CHAPTER 9

NEWSPAPER PORTRAYAL OF THE EU IN CRISES IN THE CZECH

REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY:

THE UNION'S IMAGINED LINEARITY[*]

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ABSTRACT

It is well known that media discourse may (de-) emphasise certain perspectives, and the portrayal of the EU is no exception. This chapter uses the case of the newspaper portrayal of the EU in crises to explore how the framing of the Union may reduce the complexity of the question of its further development from a multi-dimensional to a linear standpoint, marked by binary oppositions. To do so, it takes stock of the scholarship on the concept of crisis as well as the data from the online versions of six quality newspapers from three Central European countries with seldom studied media discourse (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary). The newspapers in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary offer one of the first available insights into the public portrayal of the EU in three of the "Visegrád Four" Member States. By developing a data-driven three-dimensional conceptualisation of crisis framing, consisting of the actor in focus, the attribution of responsibility, and the expected outcomes of the crises, the chapter shows that quality newspapers reproduced some common patterns of the portrayal of the crises in the period from 2008 to June 2016, which were

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manifested through binaries, in particular, the opposition between the "domestic" and "the EU in Brussels", including the "European élite". These linear cleavage-like oppositions, present to a lesser or greater extent in all the newspapers analysed across countries, signal the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the EU's development and account for a "segmented language" that may contribute to actual segmentation, or even fragmentation, of the Union.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Are crises perceived as an opportunity for developing novel structures and institutions? The EU, in particular in the period from 2008 onwards, is certainly a case in point to study whether an "innovative potential" is recognised in crises, given that it is considered to have been marked by quite a few of them. To the extent that perceptions can shape realities, perceptions about the crises in the EU can tell us something about how the EU's future is thought-through by the actors in focus. Knowledge about these mosaics of perceptions can then be used to see what was omitted from the debate (and the way in which they were framed) or how these debates made some alternatives inconceivable as opposed to others. To bring us a step closer to such knowledge, this chapter looks at a particular amplifier for the discourse about the "crises" in the EU, that of quality newspapers. To the extent to which newspapers, as well as other media, can influence citizens' views and public opinion in the EU (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2006), including their reflections on the crises (Michailidou and Trenz, 2015: 239), channel the opinions of the political élites and even trigger changes in support for particular political forces, their role is substantial for the development of relations between the citizens and the élites and, eventually, of a European public sphere (Koopmans and Statham, 2010). In turn, quality newspapers could be presumed to adhere to calmer, more evidence-based assessments, as opposed to tabloids or the new media. Hence, they should be able to evaluate the alternative scenarios and trajectories for the Union in a more nuanced manner than other media, and the absence of such an approach in their framing of the debate might signal a deeper trend across the whole media environment.

This chapter looks at six Central European newspapers that, besides being seldom studied, bring the additional value of gaining a better understanding of the sentiments towards the EU in relation to the crises in this region. The selection of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, includes one country which is in the Eurozone (Slovakia) and two countries which are not. Presumably, the portrayal of the crises in economic terms in relation to the EU would be stronger in a Eurozone Member State. Furthermore, the selection of a country that

clearly exhibits trends of democratic backsliding (Hungary) and two countries which display such trends less explicitly helps us to understand whether the Hungarian press, operating in a country with vocal anti-European élites and several restrictions on press freedom at that time, displayed more anti-European tendencies than their Czech or Slovak counterparts.

The analysis shows how the portrayal of the EU in crises during an almost nine-year period since the outbreak of the financial crisis in the US (Fabbrini, 2017) until few days after the referendum on Brexit at the end of June 2016 followed an imagined linearity, finding no space for the vocabulary of a multi-dimensional development of EU integration along the lines of the framework in this book (Bátora and Fossum, in this volume). While this gives rise to the claim that the newspaper portrayal enhances cognitive segmentation by locking the debate into a set of simplified cleavages, the overall rareness of the perception that the EU will successfully overcome the crises and develop in ways that enhance public well-being points to potential fragmentation marked by significant polarisation and the readiness to search for "alternatives" that do not account for the EU at all. Viewing the data capturing the portrayal until a few days after the Brexit referendum from a "post-crises" perspective stimulates doubts about the capacity of public language to "catch up" with the actual developments of the EU, and, in relation to that, the capacity of the process of segmentation to at least retain, if not enhance, the democratic legitimacy of the EU. The absence of an "imagination of segmentation" in the discourse about the crises re-inforces the risks that this process poses for democratic legitimacy (Eriksen, 2018, see, also, Fossum in this volume).

The argument is developed in four steps. Firstly, the case for a dialogue between theory and data for the conceptualisation of crisis-framing in the EU when studying media discourse about this phenomenon is introduced. This is followed by a classification of three categories of crisis frames, which are applicable for an empirical analysis of a particular portion of media discourse. While the content analysis of six Central European newspapers here applies an inductive logic, the basic classification of crises as well as the contexts in which they are likely to be presented, helps us to establish the main patterns in the empirical data. Thirdly, the summary of dominant frames shows how the EU has not only been portrayed as being in a complex crisis in the period under examination, but how the EU institutions represented by "European élites" have also come to be perceived as the actors responsible for it. The praise for opposition to the joint European solutions by the Visegrád Four Member States, which is visible in some portions of the data, remains at odds with the general desire for joint European solutions and to avoid the fragmentation of the Union.

Finally, the overreaching trend emerging in the images from the newspapers analysed is that of a linear portrayal of the EU's development both in relation to and after the crises.

II.   CONSTRUCTING POLITICAL ORDERS AS WAYS OUT OF CRISES

"Crisis" is a signal word that can attract the attention of the audience, since it entails seriousness, urgency, and a need for immediate, even drastic, changes to overcome it. As such, studying the portrayal of the EU in relation to this signal word captures a non-negligible portion of the portrayal of the EU as a whole, including the ideas related to its political ordering "post-crises". This section advocates the "liberation" of our inquiries into the EU's portrayal from approaches taking the crises as objectively given facts as well as those which attribute a pre-determined, top-down content to this contested concept. In doing so, it paves the way for analytically studying the framing of the EU in crises and its ways out of the crises in the media selected. Clearly, this landscape underwent rapid developments in very short time, including from the academic perspective. Four years ago, the edited volume by Kyriakos Demetriou (2015) was one of the first to put the crisis at the centre of attention in relation to the EU, although it connected it largely to economic terms[2] and largely omitted the discussion on phenomena such as crisis framing or multiple, mutually re-inforcing crises. Shortly after, there was a terminological shift from speaking about an EU in "crisis" to an EU in "crises", emphasising their multiplicity (Fossum and Menéndez, 2014: 5; Laffan, 2016), but the justifications for using the term to capture particular political developments remained blurred. Even Jürgen Habermas, who offered a careful analysis of the process of emergence of a societal crisis more than forty years ago (Habermas, 1975: 1-31), appeared to take the crisis for granted (Habermas, 2012, 2015, 2016).[3] Some interpreters of Habermas' work (including those) on crisis (Genna and Wilson, 2016) also appeared to remain unconcerned about the determination of the criteria that "create a crisis" from a certain set of developments.[4]

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[2]   Several other analyses covering only one crisis, mostly the "economic" one, can be identified (e.g., Berend, 2012; Talani, 2016; Bitzenis, Karagiannis and Marangos, 2015).

[3]   Interestingly, Heins (2016: 1, 7-9), based upon analysis of Habermas' writings, argues that "Europe's current crisis is also a crisis of its narratives, and hence a crisis of meaning". He identifies several narratives present in Habermas' work and confronts them in the "semiotic square" that includes "transnational democracy, democratic nation-state, executive federalism and European federal state". Thus, he helps us to understand the components of the "crisis of narratives".

[4]   Post-Brexit, the notion of crisis has received more attentive treatments, for instance, in a volume edited by Dinan (2017).

