

Review of existing survey data on migration and populism in Austria and Slovenia

Report

**Part of the basic project “Political and Media Populism: ‘Refugee crisis’ in
Slovenia and Austria”**

Marko Ribač
The Peace Institute

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Introduction

The so-called “refugee crisis” in Europe in 2015 and 2016 characterized by an increase in refugees fleeing to European countries along the Balkan route from war torn and economically devastated zones mainly in the Middle East fuelled a populist upsurge across Europe, including Slovenia and Austria, the two neighbouring countries at the central-north end of the route (Kogovšek Šalamon and Bajt 2016). Both countries have been witnessing an increased atmosphere of hostility towards migrating populations, which is largely exploited by right-wing populist actors, movements and parties - Slovenian parliamentary elections in 2014 and the Austrian federal election in 2017 being two manifestations of this increasing tendency (Pajnik, Kuhar and Šori 2016; Sauer and Ajanovic 2016). Research has pinpointed the influence of policy making, politicians’ attitudes and their fiery rhetoric (Wodak et al. 2013; Wodak 2015) combined with media reporting on migration (Pajnik 2017; Luthar 2017; Pajnik and Sauer 2018) as two distinct but vital discursive influences to mobilize citizens’ attitudes and perceptions on the issues of migration.

In following report, which is a part of bilateral basic research project titled *Political and Media Populism: “Refugee crisis” in Slovenia and Austria*, we want to provide an extended comparative overview of stances, attitudes and perceptions in Austria and Slovenia. Our goal is thus to compare the distribution of attitudes in two national “fields of social classes” (Bourdieu 1998: 2-7) on various issues concerning migration, populism, media and affects in the period from 2015 until 2020.¹ We aim to observe general socio-cultural values and political stances in Austria and Slovenia by examining the existing surveys, specifically large-scale surveys such as Eurobarometer and European Social Survey.

In the first part of the report, we provide some general technical and methodological information about the opinion polls in question: primarily the scope of survey polls and availability of databases. The second, analytical part of the report, the overview of Austrian and Slovenian survey data, is divided into four thematic parts: the second chapter of the report deals with migration, refugees and integration separately. The third chapter analyses stances on politics, populism and trust in political institutions, while chapter four analyses media consumption and citizens’ trust in media institutions. Lastly, the fifth chapter of the report examines emotional attachment of both countries’ citizens. The report concludes with a final chapter that summarises the most important findings of the existing surveys and opinion polls in Austria and Slovenia.

¹Delineation of the time period is and addresses primary the research focus of the project: year 2015 coincides with the opening of the migratory route generally known as the Balkan trail (in Slovenia and Austria starting with the “summer of migration” in August and September 2015 which morphed into “migration crisis” lasting until March 2016. Year 2020 as the final year of the examination is chosen for various reasons: availability of comparative data, chronological scope of the project, migration as a topic high on the political, media and research agenda prior the outbreak and expansion of the coronavirus pandemic, our own empirical opinion survey research in 2021.

1 Data, methods, topics and samples

For the purposes of the present report, we have examined 14 Eurobarometer reports. All were published in the period from 2015 until 2020. First, we examined six preliminary Standard Eurobarometer reports which are less extensive and shorter. Those reports are usually (but not exclusively) published in spring of each year and entitled *First Results* (see Eurobarometer 2015a; Eurobarometer 2016a; Eurobarometer 2018a; Eurobarometer 2018b; Eurobarometer 2019; Eurobarometer 2020). Four longer and more comprehensive reports were also thoroughly examined. Those reports are larger and usually published in autumn of each year (see Eurobarometer 2015b; Eurobarometer 2016b; Eurobarometer 2017a; Eurobarometer 2017b). We have also included an overview of data from a 2018 Eurobarometer poll, a comprehensive poll dedicated to and specifically addressing the integration of migrants in the European Union (Eurobarometer 2018c). This Eurobarometer report on polled data in 28 EU member states provides rather extensive information and cross-country comparisons on a wide variety of issues: ranging from perception of the relative proportion of migrants in the EU to general integration of migrants, from perceived structural barriers to perceived responsibilities of migrants etc. Three additional Eurobarometer reports on media use and media trust in the European Union (Eurobarometer 2016c; Eurobarometer 2016d; Eurobarometer 2017c) conclude this overview report. The data extracted from those reports are to be found in chapter 4 which is mostly providing the information on the consumption and trust related to mass media in Austria and Slovenia (namely TV, newspapers, internet and social media).

We have also consulted two European Social Surveys (ESS), conducted in 2016 (ESS number 8) and 2018 (ESS number 9). ESS 8 (2016) was conducted in 18 countries. In Austria the poll was conducted between 19th September 2016 and 28th December 2016, while in Slovenia it lasted from 21st September until 11th January 2017. Interviews were conducted with 2010 respondents (response rate was 52.5%) in Austria and 1307 respondents in Slovenia (response rate was 55,9%) (European Social Survey 2016b). ESS 9 (2018) was conducted in 18 countries. In Austria the poll was conducted between 18th September 2018 and 12th January 2019, while in Slovenia it lasted from 24th September until 1st February 2017. Interviews were conducted with 2499 respondents (response rate was 50.8%) in Austria and 1318 respondents in Slovenia (response rate was 64,1%) (European Social Survey 2018b). Both polls include only persons above 15 years of age, living in private households, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, language and legal status.

2 Migration

We begin our overview by formally acknowledging the distinction between the citizens' attitudes on migration and their attitudes on issues concerning refugees. There are persisting differences in experience and hostility toward those separated processes and groups of people in both countries. According to Eurobarometer data migration was a bigger concern in Austria in the period 2015 to 2019, however, respondents remained more open and humanitarian toward refugees. In Austria migration is high on agenda of concerns, while in Slovenia respondents expressed more xenophobic and hostile views (this is a specific paradox because, apart from the period of increased refugee entries at the end of 2015, Slovenians did not perceive migration as a concern for the country; see below).

2.1 Attitudes on migrations and immigration

According to Eurobarometer data for a period of three years, from autumn 2015 to autumn 2018, immigration and terrorism were for the citizens of the European Union the two most important issues of the European Union.² In the spring of 2015 immigration³ alone was in the eyes of EU citizens the topic that for the first time since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis replaced the economic situation and unemployment as the main concern of the union. According to Eurobarometer polls, immigration remained a main concern of the EU for four years, from spring 2015 until spring 2019, reaching a high of 58% in autumn 2015 (Eurobarometer 2015b: 40) and 36% in autumn 2019 (Eurobarometer 2020: 15-17). 48% of the respondents regarded immigration as one of the two most important issues of the EU in spring 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016a: 4), 45% in autumn 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016b: 30-32), around 38% during 2017 and 2018 (see Eurobarometer 2017b: 30-31; Eurobarometer 2018a: 4-6 and Eurobarometer 2018b: 12-14), 34% and 36% in 2019 (Eurobarometer 2019: 19-21). In the summer of 2020, probably because of the concerns caused by the Corona-virus pandemic and widely introduced lockdowns, the economic situation was the most frequently mentioned issue which the EU is facing (35% of all respondents mention this issue, followed by public finances at 23%, immigration at 23% and closely followed by health at 22%) (Eurobarometer 2020: 15-17).

Austrian and Slovenian citizens diverge on the question of the contribution of immigrants to both respective countries: in 2015 in Austria 41% of respondents agreed that immigrants contribute a lot to the country (51% disagreed), while in Slovenia only 21% agreed and 72% disagreed with the statement (Eurobarometer 2015b: 220-221). The picture in Austria improved slightly in 2017

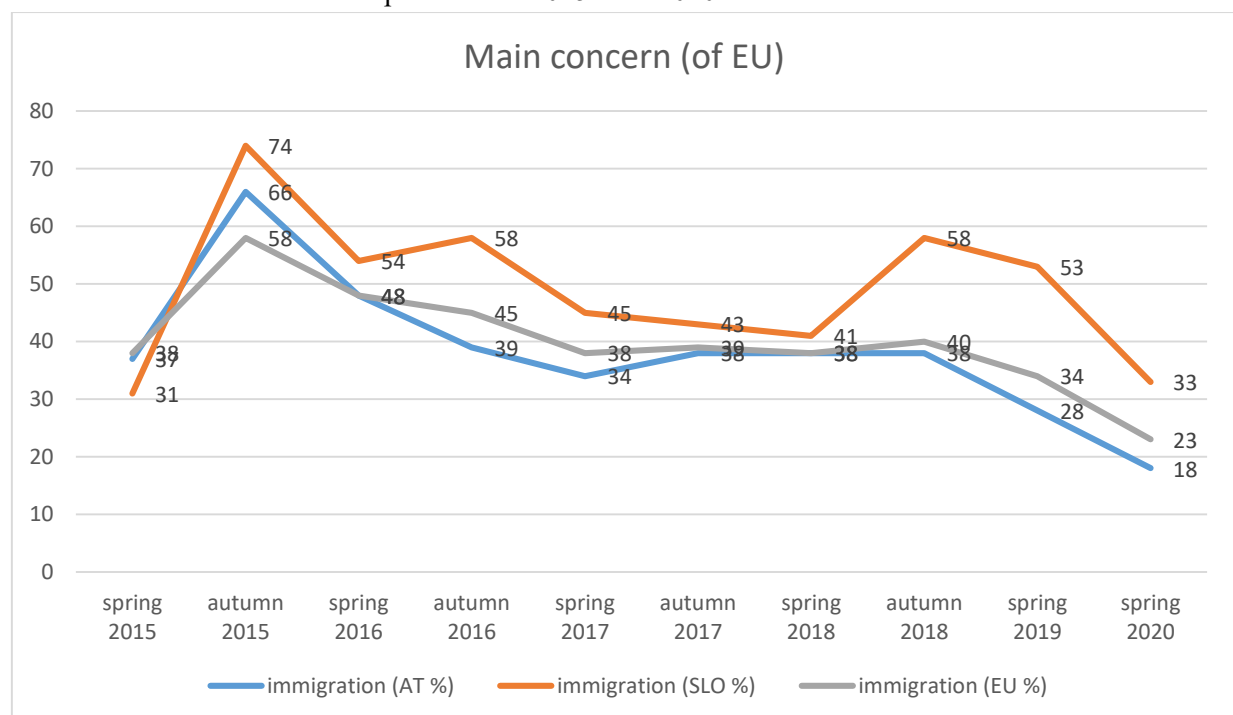
²Eurobarometer opinion poll regularly measures the evolution of the main concerns of EU citizens. Respondents are asked to select two issues within a pre-defined list (see Eurobarometer 2015a: 14). Proportional percentage shares that are listed in our main text indicate the proportion of respondents that selected this issue as one of the two concerns from the pre-defined list.

³Eurobarometer does not distinguish between migration (transition of migrants) and immigration (destination of migrants), and their opinion polls only measure attitudes and stances on »immigration«. We differentiate between the two terms, read the data with distinction in mind and use the terms carefully in the report. Slovenia is a case in point here: in 2015 and 2016 Slovenia should be regarded as a transit country for the travelling refugees from the Middle East and the "refugee crisis", contrary to popular belief, did not cause an immigration wave. Thus stances toward migrants (refugees) signify a general expression of xenophobic and populist reactions, while stances on immigrants, who in Slovenia mainly come from the former Yugoslav states, remained intact (see Zavratnik et al. 2017: 868-871). This might not be true for Austria, a destination country for both migrating groups.

while Slovenian respondents remained hostile: in spring 48% of respondents in Austria agreed with this statement and 44% disagreed while in autumn 53% agreed and 42% disagreed (Eurobarometer 2017a: 150; Eurobarometer 2017b: 145). In Slovenia in the spring of 2017 33% of the respondents agreed that immigrants contribute a lot while 63% disagreed; 35% agreed and 62% disagreed in autumn of that year (Eurobarometer 2017a: 150; Eurobarometer 2017b: 145).

In autumn of 2016 and autumn of 2018 immigration was seen as a main concern of the EU in 26 EU member states (Eurobarometer 2016b: 30-32; Eurobarometer 2018b: 12-14). The two countries analysed in this report were among those very concerned states as immigration remained a major concern for citizens of Austria and Slovenia from 2015 until 2020 as well. At the peak of the “refugee crisis” in autumn 2015 66% of respondents in Austria and 74% respondents in Slovenia regarded immigration as a main concern of the EU (for comparison only 37% of respondents in Austria and 31% in Slovenia regarded immigration as a concern of the EU a few months prior, in spring 2015). Respondents in Slovenia overwhelmingly regarded the immigration issue as a main concern as citizens’ concerns remained well above the EU average in the entire five-year period: between 41% (spring 2018) and 58% (autumn 2016, see Eurobarometer 2016b: 33) of polled citizens regarded it as a main concern, while in Austria that share fluctuated at a lower level, between 28% (spring 2019) and 48% (spring 2016), always close to the EU average.

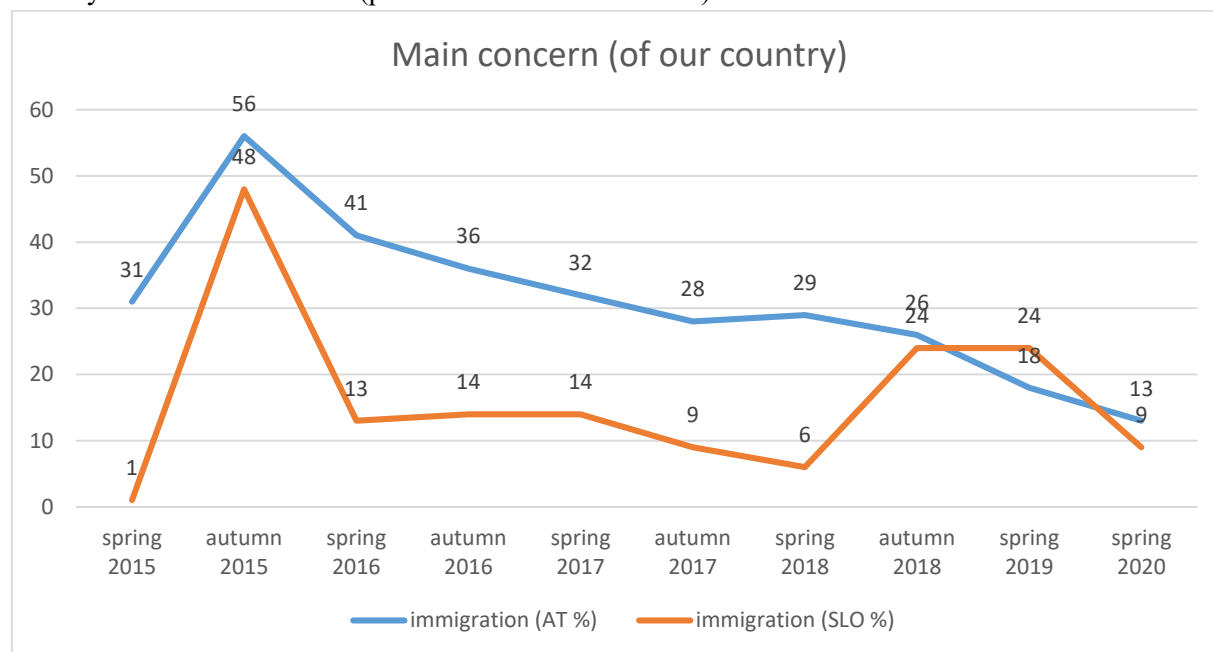
Table 1: Distribution of respondents in Austria and Slovenia answering immigration is one of the two main concerns of the EU in the period from 2015 until 2020



Concerns are different when Austrian and Slovenian citizens are asked about the list of main concerns which their respective *countries* face. Answers between the two countries differ largely here: at the national level immigration was one of the main concerns in Austria already in the spring of 2015 (37% of citizens argued that immigration is one of the two main concerns that country is facing) (Eurobarometer 2015a: 16) and remained one of the main concerns until the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (when only 13% of citizens listed immigration as a concern for and

of the country) (Eurobarometer 2020: 17). On the other hand, immigration was an issue of national concern only very briefly in Slovenia, reaching 48% of consent in autumn of 2015, increasing slightly (at 24%) in autumn 2018 and spring 2019 and on a downward trend from then on (Eurobarometer 2015b: 40; Eurobarometer 2016b: 33; Eurobarometer 2018a: 4-7; Eurobarometer 2019: 22; Eurobarometer 2020: 17).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents in Austria and Slovenia answering immigration is one of the country's two main concerns (period from 2015 until 2020)

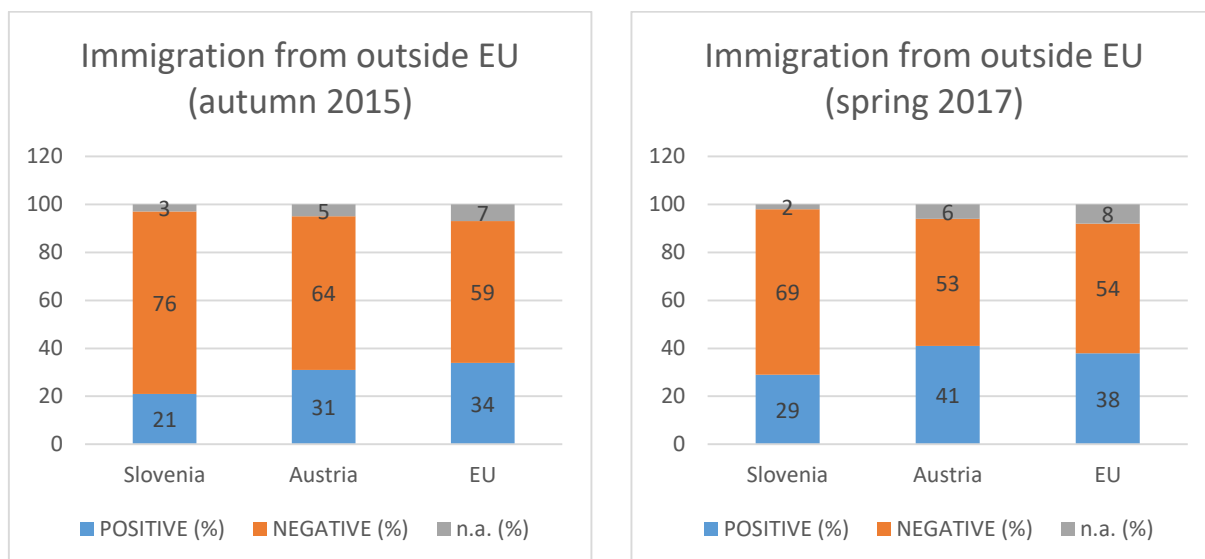


2.1.1 Migration from outside of the EU

During this period Austrian citizens remained more open on the topic of immigration from outside of the EU. Austrian citizens' stances on this question approached EU average while Slovenian views expressed more xenophobic tendencies. Immigration of people from outside the EU evoked a positive feeling for around a third of Europeans in autumn 2015: 34% (Eurobarometer 2015b: 144). Immigration of people from outside the EU evoked a positive feeling for around two fifths of EU citizens in 2017: 38% in spring 2017 and 39% in autumn 2017 (Eurobarometer 2017b: 111); it continuously evoked a negative feeling for more than a half of the EU populace: 59% in autumn 2015 (Eurobarometer 2015b: 144), 54% in spring 2017 (Eurobarometer 2017a: 106) and 54% in autumn 2017 (2017b: 111). Austrian citizens' stances on this question approached EU average while Slovenian views expressed more xenophobic tendencies: in autumn of 2015 immigration from outside the EU evoked positive feelings for 31% of respondents and negative for 64% while it evoked positive feelings for only 21% and negative for 76% citizens in Austria (Eurobarometer 2015b: 144-145). At the beginning of 2017 this balance improved slightly: immigration from outside of EU evoked positive feelings for 41% and negative for 53% respondents in Austria; it evoked positive feelings for 29% and negative ones for 69% of respondents in Slovenia (Eurobarometer 2017a: 106). By the end of the year stances on immigration worsened again: for 38% of Austrian respondents it evoked a positive feeling and for 56% negative feelings (that was also EU average). Two thirds of Slovenians denied positive feelings: only for 31% immigration from outside EU evoked a

