

EU Enlargement in far-right Eurosceptic discourse

A comparative analysis of the positions of the French *Rassemblement National*
and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* on EU Enlargement



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Introduction

During his opening statement to the European Parliament in 2014, newly chosen Commission-President Jean-Claude Juncker stated that ‘in the next five years, no new members will be joining us in the European Union (EU)’ (Juncker, 2014), as none of the candidate-countries under negotiation¹ seemed capable to meet all membership criteria by 2019. This statement gave expression to a downward spiral in public and political attitudes towards further enlargement, witnessed since the ‘Big Bang’ Eastern Enlargements of 2004 and 2007². Consequently, a vast literature has arisen on the concept of ‘Enlargement Fatigue’, simply defined as ‘unwillingness to grant EU membership to new countries or the symptom that the willingness is fading’ (Szolucha, 2010, p.2). In this literature, we find overall consensus that enlargement fatigue is a persistent and growing phenomenon. For example, studies demonstrate that in discourses or official EU documents too enthusiastic expressions on enlargement are explicitly avoided (Devrim & Schulz, 2009), and that public attitudes towards future enlargement have become significantly more negative. Moreover, academics agree on the existence of differences in popular support per candidate-country, with Turkey and Albania systematically receiving the lowest levels of support (Toskov *et al.*, 2014, pp.14-16).

A heated debate exists on the factors explaining these growing sceptic feelings among the public, as there is ‘no consensus on which set of factors has a stronger effect on attitudes toward enlargement’ (Taydas & Kentmen-Cin, 2017, p.604). A variety of explanations has been put forward, ranging from rational-utilitarian and identity-based arguments to the undemocratic nature of the EU. Moreover, academics have mentioned that country-specific aspects can shape attitudes towards enlargement. For instance, the meaning and scope of ‘enlargement’ are said to vary across the EU, ‘as citizens of different EU member states can have different candidates for membership in mind’ (Toskov *et al.*, 2014, p.10). However, little comparative research has been done on what exactly shapes attitudes towards enlargement within different member states, thereby demonstrating the influence of country-specific factors. Hence, this thesis aims to shed some light on the extent to which country-specific variables shape public debates on enlargement.

¹ In July 2014, those were Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia.

² Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined in 2004, Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.

A good way to do this is to look at positions of political parties. It is argued that ‘the domestic political arena is an important source of attitudes towards enlargement [...], since it is there where EU issues are debated and become politicized’ (Toshkov *et al.*, 2014, p.25). In the first chapter of this thesis, we will provide a more elaborate analysis of the interaction between public and political positions; for now it is sufficient to state that the literature provides evidence for a strong mutual influence (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007). In particular, the discourse of far-right Eurosceptic parties is suited to investigate public opposition against enlargement. It is said that enlargement fatigue ‘entered the European political lexicon in the wake of the dramatic failures of the French and Dutch referendums on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005’ (O’Brennan, 2014, p.224), marking the shift in public opinion from ‘permissive consensus’ to ‘constraining dissensus’ since the beginning of the 21st century (Hooghe & Marks, 2008), and paving the way for a ‘Eurosceptic wave’ over the continent. With this, it is argued, politicization of EU issues ‘has been driven in particular by political parties that oppose the integration process, [...] with the consequence that the debate of the EU has mainly been shaped by Eurosceptic parties’ (Pannico, 2017, p.17). Thus, we may fairly say that Eurosceptic parties steer national debates on further EU widening, and strengthen citizens’ negativity towards it.

Our thesis so studies the positions of national far-right Eurosceptic parties on EU enlargement, to see how they steer national debates on the matter and whether they do so in a different manner as a consequence of country-specific variables. This research can well be motivated since few studies have systematically compared enlargement-positions of similar political parties in different EU member states. Especially far-right Eurosceptic parties are under-studied here; we argue that there seems to be an overall tendency to assume that extremist-right Eurosceptic parties look at EU-related topics in a similar way. However, recent literature questions this, by demonstrating different patterns of far-right Euroscepticism (Vasilopoulou, 2018). But, parties falling within one of these patterns are still thought to share similar views on EU-issues. Therefore, by studying two rejectionist-Eurosceptic parties³, we will systematically examine whether these parties share similar positions on a specific EU-topic or not.

³ Parties belonging to this most extreme pattern accept ‘the common cultural, historical and religious European roots, but oppose the principle of co-operation within the EU-framework, the EU institutional and policy *status quo*, and the future building of a European polity’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.22).

In our research, we analyse the discourse of two rejectionist Eurosceptic parties: the French *Rassemblement National* (RN, formerly *Front National*) and the Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV). These two parties firmly contributed to the ‘Eurosceptic wave’, and moved from the margins to the political centre at the national as well as the European level. Although traditionally ‘hard’ Eurosceptic, recently a difference in rhetoric is observed. While PVV-leader Geert Wilders is still proclaiming a ‘Nexit’, RN-leader Marine Le Pen has remarkably softened her stance on the EU; in her 2019 European election campaign, she abandoned the idea of a ‘Frexit’, and instead came up with a manifest for a new European project, including a profound reform of the treaties and the European institutions (Lambrecq, 2019). Consequently, both parties could hold different positions when it comes to enlargement, for example by emphasizing different problems or being more or less radical. Furthermore, national aspects of France and the Netherlands could also motivate diverging discourses, as these two countries are particularly interesting to compare. Both have been members of the European Communities since the very beginning, but differ on diverse aspects like population size and composition, national economic and social policies, stances on foreign policy, etc. What is more, Eurobarometer surveys show that French citizens already expressed a net negative support for prospective enlargements back in 2002, while Dutch citizens only came to express a net negative attitude from 2012 onwards (Toshkov *et al.*, 2014, pp.11-12).

Our thesis consequently aims to answer the following research question: To what extent do the positions on enlargement of the European Union of the French and Dutch far-right Eurosceptic parties *Rassemblement National* and *Partij voor de Vrijheid* correspond? To narrow down this broad question, our research design is divided into two sub-parts. In the first part, we will study the two parties’ positions on EU enlargement in general, to form an image of their broader views. Secondly, as enlargement is inseparably linked to candidate-states, we will analyse the two parties’ positions on a particular case of prospective enlargement. In both parts, we will investigate whether the parties put forward similar or different kinds of arguments to support their negative stances, and in case of the latter, whether we can systematically characterize their rhetoric. By doing so, this thesis tries to clarify on the idea of country-specific variables as possible reasons for differences, but is not exhaustive on explanatory factors, as this does not constitute the main purpose of our research. There is a large variety of suitable sources to study the discourse of Eurosceptic parties. While electoral programs or media statements do well represent parties’ key points, contributions to parliamentary debates allow for a more in-depth contemplation and outright reactions to views of other parties. Primary

material analysed in the first part so consists of electoral campaigns for national and European parliamentary elections, party manifestos, press releases or contributions to parliamentary committee meetings on EU enlargement in general. For the case-study, we will notably examine party members' contributions to European parliamentary debates on the specific case, next to again press releases or contributions to national parliamentary debates relating to the enlargement-process in question.

The rest of this thesis proceeds as follows: the first chapter portrays the most important factors influencing public and political positions on enlargement, that we will use later to analyse the discourse of our parties. In our overview, we will pay attention to general factors, country-specific factors, and party-specific factors. Chapter 2 describes the methodology used for the comparison of the two parties. Chapter 3 compares broader views of the two parties on enlargement, for the period beginning from 2005, after the completion of the first round of Eastern enlargement, up to 2020. In chapter 4, we will conduct a case-study on the ever-lingering Turkish accession, within the timeframe 2015-2016. As the Turkish accession is such a 'hot topic' within the European debate, we consider it especially interesting to see whether similar political parties put forward diverging arguments to support their opposition against it. In both empirical parts, we will categorize the arguments put forward according to broader approaches to enlargement as well as specific factors influencing attitudes, as listed in chapter 1. These results will then be matched with the expectations regarding country-specific and party-specific factors we formulate in the first chapter. Finally, the conclusion sums up our most essential findings, provides a nuanced answer to our research question, and makes suggestions for future research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework: public and political attitudes towards EU Enlargement

Since the goal of our research is to investigate whether differences occur in the way the RN and the PVV look at enlargement, we first need to provide a systematic overview of the possible manners in which they could diverge. This first chapter therefore forms a theoretical framework setting out the most important factors we expect to find in Eurosceptic discourse on enlargement. Before turning to this overview, we shortly touch upon the interaction between public and political attitudes, to demonstrate how Eurosceptic parties drive public debates on enlargement.

