European integration and one would suggest they should be the members of a fraction called European Conservatives and Reformists. (Flood, Soborski, 2011)



## 2 Euroscepticism in contemporary Europe

European Union, especially in the last two decades, is dealing with the problem of the declining of the public support. Election attendance is very low and the successes of Eurosceptic fractions in the European parliament are real threats to the policy of common Europe. European elections are often criticized as being the elections of the second category, because parties are focused more on the domestic issues, therefore they are considered to be some kind of a test of political satisfaction with current government within the country. European issues and events are not enjoying as much popularity as they deserve. Other discussed topic is the legitimacy of the EU connected with many phenomenons, like for example a discussion about so called democratic deficit, non-existence of public space and non-existence of European nation. (Kratochvil, Simon, 2011) It is in particular the opacity of decision-making process at the European level and the lack of opportunities for any participation in these processes, leading to growing dissatisfaction of citizens (Habermas, 2001) That means the contradiction between the institutional development of the EU on the one and the continued dominance of the national political space as the arena for public debate and civic participation, on the other hand, are at the core of the European democratic deficit (Lingenberg, 2009).

In addition, to define the EU as a legitimate actor it is necessary to answer two important questions. The first one, derived from the representative dimension of legitimacy, is the question of statehood The EU and its finality; the second, related to the dimension of recognition, is the quality of democracy in the EU. As regards the definition of statehood, the EU is an unprecedented specific body, often in the professional literature referred to as the sui generis system without the possibility of any comparison in the past or present. This is not an international organization, nor a federation or confederation; it is a completely new phenomenon. Efforts to find the specific content of this sui generis, however, have not been very successful for the time being (Fiala, Pitrová, 2009). *"The EU is a political system whose dynamism and endlessness best affects deliberative democracy "*(Kaniok, 2011, p.83) Deliberative democracy puts a political debate that is not limited to formal and power institutions in the first place and it can also work with public sphere and precedes the political decision. (Rittberger, 2010) The EU represents the polity that is still forming - *"the dynamics of institutional development, the absence the European spirit or the absence of a full public space are the proof of it"* (Kaniok, 2011 p.84). Deliberation with its emphasis on communication and interaction is then able to capture this development.

Euroscepticism became even stronger and wider phenomena with the adoption of the Maastricht treaty and the enlargement of the agenda of European Communities. This treaty was absolutely crucial in this topic, because it shifted the role of the European Communities from purely economic role to political integration of the countries. (Novotny, 2011) The European Union had an ambition to be important player not only in the world economy, but also politics. This created the political discussions on this topic. Moreover, the term European Parliament was used since 1979 with the elections, which is very political move. It has to be necessarily connected to the criticism. (Kaniok, 2006)

## **2.1 Roots of Euroscepticism in today's European Union**

Euroscepticism nowadays have many reasons. Some of them are product of feelings and some of them are based and supported by arguments. People are sometimes Eurosceptic just inherently. They see the EU as a threat to the nation state sovereignty although they do not really have a good reason for that. This type of Euroscepticism is typical for United Kingdom. People see the continental Europe as something different, with different historical and cultural background and different sets of rules. They directly experience the feature of the European integration – migration from the countries like Poland or Romania. That is why majority of them do not want to be closer to the Europe itself. People are feared by the loss of identity. Nationalistic or patriotic feeling among people in different countries make them afraid of the creation of some new, European or pan-European identity or nationality, which seems very far to them. Especially with the introduction of Euro currency, people felt like they lost part of their national identity. Other thing that bothers some people when it comes to the national identity is the rising level of migration, especially in countries like Sweden, Belgium, Germany or France. People often say that the migrants from Eastern Europe or from countries with different religion will impact the traditions in given countries. (Hargitai, 2013)

Next phenomenon is connected mostly to the new member states, including the countries of Visegrad Group. People in those countries still struggle with identifying themselves with the EU. People would often say that it is that European Union or that Brussels, they rarely refer to themselves as an EU, they rarely use the word we. We can feel also the lack of media attention towards the EU and also low level of public debate about European issues in these countries. Citizens of new member states are also disappointed with the development of the Union, because they expected to see the benefits faster. What they

expected was that they will be soon as successful and as rich as the countries in the Western Europe. (Hargitai, 2013)

Cultural dimension of Euroscepticism is very strong. After document called The EU Fundamental Rights Policy was adopted at the EU level, it contributed to the rising of Euroscepticism and the critical position towards the EU and its actors. People felt the adoption of this document as interference to the process of national sovereignty. Understanding of human rights is different in many countries in the EU. Many experts criticized this attempt for various reasons. Former Czech President Vaclav Klaus, who considers himself to be Eurosceptic, said, that the EU should not be dealing with fundamental human rights, but it should remain the economic project, as it used to be. (Leconte, 2013) This document started the wave of criticism mainly because it was wrongly interpreted in many countries. For example in Italy or Poland, many parties adopted the wrong interpretation of what should be the prohibition to discriminate based on sexual orientation. Nationalist parties and specially Catholic clergy in both countries, where they have really strong impact on the formation of public opinion, they explained it as an attempt to legalize same-sex marriages in those countries. They said that the countries that allow adoption of this document are supporting the moral decline of Europe. (Leconte, 2010)

Euroscepticism has not worsened recently only by a chance. The project of European integration was always said to be the economic project that should be beneficial economically for citizens, by creating the single market, currency and free movement of capital and labour. But it has been changed to the political union as well. European Union is a place of stability and peace for a very long time, but it is also very diverse place, where countries with different cultural and historical background as well as different opinions are together forming one union. We have countries that adopted Euro currency for example, but we also have countries in the EU who promised to do so, but are not planning to, like Sweden. Many countries have spent great amounts of money to contribute to the EU budget; many countries are only receivers of this support. Many people see this transformation from economic to political union as the biggest problem of nowadays' European Union. Countries are so different and the speed of their development is so different, that it is the potential source of the instability in the EU. (Condruz-Baescu, 2014)

We can categorize reasons given above as political roots of Euroscepticism. But there are also reasons connected with the economy, economic prosperity of the member states and their citizens. Guy Verhofstadt, former Belgian Prime Minister says that, according to his words everybody suddenly became nationalistic and he links this Euroscepticism to the

*“reflection of the desperation at the failure of EU leaders and politicians to overcome the financial crisis.”* (Hargitai, 2013) Nationalism, economic reasons, cultural reasons but also institutional factors are all sources of Euroscepticism. Eurosceptics are opposing to the EU or one or more of the EU policies, and it can be economic one, or it can be a matter of protection of nation states’ sovereignty within the EU.

## **2.2 Cultural roots of Euroscepticism**

Besides the politics and economics, the important thing that shapes the views and actions of a nation is culture and values. European Union was built on the values like freedom, solidarity and the rule of law. But not every state has the same perception of what does it mean and also not every country had same starting position. In some countries we have higher level of corruption for instance, which is not necessarily something connected to culture, but it says a lot about the political culture. Some people are traditionally more Eurosceptic because they feel less like Europeans, as for example United Kingdom. Some countries like Poland, with a great history of fighting for their independence, is nowadays trying to strong country again, between Russia and the EU and does not want to be ruled by someone else. People in different countries feel different levels of solidarity with other countries and especially people from countries outside the EU, mostly of the Islamic religion. There are plenty of reasons for Euroscepticism based on the culture of different nations.

### *2.2.1 The role of the religion*

What is the factor connected with migration is recent years is also religion. Religion still plays important role in the lives of majority of the citizens in the EU. And it is not only Christianity. Christians, especially elderly people are very sensitive to the cultural manners and cultural routing of their country, but also Muslims, especially younger people often see EU as a threat to their religion and cultural background. (Nelsen, 2011) Nowadays, we can see in countries like Poland, that Catholic Church can play a role in formation of opposition to the problems of European Union, like for example migration or human rights policies, but it is important to say that it has never been a Eurosceptic element in the society. (Guerra, 2012) Not only Poland, but majority of Eastern and Central European countries are taking religion very seriously and thus they became an opposition to secularism or to acceptance of people of

different faiths. It is not only today's phenomenon, religion has always played strong role in the legitimating of national authority. It was the supporting element of resistance in communist's Poland, where it has led to the revolution, it is the official national religion of Ireland and Anglicanism with the head in form of a British monarch is very strong in England. (Jelen and Wilcox, 2002) European Union itself was made by the fathers of Europe, who were Christian Democrats. Christian Democratic parties are one of the strongest political entities in the European Parliament. Roman Catholic or protestant churches are usually quite in favour of European integration, with the occasional exceptions mentioned above, in the case of Poland and other countries. But in some of the new EU members from the last enlargements, Orthodox Church has the strong position. It plays strong role in the Church and State relations in countries like Bulgaria or Greece and they are well known for strong denial of everything that we could call the Western values. Then the Islam is present in Europe, which itself is very sceptical towards any type of authority. The presence of all those Churches, and much more others, may create different positions or actions towards the European integration process, and some of them might be called Eurosceptic. (Guerra, 2012)

Churches and religious communities have established relationship with the EU institutions that is quite important and based on the regular dialogue via their religious representations in Brussels, like for example Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community, or Pax Christi International. Their positions are deriving from the nation states, especially those with the strong role of Church in everyday's public and political life. Churches are influencing the events in the particular countries and take positions towards some issues coming from the EU, especially concerning migration, human rights of same-sex oriented people and they always have something to say to the moral aspects of adopted policies in the EU. In general, we can say that churches, especially Catholic and Protestant Church are pro-European, their very conservative branches in some countries may have different opinions on the issues. Many political parties that are populists or nationalists, especially in the members from Soviet Bloc are often using religious opinions to support their statements. (FitzGibbon, Leruth, Startin, 2017) In case of Slovakia, Poland or Hungary, Church and political parties who identify themselves as Christian or Catholic, played very strong role in denying the adoption of Muslim migrants from Africa and Asia.

### *2.2.2 Migration and islamphobia*

Migration topic in the EU can be classified by the two dimensions and both are the big and important sources of Euroscepticism in the EU. One of them is the migration within the EU. It includes mostly the workers from the countries of former Soviet Bloc, especially Poland and Romania, who are benefiting from the free movement of labour and often work in other countries in the Western Europe like Germany or the United Kingdom. The other dimension is migration to the EU, especially composed of the people with different social, cultural and religious background.

The issue of the free movement within the European Union was one of the key questions while forming the European Communities. United Kingdom always opposed this policy, and their arguments have raised the concerns about this topic. It is important to say that many of the migrants are seeking the advantages of social welfare state in other countries. There are clearly obvious institutional differences between the countries in the EU, that is why those types of migrants are divided very disproportionally. But many experts say that reducing the access to the social benefits from the state would not necessarily reduce the number of migrants in given countries, because many migrants actually came to work there. Although workers from Eastern Europe are considered to be the cheap labour force and they are contribute to the lowering of the salaries in those types of jobs to the level that original citizens of those countries are not willing to work in such spheres anymore. This cycle is what is raising concerns about the migration between different member states of the EU. (Conference report, 2016)

The adoption of free movement of labour and capital within the European Union, people from the EU can work and live in any other country as they were at their home state. They are treated the same as domestic citizens and the restrictions in accession the labour market of countries in the EU are being rapidly removed. (Day, Shaw, 2002) Rich people, entrepreneurs and businessmen definitely benefit from it, but so do lower educated workers. But those with lower skills are much more likely to experience some kind of a competition. When it comes to the individual support of European Union, people are calculating the costs and benefits for them coming from the membership of their countries in the EU. The problem concerning the migrants within the EU is connected to the cultural issues. Migrants are more likely to live in a separated community and live their own lifestyle, which some people may see as a threat or something unnatural for given country.

The issue of the movement of people within the EU even more supported especially the British Eurosceptics. In year 2004, the EU experienced the biggest enlargement. The centre of the political debate in Western Europe became the migration from the so called A8 countries. According to Migration Watch UK and the statistics from Eurobarometer for the period from 2004 to 2011 we can conclude, that the increasing number of migrants is strongly connected to the lowering of the support for the EU. The arrival of the migrants from A8 countries consisted of the people with lower qualification. (Hooghe, Marks, 2005) When we take into the account the situation in the UK, the number of the people demanding the social support in the UK rose from 65 090 to 113 960 within the years 2008 and 2015, which means more than 75%. Those numbers opened a discussion about the effectiveness of the migration in the Western Europe. (Keen, Turner, 2016) According to the public opinion poll conducted by Policy Network, 57% of the British think that the right to work in the EU should be limited and 73% agree that the citizens of the EU should enjoy social welfare state only in their native countries. Modern Western European Euroscepticism was therefore marked by the anti-immigrants dimension. (Vasilopoulou, 2015)

What seems to be bigger issue nowadays is the migration flow to the EU. By the half of the year 2015, the United Nations High Committee for Refugees counted more than 4 million citizens in Syria who were the part of the so called refugee crisis. Also the number of immigrants from Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Afghanistan increased in the past few years. Farid Hafez in his article for The Economist says that since the Second World War, Europe did not have to face the flow of refugees of such scale. The response of the people in most of the countries, especially the new members was not very positive, while on the other hand, European Union and its institutions are trying to accommodate as much refugees as possible; people are not in favour of this solution. In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, only migrants and refugees who are preferred are those of a Christian faith. Against the others, especially Muslims, there is a strong anti-campaign. This is the phenomenon strongly connected to the modern Euroscepticism and it is called Islamophobia. (Hafez, 2015) And also other countries are following this trend. For example former Austrian foreign minister and leader of the People's Party, which is considered to be Christian Democratic type of a party said, that he would welcome 500 refugees from Syria, but he would "*prefer women, children and Christians.*"(Hafez, 2015, p.1) He tried to persuade everyone that he Christians suffer more from the political crisis in the Middle East, the fact is that people were suffering without any reference to their religious beliefs.