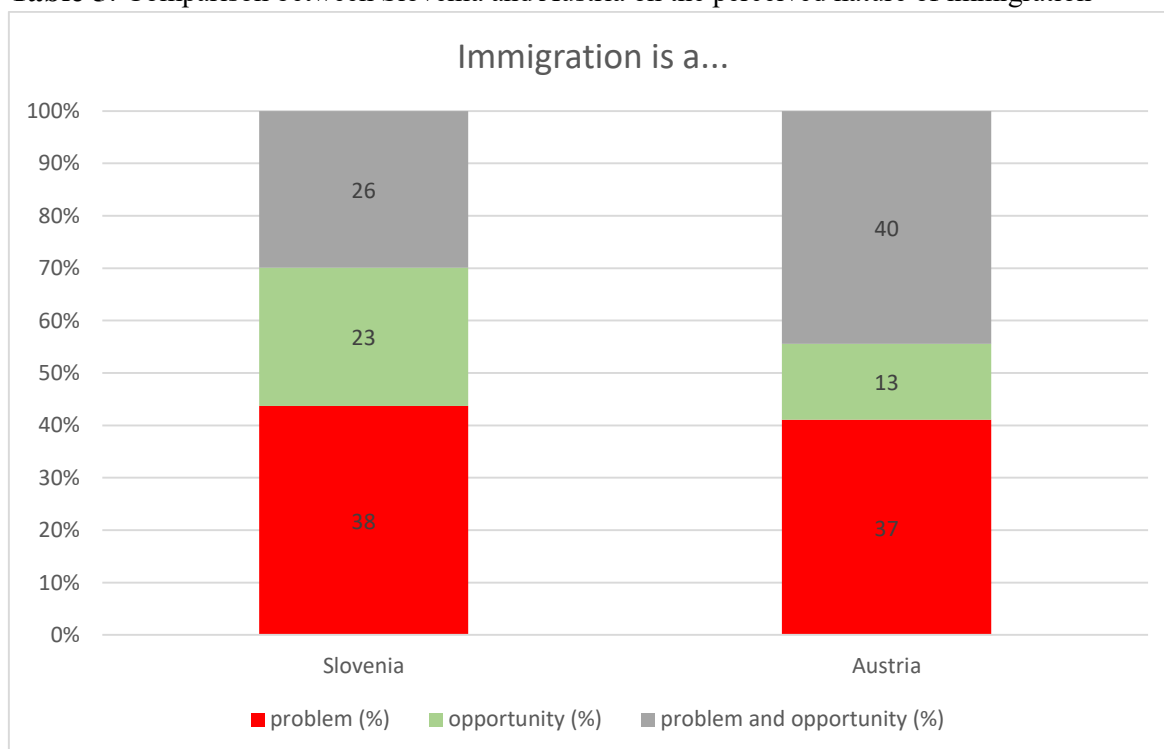
positive feeling and for 66% of respondents it represented a negative phenomenon (Eurobarometer 2017b: 111).

Table 3 and Table 4: Immigration from outside EU evokes following feelings (comparison of SLO and AT)



Those data are confirmed in the special Eurobarometer poll on immigration and integration published in 2018. 37% of Austrian respondents and 38% of Slovenian respondents regarded immigration from outside the EU as more of a problem, while only 13% in Austria and 23% in Slovenia regarded it as an opportunity (40% in Austria and 26% in Slovenia regarded it as equally a problem and an opportunity (Eurobarometer 2018c: 58).

Table 5: Comparison between Slovenia and Austria on the perceived nature of immigration



2.1.2 Securing EU borders

Unsurprisingly, according to the distribution of responses discussed thus far, respondents in both countries also show highly favourable attitudes toward securing EU external borders. Both countries' respondents provide also quite similar answers on the topic of additional measures which ought to be taken to fight irregular migration of people from outside the EU⁴: 93% of Austrian respondents and 95% of Slovenian respondents thought that additional measures were necessary immediately after the “summer of migration” in autumn of 2015 (Eurobarometer 2015b: 146-147). While in Austria this high share did not represent a significant change from spring of that year (slight rise from an already high percentage of 89%), in Slovenia it did, because in spring “only” 77% of citizens shared this view. Those shares remained high for a couple of years: 86% and 88% of respondents thought likewise in spring of 2017 (Eurobarometer 2017a: 106) and 90% expressed the necessity for additional measures in Austria and Slovenia in autumn 2017 (Eurobarometer 2017b: 112).

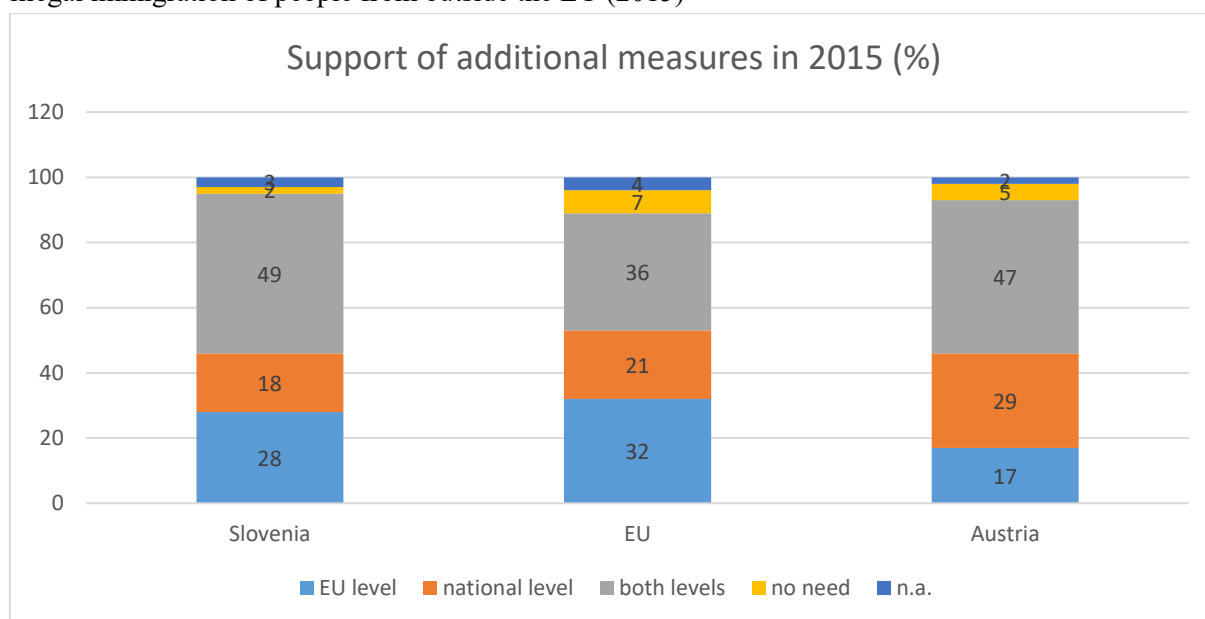
Table 6: Share of people who think that additional measures to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU should be taken.

| | yes (AT %) | yes (SLO %) | yes (EU %) |
|--------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| spring 2015 | 89 | 77 | 85 |
| autumn 2015 | 93 | 95 | 89 |
| spring 2017 | 86 | 88 | 85 |
| autumn 2017 | 90 | 90 | 86 |

However, respondents in the two countries differ in identifying the political-administrative apparatus responsible or accountable to implement additional measures to fight illegal immigration of migrants who arrive from outside of the EU. As it is shown in table 7 (below) in Austria 17% of respondents preferred action at the EU level and 29% at the national level (additional 47% prefer both) in 2015, while for Slovenians 28% of respondents preferred action at the EU level that year, 18% preferred it at the national level and additional 49% at both levels (Eurobarometer 2015b: 146-147).

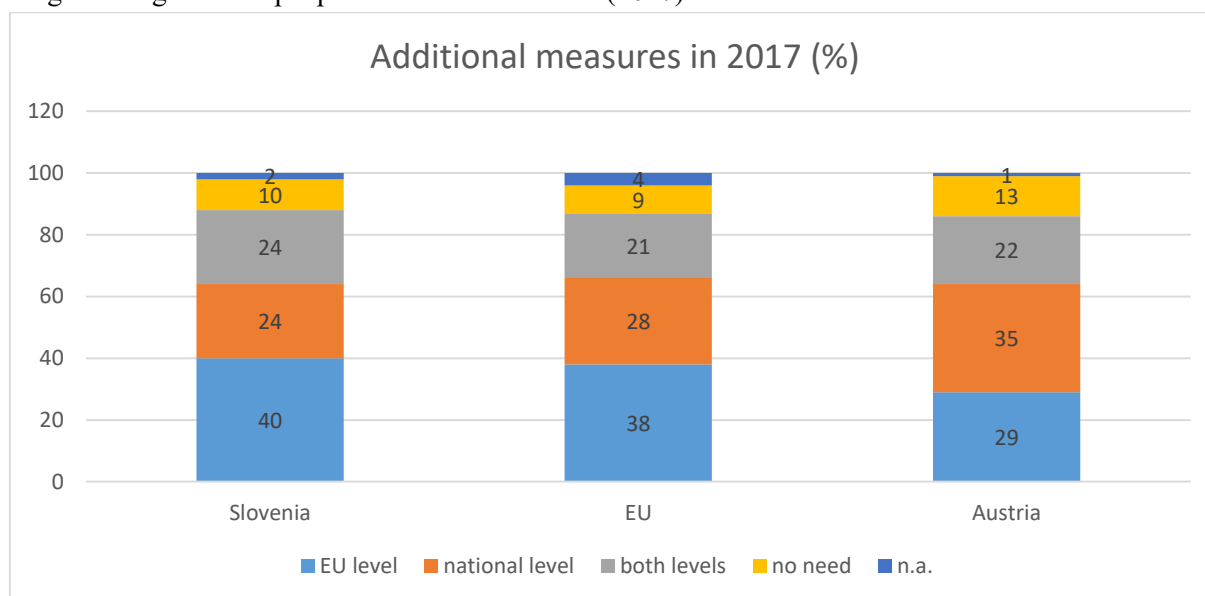
⁴Question is formulated in the following way: In your opinion, should additional measures be taken to fight irregular immigration of people from outside the EU?

Table 7: Distribution of answers about the level of additional measures which ought to be taken to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU (2015)



In 2017 shares in both countries changed significantly and the demands became reversed: 29% of Austrian respondents preferred action at the EU level and 35% at the national level (22% prefer it at both), while for Slovenians 40% of respondents preferred action at the EU level and 24% at the national level (24% at both levels) (Eurobarometer 2017a: 107). Numbers are almost identical in the autumn of 2017 (see Eurobarometer 2017b: 112).

Table 8: Distribution of answers about the level of additional measures which ought to be taken to fight illegal immigration of people from outside the EU (2017)



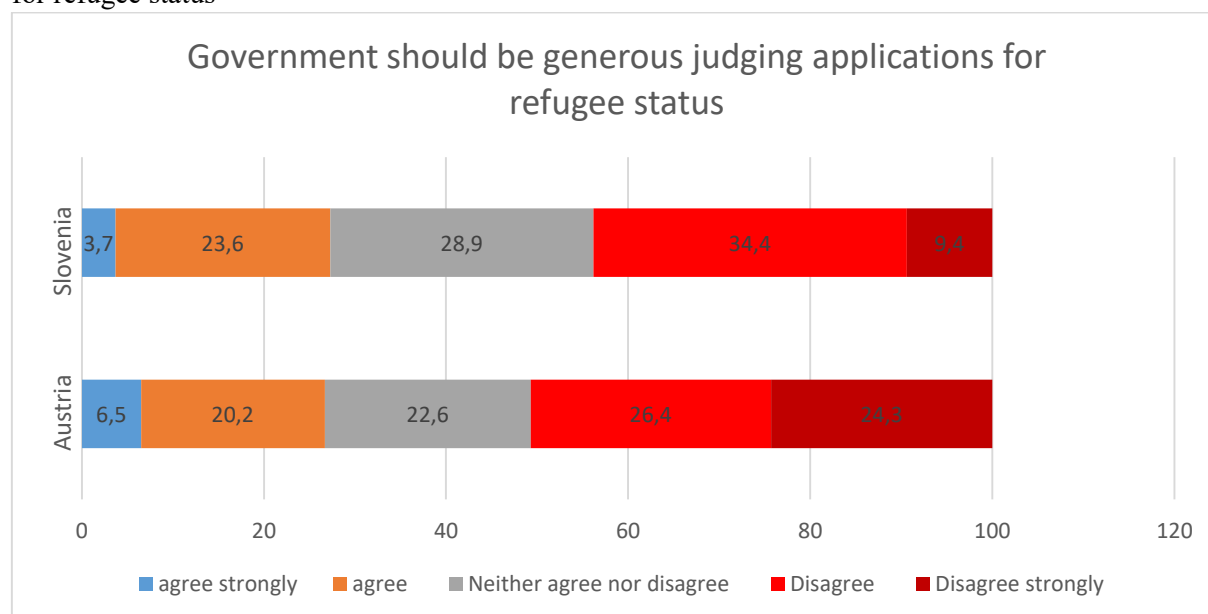
Furthermore, in 2018 86% of Austrian respondents and 87% of Slovenian respondents agreed that the EU should be more involved in helping securing countries located at the EU's external borders (only 11% of respondents in Austria and Slovenia disagreed). 73% of respondents in Slovenia and 72% in Austria also agreed that funding to strengthen EU's external borders should be increased (Eurobarometer 2018d: 19-20).

2.2 Attitudes on refugees

In the period from 2015 to 2017 around two thirds of Austrian respondents also accepted a more humanitarian stance toward refugees than their Slovenian counterparts. In the autumn of 2015 62% of respondents in Austria shared the opinion that the country should help refugees (Eurobarometer 2015b: 227); these percentages increased in 2017 to 66% in spring (Eurobarometer 2017a: 153) and to 71% in autumn (Eurobarometer 2017b: 148). On the other hand, in Slovenia in 2015 only around half of the respondents (54%) shared the belief that the country should help refugees (Eurobarometer 2015b: 227); those percentages decreased in 2017, to 51% in spring (Eurobarometer 2017a: 153) before they increased to 56% in autumn (Eurobarometer 2017b: 148).

European Social Survey poll researchers presented research on attitudes toward refugees in 2016 as well.⁵ Slovenia and Austria are according to the data provided by ESS comparable when it comes to unfavourable attitudes toward generous evaluations of applications for refugee status.⁶ 50,7% of respondents in Austria and 43,8% of respondents in Slovenia disagree with generous judging of applications while only a quarter, 26,7% in Austria and 27,3% in Slovenia, agree with the notion of generous judging. Large number of respondents, 22,6% in Austria and 28,9% in Slovenia, could not decide (neither to agree or to disagree) on the notion (ESS 2016).

Table 9: Comparison between Austria and Slovenia on the generousness when evaluating applications for refugee status



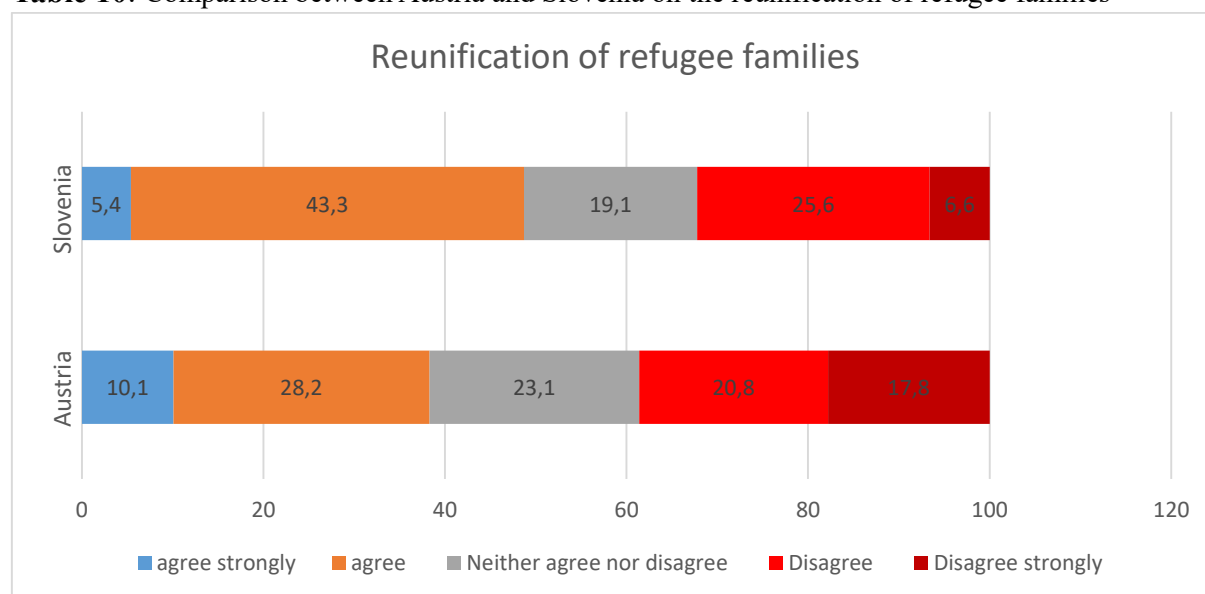
At that time almost half, 48,7% respondents in Austria and 42,6% of respondents in Slovenia, agreed that most applicants for refugee status in EU were *not* in real danger of persecution in their own countries. Only 22,8% in Austria and 29,6% in Slovenia disagreed that most applicants were not in real danger of persecution in their own countries (ESS 2016).