The relationship between public and political attitudes is fairly complex, and forms a much debated topic in the literature. Studies on mass-elite linkages mainly portray two directions: ‘the bottom-up approach refers to political elites adopting positions of the mass public, through a process of representation’; ‘the top-down approach refers to the mass public adopting the positions of political elites, through a process of information and persuasion’ (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007, p.14). Evidence exists for a mutual influence, as there are ‘strong bottom-up and top-down processes, which cause EU stances of party supporters and elites to be associated’ (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007, p.30). Since we concentrate on party positions shaping public views, our research should be understood in light of the top-down approach. Party cues, by means of which citizens ‘decide whether, and to what extent, to support a particular policy or candidate’ (Pannico, 2017, p.21), are of utmost importance in this process. It is argued that the level of information on policy issues determines the effectiveness of party cues (Maier *et al.*, 2017). Since there is a rather ‘low interest and knowledge among EU publics about EU institutions and enlargement in particular’ (Toshkov *et al.*, 2014, p.24), Europeans are relatively vulnerable to party cues for their views on enlargement.

Our choice to analyze far-right Eurosceptic parties fits well in this perspective. First, mass-elite linkages would be more disconnected within mainstream political parties (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007, p.30), suggesting a stronger connection of positions within parties at the political extremes. Second, it seems that ‘opposition parties with a clear ideology are more effective in cue-setting compared to governing parties or parties with a less clear-cut ideology’ (Maier *et al.*, 2017, p.333). As the RN and the PVV both hold a clear radical right ideology, this reinforces our claim that these parties are powerful in steering public debates. Third, as

stated earlier, it have mainly been Eurosceptic parties that shaped debates on EU-issues, since ‘mainstream parties have tried to defuse the salience of the EU in the national political debate’ (Pannico, 2017, p.17). In this respect, it is argued that the more salient a topic is to a party, the more it influences its voters (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007, p.20). For instance, during the run-up to the 2009 European elections, mostly ‘marginalised or extremist parties used enlargement as a campaign subject, [...] to highlight its negative consequences for the EU’ (Devrim & Schulz, 2009, p.20), as opposed to mainstream parties avoiding the sensitive issue.

§1.1 Factors determining Eurosceptic discourse on enlargement

In the academic literature, much has been written about the reasons for negative popular attitudes towards enlargement. This research has above all relied upon theoretical frameworks explaining public opinion towards EU integration in general, and therefore mostly used the traditional explanations for public opinion on EU membership, namely the utilitarian and identity approaches (Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Interestingly, in studies to the correlation between public attitudes towards deepening and widening, it is argued that in cases where one favours further deepening but opposes further widening, ‘such attitudes are significantly conditioned by country-specific aspects’ (Hobolt, 2014, p.677).

In what follows, we will present an overview of the main factors shaping enlargement attitudes. By means thereof, we will be demonstrating why we expect to find differences in the discourse of the RN and the PVV, and in what way. Therefore, it is important to note that we concentrate on those factors that we expect to find in the discourse of Eurosceptic political parties, and leave individuals’ subjective considerations aside. Indeed, academics agree on the fact that the average European citizen has a limited knowledge of the enlargement process and potential candidates for membership (Toshkov *et al.*, 2014, p.16). This makes that ‘citizens seem to rely on a combination of their own limited knowledge, past experiences and fears, as opposed to factual information about potential members’ (Taydas & Kentmen-Cin, 2017, p.613). The below overview is structured as follows: we made a division of four broad types of arguments presented in the literature. Per argument-type, we will explain the basic rationale and portray general factors that are at stake. In a next step, we will demonstrate how country-specific factors of France and the Netherlands, as well as party-specific factors of the RN and the PVV, play a role for this type of argument. Party-specific aspects should be taken into account since positions are to some extent formed by simple party-ideology. We will also

sometimes refer to the Turkish case, as to already provide some context ahead of our case-study. This set-up allows us to, by the end of every category, create expectations regarding the parties' positions that we will test in our analysis. These expectations are equally applicable to both parts of our research; where we have different expectations for the case-study, this is explicitly indicated.

§1.1.1 Rational-utilitarian arguments

The rational-utilitarian approach refers to a cost-benefit analysis of enlargement. The basic idea is that citizens benefitting economically from the expansion of markets (mostly those with higher levels of education and income) are more supportive, and that citizens who do not seem to benefit (those with lower levels of education and income), oppose it (Hobolt, 2014, pp.668; Hooghe & Marks, 2004). Indeed, low-skilled or unemployed can fear labour migration stemming from the accession of poorer states with higher levels of low-skilled workers or high unemployment rates; also, those who are dependent on redistributive EU policies, like farmers, fear the accession of states with large agricultural sectors, as this could negatively impact the distribution of subsidies. The accession of Turkey, with a GDP per capita significantly below EU average and one of the largest but at the same time most under-developed agricultural sectors in Europe (ESI, 2006, pp.6-7), could so have a major impact. Furthermore, scholars argued that '(citizens in) net contributor states to the EU budget tend to oppose further enlargement (with poorer states), as they fear an additional burden on taxpayers' (Hobolt, 2014, p.669). Finally, this approach also refers to perceived power within the EU (Hobolt, 2014, p.675). Considering the rules for a qualified majority nowadays applying in most policy areas in the Council of the EU⁴, an increasing EU population makes it harder for smaller states to reach the threshold of popular representation, whereas this makes less of a difference for countries with a high population share. With the accession of Turkey, the possibly second-largest EU country with approximately 80 million inhabitants (Toute l'Europe, 2020), the balance of power could be significantly affected.

For France and the Netherlands, we observe several national differences and similarities. First, both are net contributors to the EU budget. While France pays a higher absolute net contribution, the Netherlands traditionally hold (one of) the highest per capita net contributions.

⁴ A qualified majority is reached when at least 55% of the member states, representing 65% of the EU's population, vote in favour.

In 2019, the yearly average net contribution per Dutch resident was estimated on €284, as opposed to €111 per French resident (Ross, 2019), making the EU budget a very contentious issue in the Netherlands. Second, both countries have relatively large agricultural sectors. France is one of the highest beneficiaries of the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) expenditures, while the Netherlands are again one of the highest net contributors to the CAP budget (although France is a net contributor as well) (Matthews, 2015). Next, both countries made use of the transition period to restrict the free movement of workers from eight of the ten newly acceded states in 2004, opening their borders in 2006 (the Netherlands) and 2007 (France) respectively (European Commission, 2011). Afterwards, both countries have seen a considerable influx of labour migrants from Eastern Europe. For example, in the Netherlands, after 2006, the number of Polish immigrants increased by almost 97.000 in the following 10 years (CBS, 2016). Finally, an increasing EU population will have a bigger impact on the Netherlands, with a population size of approximately 17 million, than it does for France, with approximately 67 million inhabitants.

When it comes to the RN and the PVV, both parties use rational-utilitarian arguments to support their anti-European views. In essence, both favour the idea of sovereign nation-states driving trade amongst each other, without a common market and currency. However, the RN's 'rejectionist Euroscepticism is ultimately linked to its master-frame, i.e. opposition to globalisation, by which it blames EU membership for threatening the nation-state and causing problems at all levels' (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.75). As such, 'Jean-Marie as well as Marine Le Pen want a Gaullist *Europe des Patries*' (Mol, 2012, p.58), which includes the pursuit of higher levels of protectionism, and makes the party popular among the working class. For the PVV, although supporting these viewpoints, we found that it puts a bigger emphasis on cultural threats stemming from (Muslim) immigration, conform 'the expectation in the literature that far-right parties prioritise cultural frames' (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.79).

We expect:

1.)	Both parties to insist on the threat of (cheap) labour migration from poorer states, but the RN to emphasize this aspect more in due to its globalisation-frame.
2.)	The PVV to more often emphasize higher financial transfers to the EU budget than the RN.

3.)	The PVV to mention the negative impact of the accession of countries with large agricultural sectors on farmers or the CAP more often than the RN.
4.)	The PVV to emphasize the relative loss of power in the Council more often than the RN.
5.)	The RN's overall discourse to be more framed by the theme of globalization than the PVV's discourse.