Islamophobia is definitely something present in the European Union citizens' minds. It differs from country to country. People in the countries like Germany or France, where they already have the third or fourth generation of migrants are used to this type of diversity, while people in Eastern and Central Europe still see Muslims as a threat to their national identity and security. Islamophobia is therefore definitely linked to nationalism and anti-Semitism. The starting point that helped to spread Islamophobia around the world was the events of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001. Many populist politicians in Europe use Islamophobia as a driving force in their political campaign and they are spreading Euroscepticism among the citizens. The good example would be Front National, Vlaams Beland, UKIP or in Central Europe it would be Hungarian Fidesz. Even centrist parties adopted some of the parts of this antiislamic discourse and they are trying to promote the ban of minarets, hijabs, surveillance programs and so on. (Ansari, Hafez, 2012)

Many people are afraid of losing their national identity and national particularities typical for countries or regions. There is a strong conflict between national and European identity, which many citizens of the EU deny. (Carey, 2002) Migrants are having much harder time identifying themselves. They have to become citizens of their new country, but they were raised on completely different and cultural background and they also feel the sense of being a part of some community. According to a study, minorities are more likely to take their ethnic identity as the one that is predominant. (Modood, 1997) They may adopt the lifestyle of their new country, being active in a political life, but majority of them will never associate themselves with the national identity of given country. Therefore we can see that migrants are much more in favour of European unification than the native citizens. Also, the migrants often belong to the less wealthy socio-economic group. But this position has weaker effect on them when it comes to the opinions about the EU integration, than on the natives. Among the native citizens, lower socio-economic groups tend to be more Eurosceptic, as they have different opinion on what is national identity. (Roeder, 2011)

Migration from the countries outside the EU is the topic that is being kept alive by both public and the political parties. Radical right parties like Front National in France are based on their negative attitudes towards immigrants. Parties like these are using the topic of migration as an excuse for unemployment and they also spread fear that the newcomers from different countries are threat to national identity and security. In the last few years, those kinds of parties are enjoying the rise of their support in both national elections and elections to the European Parliament. Topic like Islamic terrorism, and protection of the Schengen border brought them electoral success in many different European countries. This is strongly



connected to populism. Many people in countries like Germany or France are afraid of Muslim communities, as well as part of the British population is against communities consisting of Polish or Romanian workers. But also countries like those in Visegrad Group, who do not have many refugees or migrants on their territory, they are mostly afraid of something that is unknown. And political parties tend to benefit from that. (Givens, 2013)

*“Immigrants, people of colour and Jews have long been targets of violence and discrimination in Europe. Despite advances in antidiscrimination policy, anti-immigrant sentiment continues to impact party politics in Europe.”* (Givens, 2013, p. 139) As was already mentioned before, anti-Islamic rhetoric and denying of multiculturalism is in nowadays Europe not only typical for far right parties. Mainstream politicians moved those topics into the centre. They realized that attacking the multiculturalism is an easy way to gain political points. Political parties who have anti-immigration topic as the key of their rhetoric are slowly being well established political parties in different countries' national parliaments. They are using different elections, regional, national or European to maintain their electorate and possibly attract new people. According to Givens, the future success of anti-immigration parties depends on the position of mainstream parties. (Givens, 2013)

The so called refugee crisis helped to maintain the position of Eurosceptic parties throughout the Europe. This is also the problem of the EU, because no common strategy how to face this problem has been inducted. Every single country is left to deal with this problem itself. Many countries rejected the quota mechanism, which is still being discussed. Some of the countries are building their own fences at the borders, some of them are taking only refugees of a Christian descent and some of them refused to take a single migrant while other are granting asylum to thousands of people every year. This is, according to some experts, the biggest problem of this crisis. Politicians in the nation states are deciding themselves and the Islamophobic discourse came from the far right politics to the mainstream centre. There is a strong clash between the NGOs and the politicians, who propose different solutions. Eastern and Central European member states adopted Islamophobia as central issues in the debates about refugees and migrants, even though they have less than 1% of migrants. They are afraid of the Islamization of the West and are saying that the Europe is built on a Christian values. We can definitely say that this crisis became a crucial one for the European Union and its future. (Hafez, 2015)

### **2.3. Economic roots**

Since the first sign of economic instability, European citizens could see many adjustments to the budget, or programs aimed to recover the banks by the financial support from the state. Inhabitants of EU member states became divided into debtors or creditors, depending on the country they come from. They also felt the lack of visible actions and that all led to the huge decline of trust to the European Union as an institution and also the ability of the EU to reach the targets was questioned. Economy is therefore definitely one of the roots of Euroscepticism in contemporary Europe. Either it is the unemployment that came with economic crisis, or general economic insecurity, the local governments and the EU as an institution do not enjoy the same support as they did before. Economic crisis brought the EU to the insecurity with negative expectations for the future. Euroscepticism is among the economic experts also recently called economic protectionism. (Bacescu, 2014)

The beginning of the economic and financial crisis in European Union launched a new period in the process of integration. More than ever, the questions of transnational economic redistribution were important and it also created political clashes within the EU. This, together with so called refugee crisis was an important milestone in party-based Euroscepticism. Before, Euroscepticism was either based on a public concerns about the loss of the national sovereignty, or it was typical usually only for the parties on the edges – both extreme right and extreme left. But crisis shifted the topic of the Euroscepticism into the mainstream politics. Economic crisis developed and spread the ideas of Euroscepticism to the whole European Union and has launched the support for nondemocratic populist parties throughout the Europe. (Vasiloupoulou, 2016)

The European Union was built on the idea of economic cooperation that would secure the economic growth of countries, employment and to keep the inflation low. The aim was to support the exchange of goods, labour forces and to secure economic progress within the EU member states. The idea of the European project was developed after the war and founding fathers believed that the trade between states will bring economic success and the economic success will help citizens to reduce national egoism, so the war will not happen again. (Bacescu, 2014) But especially for the countries of Eurozone, the economic crisis was very painful. Being in the Eurozone did not prevent countries like Spain and Greece from huge unemployment comparable with the Great Depression. (Mason, 2013) Another effect of this crisis was the rise of Euroscepticism. This is also something similar with the crisis in the

1930s. When economy is weak it potentially increases Euroscepticism and populism. This is based on the premise of rewarding the governments and political parties in times when economy is doing well and punishing them in the times of crisis. (Ferejohn, 1986) In that case, voters usually blame European institutions and their policies for the crisis, as well as European Central Bank. The Eurozone sovereign debt crisis definitely had strong political outputs. Many of the national government not only in the Eurozone but also throughout the whole European Union fell during the crisis. It happened in Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Lithuania and Croatia. (Gamble, 2014) That is indeed clear, that voting decisions are highly impacted by the economic circumstances within the EU and in different member states. Many analyses showed a significant relationship between macroeconomic indicators and the level of Euroscepticism or the turnout in the European election or support for Eurosceptic and populist parties. Till the outbreak of the crisis, people were not so much aware of the strong economic impact of the EU and its policies on the member states, because the membership in the EU and especially in the Eurozone brought positive economic results. It changed with the arrival of the Global Financial Crisis that launched Great Recession which led to the Eurozone debt crisis and that appeared to be the milestone in the EU integration process. (Leruth, Startin, Usherwood, 2018)

One of the economic problems especially in the Eurozone was the Greek crisis. Since the early 1990s, Greece has been struggling with the balance of payments deficit. After Greece's entry into the Eurozone, where they were only accepted because of data manipulation, the country suddenly had the opportunity to benefit from the potential of a strong currency and borrowing money at an interest rate of around 2% to 3%, which was a big difference in opposite to the 10 to 18% from 1994. The main fault of the Greece was that instead of repay high public debt at lower interest rates, they were raising salaries. (Wallop, 2015)

Greece did not carry out necessary restructuring and the additional money pumped into the country only deepened the problematic public finances. With the arrival of the debt crisis in 2007, the unhealthy functioning of the Greek economy was fully reflected. Even the additional EU contributions did not affect the start of economic growth as in other EU member states. (The Economist, 2015)

In order to help the Greek economy, in 2010, the European financial stability facility (EFSF) was created. The EFSF was created as a joint stock company based in Luxembourg, where shareholders were individual Eurozone member states. The treaty according to which

EFSF was created states, that its role is to finance the provision of financial assistance by issuing or entering into bonds, vouchers, commercial papers, debt securities and other financial arrangements supported by irrevocable and unconditional guarantees of Eurozone member states, which act as a guarantors. Its capacity was supposed to be 440 billion EUR. (Article 4, EFSF Treaty, 2010)

The reaction to this varied from country to country. Many governments resigned while trying to pass a bill binding country to borrow money to Greece. The biggest problem, according to some politicians, is false solidarity, because poor countries must save Greece to help them maintain their living standard. (Sulik, 2012) It is hard to make people of one country to show solidarity to another country. Because there is no such a thing as European nation and European Union is still build on many different nation states. It is understandable, when West Germany shows solidarity to East Germany for example, but showing solidarity with completely other nation is very unpopular. This caused big problems in European Union itself, not only Eurozone. Many countries who promised to adopt Euro as their currency are not willing to do that anymore, because of the situation with Greece. Former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz said, that solidarity is the crucial value of the European Union. The crucial value European Union was built though is the free movement of labour, capital and goods. (Sulik, 2012)

## **2.4 Institutional roots**

Despite the great criticism, the EU is definitely not a rigid institutional set-up, but a dynamic organization, which has changed from the free trade zone to the economic and monetary union over the last sixty years and also has grown by twenty two members. The essence of the Euroscepticism therefore also lies in its direction and integration processes. We can identify growing negative attitudes concerning the deepening and widening of the integration process. For this reason we can point out, that at every stage of the integration, Euroscepticism has different level and character. (Brack, 2014)

When institutions become to intervene to the spheres that are considered by the states to be the part of their sovereignty, this is the problem. The fact that the criticism of the EU institutions is justified is also said by former French president Nicolas Sarkozy. In his interview for Le Monde he stated, that the outrage of the EU citizens from the EU is not just a UK affair, but it is problem in every country. The fact that in Hungary and Poland there are

conservative governments that reject some of the EU directive cannot be perceived as undemocratic.

A serious problem of European values is also the serious deficit of democracy. Most often, the concept of democratic deficit is used in the context of the lack of democratic elements in the European Union and its institutions. It is most pronounced in the decision-making system of the European Union institutions. It is linked to the weak powers of the European Parliament or a small degree of EU citizens' participation in its decision-making processes. The European Parliament is the only EU institution that is directly created by citizens. In spite of this, it has fundamental shortcomings in terms of democratic principles. Just be aware that one of the MEPs from Germany is responsible for about 830,000 people, while Malta has six MEPs and approximately 410 thousand inhabitants. To elect one MEP from Malta, it is necessary to have 12 times less voters than one MEP from Germany. Other EU institutions also have significant democratic deficits, in particular the European Commission with its considerable powers. The electoral system in most of the EU countries makes it possible to become MEP even if no one knows this person. Apart from a few party leaders, the other candidates are unknown. A typical feature of democracy is that election voters can influence the government, but this is not possible in the European Union. The EU does not have a classical government as we know at the national level, and if we consider the Commission to be such a government, the EU has no governmental party. Voters - the EU citizens do not express satisfaction with the government of the EU in the elections. There is also no classical political opposition. (Hurna, Rusina, 2011)

All of the EU institutions, with the exception of the European Parliament, are not subjected to direct control of the EU citizens. Their representatives are appointed to their posts either by the EU member states or by other EU institutions. The European Parliament is today the only directly-elected institution of the European Union. In order to solve this problem, the European Parliament's position has continually strengthened with every deepening of the European integration. It has greatly expanded its budgetary powers, and it has strengthened its powers towards other EU institutions. In 2013, the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung Foundation published a publication with recommendations of the experts on the future direction of the European Union, called *A Europe of Freedom for and by its People*. The publication points out that there are currently many decisions on the European Union's future that are really far from common people, which creates a lack of awareness and transparency about the levels at which policy decisions should be taken in the light of the principle of the subsidiarity. These factors are threatening the acceptance of a deeper

integration process. Citizens often lose confidence in the process of European unification. It highlights the problem of greater centralization and increasing protectionism. This all also leads to the Euroscepticism. (European Dialogue, 2016)

### **3 Roots of Euroscepticism in the Visegrad group and its countries**

Visegrad Group was created mostly to help member states to integrate in the European and Transatlantic structures. After bad experience with the Soviet Russia, countries of Central Europe wanted to belong to the West and they set goals to achieve it. The goals were political and economic and they presumed that if they put themselves together, it would be easier for them to persuade stable Western European powers to accept the eastern enlargement of the EU. It is very interesting to see how the enthusiasm from the joining the EU slowly changed to quite strong Euroscepticism among the inhabitants of the V4 countries. The ultimate aim of all of these countries was European integration. Therefore we can say that the Visegrad Group is an expression of the efforts of Central European countries to cooperate on several segments of common interests within the framework of European integration. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have always been part of the same civilization based on the same cultural and intellectual values and the common roots of religious traditions which they wanted to preserve and further strengthen. Their national identities were oppressed under the rule of Soviet Union and with the arrival of the democracy to this region; they became free in expressing their wills and aims. It is also important to mention, that the V4 Group did not appear to be an alternative to European integration efforts, nor did it attempt to compete with existing functional European structures. Its activities do not, in any way, direct to the isolation or weakening of relations with other countries. On the contrary, the aim of this group is to encourage optimal cooperation with all countries in European Community, especially with their neighbours. Its highest interest was and still officially is democratic development of all European Community. The V4 group, during the times of its creation, wanted to contribute to building a European security architecture based on effective, complementary and mutually reinforcing cooperation and coordination within existing European and transatlantic institutions. In the interest of preserving and promoting cultural coherence, V4 has intensified the mutual transfer of values in the fields of culture, education, science and information exchange. All activities of Visegrad Group were aimed at strengthening stability in the Central European region. Member states had to understand their mutual cooperation as a challenge for themselves and their success as the best proof of their ability to integrate into European structures. (Stastny, 2002)

### 3.1 Roots of Euroscepticism common for all of the Visegrad Group countries

As was already mentioned, the ultimate goal of Visegrad group countries was to join the EU as soon as possible. It was beginning to be closer to the reality in 2003. In 2003, we can say that the vast majority of the citizens of the V4 group countries were in favour of becoming the members of the EU. There were only few people who were saying that this support would not remain in place after a while. The desire for the benefits coming from the EU membership was finally put into reality and people began to feel it, mostly in terms of structural funds and financial support for the farmers resulting from the Common Agricultural Policy. The support for the EU was mostly on the European average, around 50%, only Slovakia shows the support of the 57% and Czech Republic 45% according to the Eurobarometer. (Eurobarometer, 2003) Within the next three years, support for the EU membership grew, for example in Poland, by over 20% to 71%. After 2007, support for membership among citizens of V4 group countries dramatically declined and these countries never recovered to previous levels of the support. (Leruth, Startin, Usherwood, 2018)

The phenomenon of Euroscepticism in Central Europe is a relatively new thing. This is mainly due to the fact that, that the current shape of the political systems of the countries in this region as well as the liberal democracy itself, in most cases began to form only about 25 years after the fall Communist regime. It is possible to argue that there was a certain desire to reintegrate into the Europe in the past 40 years, the way for post-communist countries to the EU was rather of cautious and prudent character. For a long time, the European issue plays a strong role in rhetoric and the actions of political parties. This was partly due to the fact that the most important political topics were those about the transition and consolidation of democracy in the early 1990s, and the issue of moving to the market economy. (Havlik, Kaniok, 2006)

The elections that took place in years 2005 and 2006 respectively, in the V4 countries, caught the eyes of experts on Euroscepticism and also created doubts about the stability of the group itself and also the countries in this region. This era we can consider as a beginning of the open Euroscepticism of Visegrad Group and its members. We may say that the there are three major reasons for the success of populist, controversial and mostly Eurosceptic political parties within the Central Europe. These are *“growing fatigue with so-called reforms following accession to the EU, a lack of improved welfare, and structural frustration with established political leaders.”* (Lang, 2007, p.125) The success of the political parties and movements with populist tendencies and their presence in some of the



governments in V4 countries had also consequences not only inside the group but also outside, in particular with the United States and Russia, as well as with other European partners. For example the PiS party in Poland is strongly anti-Russian in every aspect, Slovak former PM from this time – Robert Fico, called for the stronger cooperation with Russia and was also suspended from the Party of European Socialists fraction in the European Parliament. Fico in the shade of populism was criticised for visiting countries like China or Libya in particular, criticizing the Iraqi war, or attending the ceremony connected to the Cuban revolution and the embassy in Bratislava. (Lang, 2007)

After the entering the EU, many perceived Visegrad Group as an organization that is unnecessary anymore and has little significance. But the V4 continued to maintain relatively important cooperation. (Dangerfield, 2008) Period since 2014 till now is the peak of the Euroscepticism in Central Europe. The main reasons are the so called migration crisis, the Brexit and also crisis of Eurozone and Greece in particular. Visegrad Group had to deal with these topics both inside and outside the group. The public mood changed rapidly, countries began the debates within themselves, within the V4 and also with the European Union. The debates were very heated; we can say that *“in the history of the Visegrad Group and its influence within the EU, the year 2016 will be seen as a turning point.”* (Nic, 2016, p.282) The constant push from the migration crisis together with the result of the UK referendum which was rather shocking, were understood as a turning point, when the EU institutions must re-think some of the policies, because they might lose more partners in the future, exactly like they lost the UK. In The Economist journal, the expression illiberal Central Europe was used, describing the new direction Visegrad Group took. (The Economist, 2016) But there are tensions also within the group, as it is not very coherent when it comes to this topic. The number of either soft or hard Eurosceptic parties is different from country to country, and also public Euroscepticism reaches different levels. For example Poland and Hungary are focusing much more on the topic of the national sovereignty and strong nation state, while Czech Republic and Slovakia are showing only softer Euroscepticism and are considered to be moderate. (Nic, 2016) This brought them to the search of new regional co-workers and we can hear much more often the desire for so called Slavkov-Triangle, which would, except Bratislava and Prague, include also Austria.