⁵Following topics (attitudes toward generous evaluations of applications for refugee status; fear of persecution for the applicants for refugee status; reunification of refugee families) were not a part of the ESS 2018 polling, thus the measurement for 2018 does not provide the data which would enable us a chronological comparison.

⁶Respondents were asked to decide if they agreed with the following statement: »The government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status«.

Respondents of both countries were more open-minded when considering the reunification of refugee families (viable for persons that were granted refugee status).⁷ The share of those who agreed and disagreed was almost equal in Austria: 38,3% agreed and 38,6% disagreed, while 48,7% agreed and 32,2% disagreed in Slovenia, where respondents showed a much more favourable attitude on this question. However, Austria seems to be polarized on this question: 10,1% of respondents strongly agreed and 17,8% strongly disagreed with the statement, while Slovenia had smaller shares at both extreme poles (only 5,4% strongly agreed and 6,6% strongly disagreed) (ESS 2016).

Table 10: Comparison between Austria and Slovenia on the reunification of refugee families



2.3 Attitudes on integration

In 2017 Eurobarometer conducted a comprehensive poll (published in 2018) on the “integration of immigrants” in the European Union which provides a valuable snapshot of stances, values and ideological positions on this question in Austria and Slovenia (see Eurobarometer 2018c). Austria and Slovenia differ significantly in a number of categories examined in this poll: perception of the relative proportion of immigrants in EU, perception of the relative proportion of immigrants in their countries, their interaction with immigrants in their social environment, general integration of migrants, structural barriers and perceived responsibilities of migrants.

2.3.1 Perceptions

Eurostat evaluated and measured the distance between the available (verifiable) statistical data and perception of Europeans about the number of illegal migrants in the EU. Eurostat estimated that during 2016, 984.000 third-country nationals were found to be *illegally* present in the EU16, while 21.6 million third-country nationals were *legally* residing in the EU on 1st January 2017. Data show that perceptions on the proportion of migrants residing in the EU and in both analysed countries are not completely wrong, however, we could argue that they are significantly

⁷ Respondents were asked to decide if they agreed with the following statement: “Refugees whose applications are granted should be entitled to bring with them their close family members”.

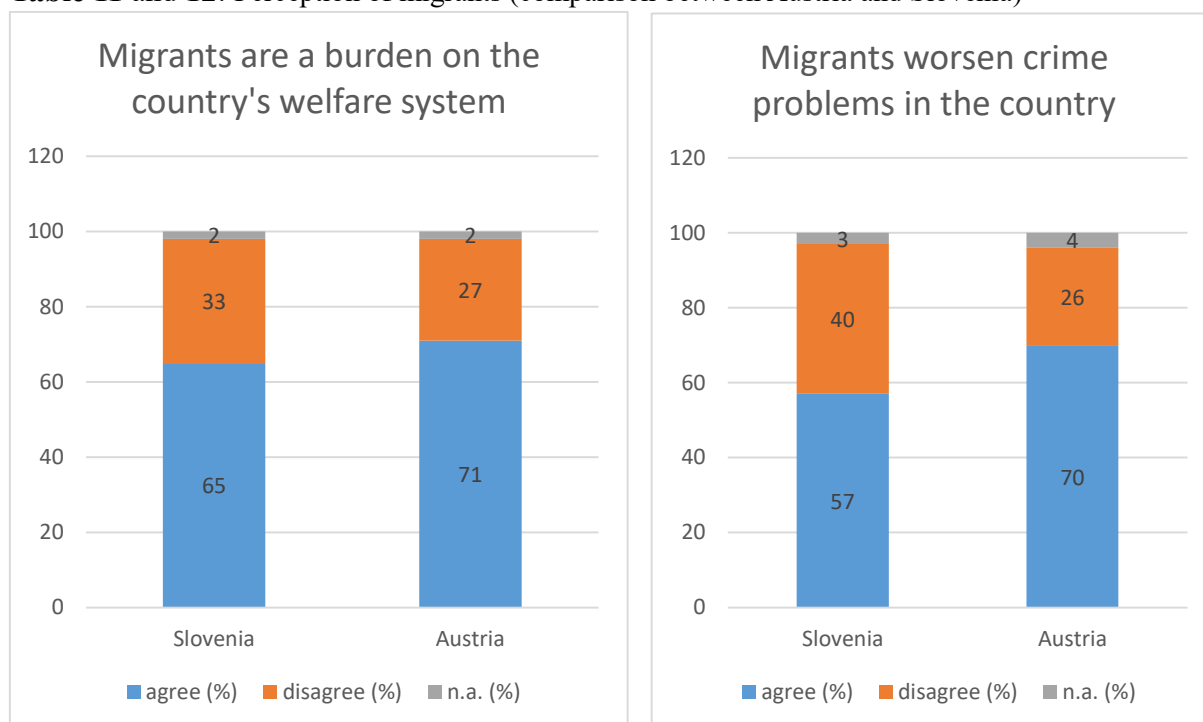
misplaced. More than half (56%) of those polled in Slovenia and 42% in Austria said that there were more immigrants who are staying *legally* than staying illegally across the EU. Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) in each country said that there are at least as many illegally staying immigrants as there are legally staying immigrants. A large number of respondents however completely misjudged the proportion of illegal migrants in the EU: 15% of respondents in Slovenia and 21% in Austria said that there are more *illegally* staying than legally staying immigrants (Eurobarometer 2018c: 14-16).

Answers in both countries are similarly misguided when it comes to the perception of the relative proportion of immigrants residing in their countries. On average Slovenian respondents estimated that the proportion of immigrants in their country amounts to 20,1% of the entire population (official Eurostat data for Slovenia shows that that number was 8,7%), identical as in Austria (however the error margin in Austria was smaller because the official Eurostat data showed that immigrants present 10,4% of the entire population of Austria) (Eurobarometer 2018c: 20-21).

2.3.2 Integration and acceptance of migrants in social roles

A set of questions in the Eurobarometer (2018c) poll addressed levels of comfort of the local population when imagining immigrants performing various social roles in their national or local context. According to the answers Slovenians were more willing to accept immigrants as their neighbours or doctors: 53% of respondents in Slovenia were totally comfortable to have an immigrant as their neighbour, 26% were somewhat comfortable and 19% of them uncomfortable. In Austria 28% were totally comfortable about an immigrant being their neighbour, 37% were somewhat comfortable and 28% totally uncomfortable. On the other hand, 54% of respondents in Slovenia were totally comfortable to have an immigrant as their doctor, 25% were somewhat comfortable and 20% of them uncomfortable. In Austria 31% were totally comfortable about an immigrant being their doctor, 36% were somewhat comfortable and 27% were totally uncomfortable (Eurobarometer 2018c: 41).

Table 11 and 12: Perception of migrants (comparison between Austria and Slovenia)



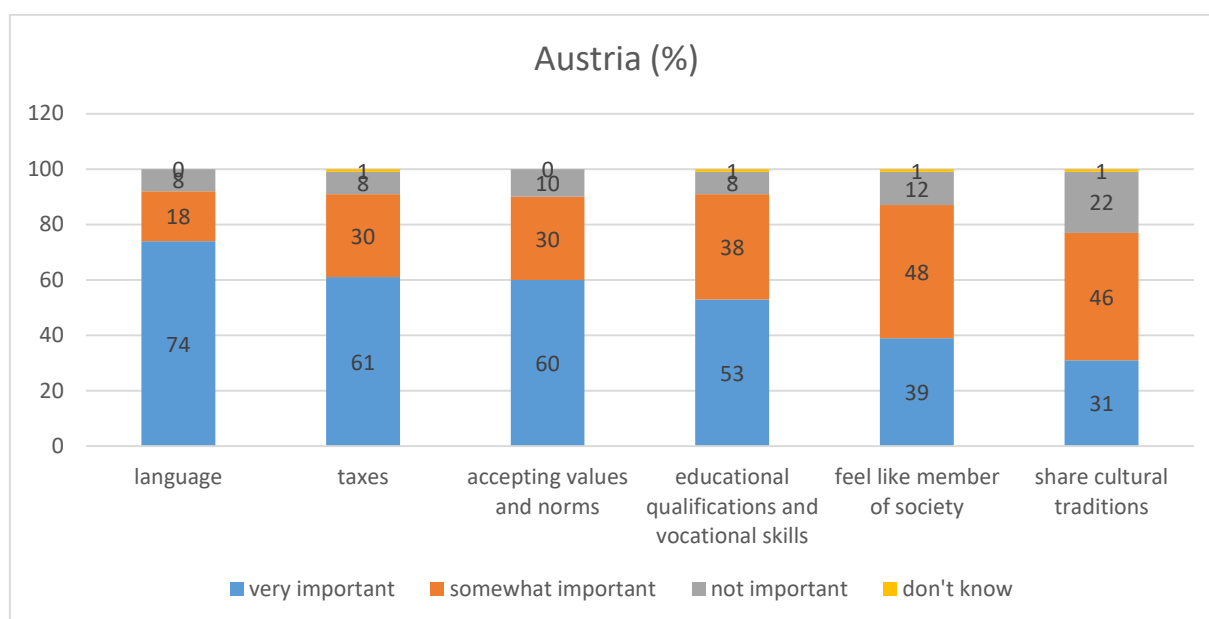
Although 81% of respondents in Slovenia and 67% of respondents in Austria agreed that immigrants helped fill those jobs for which it was difficult to find workers (Eurobarometer 2018c: 73), 65% (Slovenia) and 71% (Austria) also agreed that they were a burden on the Slovenian and Austrian welfare system (Eurobarometer 2018c: 77) and that they worsened the crime problems in the countries: 57% agreed that this was true in Slovenia, while 70% agreed in Austria (ibid: 78).

2.3.3 Citizens' attitudes on social, cultural and economic indicators of integration

Countries reported similar views expressed by their citizens on what it means to be well-integrated into the Slovenian or Austrian society as well as nationhood. Questions examining citizens' perceptions varied from acceptance and sharing of established cultural systems (language, values and norms, national cultural traditions) to economic issues (welfare system, taxes, educational skills and qualifications) to personal feelings (feeling like a member of a specific society).

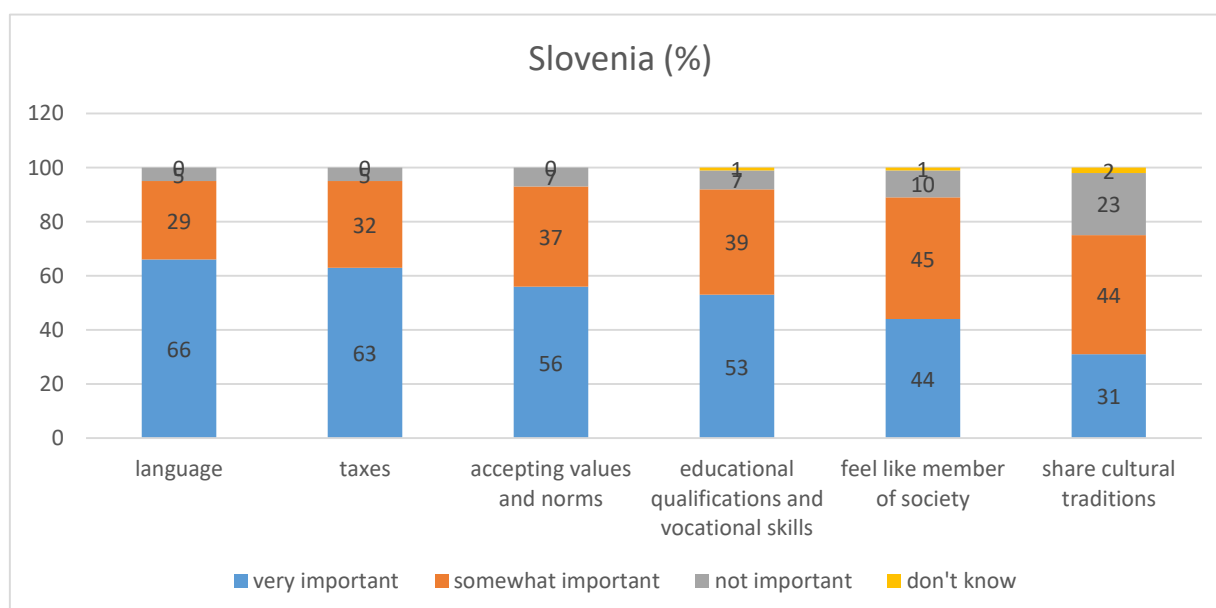
66% of respondents in Slovenia answered that being able to speak a country's language was very important for integration and 29% deemed it somewhat important. Attitudes on language were slightly more important in Austria than in Slovenia: 74% of respondents thought it was very important, while 18% thought that it was somewhat important. For 56% of respondents in Slovenia it was very important that immigrants are committed to the way of life by accepting the values and norms of Slovenian society, while for 37% it was somewhat important; on the other hand, that number reached 60% (very important) and 30% (somewhat important) in Austria. 31% of Slovenian respondents felt that sharing national cultural traditions was very important for integration and 44% felt that it was somewhat important; similarly, 31% of Austrian respondents felt that it was very important and 46% felt that it was somewhat important.

Table 13: importance of various socio-cultural indicators for the perception of integration (Austria)



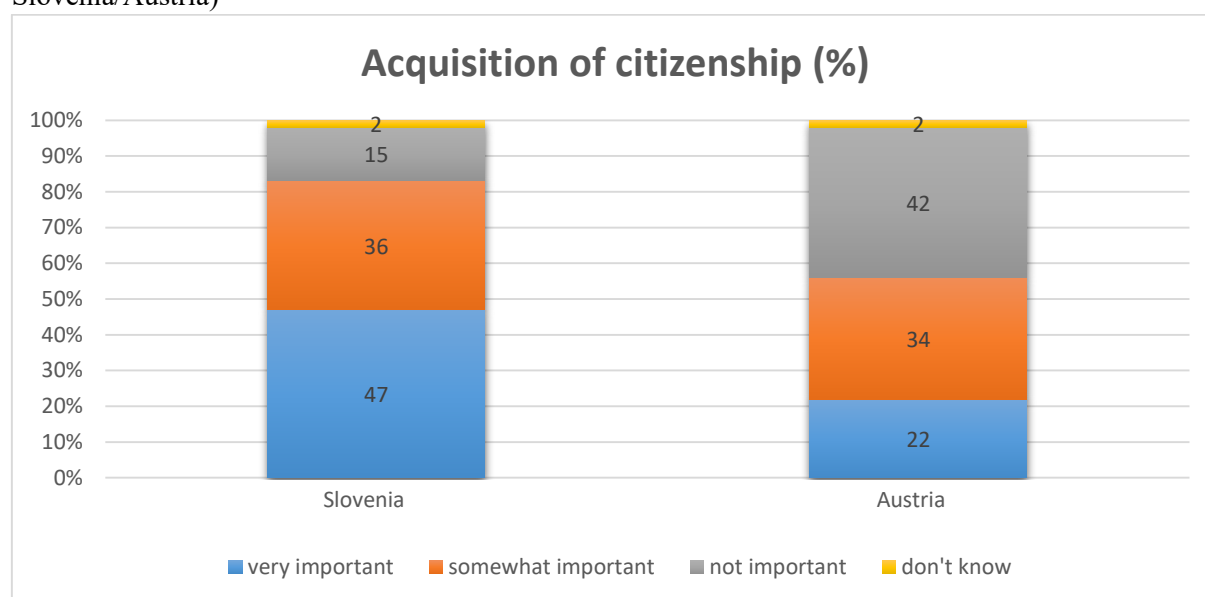
On economic issues countries' respondents were showing a high degree of comparability: 63% of respondents in Slovenia regarded contributing to the welfare system by paying taxes as very important and 32% regarded it as somewhat important; 61% (very important) and 30% (somewhat important) was the distribution of shares in Austria. Having educational qualifications and skills sufficient to find a job was very important for 53% and somewhat important for 39% of respondents in Slovenia; it was also very important for 53% of Austrians and somewhat important for 38% of Austrians. And lastly on these topics: feeling like a member of the (national) society seemed to be very important for 39%, and somewhat important for 48% respondents in Slovenia; for 44% it was very important and 45% somewhat important in Austria (Eurobarometer 2018c: 87-93).