This approach might look like a legitimate terminological shortcut, but it does not tell us about the process *through which* a set of developments becomes a crisis. In other words, how, by whom and for what purposes it is *constructed* as one. Crisis construction can become a powerful tool in the hands of those who prefer to emphasise the EU's weaknesses while remaining silent about its strengths. It can powerfully evoke the emotion of fear from uncertainty caused by unclear or unknown threats beyond the horizon (see Altheide, 2002; see, also, Cross and Ma, 2015a, 2015b). As crises are in contrast with the "normal" state of affairs (cf., Schmitt, 2006), they might be interpreted as a threat to the fundamental standards or values that a particular group considers as vital for their lives. Thereby, they can serve as a trigger for demands for substantial changes in various directions, and potentially become a means of demagogy and manipulation. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to uncover the process of crisis construction fully, it is necessary to highlight how powerful a potential it has for "sensing" the EU today. Recent scholarly work have identified the complexities[5] in the concept of "crisis" (Runciman, 2016; Roitman, 2016) in abstract terms. However, less emphasis has been placed on crisis construction in the EU context, and the construction of *ways out of the crises* in particular. Thus, a gap emerges in observing to what extent certain developments in the political reality are more or less conceivable through the lens of the dominant frames portrayed in the public sphere. By stressing some possibilities as opposed to others, the scope of public imagination about the EU's development might, in turn, be narrowed.

Precisely because of the contested content of the concept of crises and the lack of criteria determining their start and finish, analyses interested in crisis construction should adopt a bottom-up approach. Here, crises are those that are talked about as such in the public sphere. In context of the EU, crises have to be linked to it, assuming the EU as being (co-) responsible for their occurrence or influenced by them in its nature as an entity, in its decision-making processes, or in terms of deliverables. The bottom-up approach calls for empirical studies that capture the understanding of crises by the various political actors. The difficulty is that the scope of the public discourse has become broad and multi-faceted, unfolding at various levels simultaneously. Analyses of the specific inputs of one group of actors would thus necessarily be biased towards their preferences and interpretations. This

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[5] These include the difficulty of determining the *time frame* of the crisis (when did it start, when and under what conditions does it end) (Runciman, 2016) but also 'the ways in which it regulates narrative constructions, the ways in which it allows certain questions to be asked, while others are foreclosed' (Roitman, 2016: 30).

limitation is, to an extent, overcome when the portion of discourse subject to analysis is that in the media. While the media cannot be conceived as merely a channel of opinions of other actors, media discourse (Fairclough, 1995) encompasses the voices of many other actors. We have to be aware that these do not add up to a precise representative sample, because the media have their political positions as well (Eilders, 2002; Ho and Quinn, 2008), and can be subject to various biases (Entman, 2007; Kuypers, 2002). Even so, they are the most suitable actor for analysis of the portrayal of the EU in crises because of the variety of other actors who channel their opinions through them, and the way in which they are linked to public perception. Such analysis needs to be aware of the mechanism at play in the media portrayal of an issue area, known as framing. The next section fulfils this requirement by identifying a set of loose framing patterns that enable an empirical study of the portrayal of the EU in crises in quality newspapers.

III.   REPORTING ABOUT THE CRISES IN QUALITY NEWSPAPERS: FRAMING PATTERNS

The previous section outlined the significance of crisis construction and the capacity of the portrayal of the EU in crises to preclude certain forms of its further development as opposed to others. Framing, then, is the tool for crisis construction, and this section provides a way to capture how this tool has been used in (and possibly by) the selected media. In contemporary studies of issue portrayal, it has become clear that focusing descriptively on the content cannot provide an appropriate picture of its message, not to mention the implications that the message carries. Instead, messages are constructed through framing, "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007: 164). Frames can be created by emphasising selected facts over others and placing them into a certain context, but they can also create an "imagined reality".

In the discourse about crises, framing is of special importance, because crisis has a strong subjective element that can hardly, if at all, be determined in a precise form (see Roitman, 2013). Moreover, crisis can capture the attention of a target group in favour of some, as opposed to other, policy solutions, when these are argued to reduce or even eradicate the causes that are supposed to have brought it to life. In addition, in the chain at work between the (perceived) causes and consequences of the crisis, the capacity to produce associations with individuals' own lives (for example, through living conditions, security or the possibility that their political voices matter), it displays precisely some of those

characteristics that Beate Kohler-Koch (2011: 528) deems necessary for a "concept to become a frame of reference".

The contemporary EU is strongly prone to crisis framing. Since the 1990s, writings about the EU in some kind of crisis have proliferated enormously. While, since 2008, the economic crisis (for which, terms such as euro, financial or (sovereign) debt crisis are also used, not necessarily synonymously) has been an obvious example, the EU has been debated as being in various types of crisis, such as the enlargement crisis (Vobruba *et al.*, 2003) before that. Yet, the economic crisis marks the beginning of a "crisis period", in which no fewer than nine crises can be observed (Bengoetxea, 2015: 62-63). But does each of these crises share certain characteristics? Is there a unifying criterion, one that recognised them as crises? Or are these the crises that are being "talked about" in some form or another in various public *fora*? If so, what features can be identified in these discourses? To whom do these discourses attribute the responsibility for each crisis and how do they understand the desirable resolution of the crises for the EU's future?

Existing research has identified that there is a widespread tendency in the international media to display crisis-related events in a negative setting, as an existential threat to EU integration (Cross and Ma, 2015a, 2015b). Cross and Ma note that "it would also be valuable to include local and other language media coverage within member states". Recent studies have gone deeper into the unpacking of the difference between crises in objective terms and their portrayal at the domestic level; however, they have been overwhelmingly restricted to one crisis (the frontrunners being the "Euro crisis" and the "refugee crisis") and have examined traditional or new media in Western or Southern Europe (Cock *et al.*, 2018; Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti, 2016; Joris, Puustinen, and d'Haenens, 2018; Kaiser and Königslöw, 2017; Myria and Rafal, 2017).[6] In one case, the framing by transnational European media (but not restricted to crisis) was placed under scrutiny (Williams and Toula, 2017). As such, the possible interplay between the portrayal of different crises and their consequences in relation to each other remains in the shadow of scholarly attention.

While the frames themselves should not be pre-determined, but should rather emerge from the data, three general categories for identifying them were chosen, with the purpose of

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[6] A report co-ordinated by Tamsin Murray-Leach of LSE (2014) argued that the crisis is framed almost exclusively in economic terms, and the EU plays the role of the "foreign other" in this crisis, as opposed to the Member States.

exploring, in particular, the interpretations of the EU's trajectories of development in relation to crises. Firstly, it is the category of "EU institutions *versus* Member States". This is present with emphasis on one or both as the actors in focus, or the evaluations of the EU institutions' (the Commission, the Parliament) as opposed to the Member States' (and the Council's) decisions in the context of crisis. The second category captures the performance of the EU in the crises. This shows to what extent there is pessimism which persists about the crisis, meaning whether the EU will break up or fail in some other form due to not being able to handle the crisis. While it can be assumed that more optimistic references are those that do not deal with the crisis at all, the depth of the "crisis-related pessimism" is still an open question. The final category addresses the future of the EU in crisis more explicitly. This includes frames on what the EU should or should not look like in terms of the distribution of decision-making powers and the depth of further integration. It also highlights what ideas about the structure and development of EU integration are present (if at all) in the media discourse. These categories have been considered for the major crises, the portrayal of which has emerged from the data (the economic crisis, the Ukraine crisis and the "migration/refugee crisis"). The next section explains how the data were collected and analysed, and discusses the value of looking at (some) Visegrád countries from a contemporary perspective.

IV.   CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER PORTRAYAL: THE CASES OF CZECH REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY

Media discourse on the EU in crises can be identified in the broad discourse about the EU in a simple way - if the media portray the EU in crises, they mention both in some form. While a keyword search allows us to identify the whole population in the dataset,[7] these keywords determine its scope. Thus, the frames identified with a bottom-up approach for the EU in crisis do not necessarily match with those for the EU in general.