§1.1.2 Identity-based arguments

The identity-based approach refers to national identity and perceived cultural threats as determinants of attitudes. The basic idea is that citizens who feel more attached to 'Europe' and multicultural values, are more supportive of enlargement; conversely, those who hold a more exclusive national identity rather perceive enlargement as threatening the national unity and culture (Toskov *et al.*, 2014, p.22). Furthermore, religion can shape public attitudes, as attachment to religion creates feelings of an 'in-group' and 'out-group' (Azrout, Van Spanje & De Vreese, 2013). However, Taydas & Kentmen-Cin (2017, p.613) demonstrate that 'religious differences do not lie at the core of European reluctance to include other countries, with the notable exception of Turkey'. Scholars agree on the idea that 'Turkey's EU accession is more a function of identity and in-group attitudes than utilitarian factors' (Hobolt, 2014, p.666), while support for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania was more determined by material interests (Dixon, 2010, p.142). Finally, immigration is a huge determinant of attitudes. In first instance, anti-immigration sentiments can differ along the national context. The higher the percentage of immigrants in an EU member state, the more likely it is that 'citizens are exposed to the immigrants' culture and experience negative cultural, social, and economic effects of immigration, and, in turn, develop negative out-group bias toward them' (Taydas & Kentmen-Cin, 2017, p.608). Second, scholars demonstrated that attitudes towards immigration depend on the immigrant group in question. When one speaks about 'immigration', citizens rather tend to think about migrants from outside Europe, in particular migrants with a Muslim background, often perceived as a threat to the 'Western' culture (Yavçan, 2013). Thus, it is possible that opposition against enlargement in general is to a large extent driven by the Turkish case, 'since Turkey is a candidate with a large Muslim population and whose EU membership bid is a highly politicized and contentious issue' (Yavçan, 2013, p.162).

Here again, we observe differences and similarities for France and the Netherlands. First, a study found that ‘French citizens express the strongest affiliation towards European identity’ (Robyn, 2005, p.13), what interestingly relates to the point of religion here. Both countries traditionally hold a predominantly (Roman) Catholic religion, although there is a remarkable difference. In France, especially within the political right, it is said, one attaches a relatively high importance to Europe as a culturally and historically bounded entity, where ‘culture seems to be strongly implicated in the Christian religion, and ‘which’ Christian civilizational heritage paved the way for *laïcité* (secularity), often viewed as a unique Western achievement’ (Düzgit, 2009, pp.71-72). This makes that for many French, countries at the European periphery with a predominant Islamic religion, do not belong to Europe based on their cultural and historical roots. In the Netherlands, such a hungering for a definition of European identity is much less present. Before the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2004, the Dutch government even expressed that religion should not play a role in discussions surrounding Turkey’s membership, and that concerns over secularity in Turkey were unfounded (ESI, 2006, p.5). Finally, both countries know a fairly high number of Turkish immigrants. In particular, in the Netherlands, there is a relatively large Turkish community of approximately 420.000 citizens in 2020 (4,2% of total population) (CBS, 2020); in France, approximately 700.000 citizens with a Turkish background make up 1% of the total population (Akinçi, 2020).

According to the literature, the RN strongly emphasizes Christianity, which it would like to see anchored in the European treaties, and on which’ basis it ‘rejects the candidacy of Turkey or any other “non-European” country, but favors enhanced cooperation with other “European” states like Russia or Ukraine’ (Rodriguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2013, p.98). It stresses a ‘European Europe’ and the exclusion of everything ‘that is different in cultural and historical terms’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, pp.64-65). The PVV, although emphasizing the ‘Jewish-Christian and humanistic Dutch roots’ (PVV, 2010, p.33), attaches much less importance to this definition of ‘Europeanness’, and it is ‘mostly in its simple Islamophobic consideration that lies the central justification of its exclusionary criteria’ (Rodriguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2013, p.94).

We expect:

1.)	Both parties to use religion only as the reason to reject Turkey, with the PVV emphasizing the ‘threat’ of Islamic culture as such, and the RN emphasizing the need of a solely Christian Europe.
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2.)	Only the RN to stress how enlargement would harm the European cultural and historical unity, and to insist on a clear definition of this ‘European identity’.
3.)	Immigration (of citizens with different national cultures) to be an overall theme in both parties’ discourse.
4.)	The number of migrants from candidate-states living in the home country to be a recurring theme in the discourse of both, but to play a bigger role for the PVV in the case-study on Turkey.
5.)	Both parties to refer to the Turkish case regularly in their general discourse on enlargement, as this evokes most fears among the public.

§1.1.3 Democracy-related arguments

Next to the traditional approaches, we find arguments relating to the EU’s democratic deficit⁵. This starts with the idea that the EU does not explain enlargement and its benefits well enough to the public. Consequently, citizens tend to think that ‘it only benefits the newly acceding members [...] and are more concerned with the problems it could bring’ (Devrim & Schulz, 2009, p.3). In line with this lies non-consultation. So far, citizens have been excluded from the enlargement process, as ‘no direct approval in the form of referenda on the accession of new countries have taken place in the existing member states’ (Devrim & Schulz, 2009, p.3). After the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, showing increasing popular discontent with the European project, national debates arose about the possibility of holding referenda before the accession of new states, as ‘political elites have sought to respond to public fears related to the EU Constitution through the context of enlargement’ (Stefanova, 2006, p.254). Accordingly, it is argued, ‘across Europe, one of the most common attacks on the pro-Turkish [governmental] positions has been that it is an undemocratic, elite view, divorced from the concerns of ordinary people’ (ESI, 2006, p.19). Finally, it is mentioned that ‘a major factor influencing growing enlargement fatigue is citizens’ concern about enlargement *ad infinitum*’ (Devrim & Schulz, 2009, p.11). As the average European citizen with its limited knowledge on enlargement does not know which countries can exactly apply for membership, fears over continuous enlargements with ever more different are well imaginable.

⁵ The democratic deficit refers to ‘the conceptualisation of the Union as an elitist, international organisation where decisions are reached by unelected policy experts who are not accountable to elected representatives, while laws are passed with little transparency and publicity’ (Pérez-Solórzano, 2016, p.15).

As for France and the Netherlands, we find some interesting differences here. In 2005, in both countries, the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty was rejected by a large majority of citizens: 54,7% in France and 61,6% in the Netherlands (Stefanova, 2006, p.251). As this Treaty paved the way for further territorial expansion of the Union (after the Eastern Enlargement just being completed), ‘31% of the French voters rejected the Constitution due to anticipated negative effects for the economy associated with the loss of jobs and relocation of businesses’ (Stefanova, 2006, p.252). In the Netherlands, this was only 7%. Shortly after, in France, ‘reforms to the constitution were introduced to allow the country to hold a referendum to approve EU membership for any new states’ (Devrim & Schulz, 2009, p.7), whereas in the Netherlands, such a provision does not exist. Additionally, it is argued that the attachment to a shared European history and culture, as described above, ‘closely relates to a spatial/border definition’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.20). In French parliamentary discourse, scholars point out, ‘the topos of borders is utilized to construct ‘Europe’ as a geographically bounded body, which excludes countries from the Southern neighborhood’ (Düzgit, 2009, p.71). For the two parties then, in the literature we find that ‘forms of direct democracy are sacrosanct for right-populists’ (Mol, 2012, p.63), and that the call for popular referenda or citizens’ initiatives is overly present in far-right Eurosceptic discourse. Finally, as the RN attaches high importance to the idea of a shared European culture and history, so it does to this spatial/border definition, which becomes clear in its opposition to Turkey: ‘there is no space for a country that is considered “Asian” in geographical, [...] and demographic terms’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.64).

We expect:

1.)	Both parties to emphasize the undemocratic nature of enlargement, and to insist on popular referenda on future accessions. In particular, we expect the PVV to call for an instalment of a Constitutional provision on accession-referenda.
2.)	Both parties to mention the absence of clear explanation about enlargement from the EU to the public.
3.)	The RN to firmly insist on a clear geographic definition of Europe rather than the PVV.

§1.1.4 The EU's absorption capacity and political integration capacity

One could be concerned about the paralysing effects of enlargement on the functioning of the EU (Dixon, 2010). This relates to the EU's absorption capacity, meaning that 'the EU can only enlarge if there is no negative impact on the EU's budget and its ability to implement common policies, and on effective and accountable decision-making' (Sedelmeier, 2014, p.7). With ever more states, it is not unimaginable that decision-making would slow down. Second, enlargement is based on a system of conditionality, with 'the golden carrot of membership at the core of the EU's transformative power' (Börzel & Schimmelfennig, 2017, p.280). However, once a country has become member, the 'golden carrot' is gone, which creates leeway to slow down reforms or to backslide on the path towards sustainable democracy. The EU's ability to sanction this backsliding, however, 'is much weaker than prior to accession' (Sedelmeier, 2014, p.3), which makes it difficult to encounter these threats to core democratic values, and decreases enthusiasm for the accession of states with weak democratic systems. What is more, in order to carry out domestic reforms and to facilitate transitions, candidate-states receive funding from the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). As part of the EU's Regional development policy, the IPA's share within the new EU budget 2021-2027 is set on €12.9 billion (European Commission, 2020). As the EU budget always constitutes a contentious issue, so does the considerable amount of money used for enlargement. And, when reforms seem to stagnate or candidate states suffer from ever more domestic problems, one can easily question the utility of these high transfers.