The countries of the V4 differ from each other in the terms of the so called political culture, which is therefore indeed reflected in the party systems of given countries. We have the Polish system with two dominant parties, in Czech Republic and Slovakia the parliament usually consist of more than five or six parties, while the Hungarians live in the more or less

one-party state. But they share one thing in common. They are referred to, by the Western countries, as post-Democracy. And while the majority of the population of those countries are strongly in favour of the democracy, the reality shows that the societies there are built on very different principles. Despite the existence of free elections and plurality of political parties, the rule of law is more or less replaced by the networks of the very powerful economic groups, which are usually interconnected with the political parties, as those are usually getting financial support from those economic groups. Moreover, citizens of V4 countries were tired from the period of economic reforms needed in order to join the EU. Although we can say that they definitely welcomed the membership of the EU, all of the parties (with the exception of Hungary) that led the countries to the EU in the period around 2004, lost their governing position in the first elections within the EU. Next few years we were able to see the riots and change of the government in Hungary, the rule of the Law and Justice Party in Poland, which adopted many authoritarian tendencies, collapse of the coalition in Slovakia and the instability on the governmental level in Czech Republic. (Marusiak, 2013)

### *3.1.1 Economic reasons*

The economic crisis than began around year 2008 strongly shook the legitimacy of the governing elites in Visegrad Group countries. Many parties that were ruling at this time experienced big defeats and many of them do not exist anymore, like for example SDKU, HZDS in Slovakia, Democratic Left Alliance in Poland or Hungarian Socialist Party. The emotions citizens of the V4 countries began to feel towards the EU have changed especially because of the economic crisis. We cannot describe this as a hard Euroscepticism yet, because people are aware of pragmatic advantages of the EU membership. (Marusiak, 2013)

Economics play a strong role while defining the public Euroscepticism in the Visegrad Group as a whole. But it expresses differently, because for example Czech Republic is much more economically developed country than Slovakia and Poland is more successful than Hungary and so on. One of the biggest fears of the Czechs, after entering the European Union was that the level of their economic development will become slower or will disappear and they will not have economic advantage in opposite to the other V4 countries and that it will also have negative impact on the employment rate. They were afraid that it will bring the loss of job because of the migration from the east. (European Commission, 2004) On the other hand, the Slovaks and the Poles were all enthusiastic about the entering the EU, because

their expectations were that the countries will economically benefit from the EU membership. And even today, Czech people feel that they country lost more from being a member of the EU than for example Slovak people who are still quite Eurooptimistic. The economic root of the Euroscepticism in Slovakia though is the reason of being in the Eurozone, thus they had to contribute to the solution of so called Greek crisis. (Toomey, 2007)

### *3.1.2 Historical reasons*

As was already mentioned before, countries of the V4 are strongly interconnected throughout the history, some of them for more than thousand years. Almost every one of those countries formed, at least for a while, some kind of statehood with another one. And all of them experienced the totalitarian era under the rule of the Soviet Union. But they have also had experience with other members of the European Union. In particular, Poland and Czech Republic are strongly connected to the history of Germany in 20<sup>th</sup> century and even before. Both countries have serious issues with Germany and this is also reflected in the public Euroscepticism. *“Euroscepticism in Czech Republic derives mostly from a strong hostility to Germany.”* (Muller-Heidelberg, 2004, p.12) When it comes to the reasons for this hostility, it goes as far as the World War II and the German occupation of Sudetenland as well as the post-war Benes Decrees that caused troubles between the two countries for many years after. (Muller-Heidelberg, 2004)

In Poland, the situation with Germans is little more serious, as Polish people feel some kind of fear towards Germany. Polish people feel somehow devaluated by the Germans. They were afraid that Germans would not allow them to join their labour market, because they consider them to be less qualified immigrants. We have to say though, that the Czechs have negative connotations with not only Germany, but also other EU members, as they feel betrayed by the failure of the UK and France in negotiating with the Nazi Germany and they de facto decided about the faith of the Czechoslovakia, even though Czech and Slovak representatives were not present at this negotiation. This feeling present among Czech public, not so much among the Slovak one, can cause some kind of distrust to their fellow members. (Muller-Heidelberg, 2004)

On the other hand Slovakia, at the time of entering the EU, was very Eurooptimistic country, because they did not have bad historical experience with the Western members, but with the members of the V4 itself. Entering the EU for Slovaks may mean that they will not

be threatened by the Hungarian expansiveness or Czech irredentism. (Toomey, 2007) Of course, the sources of both public and party-based Euroscepticism changed over the time. After few years, countries also felt the lack of identifying themselves with the EU, as well as the fear that the EU will overrule their sovereign nation states. The biggest problem that somehow connected the position of the V4 countries was the so called migration crisis. This thesis will deal with it while describing the Euroscepticism in particular countries.

### **3.2 Euroscepticism in Slovakia**

Gradual process of European integration, creation of new institutions and complex processes of law-making have naturally led to the growth of critical attitudes towards the EU. These critical attitudes are manifested differently, whether it is the people's impudence or the negative reactions of political parties from both parts of the left-right political spectrum. There are parties and factions within the parties which can be classified as sceptical and others that can be considered as complete anti-European. (Taggart, Szczarbiak, 2002)

Slovakia has never been considered a strong Eurosceptic country. The question of the European integration has become part of political competition in Slovakia, even though political parties only rarely articulated their ideas about the organization of the enlarged European Union. The EU question was rather so-called valence issue, that means that the area *"in which the political parties basically agreed with one another, but they have stressed more of the competitiveness than their competitors."* (Malová, 2005, p.101). In the political spectrum in Slovakia there were parties that would fit into the classification of moderate Euroscepticism and parties whose attitude was not clear. Relevant political subjects that would be openly against the EU and would fit into the classification of so called hard Euroscepticism in most of the cases did not exist (Rybar, 2005)

Since gaining the independence, Slovakia has aspired on becoming a new member of multinational organizations, especially NATO and the EU. In October 1993, Slovakia signed an Association Agreement with the EU, which concerned political cooperation, market liberalization and economic, financial and cultural cooperation sector. In the following year, however, the obstacle to these ambitions has been hampered. Only a few months after the parliamentary elections in 1994 and the subsequent constitution of the government by HZDS, ZRS and SNS, Slovakia received two demarches from the EU. They were a reaction to how much has the government in parliament limited the ability of the opposition to effectively

engage in government control (Rybar, 2005). Other areas were criticized, for example, minority policy. In 1996 and 1997 the main criticism from the EU was aimed to the constant violation of democratic norms and rules. In 1997 the Interior Ministry hindered referendums about the direct election of the head of state as well as the potential entry into NATO. As a result of non-compliance with the democratic standards required by the EU was the decision of the European Commission, which proposed that Slovakia was not invited to the opening of the access negotiations to the Union (Rybar, 2005). These events caused a significant shock to the political ethics at the time. Reopening of the accession has become a major priority of many political parties. The importance of this topic allowed for opposition in the Parliament to overcome disagreements, compromise and prepare conditions for creating more common political alternative to the then-government. In 1998, these parties, also thanks to the critique of the governmental parties, won the parliamentary elections and subsequently created a new pro-European government.

The decline in the interest of Slovak voters in the elections is demonstrated both at regional and European level. Only 13,05% of the Slovak voters participated in the European Parliament elections in 2014, representing the lowest political participation from all member states. Based on Eurobarometer results, analyses show that Slovak society is still more pro-European, despite the rise of populist initiatives, especially after parliamentary elections in March 2016. (Janning, 2016)

### *3.2.1 Migration crisis and Slovakia*

Most of the Slovak political elite is in agreement with the current security risks and hence rhetoric towards the EU and the future of Schengen area. However, among political elites there is a great tension. Current Slovak politics is accompanied by serious domestic cases, which to a large extent divide Slovak politicians. Concerning the migration quotas, Slovak President Kiska at the end of the 2015 was saying that it is not the best solution, but Slovakia has to accept them, if any of the European institutions will agree on them. (Strizinec, 2015) He also adds that the migration crisis is the biggest problem for Europe since the end of World War II. That is why all states must participate in its solving. The chairman of the political party SaS, Richard Sulík, in contrast to Slovak President Andrej Kiska, rejects mandatory quotas and perceives the compulsory distribution of refugees as very negative. According to Sulik, EU has to close the European border; it is the only possible way to deal

with the migration crisis. He sees the proposal of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, called the migration compact, as a desire to implement mandatory quotas. Sulík agrees with the collective solution of the migration crisis. However, he disagrees that all of the EU member countries are to be comprised of social benefits for millions of migrants. He sees the Brexit as sign of the fact that the EU is losing its attractiveness, and many countries might leave soon. (Sulík, 2016)

Minister of International Affairs, Miroslav Lajčák sees migration crisis as a complex social problem, which must be solved at the European level. He stresses the fact that the quotas are not being debated anymore, because they lost their sense. As a possible solution to this crisis, he states so called flexible solidarity, by which European countries can solve the crisis differently. (Zavodsky, 2016) Flexible solidarity vs. mandatory quotas are often bold in terms of solutions of the migration crisis in the EU. According to former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, mandatory quotas are already dead concept in European politics and are therefore not accepted. Fico further states that Slovakia under his leadership will continue to refuse the mandatory quota with the so called flexible solidarity. They strongly opposed to the European Commission's proposal there is a fine of EUR 250,000 per migrant, which will not be accepted by the member country. (TASR, 2016)

On the other hand, Filip Bolco from the think-tank Foundation F.A. Hayek perceives the flow of migrants not as negative as the top political leaders. According to Bolco, migrants can help the whole EU, as they can solve the problem with the lack of low skilled workforce and that is how migrants would the domestic economy. If we prevent migration, we will also stop the natural shift of production factors. However, Bolco also admits that not all migrants will join in the labour market. (Bolco, 2016)

### *3.2.2 Eurozone crisis*

Slovakia as the only one country from Visegrad Group that belongs to the Eurozone had to deal with the financial crisis, or so called “Greek crisis” together with other members of the Eurozone. The problems already caused falls of many of the governments in Eurozone. EFSF mechanism together with the help for the Greece was also discussed in Slovak parliament. One of the parties in the coalition – SaS was fundamentally against and their chief, Richard Sulík, is currently a member of the European Parliament who is considered to be soft Eurosceptic. Prime Minister Radicová realized the importance of this matter and she

put together the expressing the trust for the government and EFSF mechanism under the one vote. The vote was preceded by a nearly six-hour debate. (Euractiv, 2011) The MPs and several Ministers reiterated their positions, which have been presented for several months. In particular, right-wing coalition parties blamed each other for the possible collapse of the government. SaS, whose vote was to decide on the continued functioning of the government, remained in a position not to vote against the program statement. They have repeatedly reiterated that Slovakia is the only country where the government initiates a vote that is inconsistent with the coalition agreement. The President of the Parliament who was the head of the SaS criticized the fact that EFSF will not only save countries, but also banks. He claimed that his party is not a priori against the loans for the country. For example, a loan to Ireland was according to him a good solution. He also added that the MPs from SaS are not stuck on the stools, they have their honor. He considers the combination of voting and trusts in the government to be extortion. His speech ended with a question for the Prime Minister, if she is sure that she is doing right. (Pravda, 2011)

The government fell down and the new one that was created after the election in 2012 passed the bill about the financial support for Greece and also EFSF mechanism.

### **3.3 Euroscepticism in Czech Republic**

Right after joining the EU, the Czech Republic's goal became full membership, which included the fastest possible access to the Eurozone and Schengen area. At the same time, the Czech Republic wanted to remove the free movement restriction for workers as soon as possible. According to the survey from September 2015, 39% of Czechs are satisfied with Czech membership in the EU. As for the willingness of the Czech Republic to cooperate and to collectively negotiate on EU issues, its integration depends on the current political representation. Czech Republic now experiences relatively unstable period when it comes to the government, but the previous government aimed to declare the strategic interest of the Czech Republic on European integration and the adoption of the Euro currency. However, the migration crisis, which began in the summer of 2015, interrupted their plans, because they put the country in the position of rejecting the mandatory quotas. The Czech Republic thus had to hold V4's position and interests while keeping well relations with so called old member states, and especially with neighboring Germany. (Janning, 2016)

According to Hanley, Czech Euroscepticism has several features that distinguish it from Euroscepticism in other Central European countries. The first is the fact that the European debate remained in the Czech Republic at the level of general "national interest", with relatively little attention paid to specific interest groups. (Hanley, 2008) The Czech case also shows how historically established discourses can influence the current debate on European integration. This is confirmed in the Czech case by, for example, the increasing tendency of framing the process of European integration through the terms of a revised historical nationalistic paradigm that can best be seen by increasing efforts to see the processes of accession and enlargement of the EU in terms of Czech-German relations or the conflict between Anglo-Saxon and Central European respect for diversity and national sovereignty in contrast to the German centralism and federalism. This situation was upheld in the parliamentary elections in 2002, when the Benes Decrees issue, as a symbolic Czech anxiety about the national identity and national sovereignty in the enlarged EU, emerged as an important issue. (Hanley, 2008) The perception of the Czech Republic, as one of the most Eurosceptic countries was supported by some Czech politicians led by former Prime Minister, ODS leader and former President Vaclav Klaus, which had an impact on the behavior of Czech governments as well. (Kaniok, 2014)

### *3.3.1 Migration crisis and the Czech Republic*

Czech policymakers are united in defining security challenges. As well as Slovakia, the Czech Republic is opposing the mandatory quotas, which should help solving the current migratory crisis that began in the Middle East. On the other hand, all of the top constitutional figures including Czech President Milos Zeman and former Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka agreed on the fact, that the handling of the migration crisis is the basis for the preservation and protection of the Schengen area. During a meeting in the Castle in April 2016, politicians were trying to solve the main problems not only Czech Republic is facing, but also the whole EU. Therefore, one of the main topics at the given meeting was a persistent migration crisis and EU co-operation with Turkey to detain all asylum seekers. (Ceske Noviny, 2016) Groszkowski of the OSW Polish think-tank evaluated access of the Czech Prime Minister still as moderate, in order to minimize the tension between Prague and Berlin. (Groszkowski, 2016)

During the visit to Prague by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka presented his view of the current situation in Europe. Both agreed



that it is necessary to protect Schengen area and not to continue its division. Sobotka also agreed with measures to help reduce the impact of the migration crisis, such as the agreement with Turkey. But the Czech opposition has responded to this, when ANO MP Zdeněk Soukup initiated a debate that calls for the creation of a platform to defend European culture and its values. (Donfried, 2016)