Table 14: importance of various socio-cultural indicators for the perception of integration (Slovenia)



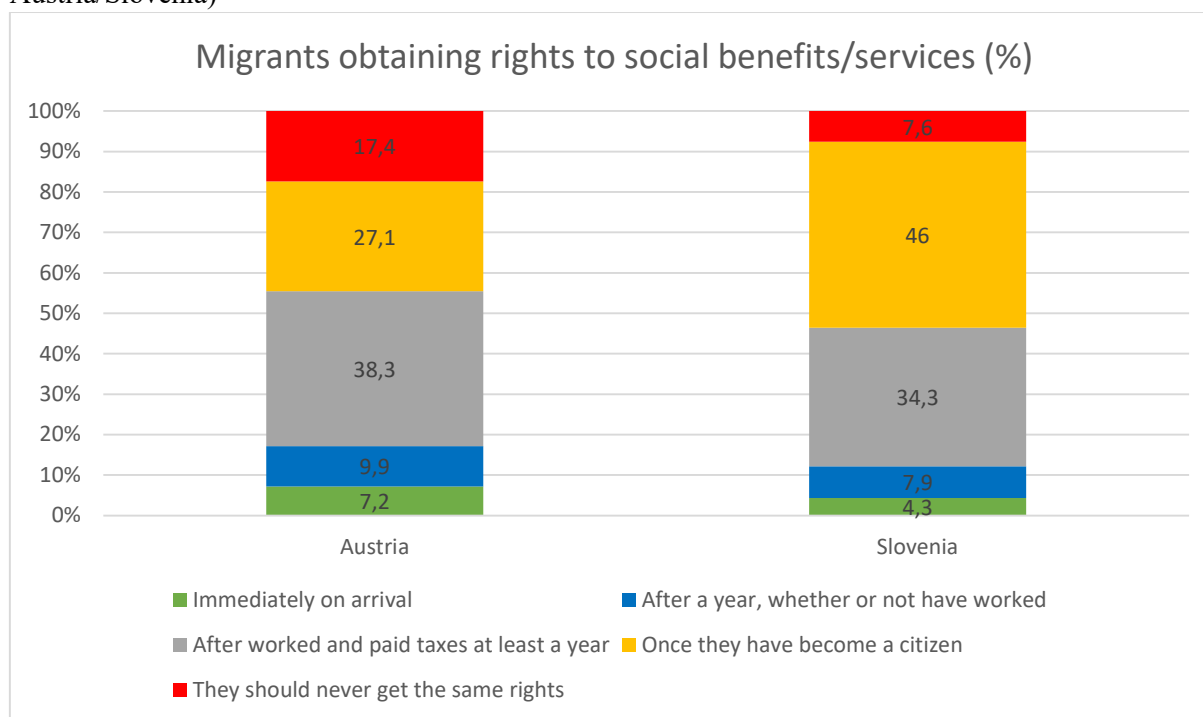
However, it is worth mentioning that the two countries differ in one category regarding integration: citizenship seems to be the most important thing to be well-integrated into Slovenian society. 47% of respondents in Slovenia said that acquiring citizenship is the most important thing that signifies an immigrant being well integrated into a society (highest percentage in EU). 36% said that acquiring citizenship is somewhat important and only 15% regarded it as unimportant. In Austria, on the other hand, only 22% of Austrian respondents regarded it as very important, 34% regarded it as somewhat important and 42% as not important at all (Eurobarometer 2018c: 94).

Table 15: importance of acquiring citizenship for the perception of integration (comparison Slovenia/Austria)



The strong belief in obtaining equal rights and social status by obtaining citizenship is confirmed for Slovenian citizens in the ESS poll (2016) as well. 46% of Slovenian respondents in 2016 thought that immigrants should have the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens only when they officially become citizens. Only 27,1% of respondents selected that answer in Austria. 34,3% of respondents in Slovenia thought that obtaining equal rights should happen after immigrants have worked and paid taxes in the country at least for a year (38,3% was the share in Austria). 7,9% (Slovenia) and 9,9% (Austria) answered that immigrants should obtain the rights to social benefits after a year whether or not they've worked, while only 7,2% (Austria) and 4,3% (Slovenia) responded that those rights should be granted immediately upon arrival. A surprisingly high percentage of Austrians (17,4%) thought that immigrants should never obtain those rights. 7,6% of Slovenian agreed with that xenophobic stance (ESS 2016).

Table 16: migrants obtaining the same rights to social benefits and services as citizens (comparison Austria/Slovenia)

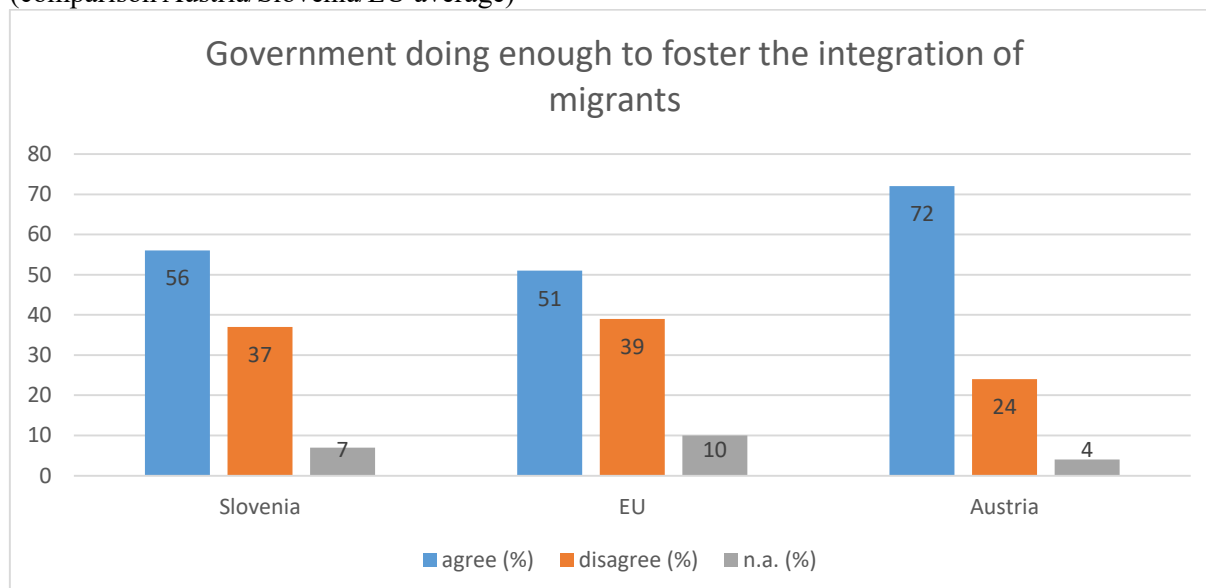


A set of questions in the Eurobarometer 2018 poll also addressed the EU's citizens' views on systematic or individual obstacles to integration.⁸ In both countries under examination a majority of respondents thought that *limited efforts by immigrants to integrate* could be an obstacle to integration: 65% of respondents in Austria (also an EU average) thought it was a major obstacle and 27% that it was a minor obstacle. Only 6% thought that it is not an obstacle at all (also an EU average). Slovenia was the country with the lowest percentage in the EU that thought it was a major obstacle (42%). 40% of respondents thought it was a minor obstacle and 14% regarded limited efforts of immigrants as not an obstacle at all (highest share in EU) (Eurobarometer 2018c: 98). On the other hand, a large majority of respondents, more than 90%, thought that immigrants themselves have a very important role in their (potential) successful integration: 71% in Austria and 68% in Slovenia answered, that immigrants themselves have a very important role, while additional 22% (in Austria) and 26% (in Slovenia) answered that immigrants have a fairly important role. Less than one in ten respondents thought that immigrants themselves were not important in the process of integration: 7% in Austria and 5% in Slovenia (ibid: 145). Austrian respondents expressed a strong pro-governmental stance on their government's role to foster the integration of immigrants. As we can see in the table 17 below 72% of respondents answered that the government was doing enough to foster integration of immigrants into the Austrian society (highest share in the EU; EU average was "only" 51%). Only 24% of respondents in Austria disagreed. Proportional shares of acknowledging government's role in

⁸ Respondents were asked, based on a list provided by the interviewer, to consider whether some specific factors could be major obstacles to integration or not. Eurostat researchers noted that these questions were framed in such a way as to elicit responses about hypothetical barriers to integration, and not necessarily those which currently exist. Researchers noted: »As such, the responses should be seen as reflecting general attitudes to factors which impede integration, rather than as an assessment of whether such factors do occur in reality« (Eurobarometer 2018c: 97).

fostering integration were much smaller in Slovenia, where 56% of polled residents agreed and 37% disagreed (close to EU average of 39%) that government was doing enough to foster integration of immigrants into the Slovenian society (ibid.: 156).

Table 17: Stance of citizens on government doing enough to foster the integration of migrants (comparison Austria/Slovenia/EU average)



2.4 Conclusion

To sum up the data presented in this chapter, we can first confirm that immigration presented a main concern for Austria and Slovenia after the “summer of migration” in the autumn of 2015. In the eyes of Austrians and Slovenians migration and immigration remained a main concern of the EU for four years, from spring 2015 until spring 2019. Migration from outside EU evoked negative feelings for an overwhelming majority of Austrian and Slovenian citizens in the analysed period, and an overwhelming (almost consensual) majority of Austrian and Slovenian citizens supported the implementation of additional measures which ought to be taken to fight “irregular”⁹ migration of people from outside the EU.

Slovenians remained more hostile than Austrians toward refugees in the analysed period. For example, in the period from 2015 to 2017 around two thirds of Austrian respondents accepted a more humanitarian stance toward helping refugees and shared the opinion that the country should help refugees. However, the countries remained similarly hostile toward the systematic recognition of refugees as refugees (granting asylums for example) that enables refugee protection, social rights and continued stay in the country: approximately half of the respondents in both countries in the analysed period disagreed with a more generous judging of applications, while only one quarter of citizens agreed with it. Almost half of the respondents in both countries also agreed that most applicants for refugee status in the EU were *not* in real danger of persecution in their own countries.

The importance of various socio-cultural indicators (e.g. language, taxes, educational qualifications etc.) for integration was regarded similar in Austria and Slovenia (see table 13 and table 14): language was in the eyes of the citizens of Austria and Slovenia the most important indicator of a well-integrated person, followed by taxes and educational qualifications. However,

⁹ Term used by Eurobarometer publications and researchers.

the two countries differed in one important aspect: According to Slovenian respondents acquiring Slovenian *citizenship* seemed to be the most important thing to be well-integrated into the Slovenian society. Almost half of the respondents in Slovenia said that acquiring citizenship is the most important feature that signifies an immigrant being well integrated into the society (highest percentage in EU). In Austria, acquiring citizenship was not nearly considered as important as in Slovenia for the perception of integration of foreigners: Only one fifth of Austrian respondents regarded it as very important and almost half as not important at all.

3 Political institutions and populism

This chapter, which analyses the perceptions and stances of citizens about the political system and its structures, is divided into two parts: the first part aims to observe populism labelled as people-centrism in Austria and Slovenia (section 3.1), while the second part (section 3.2) presents the data on citizens' trust in political institutions.

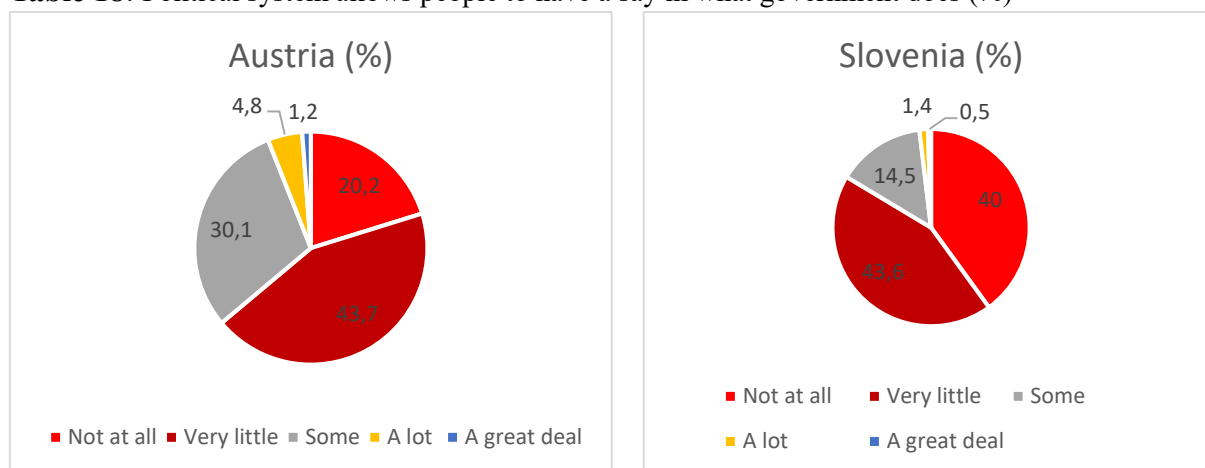
3.1 People vs. political system

Two ESS questions, presented in this section, indicate an attitude of “people-centrism” and “anti-elitism” in the population. These two populist antagonisms understand people as “an overwhelming majority” of the population and their role as “rightful political sovereigns within a given polity” (Aslanidis 2018: 1255). People are in this formulation juxtaposed to detached or distanced elites, here political elites, which misappropriate their “popular sovereignty” (Ernst et al. 2019). One question addresses the perception of citizens' influence on governments' actions, while the other examines the ability to influence the legislative and parliamentary branch of the political system.

Slovenian respondents show a great degree of fatalism with respect to the country's executive branch of the political system.¹⁰ As shown in two charts in table 18 below 83,6% of respondents in Slovenia answered that people have no say (40%) or very little say (43,6%) in what the government does. In Austria a significantly smaller share, 63,9% of people, answered that people have no say (20,2%) in what governments do or very little (43,7%). On the other hand, only 14,5% of Slovenian respondents thought that people have some say in what the government does while that sentiment was shared by as twice as many respondents in Austria (30,1%) (ESS 2016).

¹⁰ The question was: “To what extent does the political system in Austria/Slovenia enable people like you to have a say in what the government is doing?”

Table 18: Political system allows people to have a say in what government does (%)

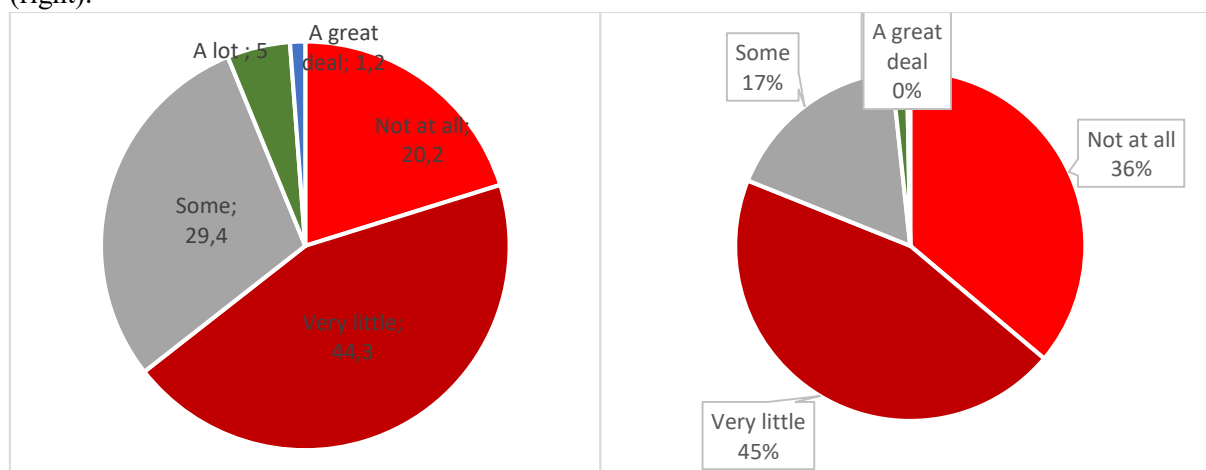


Degree of perceived powerlessness and ability to influence the government decreased slightly in both countries in 2018: 75,8% of respondents in Slovenia answered that people have no say (32,6%) or very little say (43,2%) in what the government does. In Austria a significantly smaller share, 57,7% of people, again answered that people have no say (18,4%) in what the government does or very little (39,3%). On the other hand, only 21,7% of Slovenian respondents thought in 2018 that people have some say in what the government does, while that sentiment was shared by a higher margin of respondents in Austria (34,4%) (ESS 2018).

This rather high degree of fatalism and feeling of exclusion from the executive branch of the political system is reflected also in the belief of abilities to influence the political opportunity structure as well (i.e. political system in general).¹¹ As shown in two charts (table 19) below 81% of respondents in Slovenia answered that present political system does not allow (36,1%) or only partially (44,9%) allows people to influence the politics, while in Austria 64,5% of the respondents answered that people have no say (20,2%) or very little say (44,3%) when it comes to the question of people influencing the political system. Only 17,2% of Slovenian respondents thought that people have some say while that sentiment was significantly higher in Austria (29,4%) (ESS 2016).

¹¹ The question was: "To what extent does the political system in Austria/Slovenia allow people like you to influence politics?"

Table 19: Political system allows people to have influence on politics (%): Austria (left) and Slovenia (right).



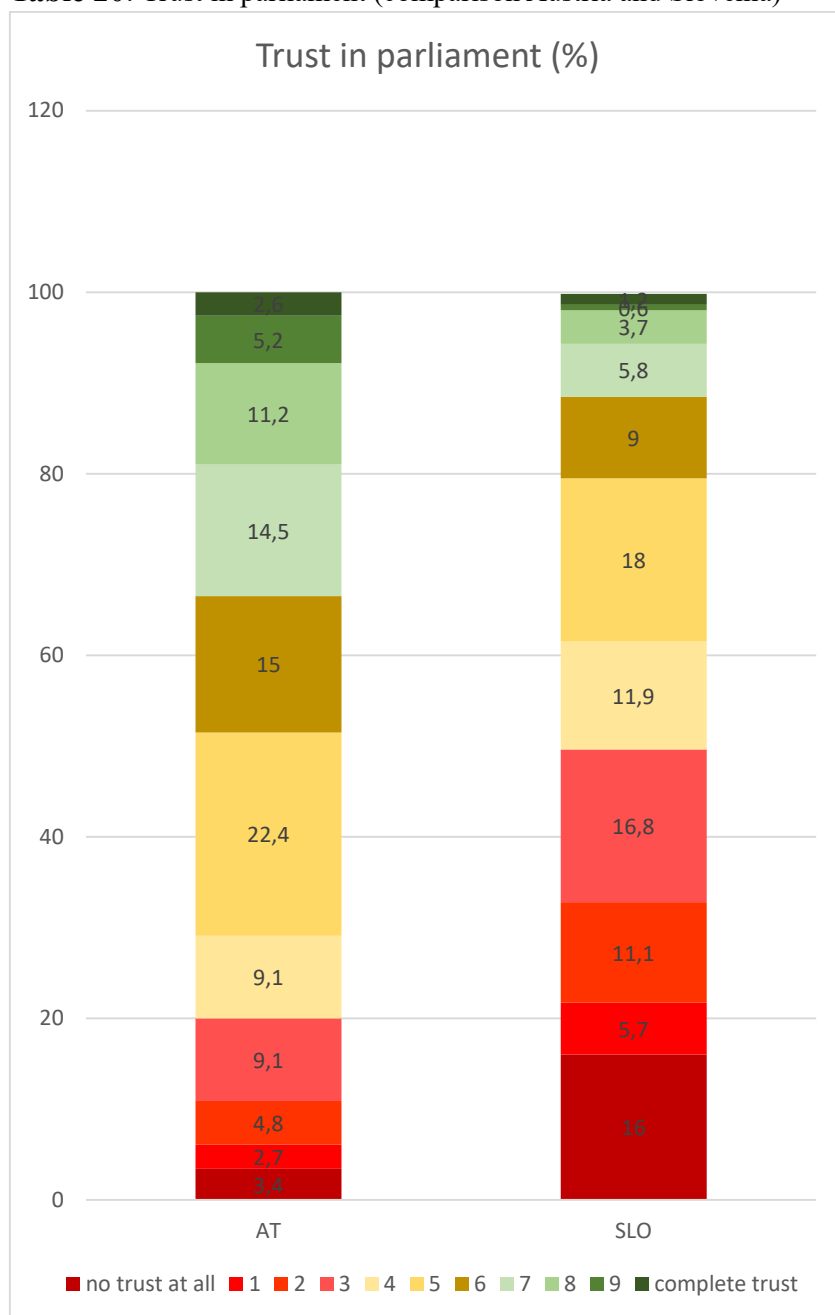
The degree of perceived powerlessness and ability to influence politics decreased slightly in both countries in 2018: 78,5% of respondents in Slovenia answered that people are not allowed (33,7%) or only partially (44,8%) allowed to influence the political system, while in Austria 57,5% of the respondents answered that people have no say (18,9%) in what the government does or very little (38,6%). 18,7% of Slovenian respondents in 2018 thought that people have some say, while that sentiment was much higher in Austria (34,6%) (ESS 2018).