It is rather difficult to determine how country-specific aspects are at stake here. An interesting point can be provided by the EU-attitudes of the French and Dutch governments. It is mentioned that the Dutch government mostly 'talks about the EU as a market and rather ignores the political context of European integration, whereas French president Macron emphasizes the (geo)political dimensions of a large budget' (de Gruyter, 2020). In the Netherlands, it is said, 'the Finance Ministry – not the Foreign Ministry – dominates European affairs' (de Gruyter, 2020). In this way, we can imagine that in the Netherlands, the need for a geopolitically strong Europe and thereby enlargement is less present than in France, influencing views on IPA funding.

When it comes to the RN and the PVV, also party-specific aspects are less at stake here. As rejectionist Eurosceptic parties, both question or oppose 'the procedures, effectiveness and

the need of common EU institutions’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.26). More new states with whom to negotiate will definitely not change these views in a positive way. Moreover, as the cultural definition of Europe (as explained in §1.1.2), to which rejectionist Eurosceptics highly attach, also implies the values of ‘Ancient Greek democracy and Roman legal tradition’ (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.23), everything that forms a threat to ‘Western’ political standards will logically be opposed by our two parties. For the IPA, finally, as we stated above, all transfers to the EU budget are seen as negative by far-right Eurosceptics, so the IPA will definitely be attacked in the discourse of the RN and the PVV.

We expect:

1.)	Both parties to emphasize the paralyzing effects of enlargement on the functioning of the EU and its institutions.
2.)	Both parties to frame slow reforms in candidate-states or democratic backsliding in already acceded states as a failure of enlargement policy.
3.)	Both parties to portray different political values or domestic problems in candidate-states as a threat to the EU.
4.)	The PVV to demand cuts in (if not a full stop of) IPA funding more often than the RN.

Chapter 2: Methodology and data collection

To answer our research question, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the positions of the *Rassemblement National* and the *Partij Voor Vrijheid* on EU enlargement. As stated in the introduction, our research consists of two different components: a generic overview of enlargement-positions, and a case-study on the Turkish accession.

Part 1 : General positions on EU enlargement

In the first part, we will analyse the parties' general positions on EU enlargement, to investigate potential differences in their overall stances. Our timeframe comprises the period beginning from 2005 up to 2020, for several reasons. First, since we want to make a systematic comparison, we start analysing material from the moment both parties exist. The *Front National* was founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, fitting in a tradition of right-extremism in France (Mol, 2012, p.26); in 2011, his daughter Marine Le Pen took over Presidency. The *Partij voor de Vrijheid* was founded in 2005, after Geert Wilders, pursuing a more right-wing ideology, split off from the centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). Second, as mentioned earlier, it is from approximately 2005 onwards that scepticism towards further enlargement increased and became more openly expressed. Third, during these years, many enlargement-related events took place: the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and that of Croatia in 2013, the opening of accession negotiations with Turkey (2005), Montenegro (2012) and Serbia (2014), and the Councils' approval to open negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in March 2020 (European Council, 2020).

A large variety of primary materials is available in this period. For some practical reasons, the sources we analyse cannot be fully mirrored. First, in the Netherlands, due to Article 68 of the Constitution stipulating the duty to inform, the Dutch national position that the minister or state secretary takes in an upcoming EU Council meeting always needs to be discussed in parliament (Tweede Kamer, n.d.). In France, parliamentary scrutiny over governments' EU positions or documents is much less present (Auel & Christiansen, 2015, p.268). Therefore, Dutch parliamentary sources on EU issues are abundant. Moreover, because of the French electoral system consisting of 'single-member districts with a two-round system' (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.59), the RN has much less parliamentarians in the French National

Assembly, than the PVV has in the Dutch Second Chamber⁶. Therefore again, parliamentary contributions on EU enlargement are rare for the RN. By contrast, the RN regularly publishes press releases (*communiqués*) of party members on the topic of enlargement. These text-pieces constitute an important source, as opposed to the very limited to absent media statements of the PVV. Finally, it is important to note that, although we concentrate on general positions on EU enlargement here, this does not mean that the below sources do not contain any references to candidate-states, as enlargement can barely be seen separately from candidates. In selecting the below sources, we assessed whether these touch upon the topic of enlargement as such, and do not concern a specific case only.

Per party, we limit ourselves to the following selection of materials:

	PVV	RN
1.)	Electoral campaigns for the Dutch national elections of 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2017; and for the European elections in 2009, 2014 and 2019.	Electoral campaigns for the French presidential elections of 2007, 2012, and 2017; and for the European elections in 2009 and 2019 ⁷ .
2.)	Party Manifest: <i>Declaration of Independence – Partij voor de Vrijheid</i> (2005).	Party Manifest: <i>Manifeste pour une nouvelle coopération en Europe : « L'Alliance Européenne des Nations »</i> (2019).
3.)	National parliamentary documents, consisting of reports of the yearly 'General Consultation on EU-Enlargement' held by the Second Chamber Commission for Foreign Affairs (available between 2011-2016).	<i>Communiqués</i> of diverse party members relating to enlargement, published on the website of the RN.

Per party, we will extract all arguments or statements relating to enlargement from the sources. These findings will be divided along the four broad categories established in chapter

⁶ In the 2012 national elections, the FN gained 2 seats in the National Assembly; currently this is 6 seats (Vasilopoulou, 2018, p.60). The PVV currently is the second biggest party in the Dutch parliament with 20 seats, and has steadily been one of the biggest parties since its entry in 2006.

⁷ Due to the party's change of name, some older documents published by the *Front National* are not available anymore, among which the 2014 European election program.

1. After, we will categorize the arguments along the different aspects belonging to the argument-type (for example, does the argument relate to labour migration or to higher transfers in case of a rational-utilitarian argument?), and note how many times similar arguments occur. It is possible that both parties come up with most of the above described arguments, but that one does so systematically more often than the other. Next, we will match our results with the expectations shaped by means of country-specific and party-specific variables. This allows us to describe how both parties' general positions on enlargement differ or overlap, and to assess whether and to what extent country-variables seem to influence discourse in the expected manner.

Part 2: Case study: positions on the future accession of Turkey

In the second part, we will analyse the parties' positions on a particular case of enlargement. If we have not found substantial differences in the first part, this case-study can be of help to confirm or falsify the idea that rejectionist Eurosceptic parties do always hold similar positions. If we did find differences in the first part, the case-study allows us to further discover whether both parties' discourse can be systematically characterized. As stated in the introduction, we choose to study the case of the Turkish accession. Since the granting of candidate-status in 1999 and the opening of accession talks in 2005, only 16 of the 35 negotiation chapters of the *acquis communautaire* have been opened, the last of which in 2016. In March 2019, the European Parliament voted in favour of a suspension of the accession process (Toute l'Europe, 2020). We will compare our parties' positions in the timeframe 2015-2016. During these years, the refugee crisis with the following EU-Turkey deal in March 2016, as well as the coup d'état in Turkey in July 2016, made the accession of the country again a salient topic in national debates. As the Turkish accession has been one of the most controversial and politicized topics on European integration so far, we consider it especially interesting to expose potential differences between similar political parties on this matter.

A variety of sources is available in this period. Due to the practicalities described above, also here the sources cannot be exactly mirrored. In the first place, we choose to analyse either party members' contributions to European parliamentary debates on the Turkish accession, since these debates most directly relate to the Turkish accession, and allow for a comparable analysis. Hereby we note that the RN has more members of the European parliament (MEP's) than the PVV in this timeframe (24 seats for the RN, 4 for the PVV). Therefore, we notably

complement material for the PVV with some national parliamentary contributions, and an elaborate media statement. For the RN, we again look at a few *communiqués* relating to the Turkish accession.

Per party, we limit ourselves to the following selection of materials:

	PVV	RN
1.)	MEP's contributions to European parliamentary debates relating to the Turkish accession, between 2015-2016.	MEP's contributions to European parliamentary debates relating to the Turkish accession, between 2015-2016.
2.)	National parliamentary documents, consisting of plenary debates of the Second Chamber relating to the Turkish accession and fragments specifically relating to Turkey from the foreign affairs-committee's yearly 'General Consultation on EU Enlargement', all between 2015-2016.	<i>Communiqués</i> of diverse party members relating to the Turkish accession between 2015-2016, published on the website of the RN.
3.)	Video message of Geert Wilders: <i>Turkey is not welcome in Europe</i> (2015).	