This study analyses[8] an original dataset in three languages to identify the crisis frames at work in three countries of the Visegrád Four. These countries have recently become known as voices of an "alternative" to the "European mainstream" in certain EU policy-fields, thus

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[7]   Two daily newspapers (on the relevance of newspapers, see Nossek, Adoni and Nimrod, 2015) were selected in each of the two countries, with the effort to choose the ones leading on the media market in the respective countries (as of summer 2016). The first category comprises *Sme* (We are) in Slovakia, *Lidové noviny* (People's Newspaper)in the Czech Republic and *Magyar Nemzet* (Hungarian Nation) in Hungary, the second one *Pravda* (Truth) in Slovakia, *Mladá Fronta* (Youth Front) in the Czech Republic and *Népszabadság* (People's Freedom) in Hungary.

[8]   With the help of qualitative content analysis, designed "systematically [to] describe the meaning of qualitative material" (Schreier, 2012: 1).

raising doubts about whether they still want to remain within the core of EU integration.[9] In the descriptive part, basic statistics are provided about the incidences of articles devoted to the various crises in the newspapers analysed. Then, the three frames are evaluated based upon their incidence in articles on the various crises. This shows which kinds of reactions are more common with the respective "crises" upon which the newspapers are focusing.
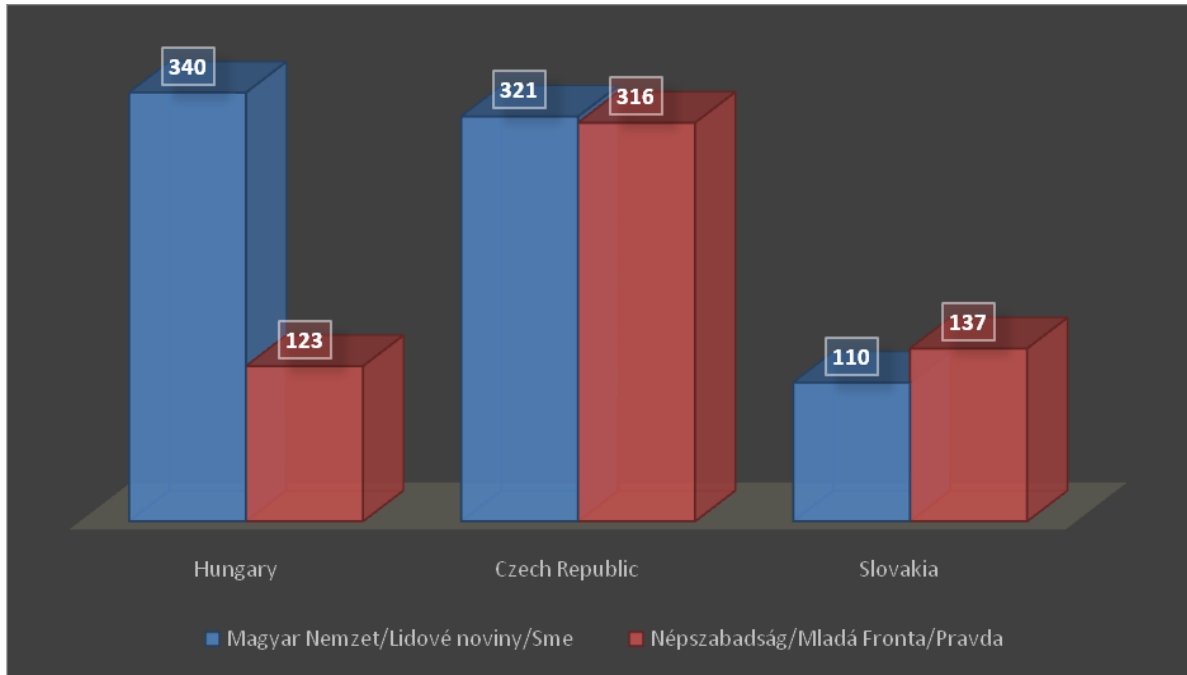
Chart 1: Number of articles in each newspaper
Source: author

The population of 1,347 articles (Chart 1)[10] includes a variety of crises in relation to the EU. Out of the more than 50 types of crises identified here, three stand out, in accordance with the assumptions of this analysis: the economic crisis, the Ukraine crisis, and the

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[9] The media environment in this region is undergoing substantial changes(see, e.g., Bajomi-Lázár, 2018). Most notably for this analysis, both Hungarian newspapers that were included here are now defunct (*Népszabadság* ceased to be published in late 2016, *Magyar Nemzet* in early 2018), giving evidence the point of the "colonisation" of the Hungarian media sphere (Bajomi-Lázár, 2014; see, also, 2017). On the one hand, this means that neither of the newspapers is a relevant actor in the post-crises Hungarian political discourse. On the other hand, these newspapers offer particularly unique sources for analysis during a transformative period when they increasingly faced the difficulties posed by the governmental control of the media environment. This could imply the tendency to position themselves more critically towards the governmental policies, and, in turn, more favorably towards the EU tackling its crises, given that the Union advocates for guarantees of free press and expressions. In the case of the absence of such a trend, a certain "blindness" of these newspapers in terms of their capacity to counter the dominant governmental narratives can be hypothesised.

[10] Two Czech and one Hungarian newspaper together comprise three times as many articles as the two Slovak and the second Hungarian newspaper. To avoid biased results in favour of the three newspapers, percentages are applied in the subsequent charts.

"migration/refugee crisis".[11] The fourth and fifth categories can be found in those of "crises" (when the multiplicity of crises was explicitly highlighted in the article) and "complex crisis" (when, instead of naming a sphere that is "in crisis", the article referred to an overreaching crisis of the EU). For example, Friss (2012) writes about a "double crisis" that emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century in the EU, "one strand of which is economic-financial, and the other is institutional, affecting the Union and the European liberal parliamentary democracies to various degrees". Another example is that of a German political scientist (Stier, 2015a) who argues that:

> "Europe is in a deep crisis. At the beginning of the year [2015], it struggled with financial and economic problems, while the current crisis is political. It is also a moral crisis, as the basic values of the Union are being questioned."

The Slovak president Andrej Kiska (2015) has also been in favour of the interpretation of the "crises", when he voiced that:

> "in the last quarter century since the fall of the Iron Curtain, Europe and the global world experienced several serious crises. But, in its complexity and uncertainty, the world is, in the present times, unsettlingly, more unstable than it was during the lives of most of us."

With over a hundred mentions, "complex crisis" and "crises" are powerful enough to be considered as distinct frames. On their own, however, they do not tell us much about the implications of such an interpretation of the crises for the future of the EU, the relationship between Member States and EU institutions, or about the attribution of responsibility for the causes of the crises. Chart 2 shows that references to the main "types" of crises are, for the most part, evenly distributed, with some small exceptions. Two can be pointed out. Firstly, the Czech press paid comparatively greater attention to the "(im-) migration/refugee crisis", while the Slovak and the Hungarian press gave greater prominence to the economic crisis in general.[12] Secondly, the Ukraine crisis was comparatively more referred to in the Hungarian newspapers, that in the Czech and Slovak ones.

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[11] An explicit distinction was made between the "(im-)migration" and "refugee" crisis, to highlight the difference between the terminology. One article, therefore, could be categorised as including a reference to both the "migration" and the "refugee" crisis. In most articles referring to migration/refugees, one of the terms prevailed while the other was not used at all.

[12] One of the Slovak newspapers, traditionally considered as a left-wing one, reported about the economic crisis in almost half of all articles according to this classification.