3.2 Trust in political institutions

In this section we present some data collected and published by ESS (2018) on trust in political institutions.¹² Compared to Austrians, Slovenian citizens show a concerning lack of trust in national and European political institutions (politicians, political parties, parliament and European parliament). According to ESS (2018) data, shown in table 20, half of respondents in Slovenia (49,6%) do not trust the legislative body (parliament), assigned grade 3 or lower, while 20% do not trust the country's parliament in Austria. On the other hand, one third (33,5%) of Austrians trust the parliament, grade 7 or higher, while only a tenth of Slovenians did in 2018 (11,5%).

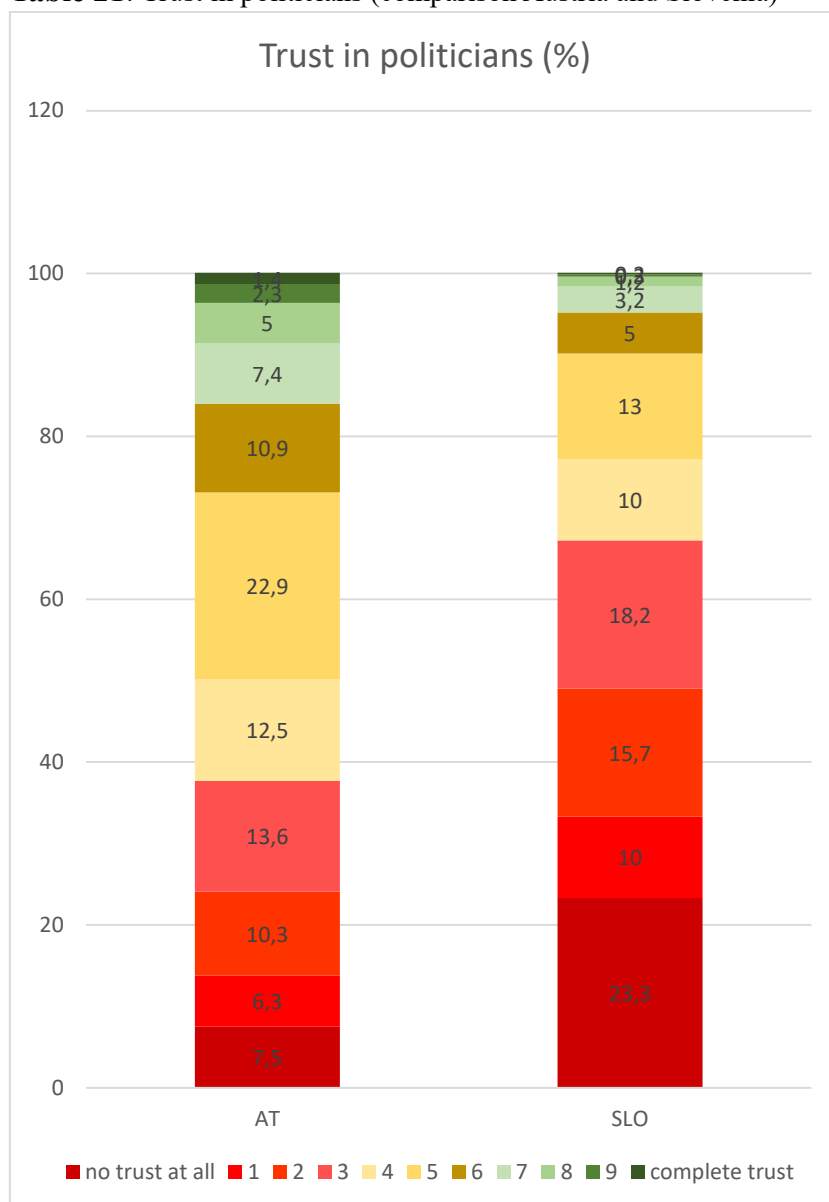
¹² We present four tables interpreting ESS data. ESS researchers measured responses about trust on a scale from 0 (= No trust at all) to 10 (= complete trust). We decided to visually present the shares of assigned specific grades in a familiar mode of traffic light: lowest grades (0-3) are in red, middle grades (4-6) are in yellow and highest grades (7-10), indicating high level of trust, in green.

Table 20: Trust in parliament (comparison Austria and Slovenia)



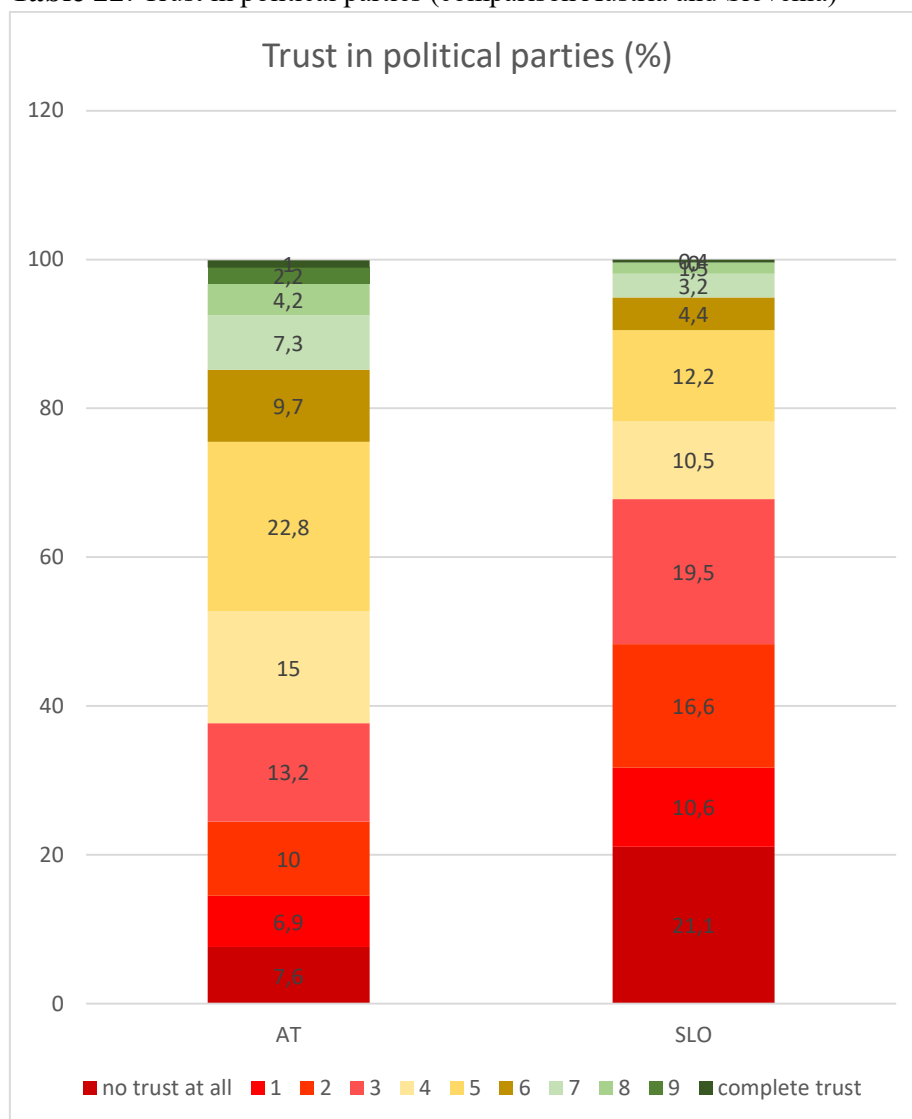
Level of trust in politicians is even lower in both countries (see table 21). According to the ESS (2018), two thirds of respondents in Slovenia (67,2%) did not trust the politicians in 2018, assigned grade 3 or lower, while around one third of Austrians (37,7%) did not trust them there. On the other hand, a very small minority of Slovenian respondents (only 4,9%) trusted the parliament, while in Austria this share shows to be significantly higher (16,1%).

Table 21: Trust in politicians (comparison Austria and Slovenia)



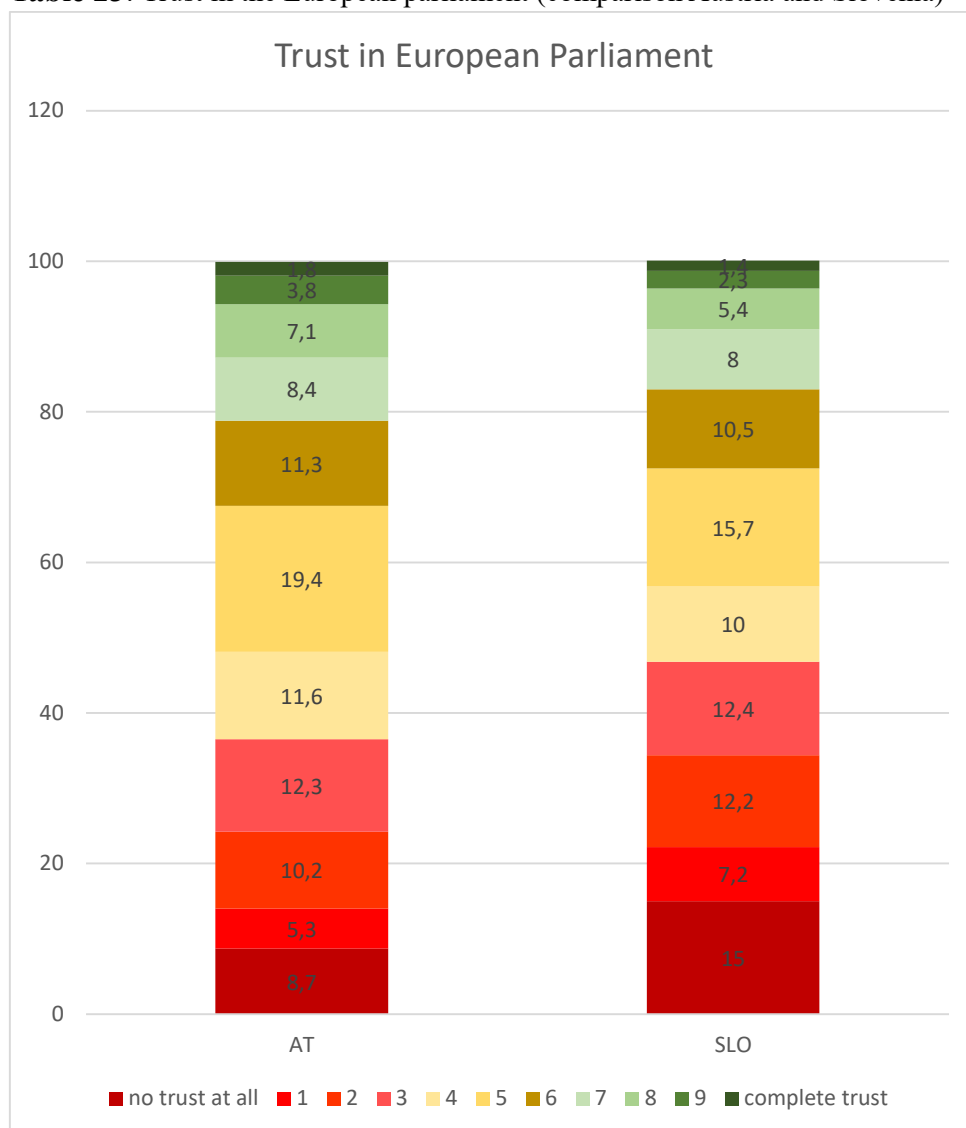
Levels of trust in politicians and political parties seem to be consistent over time in both countries, low in Slovenia and comparatively higher in Austria (see table 21 and table 22). According to the ESS (2018) around two thirds of respondents in Slovenia (67,8%) did not trust the political parties, assigned grade 3 or lower, while around one third of Austrians (37,7%) did not trust them in Austria. In Slovenia, a small minority of respondents (only 5,1%) trusted political parties, while in Austria this share has been considerably higher (14,7%).

Table 22: Trust in political parties (comparison Austria and Slovenia)



The level of trust slightly improved in both countries when respondents were asked to grade the trust in the European parliament. Trust remains low in Slovenia, where respondents did not show a high degree of trust in the European parliament (see table 23). Around half (46,8%) of the respondents assigned grade 3 or lower, while around one third of Austrians (36,5%) did not trust the institution. On the other hand, the picture improves slightly when we look at the other side of the spectrum, i.e. where levels of trust are high. 17,1% of Slovenians trusted the European parliament, while in Austria this share was slightly higher than in Slovenia (21,1%).

Table 23: Trust in the European parliament (comparison Austria and Slovenia)



3.3 Conclusion

In the analysed 5-year period, Slovenian respondents showed a great degree of fatalism, detachment and distance with respect to the country's legislative and executive branch of the political system. More than 80% of respondents in Slovenia answered that people have no say or very little say in what the government does, and that the present political system does not allow or partially allow people to influence political decisions. In Austria, a significantly smaller share of people (around two thirds of respondents) answered that people have no say in what governments do and that people have no say when it comes to influencing the political system (see table 18 and table 19). Only a small minority of Slovenian respondents thought that people have some say in what the government does, while that opinion was shared by as twice as many respondents in Austria (almost a third of the polled citizens).

Detachment from the political system in Slovenia was reflected in a high degree of distrust in national and transnational political institutions: According to ESS (2018) data, half of the respondents in Slovenia did neither trust the national legislative body (Slovenian parliament) nor the European deliberative body (European Parliament). A large share of the population, two thirds of respondents in Slovenia, also did not trust politicians or political parties. In Austria, the

degree of trust in political institutions remained constant throughout the analysed period: merely a fifth of Austrian citizens did not trust the Austrian parliament, while a larger share, around one third of Austrians, did neither trust politicians nor political parties nor the European Parliament.

4 Media

The Eurobarometer 2017 poll on “Integration of Immigrants” showed that Austrians and Slovenians do not feel well informed about immigration and integration (both countries show an identical proportion of people feeling uninformed: i.e. 40% of respondents do not feel well informed). Austrian respondents thought that matters of immigration were presented either objectively (46%) or too negatively (29%) in the media, while in Slovenia the picture was even more polarised as 53% of respondents thought that matters of immigration are presented either objectively or too negatively (27%) in the media (Eurobarometer 2018c: 158-161). This chapter, which analyses the media consumption practices of citizens and their trust, is divided into two parts: the first part aims to observe (section 4.1) consumption patterns of citizens in both analysed countries, while the second part (section 4.2) presents the data on citizens’ trust in media institutions, regulatory bodies and trustworthiness of media reporting.

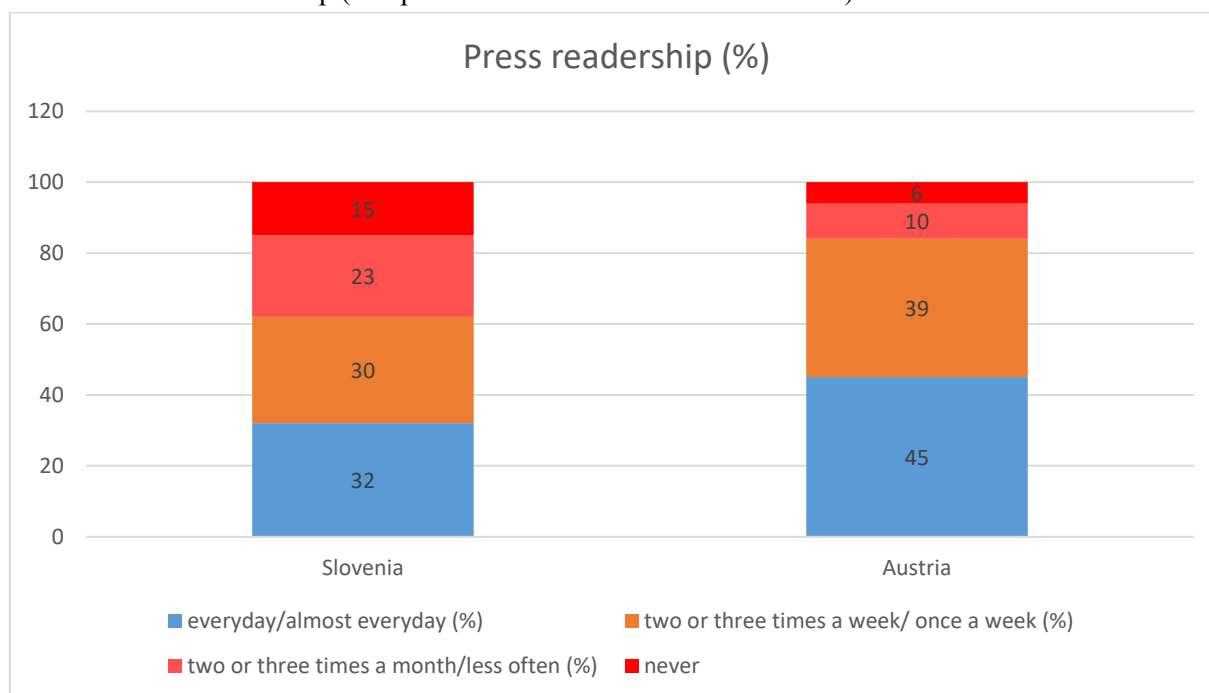
4.1 Media consumption

We structured this overview of media consumption in the analysed period as follows: We begin with an evaluation of the consumption of the press, followed by the examination of the viewership of television programmes and, finally, we conclude with an overview of the use of the Internet (and social media).