Some people see migration as just one of the impacts of globalization. Politicians should understand it, because they influence the opinions of public. According to Vit, what is positive is the fact that the V4 countries are still being loyal to the idea of European integration. (Vit, 2016) On the other hand, director of the Institute of International Relations in Prague Petr Kratochvíl said that the Czech Republic's approach in the issues of migration crisis shows, how the international politics should not be developed. He sees the position of the Czech Republic in denying the mandatory quotas as hard to understand. According to Kratochvíl, it is important to focus on the questions that will help to ensure, that the migrants will stay in the country, where they were given the asylum. (Nevyhosteny, 2015)

### *3.3.2 Public Euroscepticism in Czech Republic*

The specificity of public Euroscepticism in the Czech Republic is marked by three particular reasons. Firstly there is an externality, which means that the EU is perceived as something that is outside. Czech public is having hard times identifying themselves with the European Union. People often refer to the EU as "them" not as "us", which is a problem in every V4 country as well. Then there is a strong insecurity about the future development of the EU. (Rulikova, 2004) As was described above, Czech Republic stresses the importance of not taking migrants from countries with different cultural backgrounds. Many people are afraid that the membership in the EU will make them pass bills and adopt legislation that would be against their will. Then there is a strong aspect of so called lateness. Czech Republic together with other V4 countries was not part of the creation of the EU at the beginning. We can also define Czech Euroscepticism among citizens as something coming from the historical background of the country. For Czech nations it was always typical, that it was formed in an opposition to the most powerful nations like the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. In the history based negative expectations, when it comes to the intentions of the superpowers, the quote about us without us plays still very strong role in society. Benes is talking about another aspect, that is the Czech exceptionality – conviction that specific

historical experience gives Czech people right to play a role of a teacher in the EU. (Benes, 2010)

Views on the European Union, citizens' satisfaction with membership, perceived costs and revenues of this membership as well as many other questions are regularly tested by the Public opinion research centre. The Euroscepticism of the Czech public, of course, is not possible to simply derive only from these data, because some aspects of the European integration can be perceived as good and some of them as bad by the public. But we can conclude that the satisfaction with the EU membership was highest among years 2008 and 2010 and during the last years, this pointer fell down rapidly – to make it simple, Euroscepticism within the Czech public is increasing. The expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the membership is strongly connected to many aspects, in particular the age, education and living standard of the people. (CVVM, 2018)

The Czechs are also Eurosceptic towards the Euro currency, although they promised to adopt it in some time. And really, the public support for the Euro currency is dramatically low in Czech society. The political support for Euro is not high either. It is connected with the fact that there is not a politician who would have the courage to adopt the Euro. Some of them are against, like former President and Prime Minister Klaus, who said that “I do not see any reason why the Czech Republic should join the Eurozone. In addition, all opinion polls show that people do not want it.” (Klaus in Panampost, 2017) Some of them, like current President Zeman, take the pragmatic approach. He keeps saying that he is quite in favour of the Euro but only with the support of the referendum. And former finance minister, current Prime Minister says that the politicians are not preparing to adopt Euro at all. Considering the mood in the public, the problems with Greece and the example of Slovakia, where they have experienced political instability because of the EFSF voting, Czech Republic is not likely to adopt Euro currency in short time. (Unsworth, 2017)

### **3.4 Euroscepticism in Poland**

The Polish Euroscepticism has many different sources. When it comes to the Polish cultural and political elites, they often stress the national sovereignty and value difference of Poland given mostly by the Catholic Church. (Mlejnek, 2009) Other main factors of Polish Euroscepticism are foreign priorities, protection of the national sovereignty and ideological issues. Polish priority always was the strong tie with NATO and Washington, mostly by the

military presence of the US forces in the Central Europe and also expansion of the NATO to the east, particularly Ukraine. When it comes to the national sovereignty, Poland tries to maintain the strongest possible position in the decision-making process in the EU institutions. Poland has almost the same number of votes in the Council of the European Union as France or Germany. Value based ideological approach is based on the criticism of cultural dimension of the EU, which is being manifested by the strong emphasis on defending the Christian values against the secular values of the EU. (Ruczaj, 2004)

We have to mention though, that the Polish support for the EU membership is still relatively high in comparison with for example Czech Republic or Hungary. High support of the EU connected mainly with the high financial transactions from the EU to Poland, mostly in terms of the structural and cohesion funds, which almost every Pole has personal experience with. (Czesnik, Kotnarowski, 2014)

### *3.4.1 Polish public Euroscepticism and catholic values*

The attitudes of the Poles towards the EU passed different stages – from being strong Eurooptimists to hard and soft Euroscepticism. Poland is often referred to as a complicated country, also because of its size and strong national identity as well as the history and strong role of the Catholic Church in the decision making processes. Polish often demanded that the EU would implement the values of Christianity, for example to the preamble of the Lisbon treaty and so on. (Riishoj, 2010) The reasons for apparent Euroscepticism in Poland also come from the fear of the loss of national identity, which is expressed not only in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of religious and economic consequences for interest groups, especially farmers. Although these groups have minimal common features in addition to their opposition to the EU, they have gained considerable space in the Polish media. Political focus remains on the debate about ethnic and religious nationalism. (Kopecky, Mudde, 2002)

The Polish society is highly divided, because there is a long tradition of two political parties forming the government – either liberal and pro-Western Civic Platform (PO) or conservative nationalistic Law and Justice (PiS) party. The Polish people are therefore divided into political liberals and catholic nationalists. The second group in particular is marked by the implementation of religious concepts of the social order into the secular affairs. Also these people tend to be more ethnocentric and they believe that Poland and Polish Catholic Church in particular is the right institution and the European Union is causing moral damage to the

country. This nationalism is the strongest basis for Polish Euroscepticism, as it denies the EU as a so called materialistic, secular and cosmopolitan organization. (Ilonszki, 2009)

What has the strong role in this topic is also Polish media. State owned radio Maryja for example, together with the journals of *Nasz Dziennik* or *Nasza Polska* and the medial centre of the riot towards the EU. They even used to advert, that the Polish identity will be destroyed by entering the European Union. We have to say though, that Polish public opinion is very mutable. We can see it also on the parliamentary election, which is considered to be similar with the US ones at their quite often changing of the ruling position of the Democratic and Republican Parties. (Jasiewicz, 2004) To sum it up, Poland as a strongly catholic nation tends to stick to its values and people are convinced about the rightness of their values. Although recently there is a strong amount of people, especially young and educated, who are becoming to be more liberal. Polish people also realize the great number of opportunities and benefits coming to the from the EU membership. In many western countries they are working as migrants, especially those with the lower skills. Based on the fear of losing national identity, big problem that brought many people to the streets not only of Warsaw is the fear of adopting migrants, especially those who are of the Islamic faith. In November last year, more than 60 000 people joined the march in Warsaw and were chanting the slogans like God, honour, country, or chants about the pure white Poland. November, 11 is often abused by a Polish nationalists, as they organize the so called Independence march, as the November, 11 is the day of Polish independence. (BBC, 2017)

#### *3.4.2 Poland and migration crisis*

Poland, as the only Central European country, is not directly confronted with the impacts of migration crisis. As far as geographic location is concerned, it is furthest away from migratory routes, through which refugees come to Europe. Nevertheless, Poland is active participant in finding solutions to the current migration crisis. According to surveys of the Research Centre PEW, Poland is the country with the highest proportion of EU support. So the Poles are true enthusiastic of European integration, which can be described as a unique case, especially due to the change in the security environment in Europe. However, while Poland is still enthusiastic for European integration, political leaders are questioning the future of the European concept integration and Schengen area, which is currently at risk. (Cichocki, 2016) The central figure of Polish politics is Donald Tusk, who holds the position

of President of the European Council since 2014. As one of the most important positions in the EU, its attitude towards European integration is proactive. The current security challenges that threaten the future of the EU and Schengen, he perceives as grave and at the same time asserts that only the EU can solve the situation, while not jeopardizing the future of European integration. (Tusk, 2016) For Tusk, the most important question is how to control the EU borders. He admits that the future of Schengen is so endangered, that European countries must tighten border controls. Polish President Duda, as well as Tusk, support European integration and significantly reject Schengen cleavage. During a meeting with French Prime Minister Manuel Valls, at the beginning of 2016 in Munich, Duda strictly rejected efforts to create so called Minischengen. Duda together with Valls discussed the future of European policymaking and migration. They both agreed that it is necessary to prevent the collapse of Schengen area. (President, 2016)

Witold Waszczykowski, Polish Foreign Minister, defines the migration crisis as the result of negligence. Europe has concentrated for years on the crisis in the Eurozone, Grexit, Brexit and did not observe the events in the Middle East at all after the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Thanks to that, Europe has ignored several conflicts, one of them - in Libya, was under the right of initiative by European intervention. The question of why Poland is not willing to accept even a small proportion of refugees, he responds that the fact is that the refugees do not want to stay in Poland anyway. They will immediately head to Germany, Austria or Sweden. To this, Waszczykowski states that there is nothing like the European common foreign and security policy, because not every country defines the same security challenges. From his speech, it feels that, as for the remaining V4 states, mandatory quotas are dead for Poland. From their point of view, countries cannot help Germany with refugees because they are just migrants who do not seek this kind of help, they would rather go directly to the Germany. It is therefore a waste of time for Poland with its resources, as any support does not meet its effect. (Dempsey, 2016)

Poland left the V4 direction in the key vote and supported the quota proposal. Kratochvíl views it as a pragmatic decision by Poland. According to him, it was already clear that if the long-standing resistance of Central Europe will remain, it is going to be followed by qualified majority voting. He admits, however, that the mood of the citizens of Poland is similar to the one in the Czech Republic. Overall, however, Poland is consistent with V4 opinions calling for a common solution to the migratory crisis faced by the whole Europe. (Ibid)

### 3.5 Euroscepticism in Hungary

Since the political party Fidesz won the 2010 parliamentary elections, it is possible to observe the strong deterioration of relations between Hungary and Brussels. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban perceives the EU as a declining economic power with a vague foreign policy. Opinions of the Hungarian Prime Minister and opinions of Brussels are significantly different, especially on Russian sanctions and migration crisis. (Janning, 2016) Hungarian Foreign and Trade Minister Péter Szijjártó for Canadian CBC television said that Europe has to face at least 5 challenges. Szijjártó mainly mentioned migration, widespread of the terrorism, war in Ukraine, energy issues and Brexit's historical challenges for Europe, which must be tackled as soon as possible, thus eliminating the increase of the security risk, which may eventually result in the collapse of Schengen area as we know it today. (Hungarian Government website, 2016)

When it comes to the sources of Hungarian Euroscepticism, Hungary is a country with strong nationalistic tendencies that put emphasis on historical traditions and exceptionalism among neighbouring countries. In Hungary there is also a strong imagination of the country, which bears traditional Christian values. This all together with the tragic loss of the territories after the World War I, is reflected in the Hungarian perception of European integration. The problem of nationalism is reflected in Hungarian Euroscepticism in relations to the minorities, neighbouring nations and lack of trust towards the supranational principles of the functioning of international organizations. (Stankov, 2006)

#### 3.5.1 Public Euroscepticism in Hungary

The sources of public Euroscepticism in Hungary, besides the few people who still believe in the so called Great Hungary, are mostly economic reasons. Besides that there is also a strong lack of association with the EU. Many have the problem to identify with the benefits of the European funds for themselves; they do not feel that the EU's investments are beneficial for them. Otherwise, usually those who have benefited personally, such as Erasmus students and the European Voluntary Service, feel it. However, this does not necessarily lead to a positive evaluation of the EU by those who have remained. Positive influences often blot out negative feelings. In the case of open borders, it is a refugee crisis and in Hungary there is a strong narrative about the need to protect the domestic market. (Haerpfer, 2007)

In Hungary, the subject of national sovereignty resonates, the feeling of being used by Western countries is present in the society, as well as the feeling of subordination that has become visible in a dual quality of food, and which in many places evokes nostalgia and a socialist era with large farms, food self-sufficiency and certainty of having a job. The EU is shaping its legitimacy in particular with the objectives of economic prosperity and peace. But the economic prosperity is not really being felt, and people born in the peace times do not really think about it in this sense. They tend to identify the EU with capitalism and reproaches for capitalism, like corporate power, digitization and its impact on traditional jobs, poverty, are become reproaches against the European Union. (Duro, 2010)

The Hungarians also have very high expectations from the EU membership, mostly in areas, in which the EU is not competent, like healthcare, education and so on. It is not an exception, that elderly people on the countryside of Hungary are blaming the Brussels even for the amount of their pension. Similarly to Slovakia, Hungarian people also blame the EU for not being able to protect the money given to the country. This feeling prevails against the positive perception of EU structural funds. (Batory, 2008)

Besides all of that, Hungary is a country that was affected by the refugee crisis the most from the V4. Main migration routes lead through the Hungary, as migrants are attempting to get to Austria and Germany. Nationalistic government of Viktor Orban therefore did not wait for a long time to propose solutions that were completely in a conflict with the European values.

### *3.5.2 Hungary and migration crisis*

Hungary has radically opposed today's migration crisis. Hungary clearly refused mandatory redistribution of refugees through the quotas. Already after the outbreak of the migration crisis in 2015, Hungary has decided to build a wall that has to protect the Hungarian border in the south and thus to limit the passage of refugees through Hungary to Germany. Orban was in fact the first European leader who held the referendum on mandatory quotas, that took place on October, 2. However, as long as the 50% quorum was not met, referendum was proclaimed void, despite the fact that more than 98% of Hungarians who participated on the referendum voted against the quotas. (Kingsley, 2016) Hungarian Prime Minister believes that Europe must act together, through economic policies and there can be no situation where member states will be obliged to access mandatory quotas. So far, Europe

has begun to incite migrants and then deal with their future through the introduction of the quotas. As regards the EU agreement with Turkey, Hungary vetoed the proposal submitted on March, 7 during the Brussels Summit. (Sky News, 2016) Two months later, Orban expressed the Treaty between Turkey and the EU as a necessity. He adds that Hungary supports all bilateral treaties under which the EU is dealing with all the countries from which refugees come. Orban also expressed support for financial subsidies to Turkey. Still, however, he holds the notion that no one can force Hungary to accept mandatory quotas, as it laments his criticism especially to the German Chancellor and her invitation of migrants to Europe. (Anadolu Agency, 2016)

Orban perceives refugees as terrorists who want to enter the European Union and endanger not only Hungarian population. Therefore, it is very important to start with the implementation of protective actions, which can protect the borders of Europe. For Orban, all of the migrants represent security threat, because we cannot tell who they are. When Merkel invited millions of migrants to Europe, the risk of terrorism has increased considerably. Therefore, it is necessary to think about maintaining Schengen area by following steps and prepare for the creation of possible federations and national states. (TOL, 2016)



## **4 Expression of Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group countries**

To see how the general Euroscepticism in the Visegrad Group is expressing itself, it is necessary to analyze both public and party-based aspects of it. When it comes to the party-based Euroscepticism, it is useful to list the political parties that are considered to be at least little bit Eurosceptic, either is it soft or hard Euroscepticism and see how their strength and electoral results changed over the time from 2004 till the last elections. Public Euroscepticism comes from the public opinion polls conducted from Eurobarometer.