Importantly, the "migration/refugee" crises occupied the overall attention of the newspapers to a previously unwitnessed extent in the crisis discourse. With 557 (241 on the "refugee"/"humanitarian" crisis, and 329 on the "(im-)migration" crisis) incidences, it outnumbered both the economic crisis (310 incidences) and the Ukraine crisis (171 incidences). Two newspapers (both Czech ones, see Editorial Board, 2016a, 2016b) created a separate category for articles on this "crisis", which frequently made it to the headlines as well. In contrast to the economic crisis, few clues to explain why the events that were being reported should be considered as a "crisis" were given.[13] For these reasons, the "migration/refugee" crisis is an exemplary case of crisis construction, whereby the crisis emerges from the way in which certain events are reported, rather than by crossing a pre-determined line between the normal state of affairs and the point of crisis.
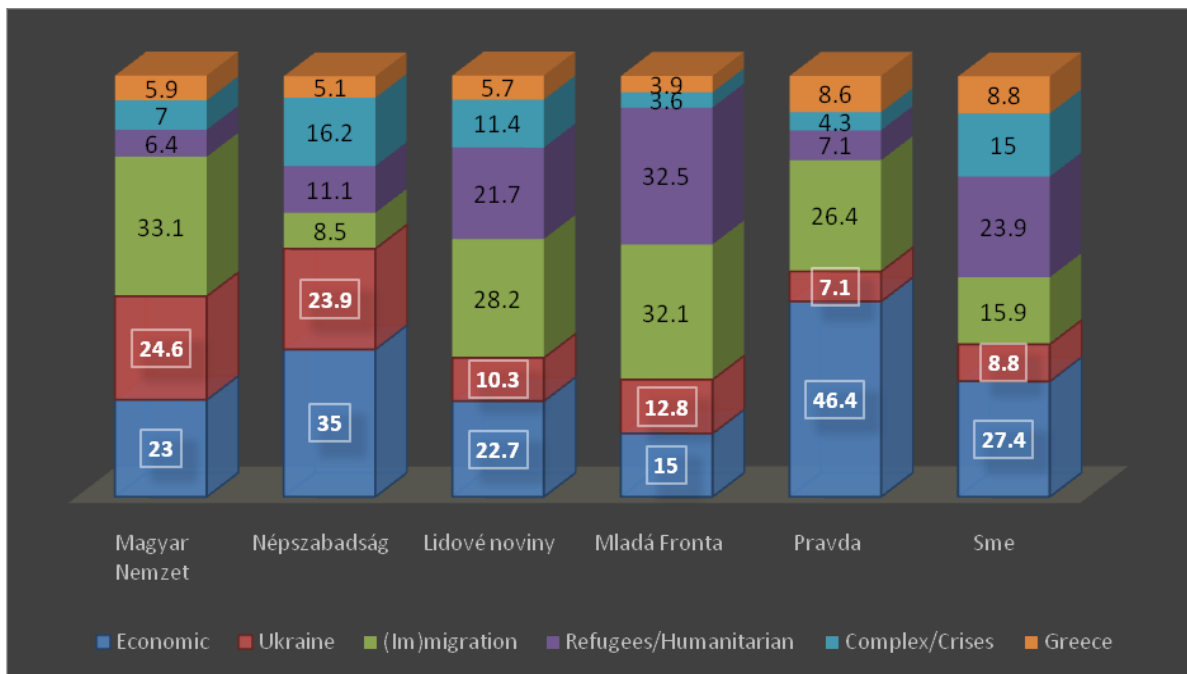

Chart 2: Incidences of the most common types of crises in the analysed articles (in %)
Source: author

V.   FRAME CATEGORY 1: THE EU *VERSUS* MEMBER STATES

Beyond the steep increase in the frequency of the portrayal of the EU in "crisis" in the last two years, new frames can be identified in some of the common dilemmas that the crisis discourse brings about, namely, which actor is at the centre of attention of the pieces

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[13]   For example, Kain (2015) writes that "the EU is at the crossroads. How it deals with the current immigration and security crisis will decide, whether it remains liberal, open, but first and foremost united and resilient. Or whether we just quickly make up a castle from sand, that will be swept away by the next wave". He does not specify at all what the immigration and security crisis is.

reporting on crises, who is responsible for the crises in question, and how the future of the EU is perceived in relation to the crises. In the first category, the population of articles allows us to distinguish between two common positions (see Charts 3 and 4), emphasising either the EU as a community of its Member States, or highlighting the actions of the EU institutions (particularly of the Commission). As these frames emerge from the overall tone of the articles, rather than a particular dichotomy (as opposed to the infrequent, but present frame that explicitly contrasts the EU and Member States), both these frames can be considered to be weak (cf., Atikcan, 2015: 22-27).
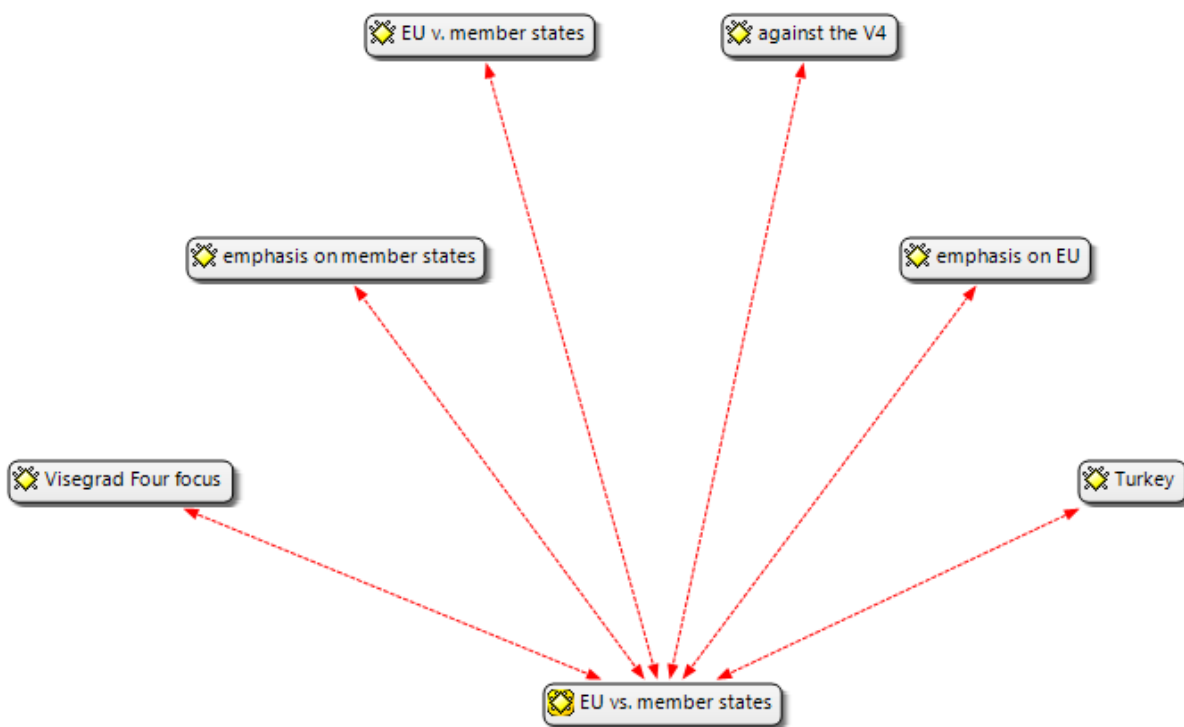
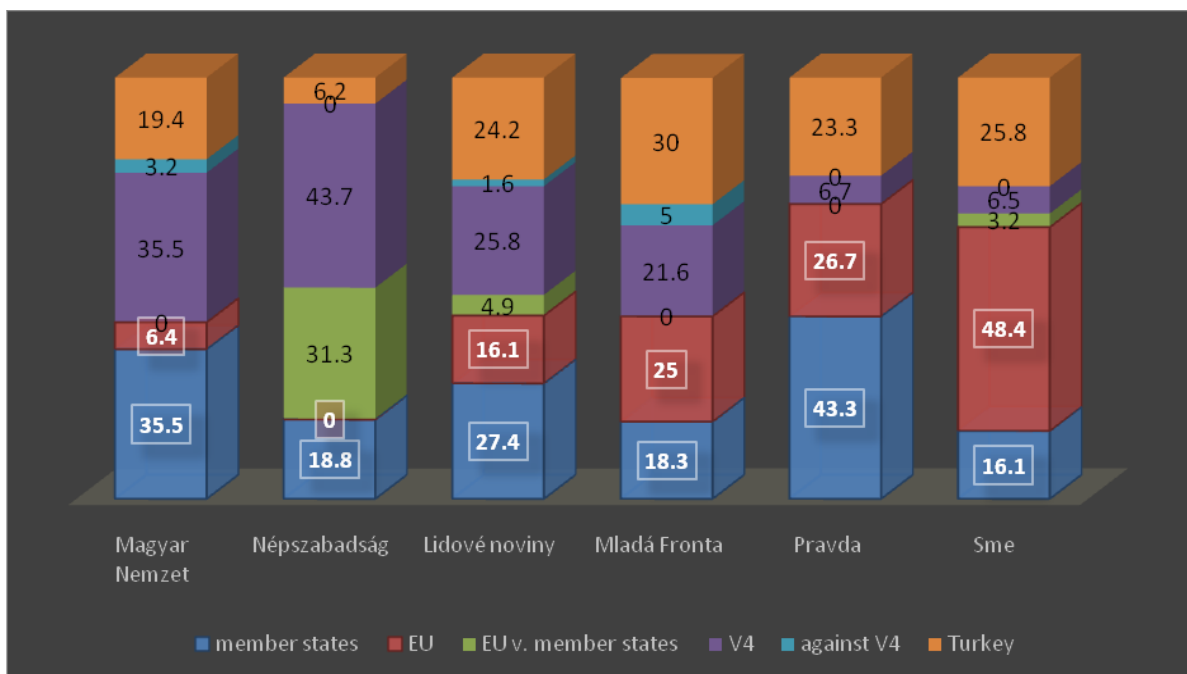**Chart 3: Frames in the first category – the actor in focus**
Source: author