In this case-study, the analysis will be conducted in a comparable way as for the first part. We again make a division of arguments along the broader categories and sub-categories and count the recurrences of different statements, whereby we take into account the political situation in Turkey as well as in France and the Netherlands at that time (these will be specified below). Afterwards, we will match our findings with the expectations from chapter 1 as well as with the outcomes of chapter 3. This enables us to see to what extent country-specific variables underlie the parties' positions on Turkey, but also whether we can observe a more systematic pattern in the positions on enlargement, which characterizes their discourse and so their influence on the public.

Chapter 3: The RN and PVV: general positions on EU enlargement

In this chapter, we will present and discuss the results of the generic part of our research. During the analysis, we gathered a total of 113 statements relating to enlargement: 68 for the PVV, 45 for the RN. This difference in numbers could be explained by the diversity of the sources, as the Dutch parliamentary sources are somewhat more extensive than the *communiqués*. However, we observed that overall, the PVV referred more often to EU enlargement in its electoral programs. This could indicate that enlargement is a more salient topic for the PVV, at least something it wants to make its voters more aware of. When determining the intensity of the arguments, we took into account this difference and tried to compare the recurrences in a relative manner. In the next paragraph, the results are exposed per broader category as listed in chapter 1. Therein, we state the outcomes per expectation, illustrated by some citations. In §3.2 we draw conclusions on the results, whereby we discuss remarkable similarities and differences between the two parties, and determine how national variables seem to influence the parties' discourse on EU enlargement in general.

§3.1 Results

In the first place, for both parties we found outright obstructions against enlargement. Both emphasize the fact that enlargement is part of the European project which implies an overall threat to the sovereign nation-state. For example, the PVV states that *'Ideologically the Partij voor de Vrijheid stands for the principle of non-enlargement. We are not going to build on a European super state [...]'* (TK, 2011, p.2); the RN mentions that enlargement *'obeys to a purely ideological logic, the overtaking, the deconstruction and the disappearance of the Nation-State'* (FN, 2018). Interestingly, the RN once points to opposition within candidate-countries, because of the current status of the EU: *'many inhabitants of the Balkans, [...], do not wish to join this sick man that henceforth is the EU'* (Bilde, 2018).

Rational-utilitarian arguments

We observed that the PVV expressed more rational-utilitarian arguments than the RN (20 as opposed to 9). The threat of (cheap) labour migration makes up approximately half of the arguments for both parties, slightly contradicting our expectation. For example, the PVV states that *'differences in welfare-levels lead to major migratory flows'* (TK, 2013, p.3) and the RN finds that *'French workers are the first victims of enlargement with countries having very*

different economies and social, fiscal and salary standards’ (FN, 2018). Moreover, within the PVV’s electoral programs, stereotyping of Eastern European workers is overly present, as we often found a variation of the sentence *‘borders must be closed for cheap labour migration from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, etc.’* (PVV, 2014). In the discourse of the RN, no such stereotyping occurs. When it comes to higher transfers to the EU budget, our results show the opposite of our expectation. For the PVV, we only found 2 somewhat indirect references (*‘every new country means more money to Europe’* (PVV, 2009)). The discourse of the RN comprises 5 such arguments, more than half of its arguments in this category. For example, we found that *‘because of the average GNI of new member states, France’s contribution is mechanically increasing’* (Le Pen, 2007). The rest of our results in this section are less significant. Only the PVV once refers to the impact on the agricultural sector, in an indirect and ridiculing way: *‘many Dutch farmers move to Poland because then with help of the EU they receive subsidies to become a competitor of The Netherlands’* (TK, 2013, p.25). Finally, only the PVV mentions twice that *‘every new country means a smaller say for the Netherlands’* (PVV, 2009), while a potential loss of power is absent in French sources.

Identity-based arguments

The discourse of the PVV contained more identity-based arguments compared to the RN (17 as opposed to 10). As to our expectations, we clearly see that for both parties, arguments relating to religion are almost only used in relation to countries with a predominant Islamic religion, notably Turkey. And, as anticipated, the PVV is much harsher in its expression of anti-Islam attitudes. For example, it states that *‘There is more than enough Islam in Europe. We do not want to worsen this by letting Islamic countries accede to the European Union’* (TK, 2013, p.18). Second, we found that only the RN speaks 5 times about Europe as a space with shared cultural and historical values, which would be harmed by enlargement with countries having different such roots. It emphasizes that *‘Not every country can become member, [...], it is history, civilisation that decide’* (RN, 2019b, p.19), and it accordingly proposes a pan-European Alliance including Russia and Switzerland, *‘to which Turkey will not be associated’* (Le Pen, 2012, p.15). Third, immigration as a consequence of enlargement recurs slightly more often in the PVV’s discourse (4 as opposed to 2). But, where the RN only speaks more superficially about *‘new passage ways to a massive and anarchic migration’* (Le Pen, 2018), the PVV makes this threat more concrete by emphasizing for example *‘Bulgarian gypsies that move to our streets’* (PVV, 2012, p.13), or the fact that *‘sooner or later we get to deal with an invasion of*

migrants, that we cannot force to follow an integration course because then they are EU-citizens' (Wilders, 2005, p.10). Additionally, the number of migrants from candidate-states living in France or the Netherlands does not figure in both parties' discourse, only the PVV once states that *'the police is incredibly busy with all consequences of a multicultural society as we experience it today in asylum seekers centres or on the streets'* (TK, 2015a, p.15). Finally, both parties refer especially to Turkey in their electoral programs, with or without further context, as to underscore that its accession is a worst-case scenario: *'One has to stop this ideology that pushes Eurocrats wishing to integrate Turkey into the EU'* (RN, 2019a, p.9), or *'Turkey in, then Netherlands out'* (PVV, 2010, p.15).

Democracy-related arguments

We observed that the RN's discourse contains many more arguments relating to this aspect than the PVV's discourse (15 as opposed to 8). As for our first expectation, the need of popular referenda as well as the undemocratic nature of enlargement make up half of the arguments for both parties. For example: *'The Dutch voter has never been asked something. On the contrary, he is constantly being lied to'* (Wilders, 2005, p.6), or the RN *'demands the organisation of referendums in every EU-country in the context of every new enlargement'* (FN, 2015a). Herein, the PVV only once demands a popular referendum on future accessions, while the RN does so twice, contradicting our expectation. Second, the fact that the EU should better explain enlargement to its citizens does not really occur in the sources, only the PVV once states that *'President Juncker said in July 2014 that we have to explain ourselves better [...] but how is he about to explain to Dutch citizens that in the next five years, no new countries will accede, but after this period this chance is very big?'* (TK, 2014, p.3). Third, what is most interesting and perfectly confirms our expectation, is that for the RN we found 9 arguments stating that the EU should clearly define its borders, whereas this type of argument is completely absent in the PVV's discourse. For instance, the RN explicitly denominates the *'logic of endless enlargement'* (RN, 2019b, p.34), or that *'European cooperation cannot be envisaged without defining where Europe stops'* (RN, 2019a, p.9). Finally, the PVV trice explicitly mentions that *'60% of the Dutch think that there are too many member-states, have never been so critical towards enlargement of the EU'* (TK, 2011, p.2). We did not find such statements for the RN.

The EU's absorption capacity and political integration capacity

For the PVV, this category is the largest with 23 references; for the RN it comes second with 11 references. As to our first expectation, a paralysed functioning of the EU is mentioned twice by the RN, pointing out that *'Continuous enlargement is for many in the paralysation of institutions, the slowness of decisions, [...]'* (RN, 2019b, p.34), while it is absent in the PVV's discourse. Second, conversely, only the PVV denominates 7 times the failure of enlargement by pointing at slow reforms or mistakes in earlier accessions. For example, it mentions that *'mistakes have been made with Romania and Bulgaria. It is too crazy to comprehend that Romania still knows the same level of corruption as Colombia'* (TK, 2011, p.2). Third, for both parties, the large variety of domestic problems or differing political values in candidate-countries make up half of the arguments in this category. For instance, the PVV mentions that *'In all Balkan-states, there is homophobia, [...], almost the whole Balkan struggles with organised crime, corruption and problems with the legal system, these countries do not fulfil the first Copenhagen criterion'* (TK, 2011, p.2). The RN also stresses the chronic instabilities in the Balkan region, which *'the European Commission would so like risking to import into the EU'* (FN, 2018). Finally, as anticipated, both parties wish for the stop of IPA-funding. But, both do so exactly 3 times, and the PVV only by mentioning the money that goes to Turkey. The RN speaks about this more generally, by stating that *'we could economize milliards of euros by putting an end to the politics of enlargement (credits of IPA)'* (RN, 2019a, p.5).