### **4.1 Party-based Euroscepticism**

The opinions on which parties are actually Eurosceptic differ from different sources. But some of them are generally known for having Eurosceptic tendencies coming from their political programme, or some parties even express themselves as anti-European. In this chapter we will see parties that have Eurosceptic tendencies according to variety of sources. Those parties are either critique to some of the EU policies; they are calling for the reform of the EU or are fundamentally against the European integration in general. It is necessary to briefly analyze what is the base of their Euroscepticism, to see if it is genuine effort to reform the EU or if it is just a matter of populism and nationalism in them. After the analysis of the parties it is good to look at their electoral results in the national parliamentary elections over the time, to understand the general political mood in the given countries.

#### *4.1.1 Czech Republic*

According to Taggart and Szczerbiak, the Eurosceptic parties in Czech Republic are Civic Democratic Party (ODS) and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM). Hyncica, Maskarinec and Novotny in their book Euroscepticism in Central Europe added to those parties also Party of Free Citizens (Svobodní), but this party never achieved a result that would have significance for analysing the electoral mood in the country, so it is not necessary to analyze it. The last one is Tomio Okamura's Dawn of Direct Democracy (Úsvit). In the terms of Czech Republic we will be focusing on the results of those parties in parliamentary elections in 2006, 2010, 2013 and 2017.

## ODS

This party's position towards the European integration is traditionally complicated. The heads of the party, especially Vaclav Klaus who was the chairman for many years, are more Eurosceptic than their electorate appears to be. They also proved that their aim is not to demonize European Union as a whole, but only some of their policies. In the European elections in 2009, the introduction to this electoral programme states: "*the electoral strategy of ODS is not leaning on the catastrophic scenarios, our aim is not to scare voters. Therefore, we will not wasting the time and we are searching for the constructive solutions.*" (ODS, 2009) They often said that their aim is to protect the Czech national interest and they are not subjected to extreme Eurooptimism, but they deny the Euronegativism. They generally do not consider the EU to be the aim, but to be a mean that they will use to support the interest of Czech citizens. ODS is not accepting the federative perspective of the EU's development, but they support the economic purpose of the European integration, that should lead to better cooperation between the countries in the sphere of trade, although ODS is opposing the common European tax mechanism. Healthcare, social system, fiscal policy and tax policy should be, according to the party, in the exclusive competence of the nation states, as well as the security issues. ODS believes that the advantages of being the EU member for the Czech Republic outweigh the negatives; therefore they do not call for the so called Czexit. As for the concrete proposals, ODS clearly refuses to adopt the Euro currency. (ODS, 2014)

## KSČM

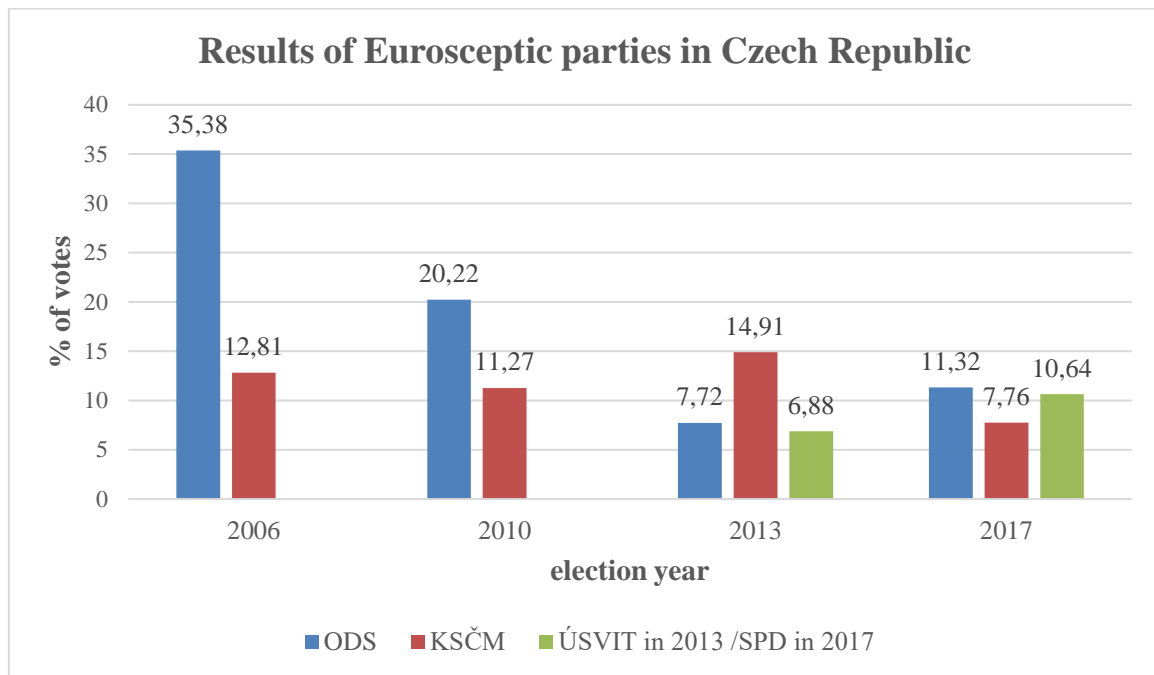
This party was, around year 2004, supporting the idea of keeping the national sovereignty as much as possible, but also idea of growth of the competences of the EU in the spheres of social justice. They believed that the EU could, to some extent, contribute to the social welfare of the countries and create socially justice society. Before the election in 2009 they again emphasised the role of a nation state in guaranteeing the social and economic stabilities of the country, but also active European integration could be a useful mean for achieving that. What is their issue with the EU is the question of security, because according to the KSČM, the USA and NATO are behind the world's biggest conflicts nowadays and what they demand is the EU not submitting to the global powers. (KSČM, 2009) They refuse the idea that the free movement of labour, service and capital are meaning to secure dignified life for all of the citizens, because according to KSČM, human rights without the economic and social ones are only empty phrase. The party criticise the EU for being neoliberal and for letting people live in the constantly worsening conditions and also for deepening the difference between the rich

and the poor. KSČM's aim was not to leave the EU, but to transform in and make it more social, although conservative parties often say that the Europe is too much social, communists deny that. (KSČM, 2014)

### **Party and Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura/ ÚSVIT**

This party is relatively new one and it was created by Tomio Okamura, Czech entrepreneur of a Japanese descent, who firstly created party called ÚSVIT. The ÚSVIT movement was established only few months before the actual election in 2013 and its priorities were to increase the public involvement on decision making processes by the institutes of direct democracy. They also supported the anti-Roma attitudes, but they had the lack of a reasonable political programme. (Stegmaier, Linek, 2014) They did not really create any programme in the issues of European integration either, but their motto was – We do not want to be the province of the EU and in general, they, again, demanded that everything should be dealt by the referendums. Okamura's programme before the 2014 election concerning the EU was summed up to less than 5 sentences. They demanded strict anti-immigration laws, because, according to them, Czech Republic was about to bring maladjusted immigrants and Islamic fanatics to the country. (Úsvit, 2013) They do not want to move the competences to the Brussels and their aim is to defend the Czech sovereignty in the economic issues. So to sum it up, Úsvit party was and is against the strong EU, against Euro currency, against migrants. They accuse the EU of making the Czechs their slaves and call this relationship as a dictatorship. (Usvit, 2014) Okamura kept pretty much the same program even during the elections of 2017, although before 2017 election Okamura meanwhile came up with the new party called Party and Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura. Therefore for the purpose of the thesis, in graph shown later, in one election we will be dealing with ÚSVIT party and in the other election with Party and Direct Democracy of Tomio Okamura, because both parties were strongly connected to its leaders, even though they are two separate parties now.

Figure 3: Electoral results of Eurosceptic parties in Czech Republic



Source: Author's edit of data from ČSÚ

## Results

In this graph, we can see the decline of the percentage of votes for ODS, which around the time of joining the EU was one of the strongest parties on the Czech political scene. The fact behind this decline is that although the party has always had a Eurosceptic wing in it, the electorate of it consists of higher educated, richer people who tend to support European Union and Czech membership in it. Anti-EU rhetoric of the party caused that those people decided to vote for another parties, especially TOP 09. The reason of the slightly higher result in last parliamentary election for ODS is that people in the centre-right political spectrum felt that the situation is becoming to be dangerous, because public opinion polls presumed good results of ANO, party of businessman Andrej Babis, which is very hard to identify, although members of ANO are talking about themselves as pro-European. (Kopecky, 2017) Those voters were also afraid of increasing results of Tomio Okamura, who in 2013 with his party USVIT gained 6,88% and in the last election with his new party SPD he gained almost 11%. This party is a party of the hard Euroscepticism, without any consistent political program except criticism towards migration flows and the EU institutions. Their increasing results show that there is a quite strong amount of people who resigned on traditional political parties and decided to vote this Eurosceptic party. What influenced those people was great Okamura's campaign about the dangers coming to the Czech Republic with migration flows

from Islamic countries. Voters of Tomio Okamura consisted very much of those who were previously voting for KSČM, the party that enjoyed its peak in the election of 2013 after the economic crisis in Europe, but it seems like the party is losing its electorate. (Muller, 2017)

What we can therefore conclude from the results of those parties is the fact, that among one part of electorate, especially liberal one, there is a strong need for party that is pro-European and has values that ODS used to have couple years ago. Also we can see the decline of the results of KSČM and the increasing potential of Tomio Okamura and his party that is considered to be very Eurosceptic. This increase derives from the so called refugee crisis in the EU and shows that in Czech Republic there is still quite strong number of Eurosceptic people, which may also have increased in last few years.

#### *4.1.2 Slovakia*

Slovakia as a traditionally most Eurooptimistic country in the Visegrad Group does not have a long tradition of Eurosceptic parties, but rather very pro-European ones. From the well-established parties, Slovak National Party (SNS) can be considered as a soft Eurosceptic as well as the Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) who voted against the EFSF mechanism and therefore contributed to the fall of their own government. There is one specific party called Kotleba- People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) which was appealing to only small percentage of mostly young neo Nazis, but which, after last parliamentary elections, became very strong party with own MPs in the National Council. For examination of Slovak party-based Euroscepticism it is necessary to see the results of those parties in parliamentary elections in 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2016.

#### **SNS**

This party is nationally oriented political subject created right after the 1989, although the original party was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They often emphasize the national values in many different ways, in European integration as well. The Euroscepticism within the SNS is connected with the nationalism. Their biggest aim after the 1989 was the creation of separate Slovak Republic as an independent nation state. The story of SNS throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is like a roller coaster, although they are still in the parliament nowadays. They have experienced many tensions, ideological clashes, personal and organizational changes. What characterised them in the 90s was the denial of joining the NATO and the EU and they

proposed the idea of neutrality of the country. (Urubek, 1999) They often doubted the necessity and advantages of the EU membership, although later they admitted that being in the EU might be beneficial, but only with the strong sovereign nation states. (Ondrousek, Havlik, 2010) After the substitution in the head of the party, Jan Slota, who was famous for controversial statements and his inclinations to xenophobia and chauvinism, was replaced by young ambitious lawyer Andrej Danko, current President of the National Council. He joined the coalition with Hungarian minority party called Most-Híd and SNS became more peaceful. According to Taggart and Szczerbiak's typology, SNS is mostly evaluated as a party of soft Euroscepticism with the elements of hard Euroscepticism during the 90s. (Hlousek, Kopecek, 2004) SNS supports the strong sovereign Slovakia and before 2009 opposed the adoption of Euro currency, although they have never doubt the importance of the EU project

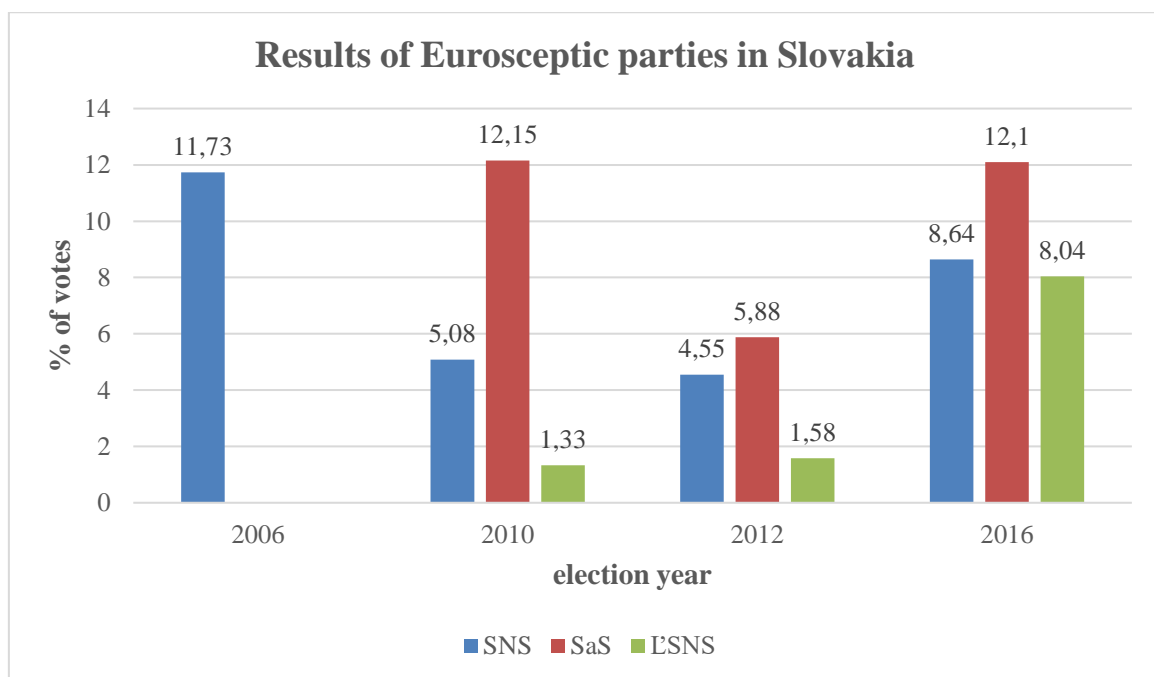
## **SaS**

This party came to the Slovak political scene in 2009 as a liberal party, although it has changed throughout the years. In the first election they immediately gained more than 12%, and they became well established political party. SaS is a member of European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Group in the European parliament. One of their characteristics is criticism towards some of the EU policies that brings them to the basket of soft-Eurosceptic parties. Already in 2010 they criticised the Lisbon Treaty as a treaty that allows the growth of the influence of the EU bureaucracy and the restriction of national competences. (SaS, 2010) In the terms of economic crisis, SaS proposed that Slovakia should leave the Eurozone. Richard Sulik, head of the party and MEP often criticized EU and its position towards Greece. He was frequently invited to discuss the matter in many German or Austrian televisions. Important action, mainly from the perspective of the domestic policy, was critique approach of SaS to the EFSF, aimed to support the countries with financial problems. Their opinions were incompatible with the rest of the governing coalition which led to the fall of the government in 2011. From the electoral programme of 2012, the Eurosceptic approach is even more visible. SaS is not opposing the Slovak membership in the EU, but calls for reforms in the economic affairs. Sulik also criticized the European approach towards the migration crisis and said that the flow of the refugees is dangerous for the EU. (Boksa, 2014) In those topics, Sulik sympathizes with the leader of UKIP, Nigel Farage. (Pravda.sk, 2014)

## LSNS

This party is at the Slovak political scene from 2000 and by many experts is defined as a neo-Nazi party. The legitimacy of existence of this party is currently being discussed on the Highest Court of Slovak Republic, because of its extremist political views, fascist tendencies and program, which aims to break the Constitution and removing the democratic system. (TASR, 2017) This party did not achieve significant electoral results throughout the years; everything became to be different after 2013, when the head of the party, famous neo-Nazi Marian Kotleba, won the regional elections in the region of Banská Bystrica. After the last parliamentary election, the party became the member of the National Council and in current political public opinion polls, its results are increasing. The aim of the party is to restore national sovereignty and independence of Slovakia and creating a society built on the pillars of nationalism, Christianity and social principle. (Chovanec, 2016) When it comes to their Euroscepticism, they demand the restoring of Slovak crown currency, they want to initiate the referendum about leaving the EU, they want to start tighter cooperation with Russia, they are anti-immigrant and in general very anti-European. (LSNS, 2016) This party is definitely the party of hard Euroscepticism.