In this category, there are several new frames, though, that gained prevalence in the context of the "migration/refugee crisis". Firstly, it is the frame of Turkey (see Chart 4), which presents the country's claims *vis-à-vis* the EU in exchange for it "stopping the refugees". For instance, an article entitled "The Turks can Come without Visas" (MTI, 2015b), reports about the "important question" of one of the European Council meetings: "with what kind of concessions they can reciprocate the help offered by Turkey in the refugee crisis."

Secondly, in a number of articles, a specific focus on Visegrád Four (V4) is present. Although this focus does not go beyond short description of some of the V4's positions or actions in all of them, with 64 articles containing such reference it is strong enough to be considered a frame on its own. The core of this frame is in referring to the summits of the V4 in which they articulated their opposition to the "EU approach" the loudest. One example is a press release on the extraordinary V4 summit with the participation of Macedonia and Bulgaria on 15 February 2016 reproduced in *Mladá Fronta* (ČTK, 2016c):

> "If the control of the external European borders is not improved and the migration influx will not be stopped, the situation can spur out of control. Failure in this area could cast doubt upon the very foundations of the European Union."

Notwithstanding the few articles which explicitly criticise the V4's rebellion against the refugee re-location schemes, the majority does not praise them either, but remains at a descriptive level with no normative position. Hence, despite the undoubted presence of this frame, the articles (in this period analysed at least) generally do not argue for the Union's fragmentation. Another question is whether *the effect* of such portrayal of the EU could manifest in greater acceptability of divergent voices about the future of EU integration - which is discussed in the subsequent categories.

Chart 4: Incidences of the most common frames in the first category (in % of the total number of included articles into the category separately for each newspaper)
Source: author[14]

VI.   FRAME CATEGORY 2: THE PERFORMANCE OF THE EU

Turning to the perception of the EU's results in the crises, *i.e.*, what the Union can or cannot deliver to concrete target groups, there is a clear negative, linear evaluation emerging from the articles under study. The variations on the "failure", or at least the "weakening", of the EU as a result of the crises (Chart 5) clearly outweigh the positive notions of the EU's strength and resilience. This could be somewhat expected, given the type of framing that tends to accompany crises (including those which serve to produce and deepen fear). However, the absence of views of crises as an opportunity for renewal and positive reforms is striking. Moreover, a rather massive opposition against what is perceived to be the "European élite" or "European bureaucracy" is clearly visible from the articles, particularly in Czech media and in the Hungarian *Magyar Nemzet*.

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[14]   The overall number of articles in *Népszabadság* included in this chart (16) does not allow to make valid comparisons with its counterparts.

Chart 5: Frames in the second category – the evaluation dimension
Source: author

A few examples of this negative framing which creates a linear binary opposition between the citizens of the Member States and the "European élites" are as follows. In an interview with a pro-Russian political scientist in the *Magyar Nemzet* (*Hungarian Nation*), the interviewee vehemently argued that both the American and the European élite exert pressure on countries such as Russia and Hungary, allegedly for three reasons: "the economic relations with Russia, the striving for independence, and the questioning of the exclusiveness of liberal values" (Stier, 2015b). Furthermore, the opinion of Mr. Viktor Orbán, that the "European political élite sits in an ideological bubble" (MTI, 2015a, with particular reference to the approach towards migration), made it to the headlines of the same newspaper. His view that "'Brussels makes a mistake' when it focuses on the re-location of refugees among the Member States instead of protecting its borders" (ČTK, 2016a), made it to the Slovak newspaper *Sme*.

Another example of the anti-European élite frame is that of the Czech philosopher Miloslav Bednář (2016), who, in *Lidové noviny* referred to a view of Jiří Weigl, (the Head of Office of the former Czech President Václav Klaus) that is illustrative and worth quoting at length:

> "The main ideological-political line of the EU has […] intentional and substantial participation in the migration influx to Europe. […] European élites see, in this migration, a new opportunity, how to use this crisis to exacerbate further the tension for an integrational transformation of Europe in accordance with their views. It is not just an effort to strengthen further the power of the bureaucracy in Brussels […] with forced quotas for accepting immigrants. Progressive visionaries see in migration a core ally that can disrupt the homogeneity of nation states and the national identity of their inhabitants […]."

Duhan (2015) argues along the same lines:

> "The technocratic and moralising approach of European élites is telling about their crisis too. It shows their weak link to their societies, not only to populations, but also their culture, nation and civilisation. They ceased feeling solidarity with Europe and its legacy. […]"

This frame of attribution of responsibility for migration (portrayed in a hostile way) to the "European élite" is deepened by labelling it as a phenomenon that "plays alongside the

lines" of this élite's plans. The mild element of a (European) conspiracy entailed in this frame makes it more attractive to anyone searching for seemingly plausible explanations of the causes of the above-average numbers of refugees arriving, which are an alternative to the mainstream explanations.

What Viktor Orbán is in the Hungarian press, the former Czech president Václav Klaus represents even more vividly in the Czech press. As an ardent opponent of the EU, Klaus managed express his views in the press on numerous occasions. In an older interview, Klaus (then still President) clearly stated that:

> "I would defend Europe, I would not defend the EU. I think that it is an unfortunate development that took place in Europe; I would not wish Europe anything wrong. And that it all plays out in the way it does, that is extremely sad" (Krist, 2009)

Klaus also found several followers whose voices are prominently reflected in the two Czech newspapers of the sample. Some of the most extreme positions in the course of the "migration/refugee" crisis were represented by MEP Petr Mach for the *Party of Free Citizens,* who claimed that the quotas are a "dictate of the EU", that, if not withdrawn, leave the Czech Republic with the only possibility to exit the EU altogether (Havlická, 2015). Others, such as the Chairman of the former party of Václav Klaus, and Petr Fiala, himself a professor of political science, use milder, but (as far as the position on quotas goes) similar rhetoric:

> "We are being forced to [accept] solutions that are not good." [referring to the Commission's proposal on relocation schemes] (Kotalík, 2016)

In Slovakia, former Prime Minister Robert Fico occasionally occupied the role of the critic of the European élites. In an interview for the Czech newspaper *Mladá Fronta*, which was reproduced/re-printed in the Slovak newspaper *Pravda*, he raised doubts that the EU "could stop migration".