4.1.1 Newspapers

Around one third of the respondents read the newspaper every day in 2016 and 2017. According to Eurobarometer estimations (2016c: 13) 32% of Slovenian citizens read the written press every day (slightly more than the EU average of 29%) in 2016, 30% read it once, twice or three times a week (EU average was 32%), 23% read it once, two or three times a month (EU average 18%) while 15% of local population never read the written press (the percentage is below the EU average of 20%). Press readership is much higher in Austria than in Slovenia, it is also well above the EU average: 45% of Austrian citizens read the written press every day in 2016, 39% read it once, twice or three times a week, 10% read it once, two or three times a month while 6% of the local population never read the written press (ibid.: 13).

Table 24: Press readership (comparison between Slovenia and Austria)



In 2017 the shares were similar in Slovenia, while they have rather surprisingly, increased in Austria, when it was one of the highest in the EU¹³: 33% of Slovenian citizens and 55% of Austrian citizens read the written press every day (EU average was 28%), 31% in Slovenia and 33% in Austria read it once, two or three times a week (EU average 32%), 23% in Slovenia and 8% in Austria read it once, two or three times a month (EU average 18%). 15% of the population in Slovenia and merely 4% in Austria never read the written press (below EU average at 20%) (Eurobarometer 2017c: 12).

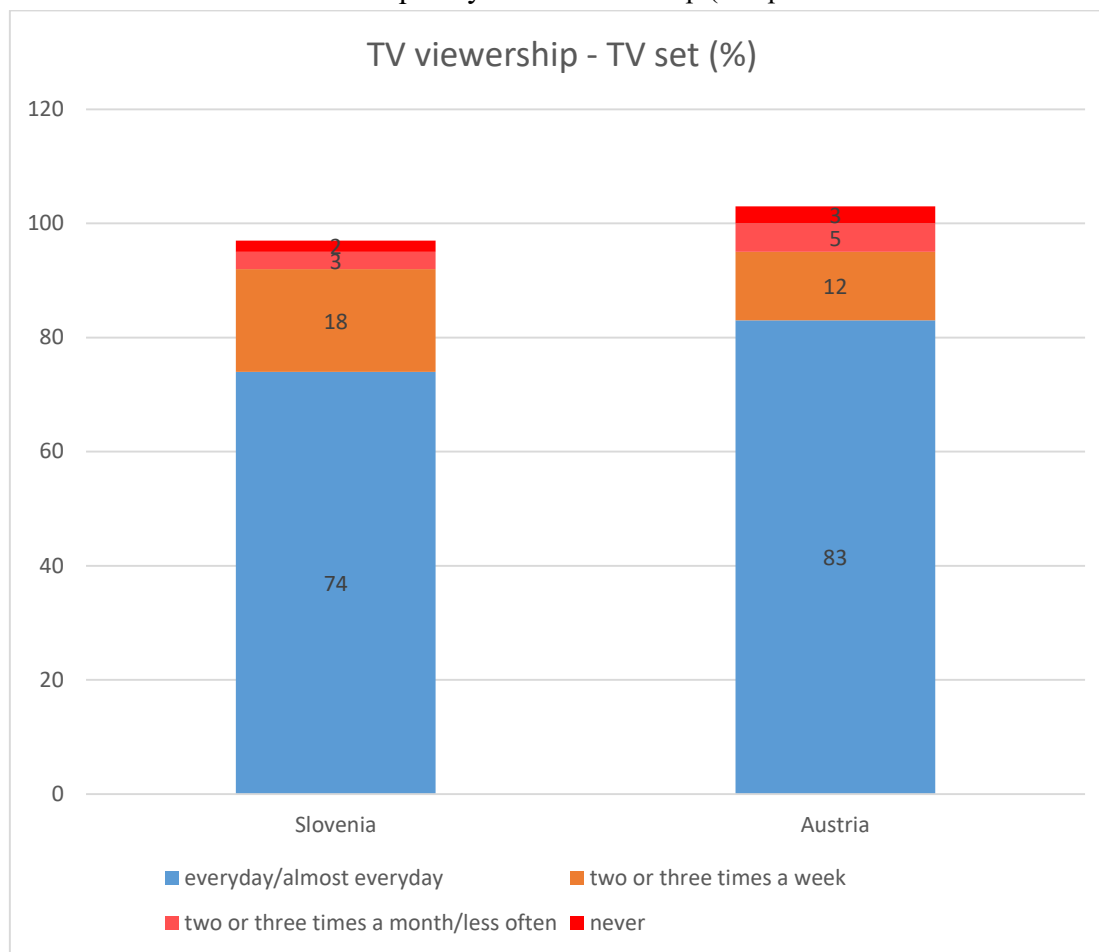
4.1.2 Television

Television remained the most popular medium in Slovenia during the period 2015 to 2020.¹⁴ According to Eurobarometer (2017c: 5–7), 74% of Slovenian citizens watched television (on a television set) every day or almost every day; even higher (83%) was the share in Austria (slightly above EU average of 81%). 18% in Slovenia and 12% in Austria watched it two or three times a week, latter being slightly below EU average (13%).

¹³ This might be partly due to the increase of free press outlets in Austria, for example the dailies »Heute« and »Österreich/oe24«, which are read on the Underground and other public transportation in Vienna (see Thiele 2019).

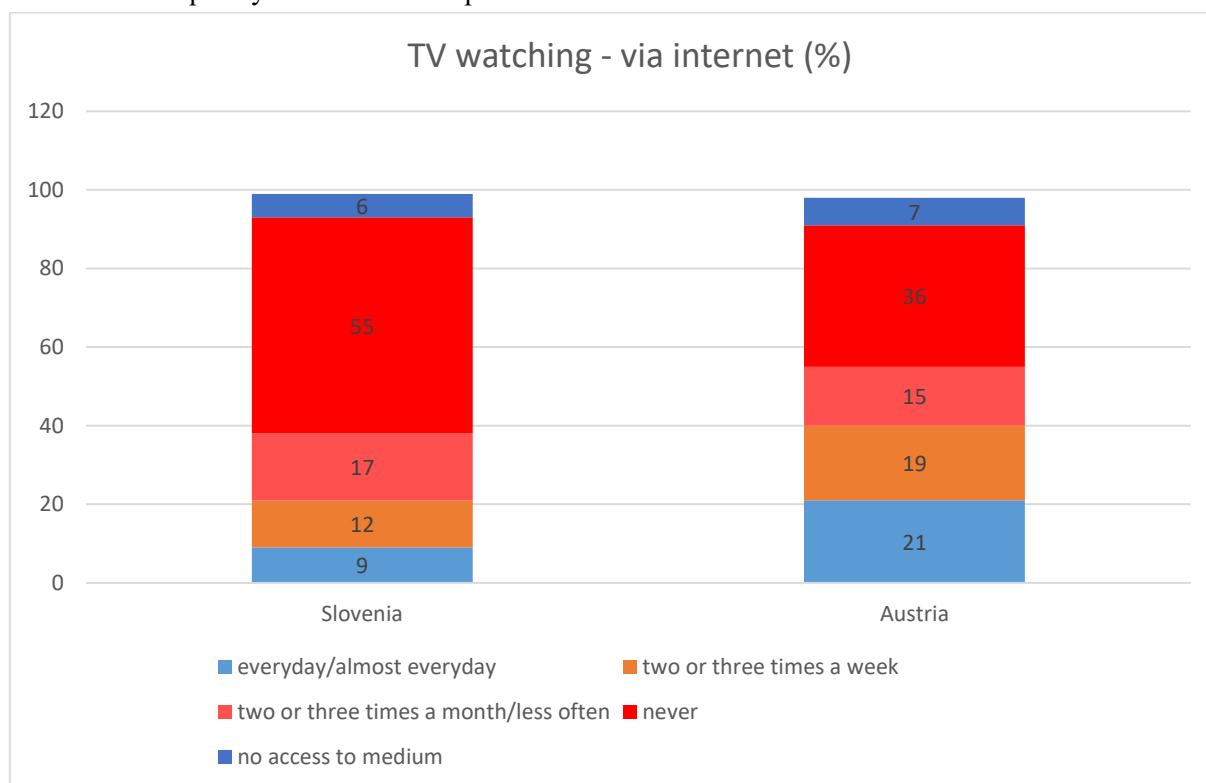
¹⁴ Average television watching time in Slovenia was estimated to be 196 minutes (for men) and 224 minutes (for women) in 2016 according to AGB Nielsen (AGB Nielsen in Jontes 2019: 129).

Table 25: measurement of frequency of TV viewership (comparison between Slovenia and Austria)



The countries do not seem to be comparable when it comes to the hybridization of television consumption, as TV consumption via Internet in Austria is twice as high as in Slovenia (see table 26). While only 9% of citizens watched television via Internet every day in Slovenia, this share amounted to 21% in Austria. And while another 12% in Slovenia watched TV over the Internet one, two or three times a week that percentage was 19% in Austria.¹⁵

¹⁵ For 2016 see Eurobarometer (2016c: 5–7), numbers for that year are similar, practically identical.

Table 26: Frequency of TV viewership

4.1.3 Internet

In merely one year, from 2016 to 2017, Austria has seen an increase in everyday Internet use by 10%. 61% of citizens in Slovenia – like the EU average – and 56% in Austria used the Internet every day or almost every day in 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016c: 17). However, in 2017 64% used the Internet almost every day in Slovenia, while 66% used it in Austria (Eurobarometer 2017c: 15). This increase correlates to the use of online social networks. In Slovenia 37% of citizens used social networks every day or almost every day, close to the EU average (38%) in 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016c: 19), while that percentage increased to 39% in 2017 (Eurobarometer 2017c: 18).¹⁶ However Austrian shares of citizens using social networks on a daily basis increased significantly in this period: from 33% in 2016 to 42% in 2017 (ibid.).

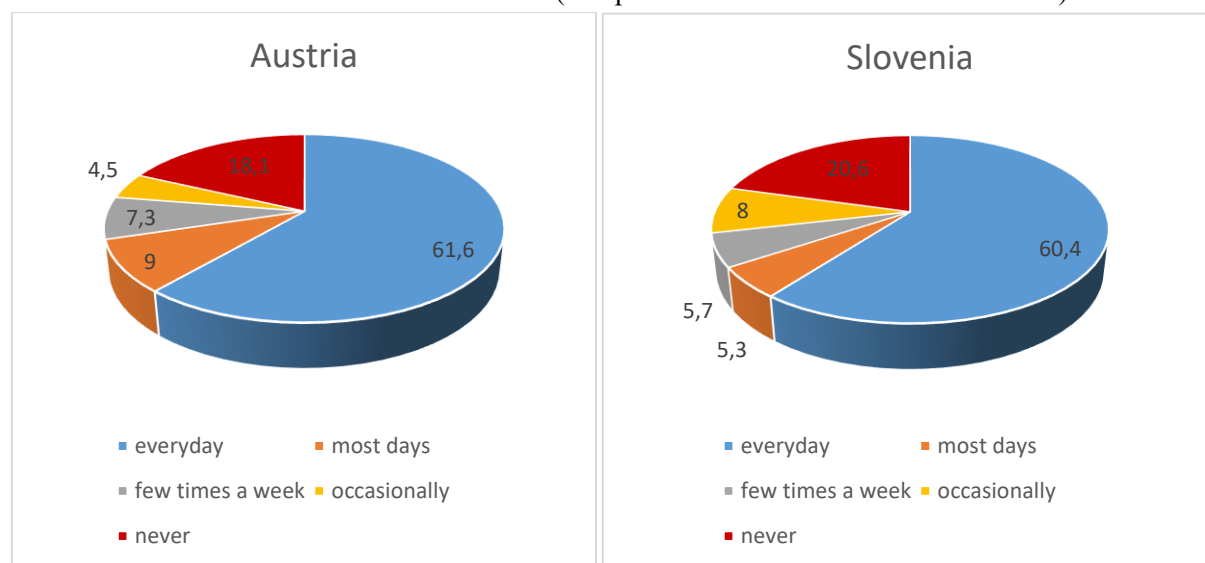
Citizens in Slovenia and Austria share similar consumption patterns when it comes to the question of Internet use. A digital divide between frequent consumption and non-users of the Internet seems to exist that is similar in both countries. According to ESS (2016) data, 52,5% of respondents in Austria use the Internet every day (12% of respondents use the Internet most days, 9,7% a few times a week and 6,4% only occasionally), while a significant number of the population (19,5%) never used the Internet. In Slovenia similarly 54,4% of respondents used the Internet every day (4,2% of respondents used it most days, 6,4% a few times a week and 8,8% only occasionally) while a quarter of respondents (26,1%) does not use the Internet at all (ESS 2016). Most of the users use the Internet for an hour each day (19% in Austria and 18,5% in Slovenia), 18,6% (Austria) and 16,5% (Slovenia) use the Internet for two hours, 12,7% (Austria) and 12,5% (Slovenia) use it three hours daily, 7,3% (Austria) and 6,4% (Slovenia) use it for four

¹⁶We analysed reports for media use in 2016 and 2017, however, numbers for Slovenia were almost identical; for 2017 see Eurobarometer (2017c).

hours. A smaller but significant number of polled respondents use it only for half an hour each day, 8,2% in Austria and 8,5% in Slovenia (ESS 2016).

Table 27 and table 28 (below) show shares of Internet use for the year 2018. According to the ESS, in 2018 61.6% of respondents in Austria used the Internet every day (9% of respondents used Internet most days, 7,3% a few times a week and 4,5% only occasionally). The share of non-users remained high: 18,1% of respondents in Austria never used the Internet. In Slovenia similarly 60,4% of respondents used the Internet every day (5,3% of respondents used it most days, 5,7% a few times a week and 8% only occasionally) while a fifth of respondents (20,6%) did not use the Internet at all (ESS 2018).

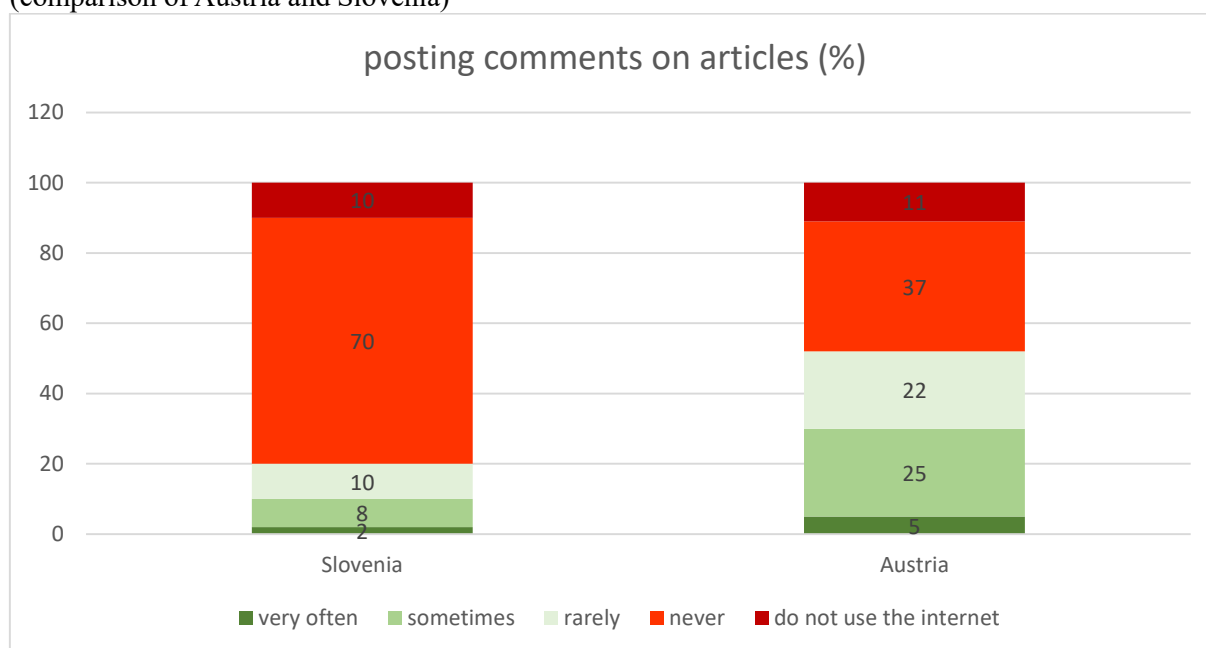
Table 27 and table 28: Internet use in 2018 (comparison between Austria and Slovenia)



Most of the polled people used the Internet for one hour (19% in Austria and 17,9% in Slovenia) or two hours each day 19,6% (Austria) and 19,2% (Slovenia). 10,5% (Austria) and 10,9% (Slovenia) used it three hours daily, 8,2% (Austria) and 6,9% (Slovenia) used it for four hours. A smaller but significant portion of polled respondents spent only half an hour using the internet each day, 8,2% was that share in Austria and 7,3% in Slovenia (ESS 2018).

Austrians comparatively often followed and participated in debates on social media: 68% of respondents followed the debates, and 21% not. 52% of citizens in Slovenia followed them, while 38% said that they do not (Eurobarometer 2016d: 40). Interestingly, Austria is the only EU member state where the majority of respondents took part in those debates by posting comments on articles on the Internet, or through online social networks or blogs (52%), followed by 45% in Finland and 39% in Sweden. Table 29 below shows that in Slovenia only 20% of respondents took part in those debates by posting comments on articles on the Internet, or through online social networks or blogs, while 70% of the population did not (Eurobarometer 2016d: 42-43).