Figure 4: Electoral results of Eurosceptic parties in Slovakia



Source: Author's edit of data from ŠÚSR

## Results

The results of Slovak Eurosceptic parties, since the joining the EU, have some similarities with the Czech ones. At first, there is quite similar development of SaS party with ODS in Czech Republic. This party was created as a liberal one, supported by liberal voters from bigger cities with higher education and higher salaries. Already in 2010 they became the part of the government, although it lasted only two years and it fell because of this party. They were strongly opposing the increase in EFSF mechanism, which was at that time aimed to help boost the Greek economy. The issue became so crucial that the government could not continue anymore. In the next election, SaS fell down rapidly, but in the last election it ended up second, after long time ruling party social democratic party called SMER-SD. (Leska, 2013) The chairman of SaS, Richard Sulik, who in the meantime became MEP, was criticising the EU very much and that is said to be behind their great results. It appears that Slovakia went from highly Eurooptimistic to highly Eurosceptic country. And we can see it also on the results of neo-nazi party ĽSNS, that was for long time below the 5% limit but after the last election they became part of Slovak parliament while gaining more than 8% of votes. This party is a party of hard Euroscepticism and their good results, together with the results of SaS are mostly because of the economic crisis and also so called refugee crisis, as both parties strongly criticised the EU in that aspect. (Agerholm, 2017) It was even discovered that the leaders of the parties met before election 2012 to discuss the plan how to destroy the results of other Eurosceptic party, SNS. It was successful, as SNS stayed below the 5% limit in 2012, although it was the member of the government in 2006-2010 terms. Party was for a long time under the rule of Jan Slota, who was very controversial person, but in general his rhetoric was aimed against everything that was not Slovak. In the 2016 election, party already had new chairman Andrej Danko, young educated lawyer and gained better results, but party still remained Eurosceptic. Andrej Danko even visited Russian Duma and had a speech there; at the same time as president Kiska had speech in European Parliament. (TASR, 2017) In the 2016 election, all the Eurosceptic parties gained much better results than in election before, and it also shows the Eurosceptic tendencies in Slovakia, that once was very pro-European country.



#### *4.1.3 Hungary*

Hungary is in the last few years perceived as a black sheep in the European Union. The specificity of the political situation in this country is marked by undeniable strong position of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his party called Fidesz. Hungary is considered as very Eurosceptic country especially when it comes to the party-based Euroscepticism. There are few more Eurosceptic parties, but their significance in the electoral results is very low, that it is not even necessary to mention them. It is though necessary to focus on the results of the above-mentioned Fidesz party and also Movement for better Hungary known under the name Jobbik. Both parties are very nationalistic and their Euroscepticism is connected to this fact. (Novák, 2014) Against them there are parties socially-liberal oriented. Nationalism is very significant in the Hungarian politics since the 90s. They are reflecting the problems of the absence of the correlation between the actual borders of Hungary given by the Trianon Treaty and the borders of the Hungarian community in general, that are reaching other countries, in particular Serbia, Romania and Slovakia, where huge Hungarian minorities live. Therefore, the emphasis on the national values is more important than being the part of the common European Union. (De Vries, Edwards, 2009) That is why Eurosceptic parties enjoy very stable and strong support among the citizens for quite a few years now. As the graph will show, the support for those parties has been rising since year 2004, when Hungary joined the EU, and this support is also very steady.

#### **Fidesz**

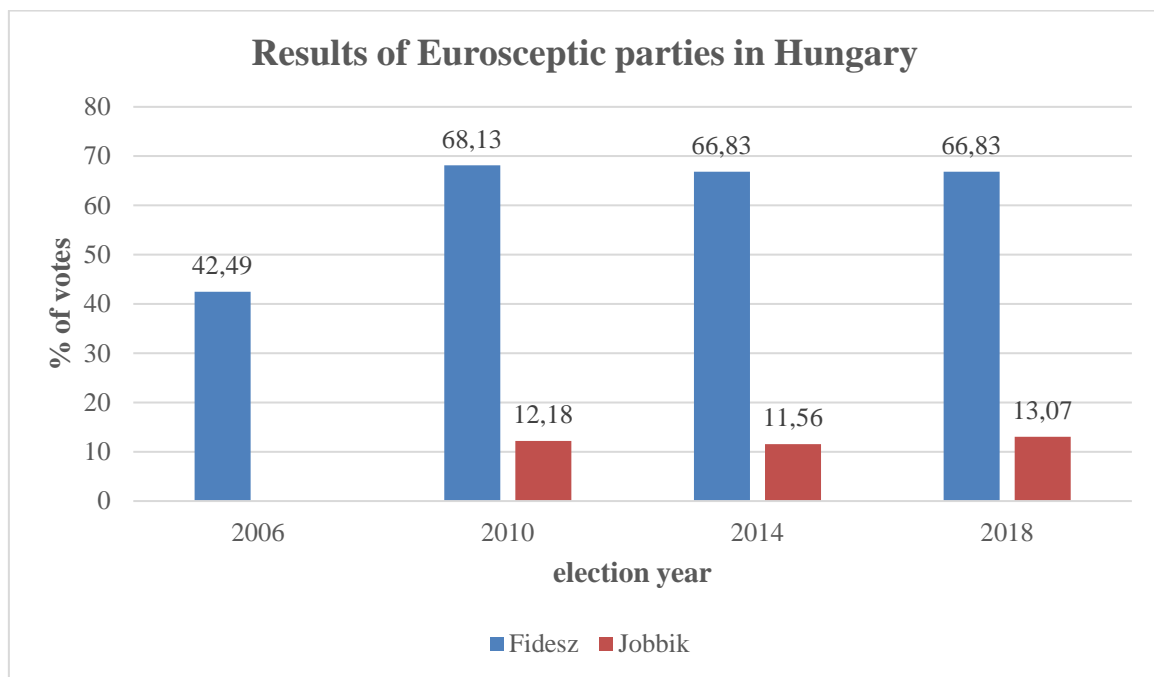
This party began its functioning in 1990, when it was established as a liberal party. But later on, conservative wing led by Viktor Orbán became to be more influential, especially after 1993 when Orbán became the chairman and moved the program to more conservative and nationalistic path. It suddenly changed from the liberal party to Christian Democratic Party with emphasis on the nationalism and rights of Hungarians living abroad. (Hrdlicková, 2008) The support for the party is continuously arising since the first free election in 1990, when they only got 5% of votes. Already in 1998 they won the election with the result of almost 30%. The new dimension of the party became after the election in 2010, when they gained a two-third majority in the parliament. This period, from 2010 to 2014 is marked by the change of the overall character of the country. They created a new Constitution, changed the name of the country to same as they had in imperial era and they have become to be criticised from the EU. (Jenne, Mudde, 2012) This is the time when the party became to be Eurosceptic. The

EU began to criticise many aspects of the Fidesz policy-making and Orban's reply was that he will not submit to the dictate from Brussels. They developed amicable relationship with Russian President Putin in order to become less dependent on the EU. (Pravda.sk, 2015) And of course, with the migration wave from the Middle East, Orban became one of the strongest critics of the European policies. This party is considered as a populist and they simply criticise the EU because it bring them political points, although the country has benefited from the EU since 2004 very much. (Mudde, 2015)

### **Jobbik**

This party is an example of hard Euroscepticism based on the extreme right point of view. It was created in 2003 by young students that were radically oriented. During its creation, Jobbik put emphasise on the national aspect, local patriotism and traditional national values. (Belaiova, 2011) The political significance of this party began in 2006 during the anti-governmental protests that were very violent. Around this time, they created a paramilitary organization called Hungarian Guard. Their aim was to protect the interest of Hungarians, but all they did was maintaining conflict with the Roma and the Slovaks. The party became significantly growing around year 2008, when economic crisis began. During the election in 2009 they entered the political scene with the label: Hungary belongs to the Hungarians and their program was based on the refusal of the EU and its bureaucratic and centralised system. One of the elected MEPs came to the European Parliament in the uniform of Hungarian Guard, other two in traditional Hungarian folk dress. One of their aims was also to cancel the Benes Decrees and Trianon peace treaty. (Belaiova, 2011) For Jobbik, hard Euroscepticism is characteristic, and it is very nationally oriented. The basis of their program is anti-integration, anti-liberalism and anti-globalization. Current state of the EU is, according to them, in deep crisis and they would like to have a discussion about Hungary staying part of this community. (Stalose.cz, 2015) The success of Jobbik party is something that defines Hungarian political discourse in last few years – nationalism, denial of everything foreign, denial of international cooperation and globalization. The sources of political success of this party are long-term economic problems, social clashes and migration crisis in Hungary that, according to them, has to be solved in just fair way. (Jobbik Manifesto, 2013) Similarly to other populist parties in Europe, with Jobbik there is a tendency of becoming more moderate party with increasing of political preferences.

Figure 5: Electoral results of Eurosceptic parties in Hungary



Source: Author's edit of data from Valasztas

## Results

Fidesz party of Prime Minister Viktor Orban enjoys very stable support since 2010 and it was proven also in the election this year, when Fidesz gained 133 MPs which is the exact same number as in 2014. Viktor Orban is Eurosceptic leader with very nationalistic and patriotic tendencies and it seems like it is something Hungarians wanted. He uses anti-immigrant rhetoric, he demands the revision of Trianon Treaty, and he encourages Hungarians in other countries to unite, to fight for their rights. And this nationalistic rhetoric seems to work, together with massive campaign against American billionaire George Soros, who, according to Orban, is doing harm to the Central Europe and Orban puts himself into a position of great protector of Hungarian national interest. During the pre-electoral meeting he said: *"They want to take our country. Not only by the one sign, like hundred years ago in Trianon, but they want to make us give our country to foreigners, coming from other continents, who do not appreciate us, our culture, our laws."* (Pravda.sk, 2018) The use of this migration card is obviously very successful and the results of Fidesz in every election since 2006 prove it. When it comes to Jobbik, they have their stable supporter base and their results are also very similar in every given election. Hungarian political system today practically does not allow opposition to come to power. Orban is financing his campaign from state budget, plus there

are millions of Hungarians who are sincerely supporting Fidesz with all their anti-EU rhetoric. (Daily News Hungary, 2017)

#### *4.1.4 Poland*

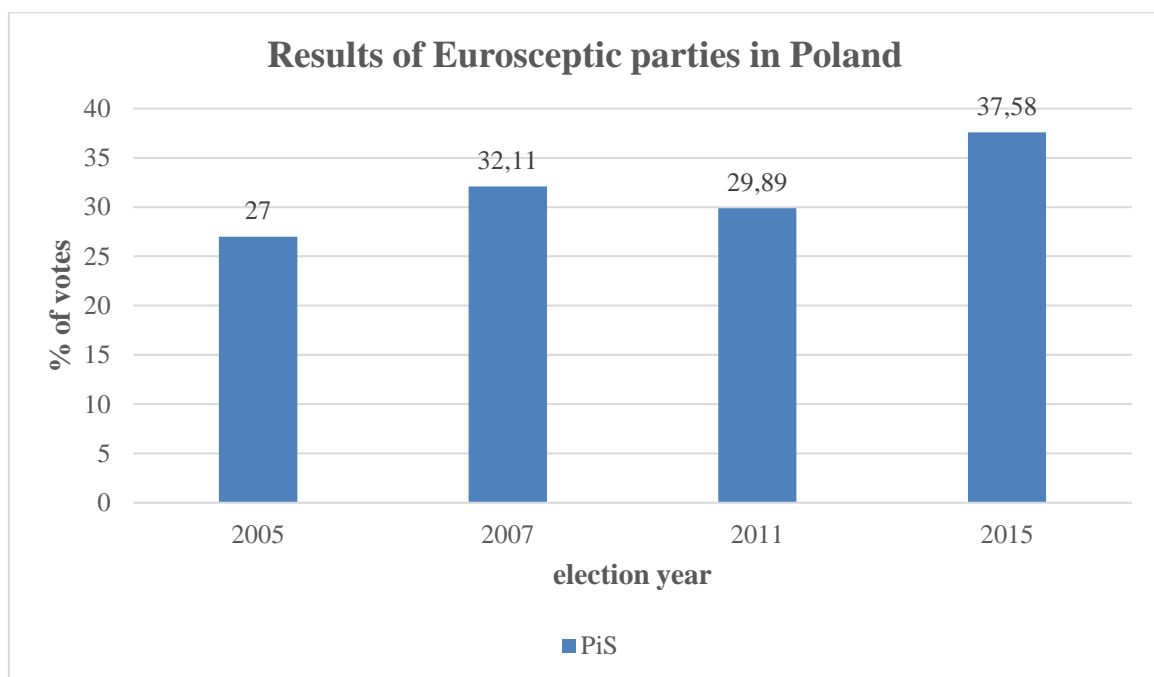
When it comes to the Polish situation, it is little bit different from other V4 countries, because the position of the two strongest parties Law and Justice (PiS) and Civic Platform (PO) is little bit different than in the rest of the Central Europe. Those parties usually compete against each other to gain power and it is often changing. There are not many significant political parties in Poland that could influence and change this system of two strong parties. That also means that the country is very much divided. PO is a pro-European liberal party, which former chairman Donald Tusk is current President of European Council. On the other hand, PiS is party that is, especially in last few years, considered Eurosceptic. They are considered to be nationally oriented conservative party, deriving from, what some experts call catholic nationalism. (Ojewska, 2018) Polish Catholic Church is influencing the country's politicians for many years. But especially nowadays, the Catholicism in Poland is strongly connected with the nationalism and anti-Europeanism, because they perceive the EU as something that tries to influence the domestic issues in Poland and, moreover, domestic values Poland have, that are, in some groups of the citizens, very conservative. Law and Justice Party who governs Poland today, backed up by the Church, is considered as a soft Eurosceptic party. And they re-gained power just recently, after 8 years of government of the Civic Platform. There were some Eurosceptic parties that tried to be an alternative to the two major parties, in particular League of Polish Families or conservative party CORWIN, but they never achieved any significant result, as only PiS seems to be the alternative for Eurosceptic part of Polish population. (CEE Identity.eu, 2013)

#### **PiS**

Conservative oriented right-wing party of the brothers Kaczynski was established before 2001 as a result of the clashes in other parties. PiS links themselves to the ideas under which the EU was created, but also compare the EU to the former Soviet Union, as an organization that tries to rule and do not see the differences between nations. They are anti-hegemony of the EU in the continent and they prefer Eurorealism in comparison to the aggressive political correctness. (PiS, 2014) According to their program it is their duty to defend the country from

the expansionism of the sovereignty of the EU over other territories. What is significant here is the problem with identification of Poland as a member of the EU as well. PiS, to describe the EU, use words like “they” or “them”, instead of “we”. They support the idea of stronger nation states and national identities as an opposition to European integration process. When it comes to the relation with other countries, they demand the principle of equality with Germany and they demand Russia to respect the principles of international law. Party emphasises, that they will not be supporting any EU decisions that are not compatible with the Polish values. Their aim is to defend Christianity, identity, traditions, culture and Polish way of life and customs. They call some of the individual liberties, in particular gay marriages or abortions as risky cultural experiments that are not acceptable for Poland as they do not want to be exposed to the cultural re-education. (PiS, 2014) PiS also demanded the maintenance of the Polish Zloty currency, EU of the equal countries with the principles of solidarity, but they refuse to accept the migration, especially from the non-Christian countries, as, according to them, European civilization is based on the strong, Christian roots. From all mentioned above it is obvious, that PiS can be classified as a party of soft Euroscepticism, which is not denying the EU as a project, but many of the EU policies.