§3.2 Discussion

These results make us draw some interesting conclusions. In the first place, we can fairly say that the positions of the PVV and the RN on enlargement in general do differ considerably. If we take a look at the four broad categories, it indeed seems that the PVV prioritises a cultural frame, as for the RN we found a smaller amount of identity-based arguments. However, we expected to find more rational-utilitarian arguments for the RN, because of its said master-frame of globalisation. This turned out not to be the case, with actually the PVV stressing labour migration more regularly than the RN. Considering the other two categories, it is clear that democracy-related arguments are much more important to the RN than the PVV; arguments relating to the EU's absorption and integration capacity were relatively important to both. As stated in the introduction, our purpose is not to determine the reasons for this, but in any case it

demonstrates that these two latter types of arguments should definitely be taken into account when considering political (and public) opposition against EU enlargement, next to the traditional approaches.

Most importantly, for the general positions on enlargement, we cannot conclude that the national context plays a decisive role in shaping positions. In this respect, our results only correspond with the idea that attachment to a European identity and shared cultural/historical roots is more common in France than in the Netherlands. The rest of our findings do not support our expectations. First, regarding higher transfers to the EU budget, our results showed the complete opposite of the expectation. For the Netherlands as one of the highest net contributors, we would have expected this to make up a considerable part of the results, especially because in the PVV's overall discourse, financial transfers to the EU budget in general are one of its key-points of criticism. Therefore it is interesting to see that it is the RN that rather stresses this aspect, also because this argument relates least to globalisation. Second, as for popular exclusion and IPA funding, our findings were comparable. This demonstrates that it is not the PVV that emphasizes this more because of the lack of a Constitutional provision for accession-referenda or the Dutch stance on the geopolitical status of Europe. Third, we indeed found that the PVV mentioned the negative effects of enlargement on farmers and on the power in the Council more than the RN, but these references were quite rare, therefore not that convincing. Fourth, arguments relating to the amount of migrants from candidate-states living in the home country were practically absent. This in the end makes us also conclude that not all arguments presented in the literature are at stake in determining far-right Eurosceptic parties' positions on enlargement.

The results also lead us to some other conclusions. First, we clearly see that the PVV holds a more xenophobic character than the RN, fitting in the more cultural-frame. As expected, it puts a much bigger emphasis on the differences between Islamic and Western cultures, particularly by stating that *'Turkey must never be part of the EU, not within a hundred years. The Islamic culture conflicts with our culture'* (PVV, 2009), or by emphasizing that also Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina are Islamic countries that should therefore not join the EU. But, we have also seen that its overall discourse contains a high level of stereotyping, for example by constantly pointing to Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian workers as labour migrants. By doing so, the public is easily incentivised to form negative biases towards these country-nationals. Second, as described in the introduction, the idea that the RN would be somewhat

softer seems to be confirmed by our results. The RN very often mentions that it is important to define what Europe is in order for it to function properly, or it pointed out the negative effects of enlargement on the functioning and institutions of the EU. The complete absence of these elements in the discourse of the PVV can indicate its outright disregard for the European project, while the RN so seems more concerned about the status of the EU. Additionally, we also saw that the PVV clearly stresses that earlier enlargements have failed and that mistakes have been made. The absence of such harsh statements in the RN's discourse can indicate its somewhat softer stance on enlargement.

Chapter 4: The RN and the PVV: Positions on the accession of Turkey

In this chapter, we will present and discuss the results of our case-study. Since this component is meant to clarify more on the extent to which the parties' discourse could be characterized systematically, we will also compare our findings on Turkey with the results of the generic part. This allows us to form a more complete image of the parties' overall discourse on enlargement, and the role of country-specific variables therein. As we concentrate on positions between 2015-2016, we first need to briefly describe the context in which these positions were formed, i.e. the situation in Turkey at that time as well as the political situation in France and the Netherlands (regarding Turkey). The types of arguments put forward and the importance attached to them could differ along these variables.

In France and the Netherlands, Turkish EU membership has been subject of debate in different ways. Traditionally, the Netherlands hold strong diplomatic and economic ties with Turkey; therefore, Dutch political elites have been 'one of the most consistent supporters of EU enlargement and Turkey's membership aspirations' (ESI, 2006, p.3). As for France, notably over the past two decades, Turkish-French relations have 'seriously strained over seminal issues of European identity and religion' (Idiz, 2010, p.3). Indeed, next to Cyprus, France has been the only EU member state so far to have unilaterally vetoed the opening of negotiation chapters (Idiz, 2010, p.8). This difference can also be observed among the public. In 2005, when Turkey's prospective accession became more politicized and publicly debated, we see that public opinion in both countries expressed a net negative. But, in the Netherlands, only a slight majority of 52% was against, where in France this was 68%, a remarkable difference with the EU average of 55% against (European Commission, 2005; ESI, 2006, p.22).

In the years 2015-2016, during the civil war in Syria, Turkey had become central to the refugee crisis that hit Europe. The EU-Turkey deal, agreed in March 2016 and intended to reduce the number of refugees entering Europe, played an important role in Turkey's enlargement question. One of the 'rewards' for Turkey's effort to help control the migratory influx, was the 're-energising of the accession process by the opening of Chapter 33 in the first half of 2016' (European Council, 2016), making the issue of Turkey's accession anew subject of debate. By this time, a variety of other events relating to Turkey were at stake in the Dutch and French debates, influencing attitudes. First, it is argued that terrorist organization Islamic State (ISIS) had become so widespread over Syria and Iraq partly because of its connections

with Turkey. President Erdogan, as a ‘vocal supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood, would have facilitated ISIS’ expansion, for example by the secret transportation of oil supplies from ISIS positions to the West’ (Kedar, 2020). At the same time, it is ‘France that has been more active in Syria than any other European Member State, participating in US-led airstrikes on ISIS positions’ (Muro, 2015, p.1). The series of terrorist attacks in France in 2015 claimed by ISIS can so be seen as a response to French interventionism, with France consequently declaring war on ISIS and intensifying bombardments (Muro, 2015, p.2). For the Netherlands, Dutch-Turkish diplomatic relations found themselves at an all-time low in 2015 and 2016. Diverse events, among which the arrests of Dutch journalists in Turkey and the call of the Turkish consulate to report criticism towards Erdogan in the Netherlands, in the end led to the mutual withdrawal of ambassadors (Isitman, 2018).

Furthermore, also more historical topics figured in the debates. First, the recognition of the Armenian genocide traditionally caused tensions in EU-Turkey relations. Over the years, European countries have decided to recognise the mass killings of Armenians in 1915 as a genocide, to the fury of Turkey, denying the systematic orchestration of the killings. The fact that ‘France was the first major European country to officially recognise the massacres as genocide in 2001’ (France24, 2019), while in the Netherlands only the Parliament recognised the genocide in 2018, can make the tensions with Turkey over this issue more prominent in the French debate. Second, the occupation of the Northern part of Cyprus by Turkish military forces since 1974, created ongoing tensions between Turkey and the EU. Although the Turkish recognition of the Greek-Cypriot administration is not an official prerequisite for accession, in 2005 it was French Prime Minister de Villepin who announced that ‘Turkey must recognize the Republic of Cyprus before it can begin membership talks’ (DW, 2005), making the Cypriot question again a likely more salient topic in the French debate rather than in the Dutch debate.

In our analysis, we gathered a total of 128 arguments against the Turkish accession; 56 for the PVV, 72 for the RN. This difference could be explained by the diverging number of MEP’s, as described in the methodology. Therefore, when determining the intensity of the arguments, we again also considered the recurrences in a relative way. A little inconvenience of our chosen timeframe is that EU accession, as a part of the EU-Turkey deal, makes it sometimes difficult to see the arguments separately from the refugee crisis and promised visa-liberalisation for Turkish citizens. We tried to filter out as much as possible the arguments specifically relating to accession. The rest of this chapter is structured in a similar way as the

previous chapter. The next paragraph presents the results per broader category as listed in chapter 1. Here, the outcomes are compared with our expectations as well as with the results of chapter 3. In §4.2, we draw conclusions on these results, whereby we sketch differences and similarities between the two parties' positions on Turkey and try to determine the role of national variables for this case, but also by assessing whether the outcomes allow for a systematic characterization of the parties' discourse.