Table 29: Posting comments on articles on the Internet, through online social networks or blogs (comparison of Austria and Slovenia)

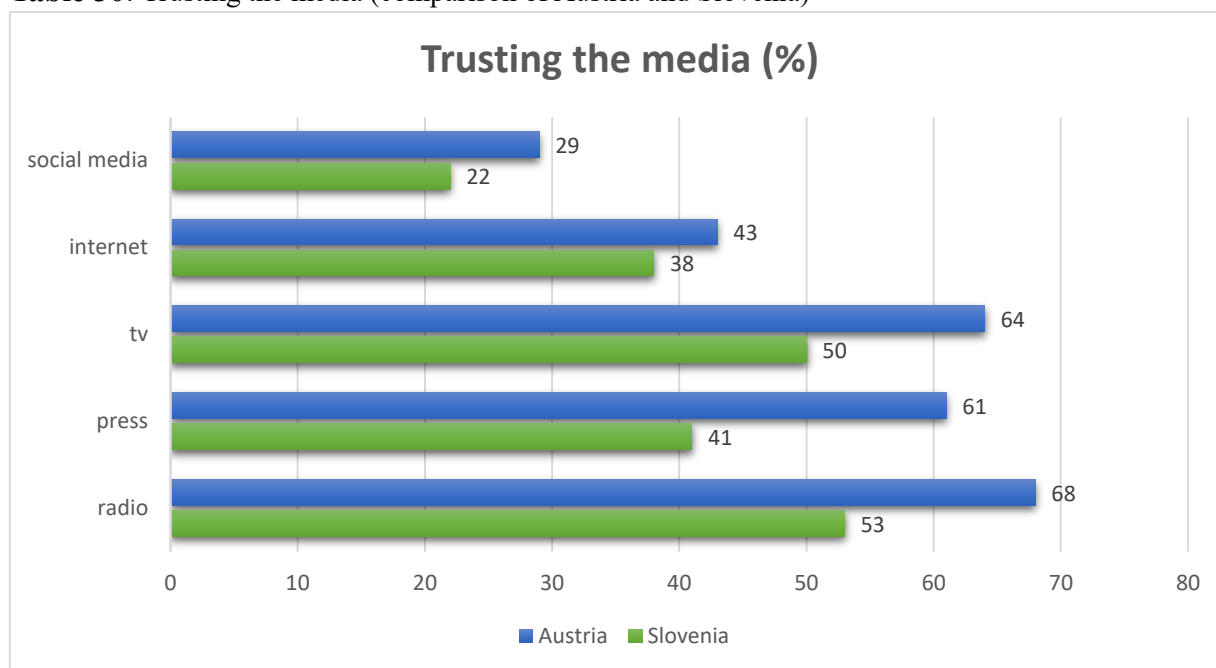


4.2 Trust in the media

Slovenian citizens showed a lower level of trust in media outlets than their Austrian neighbours, who constantly recorded higher levels of trust than their EU compatriots. 52% of Slovenian citizens tended to trust the radio in 2016 (59% was EU average), a 12% increase (biggest increase in the EU) from autumn 2015. Surveys registered that trust in Slovenian radio outlets had fallen by ten points between autumn 2014 and autumn 2015. On the other hand, a high number (64%) of Austrian citizens tended to trust the radio in 2016 (Eurobarometer 2016c: 25). 41% of Slovenian citizens and 54% of Austrian citizens tended to trust the written press (EU average was 46%). 37% of Slovenians and 43% of Austrians trusted the Internet (36% was EU average) while 22% of Slovenians trusted online social networks (like the EU average). 29% was the share of those who trusted online social networks in Austria at that time (ibid: 27–29).

In 2017 43% of citizens in Slovenia had low or no trust in the media, merely 26% was the share in Austria. The same year 23% of citizens had high trust in the media in Slovenia, 31% was the share in Austria (ibid: 29). Table 30 (below) shows the distribution of trust across media: 53% of Slovenian citizens tended to trust the radio in 2017, while 68% tended to trust it in Austria. In Slovenia 50% tended to trust television, while 64% tended to trust the television in Austria. 41% of respondents tended to trust the written press in Slovenia, while 61% tended to trust it in Austria. Shares are similar when we look at the trust in online media: 38% of polled Slovenians trusted the Internet, while 43% tended to trust it in Austria. 22% of the respondents in Slovenia also trusted online social networks, while 29% tended to trust it in Austria (Eurobarometer 2017c: 22–28).

Table 30: Trusting the media (comparison of Austria and Slovenia)



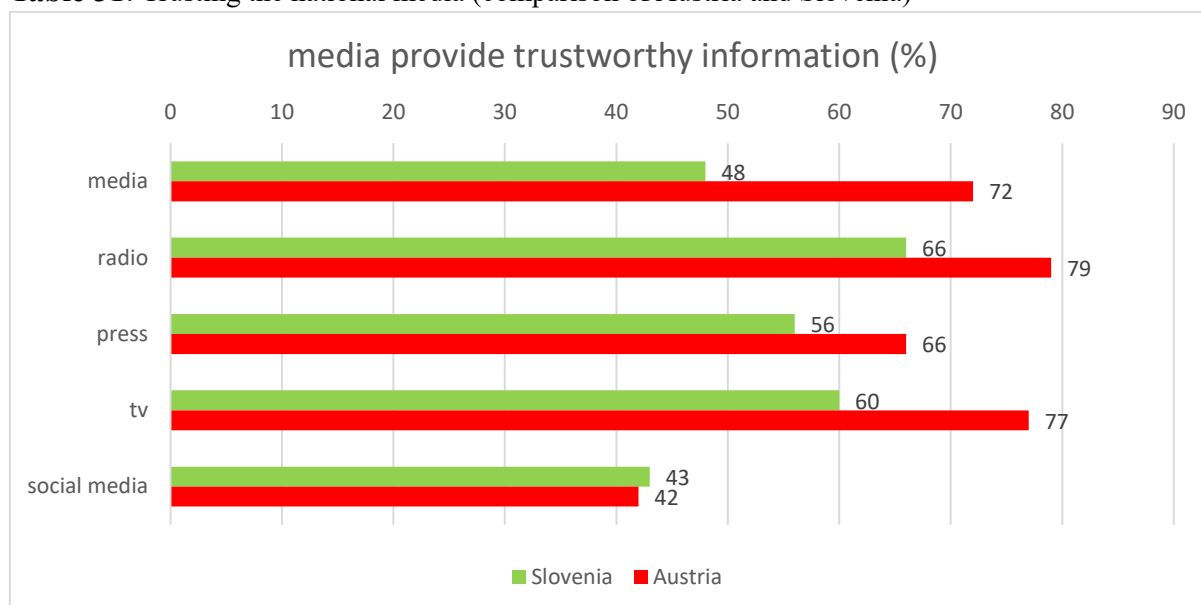
Adding to these numbers, the 2016 Eurobarometer on “Media pluralism and democracy” (Eurobarometer 2016d) provides valuable insights about trust and reputation of the media in the Austrian and Slovenian public opinion.

76% of Austrian respondents agree that their national media system provides a diversity of views and opinions (only 22% disagree), in Slovenia the share of those who believe that media outlets of the national media system provide a diversity of views and opinions is much smaller than in Austria, only 60% (a high 38% disagree with that belief). However, 34% of respondents in Slovenia answered that media, compared with five years ago, brought more diversity of views and opinions (Eurobarometer 2016d: 7, 11).

On the topic of public media Austrian citizens equally regarded Austrian public media as free and not free from political pressure: 48% of respondents thought that their public media *are free* from political pressure, while 43% believed that their national media do *not* provide information free from political or commercial pressure. In Slovenia respondents showed a greater distrust in the national public media: 36% of respondents thought their public media are free from political pressure, while 67% of respondents believed that their national media do not provide information free from political or commercial pressure (Eurobarometer 2016d: 16, 19).

A majority of the Austrian population believed that national media outlets provide trustworthy information (72%), while in Slovenia that trust is very low, the share of those who believed that national media provide trustworthy information is only 48% (Eurobarometer 2016d: 26). As we can see in table 31 radio was considered the most reliable source of information in both countries: 79% in Austria and 66% in Slovenia considered it a reliable source. 77% in Austria and 60% in Slovenia regarded television as a reliable source, while 66% in Austria and 56% in Slovenia regarded newspapers as a reliable source). Interestingly, when compared to Austria (42%), a higher share of Slovenians trusts social media (43%) as a reliable source of information.

Table 31: Trusting the national media (comparison of Austria and Slovenia)



The Austrian national media regulator is regarded by the majority of respondents as free and independent from political, governmental and commercial pressure (51%). Only 41% of respondents in Slovenia agreed that the body that oversees the audiovisual media in Slovenia is free and independent from political, governmental or commercial pressures. 46% of respondents in Slovenia did not agree that the institution is free and independent from political, governmental or commercial pressures (Eurobarometer 2016d: 37).

4.3 Conclusion

As we showed in this chapter, the two countries diverge significantly in the area of media consumption. We focused on press, television and internet consumption. Press readership is much higher in Austria than in Slovenia. It is also well above EU average: Almost 85% of Austrian citizens read newspapers at least once a week, that share was only two thirds of the population in Slovenia. Television, despite the rise and proliferation of the Internet and social media channels, remained the most popular medium in both analysed countries during the period 2015 to 2020. Three quarters of Slovenian citizens watched television (on a television set) every day or almost every day, even higher, similar to their press readership share, was the share in Austria (83%). Interestingly and worth of noting, as late as 2018 polls showed that both countries had a significant share of the population that did not consume media content online: around one fifth of respondents, in Slovenia as well as Austria did not use the Internet at all (ESS 2018; see table 27 and table 28).

A majority of the Austrian population believed in 2016 as well as 2017 that national media provide trustworthy information (almost three quarters of the population expressed this belief), while in Slovenia such trust was significantly lower as only around half of the population believed that national media provide trustworthy information. Interestingly, Austria is the only EU Member State where the majority of respondents (52%) take part in online debates, i.e. posting comments on news below articles on the Internet, or through online social networks or blogs. In Slovenia only one fifth of respondents decided to take part in online debates by posting comments on articles on the Internet or through online social networks or blogs, while a large majority of the population (70%) abstained from this kind of communication (Eurobarometer 2016d: 42-43).

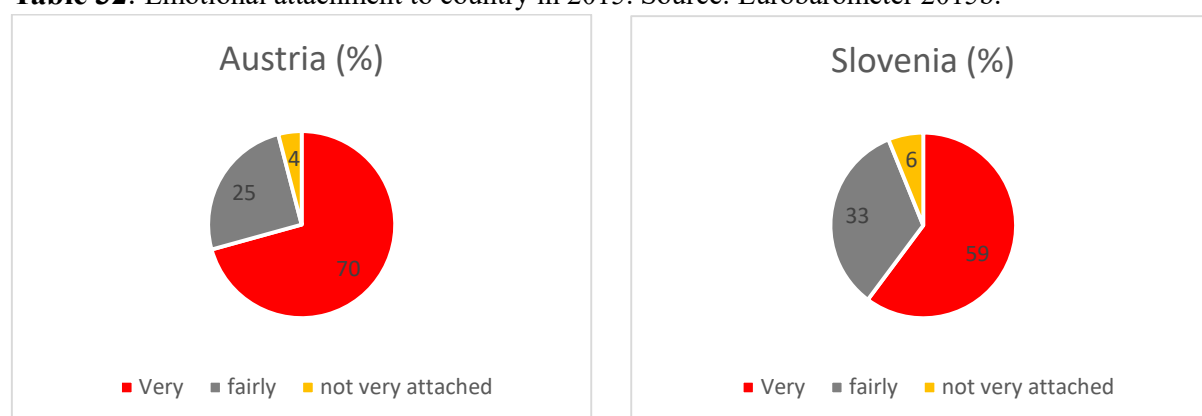
5 Emotional attachments

We examine three emotional stances expressed by respondents in Austria and Slovenia. Eurobarometer measured emotional attachment toward the country, toward Europe and toward the European Union (as a political-economic union). Eurobarometer provides data for 2015 and 2017, ESS polls, which are also more nuanced, provide data for 2016 and 2018.

5.1 Emotional attachment to the country

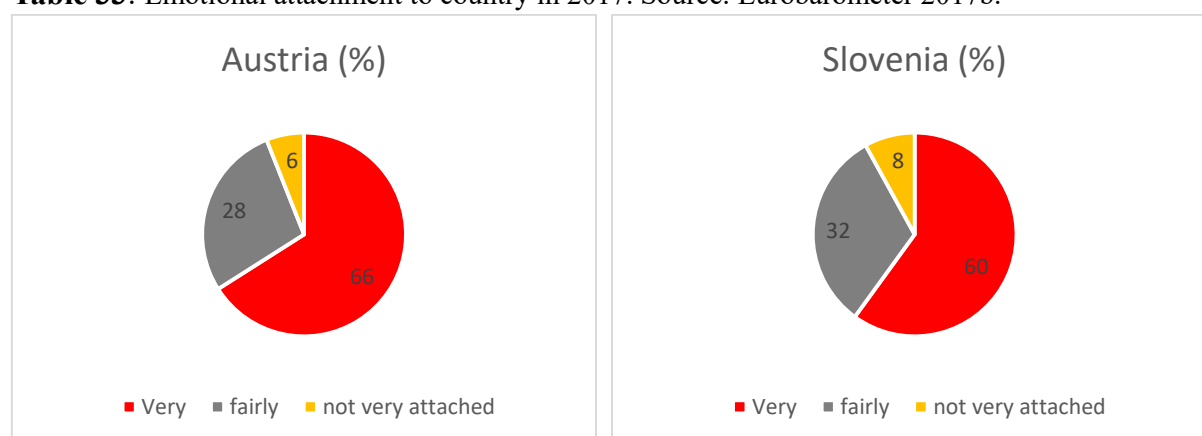
According to the Eurobarometer poll in autumn of 2015 70% of respondents in Austria and 59% in Slovenia were very emotionally attached to their country. Additional 25% (Austria) and 33% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to their country. Merely 4% in Austria and 6% in Slovenia stated that they did not feel very attached to their country (Eurobarometer 2015b: 173).

Table 32: Emotional attachment to country in 2015. Source: Eurobarometer 2015b.



In 2017 attachment to the country did not change significantly for respondents: according to the Eurobarometer poll in 2017 66% of respondents in Austria and 60% in Slovenia said that they felt very attached to their country. Additional 28% (Austria) and 32% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to their country. Merely 6% in Austria and 8% in Slovenia stated that they did not feel very attached to their country (Eurobarometer 2017b: 126).

Table 33: Emotional attachment to country in 2017. Source: Eurobarometer 2017b.



According to our interpretation of the ESS poll (ESS 2016)¹⁷ as shown in table 34 and table 35 27,7% of respondents in Austria and 24% in Slovenia said that they were very emotionally attached to their country in 2016. 52,3% of Austrians showed high attachment to their country, while in Slovenia we estimate that this share is 45,2%.¹⁸ Only 3,2% in Austria and 8,8% in Slovenia did not feel strong emotional attachment to their country¹⁹ and merely 0,6% in Austria and 1,8% in Slovenia stated that they do not feel any emotional attachment to their country.

Table 34: Emotional attachment to the country in Austria in 2016 (share in %)

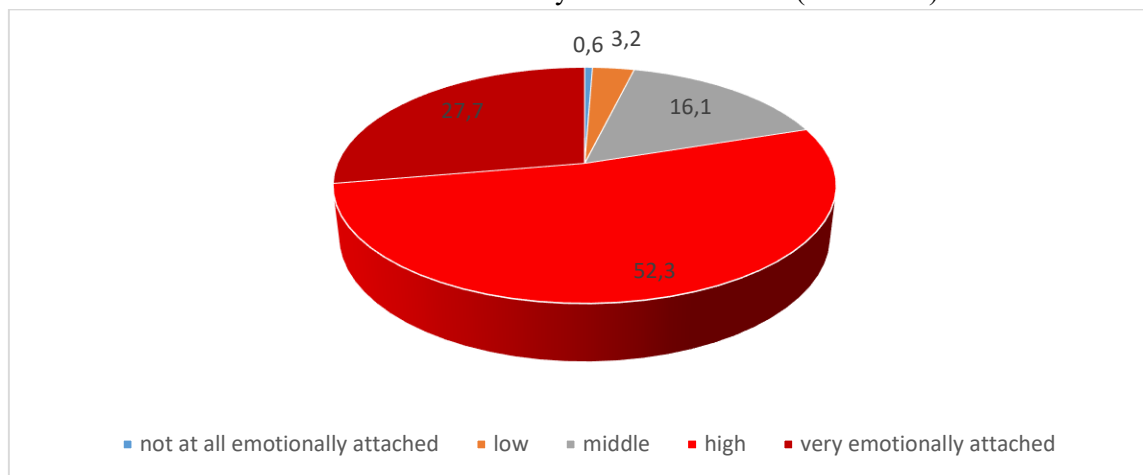
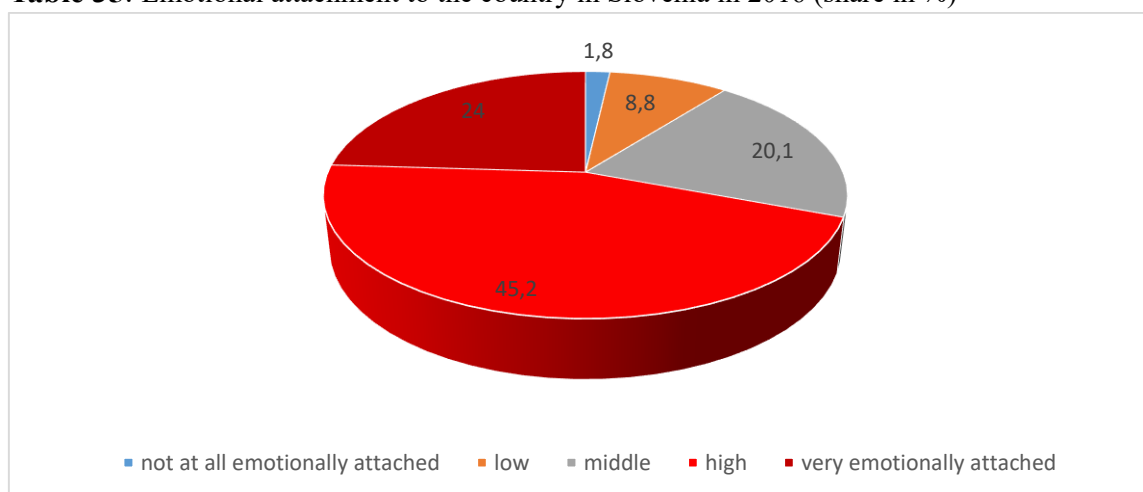


Table 35: Emotional attachment to the country in Slovenia in 2016 (share in %)



¹⁷ Interpretation and schematic illustration of the comparison between the countries presented here is our own calculation and interpretation of ESS measured data. ESS asked the question in the following way: “People can feel different strong attachments to the country, in which they live, and to Europe. How emotionally attached to your country are you?” ESS researchers measured responses on a scale from 0 (= Not at all emotionally attached) to 10 (= Very emotionally attached). For illustrative purposes of this report, we have created a scale of 5 categories instead of 10 grades and thus combined various ESS grades to create our own categories: low, middle and high attachment. Polar opposites (i.e. 0 (not at all emotionally attached) and 10 (very emotionally attached) thus remain the same and show ESS calculations. Other categories combine various grades: grades from 1-3 are summed up and show *low* attachment, grades from 4-6 show *middle* and grades 7-9 show *high* attachment. See fn. 13 for the calculation of high emotional attachment and fn. 14 for the calculation of low.