*Figure 6: Electoral results of Eurosceptic parties in Poland*



*Source: Author's edit of data from Election Resources*

## Results

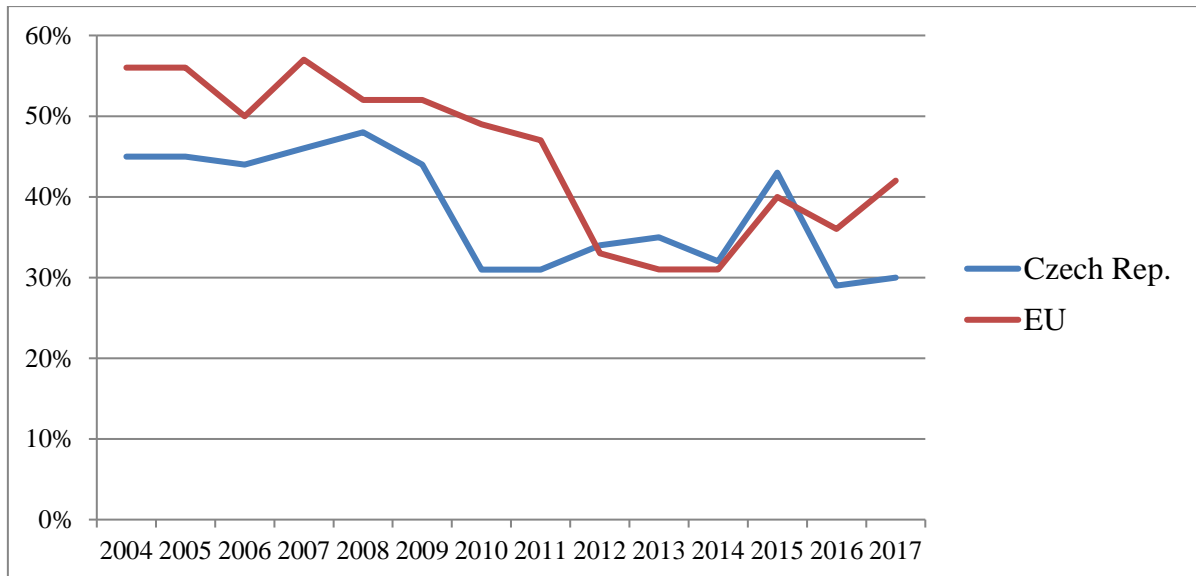
The results of PiS party in Poland, that is the only one significant Eurosceptic party in country, are increasing stably from the times when Poland entered the EU. It is not because of the membership in the European Union, but it is the influence of the years of government of Civic Platform, liberal party, that turned Poland towards Europe, towards more liberal values, which many Poles see as a threat to their national sovereignty. PiS rhetoric is aimed to protect Poland from foreign influence that is against Polish cultural values and national interest, whether is it from the side of Russia, USA or the EU. (Marcinkiewicz, 2017) Liberal government put Poland to the path of modern western-style country, but had to deal with economic crisis, the crisis of identity as well as refugee crisis. That all changed in 2015, when conservative PiS gained the majority that was enough to create a government consist only of this one party. The new government slowly started to rule without any restrictions and did reforms in the judicial system and media, which was very criticised by the European Union. Polish government found their allies in Hungary, where Viktor Orban as a protector of Hungarian national interest against migrants and Western values share many opinions with the head of PiS, Jaroslaw Kaczynski. (Kelly, 2018) After years of liberal government, conservative party was finally given the opportunity to govern, but it seems like they are taking their country away from the EU and other democratic states in it. And public opinions polls show, that PiS will likely win the next election as well. The gaining results of PiS throughout the years are marked by economic crisis, refugee crisis and also the fatigue of Poles from being under the rule of one party for longer time.

### 4.2 Expression of public Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group

To analyse the level of public Euroscepticism in countries, it is necessary to use data expressing the public enthusiasm or scepticism towards the EU. Good means to do that are Standard Eurobarometer Surveys conducted by European Commission annually. For the purpose of this thesis, the question asked in the survey is connected to the trust in the European Union membership. The question is: *“Generally speaking, do you think that our country’s membership in the EU is a good thing?”* In every given country from Visegrad Group we will analyse the percentage of people who think that the EU membership is a good thing. To see greater picture, in every graph there will be also the average of the EU.

#### 4.2.1 Czech Republic

Figure 7: Public support for membership of Czech Republic in the EU

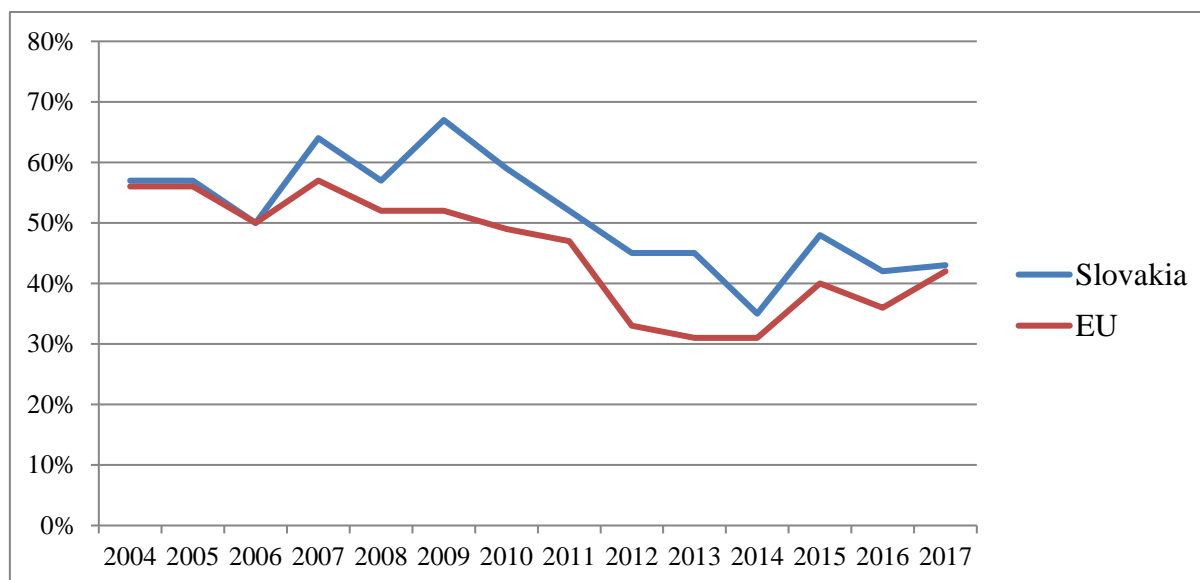


Source: Author's edit of data from Eurobarometer

As shown above, in the graph 5, Czech people were since the year 2004 very critical towards the EU membership and until 2012 they were well under the EU average when it comes to the question of trust to the EU. A referendum on joining the European Union in 2003 in Czech Republic had a turnout of 55,2% and the proposal was supported by 77,3% of the voters. Since then, support of the public for the EU began to decrease stably. (Volby.cz, 2013) As was mentioned in theoretical part of the work, majority of Czechs feel kind of disconnected from the EU. Already in 2004, after joining the EU, Eurobarometer shows the support for the EU in Czech society is below EU average. The perception of benefits coming from the EU membership increased in 2005 and 2006, but still remained below the average. Following years, 2007 till 2009 are marked by economic crisis in Europe, which is connected to the curve going down rapidly in Czech public support of the EU membership. People felt they do not benefit from EU as much as they would expect, they economic life did not improve that much, but on the other hand, they experienced financial crisis and their living standards went low. The situation has stabilized in 2010 and stayed relatively stable, in 2015 even increased above the average. The so called refugee crisis and with it connected growth of extremism in the country cause the decline in public support for the EU membership from 43% in 2015 to 29% in 2016 and remained at that level also during the last year.

#### 4.2.2 Slovakia

Figure 8: Public support for membership of Slovakia in the EU



Source: Author's edit of data from Eurobarometer

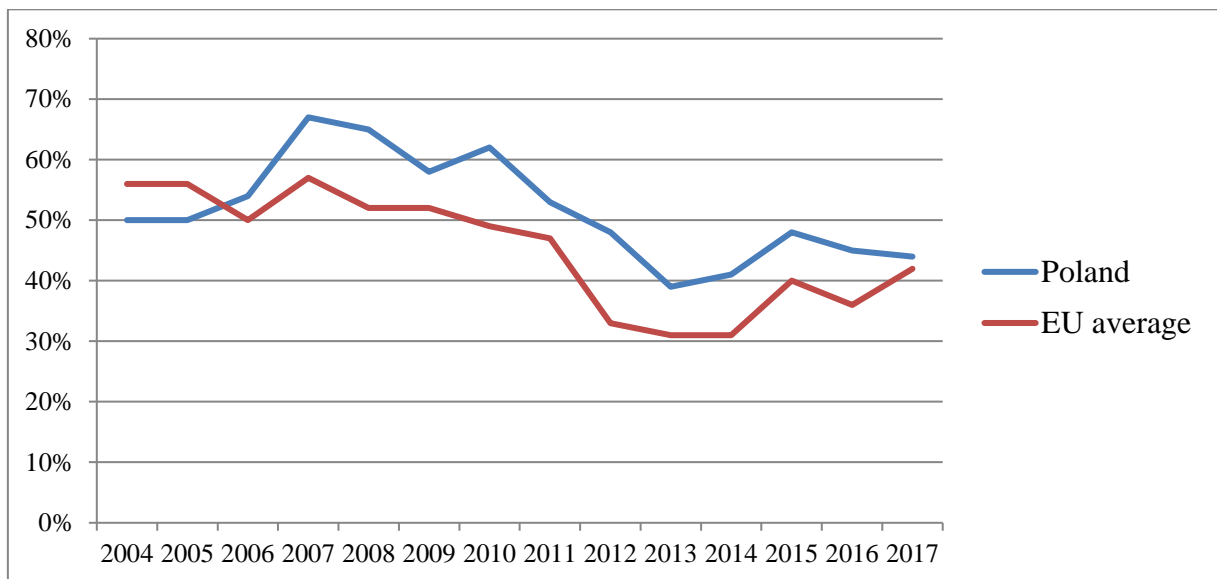
Situation in Slovakia was slightly different from Czech Republic, but also from all of the other members of Visegrad Group. As the Eurobarometer results from 2004 show, at the time of accession, Slovakia expresses the highest level of public optimism towards the EU among every other of the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004. (Eurobarometer 2004.1, 2004) Also, when it comes to Slovak European Union membership referendum in 2003, at the turnout of 52,1%, almost 94% of voters voted in favour of becoming the member of the EU, which is again the highest score among the Visegrad Group members. (Nohlen, 2010) In fact, the EU membership support among Slovak public remained higher than the EU average till today. In the years following the accession to the EU, the public support for the Union even increased throughout the years. The reason for that is the domestic political situation in Slovakia. Years between 2006 and 2010 are the period when the reforms of pro-European governments of Mikulas Dzurinda came into effect and people's living standard has increased rapidly at that time. (Bloomberg, 2004) However, between 2009 and 2010 we can see the decline in the support of the EU by Slovak public. This is caused, as in many other countries, by the effects of economic crisis. In Slovakia this decline is visible until early 2014, because as a member of the Eurozone, Slovaks had to save Greece, which was very unpopular in the country. In 2012 it even caused the fell of the Slovak government. Then we can see that the



public opinion in favour of the EU membership slightly improved, but it lasted only till the refugee crisis began in 2015. 2016 is the election year, when hard Eurosceptic party LSNS gained more than 8% in Slovak parliamentary election and the public support for EU remains on the very low level.

#### 4.2.3 Poland

Figure 9: Public support for membership of Poland in the EU



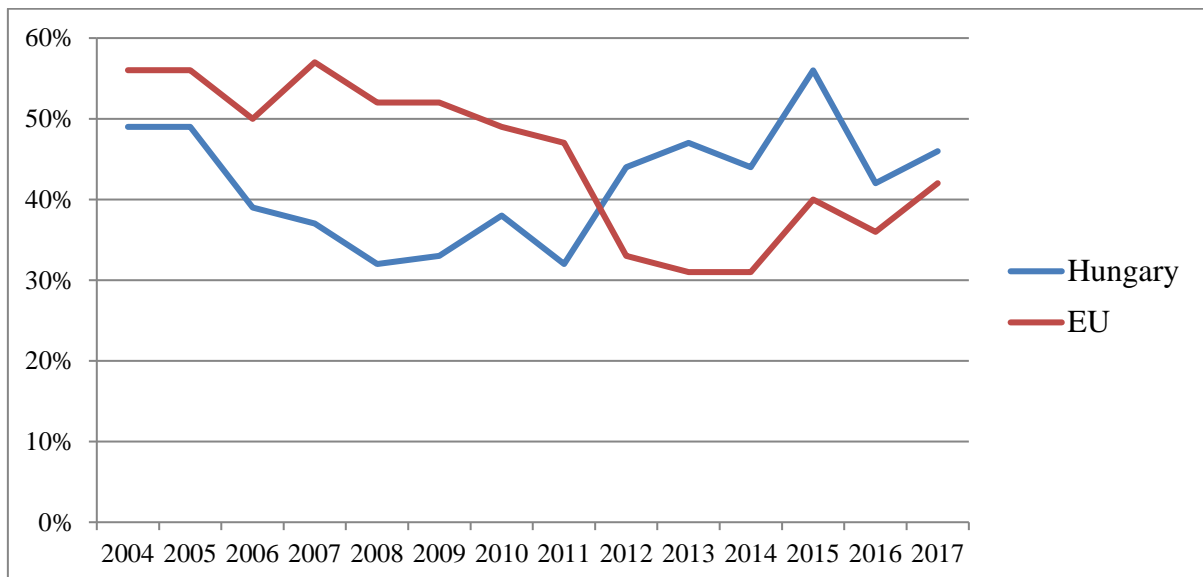
Source: Author's edit of data from Eurobarometer