> "I am asking, are we really leading the Union to self-destruction?" (SITA, 2016a, see also Palata, 2016)

One of his ministers at the time, and the chief of his party's election campaign conveyed a similar message:

"if the EU does not enter into an open dialogue with its citizens, radicals will seize this initiative. For decades, things are being done in a stealthy way so that we make the EU a super-state." (SITA, 2016b)

The representatives of the executive were supported in this rhetoric by some opposition leaders, such as the Chairman of the Party of the Hungarian Community, who was especially outspoken in denouncing the quotas:

"the quotas could not work and it is even a very undemocratic decision-making of Brussels, that it wants to force the quotas upon respective states." (Cuprík and Vrabcová, 2016)

Some journalists offered similar opinions:

"If someone sets the states of the Union apart now, it is the Commission together with the similarly oriented European parliament. They live in an illusion about all-European democracy, in which the people are supposed to vote their president of the Commission, kind of a European government. The will of the democratically elected prime ministers is a burden for them." (Houska, 2016)[15]

Voices of experts such as the "political scientist, economics and publicist" Petr Robejšek (2014)[16] can also be found arguing this way:

"As usual, the European élite attribute themselves more capabilities than they have, and take on more powers than they are capable of exercising. The incapability of the Union to resolve big questions is "compensated" with an obsession with details. Brussels wants to neutralise the growing disparity of the association [in interests and development] with *gleichschaltung.*"[17]

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[15] Another example coming from the period before the "migration/refugee crisis": "Even if a Nobel prize would be awarded for procrastination, it would be someone else instead of the European political class who would go for the Nobel price to Oslo this year. Indeed, in the first half of the year, practically nothing at all happened." See Vajs (2012).

[16] "The pedants of Brussels on their way towards a messianic dictatorship."

[17] The term in this context has origins in Germany under national socialism and denotes the subjugation of all aspects of life to the ruling ideology (see King and King, 2014).
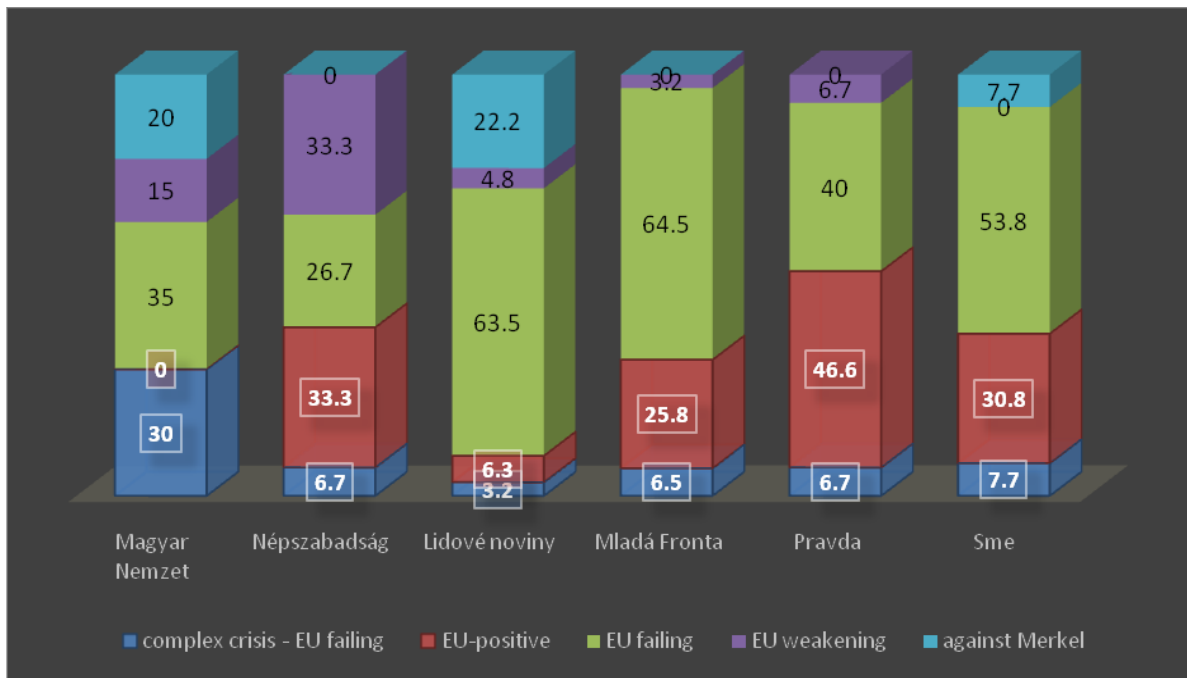
Chart 6: incidences of the most common frames in the second category (in % of the total number of included articles into the category separately for each newspaper
Source: author

The handful of positions that support the ideas behind the EU and/or its capacity to deliver valuable outputs lags behind in strength and intensity. In most newspapers, it is not prevalent, or is missing altogether (*Magyar Nemzet*). It is more commonly present in *Pravda* and *Népszabadság*, although, in both cases, it is less than ten articles in absolute numbers. Yet, it can still be considered a "weak frame", comprising a set of positions, such as those of Zeeb (in Mánert, 2014),[18] Garton Ash (2012)[19] or Urban (2015).[20]

Overall, the performance of the EU is clearly negative in the six newspapers, with small differences between the three countries (Chart 6). There is a strong frame attributing responsibility for the crises (especially the "migration/refugee" crisis) to an unspecified group of "European élites", which goes as far as to accuse them for causing the crisis, benefiting from it or, at least, preventing it from ending with appropriate solutions. These are sometimes viewed as infringing upon the rights of the Member States and the "national communities"

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[18] "In the present age of global struggle, Europe must summon the courage and solidarity to elevate the concept of the union in a logical direction, towards a real Europe with the shape of a democratic federal state, that will be powerful enough to be able to face all the challenges mentioned above."

[19] "And that [memory on war, Soviet threat, German unification, the 'return to Europe' of the eastern states, and rising living conditions within 'Europe'] is the basis of a new argument for European unification."

[20] "The nation state is for a crisis of such magnitude impractical to say the least. It was exactly the absence of other than national decision-making mechanisms that prevented Europe from recognizing the warning symptoms early on and via joint coordination prevent the very emergence of the refugee wave."

within them, which creates a binary opposition and "clouds" another views. This frame is not countered by another similarly strong one that would emphasise the Union's resilience, the benefits that it provides, and/or its capacity to endure in some, albeit segmented, form.

VII.   FRAME CATEGORY 3: THE FUTURE OF THE EU

The last category of frames speaks to the implications of the portrayed crises for the optimal future configuration of the EU. It shows, firstly, the prevalence of linear thinking about the Union in relation to the crises through the traditional dilemma between more or less integration, and, secondly, the presence of a great variety of "ways forward", which are mostly vague and unclear on the structure that would emerge if this particular way (defined often through specific policies, such as joint EU solutions on migration) came into being (see Chart 7).[21]

After breaking down the frames into frequencies, there is a clear dominant frequency stemming from the data, the one on the joint EU approach. With 123 incidences (cf., Chart 8), mostly in relation to the "migration/refugee crisis", it is by far the strongest frame related to the category of the EU's future. A closer look demonstrates that it encompasses different ideas on the substance of this joint approach. Positions range from that in which the joint approach should unfold among the *Member States* of the EU, with the larger states having a greater pool of responsibility (Pataky, 2016, interviewing the Croatian minister of foreign affairs Miro Kovac), through the emphasis on a *European* solution which is to be found in "increased border security and refusing refugees" (ČTK, 2016e), up to the call for an *EU solution* in which Member States need to participate (Krbatová, 2016).[22] Others again stress the need to "protect the joint Europe with joint efforts and find courage for major economic and social reforms […]" (Dzurinda, 2016), and there is, of course, Angela Merkel, who referred to the joint EU approach on numerous occasions (ČTK, 2016b).