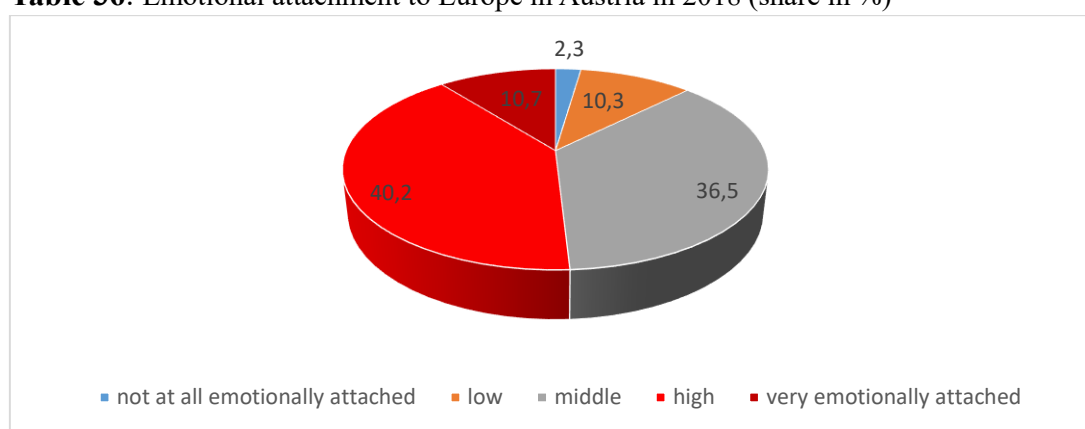
¹⁸ 16,7% of respondents in Austria and 12% in Slovenia graded their attachment to the country as 9, 20,5% in Austria and 20,4% in Slovenia as 8 and further 15,1% in Austria and 12,8% in Slovenia as 7.

¹⁹ Grades 3 or lower that were chosen in ESS poll (ESS 2016).

5.2 Emotional attachment to Europe

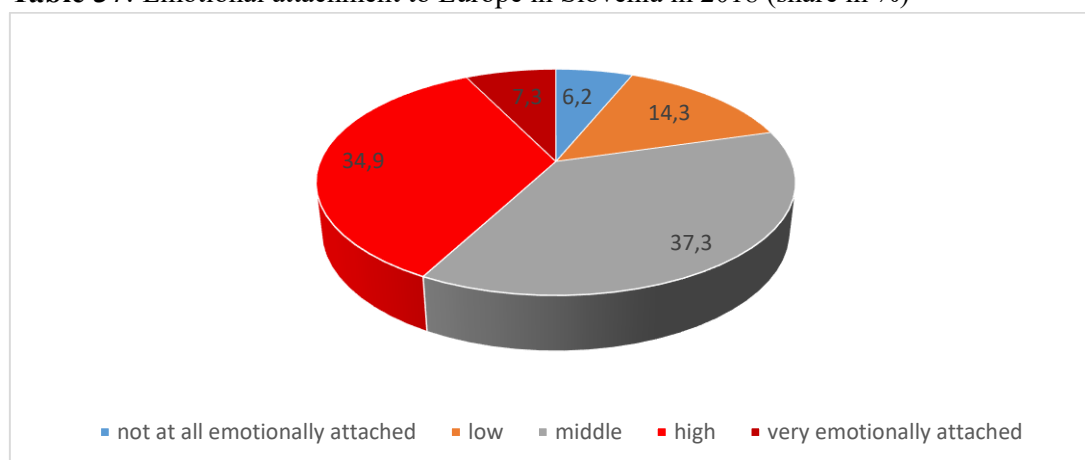
Citizens' emotional attachment to Europe is much less strong in Austria and Slovenia than the citizens' attachment to the country. According to the Eurobarometer poll in 2015 only 11% of respondents in Austria and 15% in Slovenia said that they felt very attached to Europe. Additional 45% (Austria) and 41% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to Europe. Around one third of respondents, 34% in Austria and 30% in Slovenia, stated that they did not feel very attached to Europe as a whole (Eurobarometer 2015b: 177). According to the Eurobarometer poll in 2017 some attachment to Europe was on its way to be restored to pre-2015 levels: in Austria, as 26% of respondents in Austria (and 18% in Slovenia) said that they felt very attached to Europe. Additional 46% (Austria) and 45% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to Europe. Around one quarter of respondents, 23% in Austria and 28% in Slovenia, stated that they did not feel very attached to Europe as a whole (Eurobarometer 2017b: 128).

Table 36: Emotional attachment to Europe in Austria in 2018 (share in %)



As shown in table 36 (above) and table 37 (below) only 10,7% of respondents in Austria and 7,3% in Slovenia were very emotionally attached to Europe.²⁰ Only 10,3% did not feel strong emotional attachment to Europe in Austria and 14,3% in Slovenia (we combined shares that chose grades 4 or lower). Merely 2,3% in Austria and 6,2% in Slovenia stated that they do not feel any emotional attachment to Europe (ESS 2018).

Table 37: Emotional attachment to Europe in Slovenia in 2018 (share in %)



²⁰ 6,9% of respondents in Austria and 7,7% in Slovenia graded the attachment as 9, 16,2% and 14,6% in Slovenia as 8 and further 17,1% and 12,6% in Slovenia as 7.

5.3 Emotional attachment to the European Union

Interestingly attachment to the European Union was even lower in the examined period. According to the Eurobarometer poll in 2015 only 8% of respondents in Austria and 13% in Slovenia said that they felt very attached to the European Union. Additional 30% (Austria) and 37% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to the Union. 41% in Austria and 35% in Slovenia, stated that they did not feel very attached to the EU (Eurobarometer 2015b: 175). According to the Eurobarometer poll in 2017 23% of respondents in Austria and 14% in Slovenia said that they felt very attached to the European Union. Additional 32% (Austria) and 41% (in Slovenia) answered that they felt fairly attached to the Union. Third of respondents, 33% in Austria and 34% in Slovenia, stated that they did not feel very attached to the EU (Eurobarometer 2017b: 127).

5.4 Conclusion

As this chapter indicates, the nationalist attachment remained strong in both countries throughout the entire analysed period. Polls consistently measured, as shown in chapter 5.1, that around two thirds of Austrians as well as Slovenians in the period from 2015 until 2017 felt very strongly attached to their countries. A lower share, around half of the respondents in both countries, replied that they felt a strong attachment to Europe. Attachment to the European continent was not as strong as the attachment to the country, however it did remain relatively high, around 50% in Austria and 40% in Slovenia. The emotional attachment toward the European Union, when compared to the attachment to one's country or the continent as a whole, dramatically decreased and became very low among citizens of both analysed countries. Only around one tenth of citizens in Austria and Slovenia agreed to the statement that they feel a strong emotional attachment to the European Union.

6 Conclusion

The selection of polls, conducted by Eurobarometer and ESS over a five-year period (2015-2020), which we managed to examine for this report, outlined some clear trends in Austria and Slovenia on four issues: migration, trust in political actors and the political system, consumption of media content and trust in the media system, and emotional attachment to geo-political unions like the nation state, Europe, and the European Union. The conclusions of our report, drawn above, suggest that a large share of Austrian and Slovenian citizens since the “summer of migration” in 2015 might be inclined to support anti-migrant and right-wing populist stances.

Migration and immigration had been at the forefront of the citizens’ concerns in Austria and Slovenia from the “refugee crisis” (autumn of 2015) onward, however, citizens regarded it mainly as a concern burdening the EU rather than individual countries of the Union (Eurobarometer 2016b: 30-33; Eurobarometer 2018a: 4-7; Eurobarometer 2018b: 12-14; Eurobarometer 2019: 22; Eurobarometer 2020: 17). The data also confirmed that a declared public support of refugees is higher in times of less intensive, less visible and distant migratory dynamics, while support decreases in times of intensive interaction with migratory movements (see tables 2-4 above; see also Zavrtnik et al. 2017: 868-871).

The polls repeatedly indicated two conclusions: First, citizens of both countries more readily accept and welcome migrants with a cultural background similar to the majority of the local population; and second, citizens’ acceptance of migrants is predetermined by the legal recognition of the states’ administrative and regulatory framework (granting asylums and granting citizenships). The overwhelming percentage of citizens rejecting immigration from outside the EU contributed to the first conclusion (see tables 6-8 above; see also Zavrtnik et al. 2017: 868-871). The humanitarianism of citizens showed in a higher support for groups of migrants like refugees and refugee families (see table 10) compared to the rejection of illegal migrants, migrating men and/or so-called “economic” migrants (Zavrtnik et al. 2017: 871). In Slovenia the importance of administrative recognition of one’s legal status seems to be additionally confirmed by the importance ascribed to the acquisition of citizenship (highest percentage in the EU) as one of the very important indicators of perceived integration into the Slovenian society.

Our report indicates that Slovenian citizens might be more inclined to accept and ascribe to populist views and messages by populist politicians, parties and journalists than their Austrian counterparts. As seen in chapter 3, Slovenian citizens showed a rather strong anti-elitist populist worldview, with a great disbelief in the abilities of people to influence legislative and executive decisions in the country (see section 3.1). Slovenians also showed much lower levels of trust in the parliament, politicians and political parties than their Austrian counterparts, indicating a general trend of “withdrawal and disengagement” (Mair 2013: ch. 1) from the institutional political sphere.²¹

²¹ This is a phenomenon indicated in Slovenia by decreasing electoral participation from 1992 onward, basically since the introduction of the parliamentary system. Parliamentary elections participation has decreased in following way: 85.6% (1992), 73.7% (1996), 70.1% (2000), 60.65% (2004), 63.1% (2008), 65.6% (2011), 51.71% (2014), 52.64% (2018). Presidential elections participation shows a decline in the following way: 83% (1990), 85% (1992), 68% (1997), 48% (2002), 57% (2007), 48% (2012), 44% (2017). European elections participation has been even worse: 28% (2004), 28% (2009), 24% (2014), 28% (2019). Participation at local elections and referenda showed

The data of chapter 4 confirmed the hypothesis, put forward by Nayla Fawzi (2019: 155-156), that the more respondents pronounce an anti-elitist populist worldview, the less they tend to trust quality media. As presented in section 4.2, levels of trust in media of Slovenian citizens compared to Austrians were significantly lower in all categories. For example, two thirds of Slovenians did not believe that their *public* media are free of political pressure, compared to less than half in Austria. Furthermore, less than half of the Slovenian population believed that the national media system provides trustworthy information, while three quarters of the polled citizens in Austria believed that they do so.

Since the onset of “refugee crisis” in 2015 both countries, according to the data provided in this report, represent spaces for a possible expansion of right-wing populist ideas propagated by strong right-wing populist movements. Citizens of both countries showed a high emotional attachment to their respective national identity (see chapter 5), a high preference for television consumption and – if low press readership in Slovenia indicates avoidance of broadsheets and high shares in Austria indicate demand for tabloid free dailies – also a high preference for infotainment (see chapter 4). Data from Austria confirmed that people with a high probability to vote for the populist right-wing FPÖ tend to be skeptical of the media, consume tabloids, avoid broadsheets, and hold anti-immigration attitudes (see Diehl et al. 2019: 9-10). All these propositions, as our report shows, hold true for a great share of Slovenian and Austrian citizens.

We finally propose two general directions (two starting points) – originating from our knowledge of the history of two national political and media systems – which indicate important differences between Slovenia and Austria. Further research in these indicated directions could eventually, we believe, lead to the formulation of causal and contextual explanations of the manifested citizens’ attitudes presented in this report. First, further research on citizens’ attitudes should acknowledge the integration and trajectory of the institutional right-wing into two national parliamentary political landscapes and consider the influence of the largest right-wing parties on country’s legislative, executive and political institutions. Second, further explanations should consider the discursive and ideological as well as political and economic pressures of right-wing parties on the media system in general and the populist parties’ influence on its commercial pole specifically.

Since Othering (i.e. constructing and considering migrants as a threat to security, society and culture) is predominantly a discourse of the right-wing parties in Slovenia and Austria (Pajnik et al. 2020: 81-82), further explanations must thus consider the structural role, trajectories and media presence of biggest conservative parties in both countries. In Austria historical role and legislative power of Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP) should be evaluated, while influence of FPÖ (further to the political right) on ÖVP’s policies and ideological trajectory should also be included in discussions on the move of public opinion to the right. Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS) seems to generate political and ideological tendencies of both Austrian right-wing parties. Its historical influence on legislative and administrative architecture in Slovenia as well as its ideological reinforcement of traditional values in Slovenian public opinion could represent a point of political comparison between the two countries.

There are important existing historical differences in parliamentary trajectory of right-wing parties which at this moment can only be outlined without further examination. In terms of

similar trends (longitudinal data compiled by the author from Državna volilna komisija (Slovenian voting commission)).

Federal Assembly seats, the ÖVP has, apart from the infamous 1999 general elections, managed to maintain its position as the strongest or second-strongest party in Austria and has formed a majority (i.e. has led or has been a partner) in every Austrian federal cabinet since 1986. ÖVP maintained a strong legitimacy among the Austrian highly engaged voting public, consistently gaining between 24% (in 2013) and 42% (in 2002) of the popular vote in every general election since 1990. ÖVP has a history of coalition governing with its centrist-left wing partner SPÖ, entering a coalition seven times since 1986 (from 1986 until 1999 and from 2006 until 2017). Historical role of SDS as the oppositional party in Slovenian parliament has conversely been crucial. Formed in 1989 it has led a national governmental cabinet three times, only once for a full four year term as a general election winner (from 2004 - 2008). Carlos Gonzalez Villa showed that precisely the xenophobic legislative responses as well as media presence and organising of local population by the (oppositional) SDS from 2015 onward served the party in its reintegration in the political mainstream after its electoral collapse in 2014 (see Gonzalez Villa 2017: 353-356).²²

The second research direction should consider important discursive and ideological implications of right-wing parties' influence in the public sphere: do the outlined differences in right-wing parties' roles in national media systems generate differences in citizens' opinions about the media? Might higher distrust and an atmosphere of political pressure in Slovenian media be generated by the visibility of a highly politicized right-wing party press, continuous publicized attempts of the right-wing SDS to efficiently control numerous media outlets, and the normalization of xenophobic populist ideas in mainstream media (see Luthar 2017)? Since refugees' contacts with the local population during the "refugee crisis" were restricted to bare minimum (Kogovšek Šalamon and Bajt 2016: 9) further interpretation of the data should focus on the integration of right-wing sentiments into the media ecosystem and the contribution of the xenophobic right in both countries when it comes to influencing the public opinion on migration.

Institutional political right-wing forces in both countries have stronger or weaker historical interventions in both media systems. While there are hardly clear party affiliations in Austrian press (Trappel 2019) a report on the Austrian media system found that the biggest tabloids *Kronen Zeitung*, *Heute* and *Österreich/Oe24* are regularly among the big receivers of public sponsored advertising, ministries and public companies, especially during the ÖVP-FPÖ reign (Thiele 2019: 4). When comparing Slovenia to Austria, explanations of populist tendencies permeating the mainstream media should consider at least three historical processes in Slovenian media system which might serve as a point of comparison: the formation of a parallel (party) media subsystem²³, attempts to exert control and influence on the public broadcaster's structure and recent attempts of the right-wing parties to dominate the (broadcasting) commercial pole of media field.²⁴

²² It seems that "withdrawal and disengagement" (Mair 2013: ch. 1) of the Slovenian electorate propels SDS party to maintain its fragile leadership among Slovenian political parties. When in 2014 general elections SDS lost almost 40% of the votes compared to 2004 elections it has managed to retain its relatively strong parliamentary position due to a lower turnout: the number of SDS parliamentarians in a 90 seat parliament decreased from 28 to 21.

²³ SDS party has been strongly involved in the formation of a parallel (party) media subsystem in Slovenia, funded by Viktor Orban's financial oligarchy, which is consisted of growing number of media outlets from TV station (Nova24 TV) and its website (Nova24tv.si) to political weekly magazine (Demokracija) and around 30 web-portals reproducing identical messages of populist anti-migrant and anti-establishment propaganda on all of its platforms (Kučić 2019a; Kučić 2019b; Kučić 2019c; Cirman et al. 2021a; Vezjak 2021).

²⁴ Right wing parties' transformation of public broadcaster bodies and attempts to control newspaper Delo were already discussed in another report (Ribač 2019: 11-13). Attempts to disintegrate and dissolve the national press

Our conclusions that anti-migrant, populist, nationalist and sceptical citizens' attitudes presented in this report point to the role of political and media systems in shaping populist sentiments should further be re-examined and linked to the social and economic conditions of groups that are attracted to populism as well. Any analysis of forces that propel populist sentiments must take into account an array of economic, social, cultural and demographic data in order to understand how contemporary Austrian and Slovenian populisms are a result of longstanding socio-economic as well as political dealignments alongside perceived (cultural) deprivation on the part of the countries' citizens (see Berezin 2019).

agency (STA) and increasing attempts to solidify right-wing political influence in commercial TV stations Planet TV and POP TV (Cirman et al. 2021b; Kučić 2021a; Kučić 2021b) have intensified in the past year with the formation of another SDS-led government.

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