Upon entering the EU in 2004, Poland was often perceived as one of the most Eurosceptic countries among new member states. After the accession, the public support for the EU in Poland was 50%, under the EU average. The referendum from 2003 shows, that the Polish support is at the level of 77,6% of voters in favour of accession at the 58,9% turnout. (Nohlen, 2010) After 2004, polls show that the perception of the EU is becoming more positive, till it reached its peak in 2007. Since that year, till 2014, Polish public trust in the EU and support for the EU membership went rapidly down, but it was still being above the average of the EU. (Eurobarometer 65, 2006) This level of Euroscepticism has carried on to the present times pretty much. The perception of personal benefits coming from the EU membership and also benefits for the country is not very high and it reflected at the domestic policy scene, when PiS won the parliamentary election in 2015. Although there is a slight growth in public support for the EU at those times, it never reached the results from the times of accession. The reasons for that are economic crisis as well as the refugee crisis and crisis of identity. PiS

party that won the election in 2015 set its aim in protecting the national interests and cultural identity in Poland. Polish people who benefited from the EU in terms of migration to the west are now seen as people who refuse to submit to Brussels and refuse to accept many EU policies. The support for the EU membership in Poland moves around 50%, which shows that the society in the country is pretty much polarized. There are city voters who tend to be more liberal and support the EU and political party PO, who's former chairman is now the President of the European Council. Other half of people consists of more rural and conservative voters, who stick to traditional Polish values. (Strzelecki, 2017)

#### 4.2.4 Hungary

*Figure 10: Public support for membership of Hungary in the EU*



*Source: Author's edit of data from Eurobarometer*

Hungary has been for a long time shown as one of the most Eurosceptic countries in the EU, and when we take a look at the electoral results of Jobbik and Fidesz parties, which are considered to be Eurosceptic; we would presume that it is true. The paradox is that the Hungarian public, according to Eurobarometer results, seems to be much more Eurooptimistic than many other countries including Austria, Finland, UK, Baltic countries or Sweden. But the truth is that public support for the EU in Hungary was for many years lower than the EU average. It went down rapidly since 2005 till 2009 and the reason is obviously the same as in the other V4 countries – economic crisis. Living standard of Hungarians was getting worse during those years, which led to collapse of Hungarian economy. Governments failed to adopt

needed economic reforms, people who expected Austrian standard of living were disappointed and it led to very successful electoral results of Fidesz and Jobbik in 2010. (Boros, 2016) Especially Jobbik, at that time hard Eurosceptic party, considered EU to be a threat to the national sovereignty and it gained popularity among significant part of citizens. (Torreblanca, 2013) And the paradox is that 2010 is the year when Viktor Orban firstly became Prime Minister and it is also the year, when the public support for the EU in Hungary became increasing for years and since 2012 till nowadays it is still way above the EU average. Despite the Eurozone crisis, refugee crisis and Fidesz's campaigns against the EU, majority of Hungarians have positive perception towards the EU membership. It seems that Hungarians put importance on the questions of national sovereignty, but realize the positive aspect of the EU. Viktor Orban never went as far as creating an anti- EU party, but rather Eurosceptic party. (Wiktorek, 2014) Fidesz continues to build its political campaign on the EU criticism, but from the polls it seems like there will never be something like Brexit in Hungary. The support for the EU went slightly down after the refugee crisis in 2015, but now it becomes to increase again and remains well above the EU average.

### **4.3 Similarities and differences in expression of Euroscepticism in countries of Visegrad Group**

All of the countries show the increasing level of support for Eurosceptic parties as well as increase in public Euroscepticism, which means that less people are in favour of the EU membership as they used to be. They show many similarities and also differences in the expression of these Eurosceptic tendencies. Firstly, all four countries show vulnerability towards populism and nationalism, which is expressing in parliamentary elections since 2004 till nowadays. Countries of Visegrad Group have variety of Eurosceptic and populist parties, which based their political program on criticism of the EU. Most of them are soft Eurosceptic parties, although in countries like Hungary and Slovakia there are parties that demand the reconsideration of country's membership in the EU and are considered as hard Eurosceptic. Statistics show that those parties gained more power in the last few years. That comes from the crises that the EU faces or faced, in particular economic crisis, Eurozone crisis and so called refugee crisis that erupted only few years ago. (Wisniewski, 2017) The common thing in V4 countries is also the fact, that people are having hard times with identifying themselves as Europeans; they put more emphasis on national interest and national and cultural values, which are more important for them than the common European good. There is also strong

historical aspect that makes countries sceptic towards other. This is present especially in the Czech, Polish and Hungarian Euroscepticism, where they often feel somehow betrayed by the western powers. Slovakia does not have this problem. Their major historical rivals are Czechs and Hungarians. (Toomey, 2007) All of those countries are young democracies and from becoming the members of the EU they expected that their life standard will become much higher. People expected, either for them or for their country, better life when it comes to the economic affairs. But it is not the fault of the EU that the living conditions in those countries are improving only very slowly. People also see distrust towards the standard political parties that ran the countries throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is also one of the reasons behind the success of populist Eurosceptic parties on the national level.

Besides common reasons, countries have also reasons coming from their national identity. Polish people are very much influenced by the Catholic Church and their aim is to protect Polish values and cultural identity, which is very much conservative. They often see the EU as a liberal entity that want to impose liberal values on Poland. That is why the political discourse is not anymore dominated by the liberal PO party, but by conservative PiS party, that is often seen as a party of catholic nationalism. (The Economist, 2016) Some countries, in particular Slovakia and Czech Republic have some other issues with the EU recently, for example the double quality of food. Slovak and Czech market is filled with food of lower quality than the food in the Western Europe, which gives the people feeling of being second class citizens. People also feel that they are underrepresented in European institutions, especially European Parliament and they often do not see the necessity of having those institutions. (Wisniewski, 2017) For example, during the European elections in Slovakia in 2014, the turnout was only 13,05%, which proves that people believe the decision making process should happen on national level rather than the European one. Especially Poland's aim is to decide more about the European issues. (Gotev, 2017) Nowadays there is definitely the clash between the Brussels and the Visegrad Group, either it is because the refusal of migration policy by the countries of V4, or significant growth of Euroscepticism in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Czech Republic.

#### **4.4 Impact of Euroscepticism on the functioning of the Visegrad Group**

The Visegrad cooperation in the EU was created on the basis of the principle of open and free cooperation. It means that the activity of the Visegrad Group is focused on the issues, where there is a consensus of its members. Within the European Union, the V4 is functioning as a forum for dialogues about the questions concerning the whole Visegrad region, which does not mean though that the coordination of the activity of the Visegrad Group is automatic. Since 2004, members of the Visegrad Group within the EU cooperated mostly in solving the issues like environmental policy. Outside of the EU framework, the big success of the cooperation is the creation of the so called Visegrad Battlegroup. Different armies are training themselves and trying to synchronize the evolution of the defence in the countries. This Battlegroup includes the coordination of the military exercises with Ukraine, which reflects the solidarity and responsibility of the Visegrad Group toward the Eastern partnership. (Dangerfield, 2014)

Visegrad Group countries deepened their cooperation in terms of the issue of Schengen Area. They declared the intention of joining the Schengen and created working groups in order to deal with it. An example of the common position of Visegrad Group illustrates its members' approach to EU foreign policy, in particular toward the neighbourhood policy. Visegrad Group showed support for the Eastern partnership not only declaratory, but also by creation of a financial support grant programs, and education mobility programs, which are aimed to support the democratic and economic transformation in the countries of Eastern partnership. (Morison, 2017)

Nowadays, the Visegrad Group acts as a united entity in the EU concerning the issue of migration. From the end of August 2015, the representatives of the V4 states have repeatedly expressed their solidarity and willingness to assist the states that are at the centre of the events, but they have also expressed their resentment with adopting the so called migration quotas. In the last few years, there were an increasing number of meetings of the representatives of Visegrad countries on the highest level. The conclusions of the meetings of the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers created the possibility for creation of future dimension of cooperation on the Visegrad Group level. The united approach of the V4 to the migration crisis is the first major confrontation between the EU and the Visegrad Group. (The Economist, 2016)

Migration crisis is something that brought Visegrad Group to be more active on the international scene. Representatives of the Visegrad Group countries say that nobody can force them to adopt the migrants. They propose the system of the so called effective solidarity, which means that every country will offer adequate level of help to this matter, which would be the expression of solidarity, but they do not want to be forced to take any actions. (TASR, 2016) The case of the V4 position towards the migration crisis is currently being discussed on the Court of Justice of the European Union, as the European Commission sued the countries of Visegrad Group. On the other hand, Visegrad Group, many politicians grasped this topic as it brings them the electoral success in their countries. (The Economist, 2016)

During the Czech presidency of the Visegrad Group, countries of the V4 created the group called Friends of Schengen. It should create the space for discussing the Schengen and its improvement. In the joint statement, Visegrad countries expressed the need for the reinforcement of the Schengen borders. Visegrad Group promised to offer 300 experts for the need of the Frontex agency and practical help for the countries of the Western Balkans. (V4, 2015) The activities of the Friends of Schengen platform fell silent since the solemn declaration of its creation, however, the Visegrad Group continues to refer to it regularly. (V4, 2016)

But even in the topic of migration, the countries of the Visegrad Group do not take the same approach in every aspect. In the vote about the quotas, only Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, together with Romania, voted against them. Poland voted in favour of the adoption of the quotas. (Reuters, 2015) After that, Slovakia sued the Council of the European Union. In December 2015, Hungary joined Slovakia and sued the Council as well. At the beginning of the 2018, the European Commission on the other hand sued Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland for their approach towards this topic. Slovakia is not a sinner anymore, according to the Commission, because they showed the will in participating of the migrants' redistribution on the last minute. (ČTK, 2018)

Euroscepticism does not really have a significant impact of the functioning of the Visegrad Group. It seems like the mission of the V4 was ended by the entry of Visegrad countries to the EU in 2004. Many experts since then were questioning the meaning of existence of the Group. Countries on their regular meeting did not really solve important problems, nor did they perform within the EU as an independent entity with its own requirements. (Smolar, 2012) Migration crisis kind of changed this and it restored the activity of the Group, as the number of meetings of the V4 officials is increasing and they adopted

common approach towards this topic. It is also the first clash between the EU and the Visegrad Group. But it seems like the Euroscepticism has much more impact and it is much more reflected within the countries itself rather than on the functioning of the Visegrad Group.

## Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to identify what does Euroscepticism mean, what different forms of Euroscepticism there are and, in particular, how is Euroscepticism connected to the countries of Visegrad Group. The thesis is divided into theoretical and empirical part. The aim of the theoretical part is to give the overview of the meaning of Euroscepticism, in context of European Union, and also, to describe, how it can be potentially connected to the Visegrad Group. The overall aim of this work was to give answer on the given research questions – how is Euroscepticism being expressed in the countries of Visegrad Group and what are the reasons for its presence in those countries. Besides the division of the work into theoretical and empirical part, it is also divided into four chapters.

First chapter is talking about the theoretical background of Euroscepticism and its aim is to give reader more information about the topic. The chapter is divided into four subchapters. The first one deals with the theoretical explanation of word Euroscepticism and its brief history, while the three remaining subchapters describe different types of Euroscepticism, whether it is party-based, public or economic Euroscepticism. This chapter brings some definitions from the works of the most famous authors dealing with Euroscepticism – Kopecky, Mudde, Taggart, Szczerbiak and so on. All of them created some basic or broader definitions and gives different points of view.

The aim of the second chapter is, as the title suggests, listing and analysing the causes and sources of Euroscepticism in nowadays' European Union. Four subchapters are dealing with sources of Euroscepticism, including the cultural, economic and institutional roots. Under the term cultural roots, it is necessary to mention also the influence of history, religion and the quite recent phenomena of islamophobia, connected to the so called refugee crisis. Economic roots are also very important, as European Union experienced economic crisis few years ago and the Eurozone was dealing with the issue of Greece and its debt, which discourages many countries from joining the Eurozone. Institutional roots are described in one of the subchapters, as there is a strong problem of trust of the EU citizens in those institutions, as well as problem with identification.

The last part of the theoretical section of this thesis is dedicated to the theoretical description of Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group and its countries. In this chapter, previously mentioned roots of Euroscepticism are described in the connection to the V4 countries. Some of the countries in Visegrad have the same problems; some of them have unique problems deriving from their geographic position or history. For example in Czech Republic, public



Euroscepticism is very strong, while Slovakia has one of the most Eurooptimistic populations. Hungary was widely affected by migration crisis and Polish has a strong sense of national identity connected to the Catholic Church. Although some roots of Euroscepticism in Visegrad Group in those countries are common, for example all of them were, to some extent, affected by the economic crisis.

The fourth chapter is the one dedicated to the empirical part of the thesis. It shows the expression of Euroscepticism in V4 countries by, firstly, describing the Eurosceptic political parties in given countries and analyzing their electoral successes in parliamentary elections, since the EU enlargement of 2004 till nowadays. Data from national statistic offices are used and put into graphs, in order to see the trends in support for Eurosceptic parties in given countries. After each graph, the reason for these results is explained. The second part of this chapter is dedicated to the expression of public Euroscepticism. By the data from Standard Eurobarometer issued annually by European Commission, it is possible to see the trends among the public of Visegrad Group countries and their opinion on the EU membership. Graphs in second subchapters show the surveys made in countries of Visegrad Group, when people were asked if they trust the EU and if they think that membership of their country in the EU is a good thing. Graphs show the development of the level of support for the EU among public. After each graph, it is described how and why the curve on the graphs changed this or that way. The end of this chapter is dedicated to analyzing the similarities and differences in the expression of Euroscepticism in V4 countries and to understand how Euroscepticism impacted the functioning of the Visegrad Group.

When it comes to the research question, from this thesis it is obvious, that the Visegrad Group is becoming more and more Eurosceptic region within the EU. There are many reasons why and they are described in the work. Some reasons are connected to the national identity of V4 countries, culture and history. The level of Euroscepticism also arose during the so called refugee crisis, as these countries were not used to live around the people with different cultural background or religion. Visegrad Group was the strongest voice in the EU when it comes to the critique of the EU in terms of the migration policy. Also, economic crisis was one of the triggers for Eurosceptic tendencies, because people in V4 were expecting, after year 2004, that their living standard will improve and they expected that the EU membership would be beneficial for them and their country. Economic crisis slowed down this positive economic development, as governments had problems with doing important economic reforms. People in V4 have also problems with identifying themselves as Europeans, for instance in countries like Hungary and Poland, strong nationalistic tendencies

are present. Visegrad Group is becoming more Eurosceptic because the EU, in the eyes of V4 citizens, failed to provide many things, such as security, economic profit and people also feel that the sovereignty of their states is suffering in the EU.

This rising Euroscepticism is reflected by the fact, that in every four of the Visegrad countries, the Eurosceptic political parties are gaining more and more power. It is shown in fourth chapter of the thesis, where we can see that the Eurosceptic parties are way more successful nowadays than they were at the times of accession, around year 2004. Public Euroscepticism is reflected in the Eurobarometer surveys, where we can see the decline for the EU support among the public in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary throughout the last ten years, when less and less people are showing their satisfaction with the membership of their country in the EU.

The Euroscepticism had only small impact on the functioning of the Visegrad Group. Visegrad Group is an alliance that is not perceived as a strong player within the European Union. The Group members usually agreed on most of the topics concerning the EU, especially their approach towards the Eastern Partnership or the geopolitical orientation of the V4. They always acted as a partner of the EU rather than the competitor. However, in last few years, Visegrad Group is standing against the European Union in the issue of migration. They are opposing the adoption of the quotas and countries like Slovakia and Hungary even sued the European Commission for this decision. Although we can say, that the opinions within the Group are changing quite a lot. Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary voted against the quotas, but Poland remained silent. Then the Council of the EU sued Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland, but not Slovakia, because they changed their approach a bit. Euroscepticism is being felt in the Visegrad Group, but it does not have a really significant impact on its functioning, but has a strong impact on the domestic political situation within the countries.

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