§4.1 Results

Rational-utilitarian arguments

With only 2 arguments for the PVV and 3 arguments for the RN in this category, our findings correspond to the theory stating that the Turkish accession is less determined by utilitarian arguments. First, only the PVV once stresses negative socio-economic consequences the free movement of Turkish citizens would entail: *'our voters will be most affected, as it impoverishes us, it ruins our social insurance system, it devours our housing stock [...]*' (TK, 2015a, p.3). Interestingly, labour migration is not mentioned by either parties. This demonstrates the distinction the PVV makes between Eastern European migrants (mostly forming a threat to labour) and Turkish migrants (mostly forming a cultural threat). Next, in line with chapter 3 but again contrary to our expectation, only the RN stresses the increasing contribution to the EU budget: *'the funding [...], risks to become unbearable if we would have to allocate a considerable share of the budget to Turkey when it has become member'* (EP, 2015a). Finally, the PVV once mentions the fact that *'Turkey would become the largest country of the EU, in surface as well as in population size'* (TK, 2015b). This confirms our expectation that the PVV would rather insist on a loss of power, but like in chapter 3, this is little convincing, since it concerns one single and a rather indirect statement. The other sub-arguments established in chapter 1 were not found.

Identity-based arguments

For both parties, identity-based arguments make up a considerable part of their discourse on the Turkish accession, with 25 arguments for the PVV and 23 for the RN. This confirms the idea that the Turkish case is largely determined by identity-based arguments, rather than rational-utilitarian arguments. When it comes to religion, first, the PVV clearly demonstrates its harsh anti-Islam attitude, by describing 8 times the 'dangers' of Islamic culture. For example,

it states that *'The Western values of freedom, democracy and human rights cannot coexist with the Islam, with the Islamic Turkey'* (EP, 2016a). The RN comes up with 4 arguments relating to the Islam or religious differences, and notably stresses that *'we should protect here, today, the civilizational achievement of a Christian Europe'* (EP, 2015a). These findings match with our expectations and the results of chapter 3 that the RN uses religion-related arguments to proclaim its ideal Christian Europe, whereas the PVV presents the Islam more as a cultural threat as such. Second, strikingly, both parties mention 4 times that Turkey does not belong to Europe because of its cultural and historical roots: the PVV states that *'the Turkish culture does not fit with the European'* (TK, 2015c), or that *'You are no Europeans, and you will never be!'* (Wilders, 2015); the RN states that *'Whether it may be at the cultural, religious, historical or civilizational level, Turkey is no part of Europe'* (EP, 2015b). Third, as for migration, the PVV emphasizes 6 times the fact that *'we will get a Turkish invasion, [...] when all Turkish citizens may settle themselves as future EU-nationals in Western-Europe and the Netherlands'* (TK, 2016b); the RN insists only 2 times on *'heavy migratory disadvantages the accession of Turkey to the EU would engender'* (EP, 2015b). Interestingly, both parties explicitly mention the large Turkish population size, as to demonstrate the horror-scenario of its future free movement. Furthermore, in line with our expectations, it is only the PVV who points at Turkish migrants present in the Netherlands, referring to the number of *'400.000 Turkish nationals in the Netherlands who can easily invite neighbors, cousins, or brothers to come here'* (TK, 2016b).

We also found other arguments specifically relating to the situation in Turkey and the Dutch and French political context thereto, which we classified in this category. First, both parties express concerns about the links that president Erdogan would maintain with ISIS, by which they characterize Turkey as a 'terrorist' country. However, as suits the national context, the PVV only once gives a description of the ties that Erdogan's children would have with ISIS, while the RN insists 8 times on these ambiguous links, for example by stating that *'Turkey does trade with the barbarians of the Islamic State, [...] European consumers would find themselves indirectly financing a terrorist organization that declared war to them'* (Le Pen, 2016). Second, both parties mention the 'crimes' Turkey committed against religious minorities, referring to both the Armenian genocide and the treatment of Kurdish minorities. However, for the RN we found slightly more arguments (5 as opposed to 2), and as expected, it is the only party to explicitly mention the fact that *'Turkey still refuses to recognize the Armenian genocide of 1915'* (EP, 2016c), where the PVV only vaguely refers to *'What happened to the Armenians'* (EP, 2016a).

Democracy-related arguments

We again observed that the RN's discourse contained many more arguments fitting in this category than the PVV (16 as opposed to 3). As anticipated, both parties mention the undemocratic nature of enlargement regarding the Turkish case, and the EU's disregard of the public: *'[...] , stop the betrayal of the Dutch population'* (EP, 2016b); *'neither the French, nor other European peoples, have ever been consulted on the eventual accession of Turkey to the EU'* (Arnautu, 2015). Moreover, in contrast to our findings in chapter 3, the PVV only once refers to the fact that Dutch voters are negative towards the Turkish accession, while the RN pointed 8 times at the critical attitude of the (French) population: *'On the 29th of May 2005 [...], the French have mostly voted against [the Constitution], in particular because they did not want to let Turkey enter the European Union'* (EP, 2015a). Finally, in line with our expectations and the results of chapter 3, the RN put forward 6 arguments stating that Turkey is geographically not European: *'Turkey simply cannot have its place in the EU because of its geography'* (EP, 2016b). The importance the RN attaches to a clear definition of the EU's final borders is expressed by an ironic question: *'Is there is a geographical limit to the European Union or do parliamentarians intend to extend their anti-democratic organization to the achievement of a global government?'* (EP, 2015b). The PVV did nowhere refer to geographical limits.

The EU's absorption capacity and political integration capacity

The last category constitutes the largest for both parties: 26 arguments for the PVV, 30 for the RN. First, we did not find any arguments relating to the paralysation of EU institutions and their effectiveness, despite the considerable institutional impact Turkey could entail. Second, both parties denominate the stagnation or decline of reforms in Turkey, thereby pointing at the length of the accession-process: for example, the RN says that *'we are more than 10 years later, and the situation has even degraded'* (EP, 2016h). In line with our expectations and the findings above, the PVV does so slightly more often than the RN, and is more harsh in describing the case as a failure. Third, domestic problems and diverging political values make up about half of the arguments and two-thirds for the PVV and the RN respectively, which matches with our findings in chapter 3. We observed that for both parties, the content of these arguments is rather similar, often describing practices that violate European fundamental values: the PVV states that *'Turkey does not respect democracy, freedom of expression, and equality between men and women. And Erdogan shows us this everyday'* (EP, 2016h); the RN finds that *'in terms of "values" Turkey is far from meeting the European*

requirements, notably when it comes to freedom of expression and respect of pluralism' (EP, 2016h). Fourth, we observed that the PVV mentions 7 times the high amount of IPA-funding that has wrongly been transferred to Turkey so far, while the RN does so only 4 times, corresponding better to our expectation: the RN states that *'between 2005 and 2016, the EU has paid almost 10 milliard euros to Turkey within the framework of IPA, which is inadmissible'* (EP, 2016h), while the PVV is more extreme in ridiculing the IPA-transfers, by describing how taxpayers pay for Erdogan's shady practices: *'Our tax-payers contribute to a country where the president has just built an enormous palace, the Ak Saray'* (TK, 2015a, p.3).

Finally, also for this category we encountered arguments specifically relating to the situation in Turkey and the Dutch and French political context thereto. The PVV refers twice to a sentenced Dutch journalist, by which it describes Turkey as a *'police state in which only Erdogan has something to say'* (EP, 2016d). We observed that only the RN mentioned 6 times the incompatibility of the territorial occupation in Cyprus with EU membership, while for the PVV we did not encounter this fact: *'[enlargement is] an unbelievable perspective if one knows that Turkey has invaded Cyprus, of which she occupies a part of its territory'* (EP, 2015b). Besides, the RN also comes up with 2 arguments relating to geopolitical inconveniences of a potential Turkish accession: *'such an integration would bring major geopolitical problems, by projecting the borders of the EU nearby such unstable countries as Syria and Iraq'* (EP, 2016h). For the PVV, again, this type of argument is absent.

§4.2 Discussion

We clearly see similarities and differences in the positions on the Turkish accession. As for the broader categories, our results confirm the idea that the types of arguments can depend on the candidate-country, as we found very few rational-utilitarian arguments and the more identity-based arguments for rejecting Turkey. This also reaffirms the idea the RN's master-frame of globalisation seems to apply less to enlargement, as arguments relating to labour migration were fully absent in its discourse on Turkey (whereas this could be different for the accession of Western Balkan states for example). Next, corresponding to the generic positions on enlargement, the RN's discourse contained many more arguments relating to the democratic status of the EU than the PVV. In this regard, we could conclude that this type of argument is a constant factor in the RN's discourse on enlargement, while it seems to be one of the least important factors for the PVV. Finally, arguments relating to the EU's absorption and

integration capacity were comparably high for the Turkish case, making this an important factor in Eurosceptic discourse on enlargement overall.