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[21]   With respect to more sophisticated accounts of the developments, there is virtually no example of core formation around the Eurozone in the articles. The frame on the Visegrad Four includes some examples praising the V4's position towards migration/asylum policies, however, not in the sense that the V4 should form its own block within the Union, but that the Union *jointly* should adopt the V4's approach. A few notions of two/multi-speed EU can be identified that could be closest associated to segmentation. Fragmentation is the most commonly appearing frame (see on regional divisions below), but in a negative sense (the EU needs to avoid it).

[22]   This was an interview with a Slovak MP, who said, among others that "Europe as an union but also as a continent faces a problem, that it can resolve only with joining forces. Even though the refugee wave does not arrive to us, Slovakia has to somehow participate on the problem".
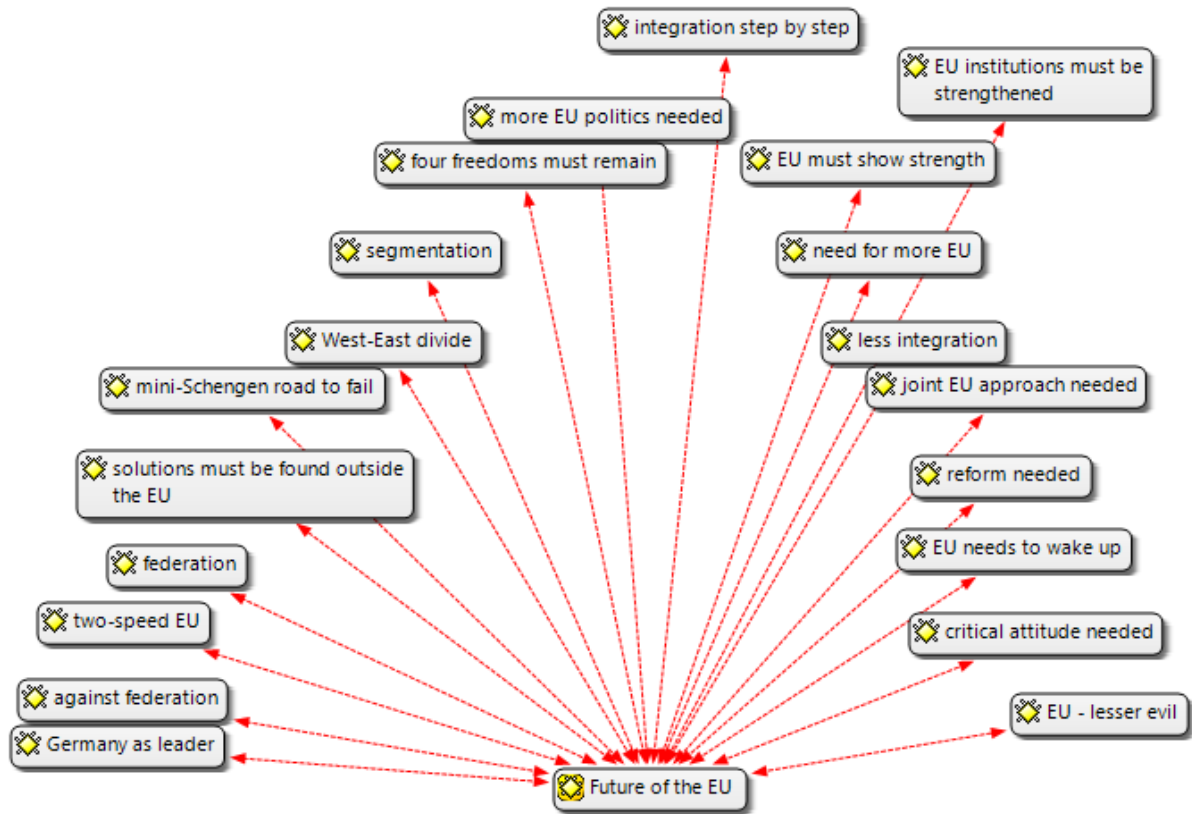
**Chart 7: Frames in the third category.**
Source: author
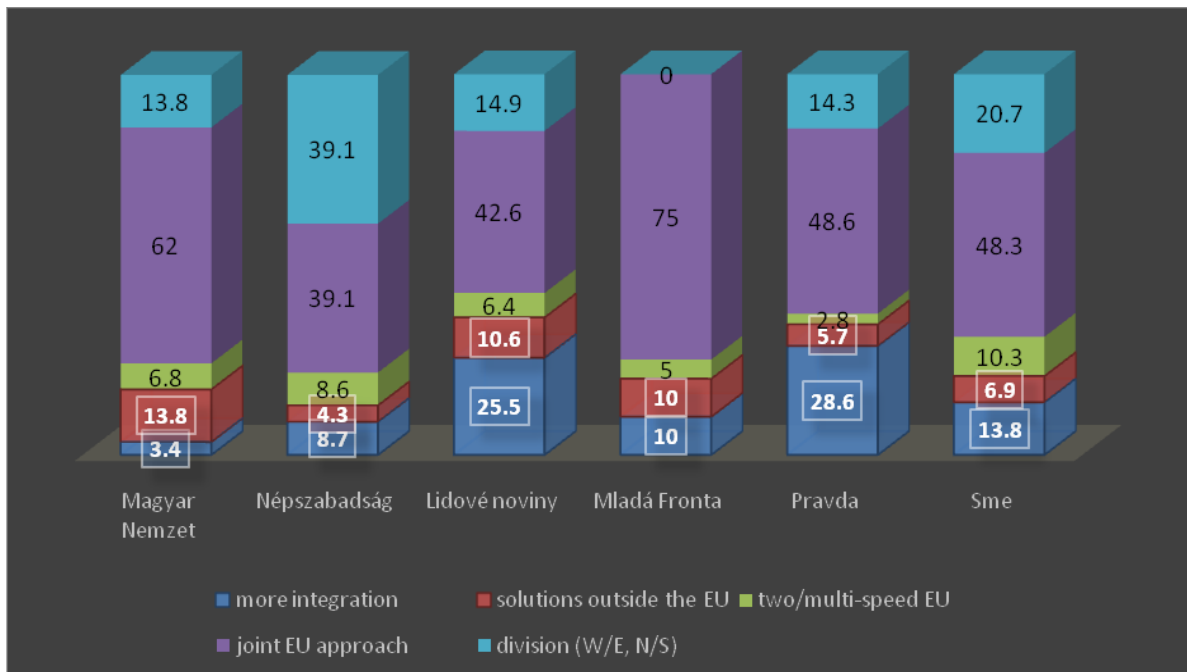
Chart 8: Incidences of the most common frames in the third category (in % of the total number of included articles into the category separately for each newspaper).
Source: author