For the Turkish case, the influence of the national context seems to be stronger than for generic positions, but is still not fully convincing. First, for rational-utilitarian arguments, the most striking is that the problematic of higher transfers to the EU budget again only recurs for the RN. We so conclude that the EU budget forms a much more important objection for the RN against enlargement than it is for the PVV, falsifying the role of national variables here. At the same time, the potential loss of power is not directly mentioned, and the consequences for the CAP are completely absent for the Turkish case, not allowing us to draw conclusions thereupon. Second, for identity-based arguments we see a stronger influence. For example, only the PVV mentioned the Turkish migrants present in the Netherlands, and the RN's emphasis on the 'Christian civilizational achievement' fits well in the French perception of Europe as a cultural-religious entity. And, although both refer to the idea that the Turkish culture is different from the European, it is the RN who, in these arguments, especially refers to the 'historical and civilizational level', whereas the PVV stays more superficial by only mentioning that Turkey is 'not European'. Notably for arguments relating to the situation in Turkey, the national political context plays an important role. We clearly saw that the troubled links between Erdogan and ISIS are a much more salient topic in the RN's discourse, consistent with a higher salience of the fight against ISIS among in the French debate. Also, it is very clear that the RN mentions the Turkish refusal to recognise the Armenian genocide, while the PVV does not refer to the political question of recognition.

As for democracy-related arguments, the absence of the call for popular referenda on Turkey does also not give us a definite answer as to our expectation. This does however match with the few references to this in the generic positions on enlargement, making us conclude that the call for referenda, although expected, does not recur that often in the parties' rejection of enlargement. Conversely, the geographic location of Turkey only being mentioned by the RN fits perfectly in the predominantly French perception, and makes us conclude that the idea of a geographic bounded entity is an important factor in the RN's discourse, as opposed to the PVV. As for our last category, the positions on Turkey show us that the PVV insists more on the IPA-funding as expected by national variables, but the difference is not very significant, and could also be explained by the fact that in our timeframe, Turkey had already received funding for many years, making this sub-argument more dependent on the candidate. Here again, for

arguments specifically relating to the situation in Turkey, the national political context clearly determined positions, as arguments relating to the Cypriot question (absent for the PVV) can come forward from the stauncher French position on this problematic. The expression of concerns about potential external borders with Syria or Iraq could also relate to the higher salience of geopolitical aspects in the French debate.

Finally, we also made some other observations. First, we can conclude that not all arguments for opposition presented in the literature are similarly recurring in Eurosceptic rejection of enlargement. In both parts of our research, we found very few statements about the negative impact on the agricultural sector and the EU's institutional set-up and effectiveness. Outcomes could be somewhat different for another timeframe or other candidate-countries, but we may fairly say that our parties make a distinction in elements they find the most salient (to influence their voters with). Second, we observed that both parties used the critic attitudes of citizens as an argument against further enlargement, the PVV mostly in general, the RN mostly for Turkey. Although we anticipated that both parties would stress the undemocratic nature of enlargement, we did not expect them to mention this fact so explicitly, which actually corresponds well with the populist character of the parties, claiming to represent the voice of the average citizen. Furthermore, we stated above that the RN's arguments relating to the Armenian genocide or the occupation of Northern Cyprus can be explained by the national political context. However, it is also argued that 'the public is not well informed on Turkish history or politics, and cares little for issues such as Cyprus, the Armenian genocide' (ESI, 2006, p.20). Not emphasizing these elements could so also be a strategy to maximize influence on the public, that feels more frightened by the prospect of migratory flows for example. Strikingly, migration is relatively rare in the RN's discourse (in both parts we encountered only two such arguments), making it, for a party often characterized as an anti-immigration party, a seemingly less salient topic regarding EU enlargement.

Conclusion

In this thesis, we concentrated on far-right Eurosceptic parties' discourse on enlargement of the European Union, in light of growing negative attitudes towards further enlargement across EU member states. We examined in particular the positions of the Dutch and French far-right Eurosceptic parties *Partij voor de Vrijheid* and *Rassemblement National*, to determine the extent to which these parties' positions on the topic of enlargement correspond or diverge, and so to discover which factors seem to influence public attitudes in France and the Netherlands the most. Next to the fact that little comparative research has been done so far to national Eurosceptic parties' positions on enlargement, our research was also motivated by other questions on which no clear consensus yet exists: to what extent national variables play a role in determining (political) attitudes on enlargement, and whether far-right Eurosceptic parties always hold similar positions on EU-issues. In order to answer our research question, we first established an overview of the most important factors far-right Eurosceptic parties could put forward to support anti-enlargement positions and to influence the public with. This exercise can already be considered as contributing to the existing literature. Scholarly literature on public opposition against enlargement often looks at rational-utilitarian and identity-based arguments, whereas arguments relating to the democratic deficit and the EU's absorption and integration capacity are presented more separately. However, considering the findings of our research, we conclude that it is necessary to take all four aspects into account when studying public and political enlargement-attitudes.

To provide a complete answer on our research question, we analysed enlargement-positions of the PVV and the RN by means of these four established categories. By studying generic positions on enlargement as well as positions on the specific case of Turkey, we were able to either see whether the parties systematically put forward certain types of arguments, or to discover whether the candidate-state in question has a bigger influence on positions. Based on this research, we can conclude that the parties' positions on enlargement do certainly correspond to some respect, but also systematically differ on diverse points. For the RN, through both parts we observed that higher transfers to the EU budget as well as the idea of 'Europe' as a cultural, religious and geographical bounded entity, harmed by further enlargement, were systematically important components of its rejection. For the PVV, on the contrary, through both parts we observed that notably the threat of immigration and 'more Islam in Europe' as a consequence of enlargement are important factors, as well as more socio-

economic consequences (although this aspect may be more equally put forward by both parties for other candidate-states), and the fact that enlargement policy has failed. However, we have also seen that some aspects were equally important to both parties. For example, the high amounts of IPA-funding and differing political values or domestic problems in candidate-states were often stressed, like the fact that the public is negative towards further enlargement or the portrayal of the Turkish accession as a worst-case scenario. Additionally, the case of Turkey showed us that parties' positions can be more aligned depending on the candidate-state, as for Turkey we indeed found very few rational-utilitarian arguments and an almost similar number of identity-based arguments. Yet, we also observed that positions on Turkey diverged on quite a number of points as described above, whereby we can conclude that positions are not fully conditioned by the candidate-state in question and that far-right Eurosceptic parties can hold systematically differing positions on enlargement.

As to factors mostly influencing public attitudes on enlargement in France and the Netherlands, we can conclude that in France, the RN mostly influences the public debate by insisting on the importance of a specific European identity with certain shared roots, and by making citizens aware of the fact that enlargement is yet another expression of the highly undemocratic organisation the EU is. For the PVV we can state that it mostly tries to influence the public by sketching horror-scenarios of huge migratory influxes or by persuading of the fact that enlargement policy is a failure, and should therefore be immediately stopped. Also, our research shows that the PVV's discourse holds a much more xenophobic character, and overall seems somewhat harsher in its positions, for example by its more vulgar language use. Finally, we also observed that some arguments, like negative consequences for the agricultural sector or the EU's institutional set-up and effectiveness, did barely figure in the parties' discourse. This makes us conclude that Eurosceptic parties find these arguments less salient to influence voters with, or do simply care less about these aspects. However, similar research with other candidate-states would have to more definitely confirm this idea.

As to the other questions we intended to shed more light on, we certainly showed that rejectionist far-right Eurosceptic parties do not always have to share similar positions on EU-related issues. Second, most importantly, as to the determining role of the national context, on the basis of our analysis we conclude that positions can sometimes be explained by national variables, but not systematically. In the case-study on Turkey, we clearly saw that the national political context made that some arguments were rather brought up by the RN than by the PVV

or the other way round. When considering the arguments established in the first chapter, however, we have seen that for many of our expectations, we either found the opposite, or a similar number of arguments, or simply too few references to draw a conclusion. To develop a more definite answer regarding the influence of the national context on political positions towards enlargement, future research could for example elaborate on this by comparing far-right Eurosceptic parties from other EU member states, or equally study the positions of Christian-democrat or socialist parties in France and the Netherlands.

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