One noticeable frame is the one on the divisions (West/East, North/South) that persist or are deepening in the EU in relation to the crises. Critical comments are reproduced in the articles that object to such divisions, particularly in the context of the economic situation. One quite imaginative portrayal of the threat of deepening divisions is through a cartoon re-published in *Népszabadság* (Chart 9), in which the EU is "shifted" to the East, while the former Western European states are united in a different structure called "*Merkelreich*". Without stating it explicitly, and thus the concept being captured by the content analysis, the cartoon is an example of the fragmentation of the EU.
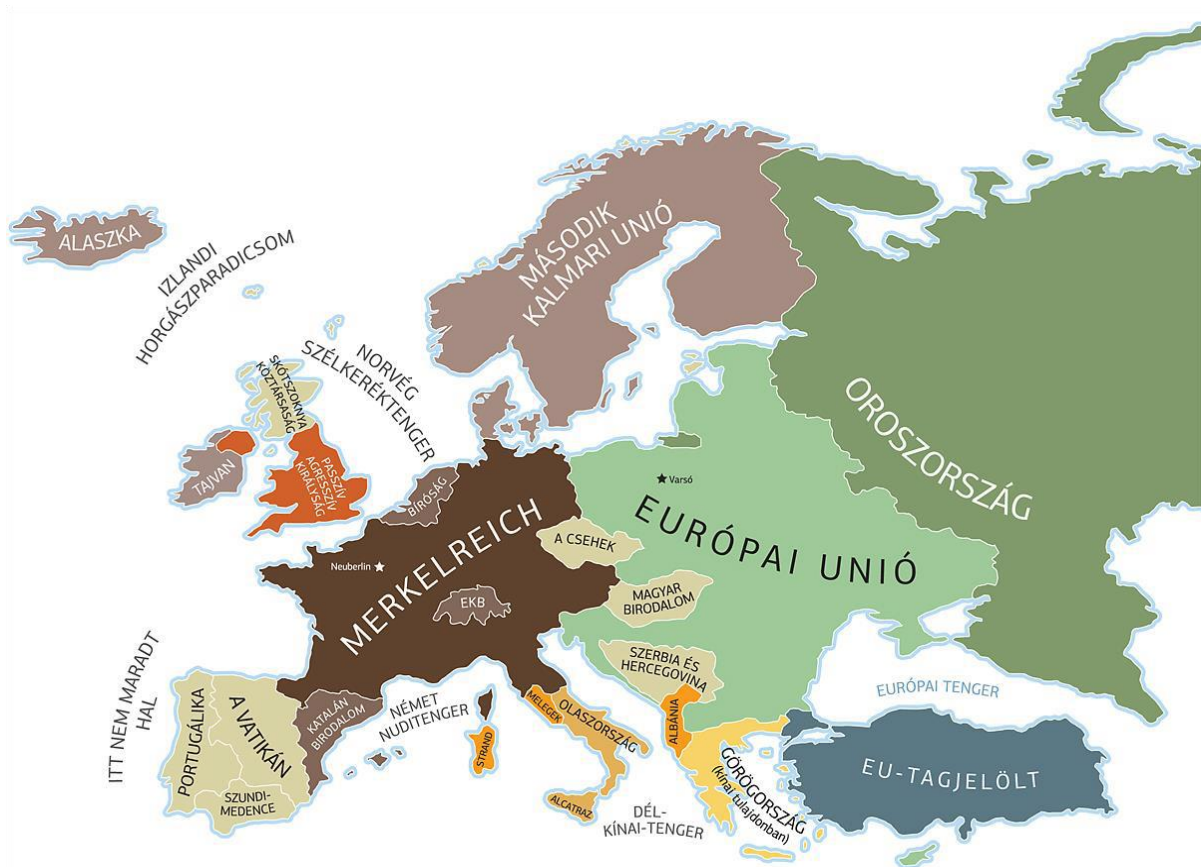
Chart 9: The future of the EU according to a cartoonist. The term is reserved for the east, while the West is transformed to "Merkelreich". The "Czechs" and the "Hungarian Empire" form small but independent entities.
Source: Friss (2015)

Fragmentation appears to be the threat on the horizon in the views of others as well. An Op-Ed entitled "European United Dreams" is worried that:

"the nation states do not work in the ways they used to, and the societies of the European periphery can easily get trapped into the crisis of the nation state. [...]

Thus, it is necessary to proceed further at the European level in some direction."
(Tamás, 2014)

The greatest risk, in this columnist's view, is thus the intensification of the centre-periphery divide (which he does not precisely define, though). In connection with the "migration/refugee crisis", there have been concerns over the "tension between Central Europe and the rest of Europe" (Holkovský in Cuprík, 2015) or even an "open conflict at the next summit of the EU between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the countries that refuse her plan to resolve the refugee crisis in co-operation with Turkey" (ČTK, 2016d). As Chart 8 shows, the frame on division is present in newspapers across the countries under study, and is overwhelmingly perceived as negative for the EU's future. This is a noticeable contrast to the frame on the Visegrád Four above, where the "separationist" attitude in the "migration/refugee" crisis was praised in most of the texts in which it appeared. As "separationist" attitudes are likely to deepen, their support can hardly be reconciled with the voice in favour of joint European solutions, regardless of their content. This is yet another form of opposition that may have contributed segmentation in the Union through the creation of two lines of thought speaking *alongside*, *but not to*, each other.

VIII.   CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A POST-CRISES PORTRAYAL OF THE UNION

What does the analysis of the newspaper portrayal of the EU in crises tell us about the development of the EU post-crises? For one thing, this chapter supported the standpoint that determining when there is a crisis, when it starts and also when a "post-crises" era comes about, is intertwined with its construction. Despite all the spatial and temporal limitations of the chapter's empirical analysis, it can be concluded that the crises live their own lives in the media, which is far from being based upon fact, which straightforwardly explains why a set of events has "earned" the right to be labelled as a crisis, upon the basis of what criteria the responsibility for its causes can be attributed, and how its possible consequences can be evaluated. In a more than eight-year period, in six Czech, Slovak and Hungarian quality newspapers a gloomy picture of a crisis-struck Union emerges, with a number of characteristics. Firstly, the responsibility for at least the latest, and most anxiously perceived "migration/refugee crisis" is largely attributed to the EU institutions in Brussels and the "European élite", and a bright future for the EU can hardly be imagined at all. Secondly, it is a picture in which the joint approach of all EU Member States is still perceived to have power, but is difficult to achieve because of the persistent, or even deepening, divisions between their positions. Thirdly, the Visegrád Four's prevalently praised position towards

some issues within the "migration/refugee" crisis is at odds with the preference for a joint approach, and implicitly paves the way towards fragmentation of the EU. Finally, while there is clearly a frame that believes in European integration, sometimes explicitly in the form of "more EU" with a federation at the end, in the regularity of its appearance, it is far from one what could be evaluated as strong.

Despite some differences in specific frames,[23] this chapter has argued that all the newspapers under scrutiny share something common: the *linear image of the EU's development*. By creating oppositions between the Member States and EU institutions, the European élites and citizens, and nation-state sovereignty and deeper integration, they exemplify a linear thinking about the Union with hardly any space for a segmented political order. A possible explanation for this linearity is that the language of crises, as discussed throughout the chapter, supports radical changes with a capacity to overcome them, rather than some form of muddling through. The standpoints of the "Ever Closer Union" or the Union's fragmentation fit into this language better than that of segmentation. At the same time, the creation of opposing standpoints talking alongside each other but not *to each other*, *i.e.*, without the capacity to engage with the diverging views in order to generate a more overarching narrative, supports *segmented language*, characterised by cognitive and ideological closure (see the Introduction to this volume). Further empirical research possibly including more types of media could show the subsequent trends in the portrayal of the EU as well as whether the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary will increasingly stand out due to the cementing of the idea of pursuing their own "Visegrád" approach while still remaining in the EU, or whether there will be increasing differences due to changing public discourse as well as the undermining of the very foundations of democracy. All in all, the crisis construction process seems to have left at least some segments of the public discourse about the Union unaware for the subsequent policy developments. With the entrenchment of linear views of the Union and the absence of vocabulary that could account for what is happening, it is doubtful that EU citizenry would be able to understand and relate to the Union more post-crises than before them, even if the "crisis talk" does not continue with such an intensity (see Steuer, 2017). Empirically, this seems to have created an environment in which segmentation

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[23] Addressing the comparative questions from this chapter's Introduction, it cannot be said that the Eurozone membership would indicate a significantly different portrayal of the Eurozone crisis or that in Hungary facing significant democratic backsliding, the language of blaming the "European élites" would be more present.

can flourish. Normatively, this is not good news for building a democratic Union, whatever form it will take.

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